TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Any "introduction" to James's life and work, by way of anthology or collected views on him, faces one almost insurmountable problem. As Martin Glaberman noted in the first anthology of James's selected writings (edited and published by this writer as *Radical America,* Volume IV, Number 4, May 1970), the sheer range eternally evokes the question, "where does one begin?" Happily, our beginning does not have to be so rudimentary as eleven years ago. A growing number of James's works are readily available in commercial editions throughout the English-speaking world. We anticipate confidently that an autobiography will soon be completed. And surely, as the world crisis brings another generation of insurgents to the fore, many of James's now less available studies will receive the proper attention. Already, many readers of this symposium will be familiar with James the Pan-Africanist historian of *The Black Jacobins,* the political visionary of the post-Vanguard Party age, and (especially in Britain) the West Indian and British commentator on sports and culture. We mean here only to sketch out the general contours of James's life, his travels, the main periods of his political and theoretical endeavors, and the specific influences which have prompted this volume.

James was born in 1901 in Trinidad, in the kind of family that used to be called "poor but honest," driven down economically but determined to hold onto self-respect and the ideals of education and upward mobility. Like many revolutionary artists, he had a mother devoted to literature as her time and energies would allow. Several of the following essays show how James might well have become a provincial schoolteacher but, through love for cricket, felt drawn toward the common pastimes of the West Indian masses. When I asked James recently why Ireland and the West Indies had produced so many great literary figures, he answered simply that young people of talent had no other options — as if to say that becoming a writer had, negatively speaking, been for him as well the only means to use the available political and intellectual resources. But surely there is a positive side: fiction about daily life in the slums, about the education of a young intellectual learning about that life *(Minty Alley)* offered a synthesis of James's background, training, cultural and political proclivities.

So while James took a hand in the emerging West Indian literature by way of editing and writing, and ultimately drew a novel from his experiences, he became a self-consciously and primarily political intellectual only after he had removed to Britain. One might have thought, from his political work and cricket journalism there, that he had found his calling as an editor-agitator and his vocation as a sports reporter. In addition to the pioneering Pan-African agitation that various authors describe below, James served as Chairman of the Finchley Independent Labor Party branch, wrote for the ILP press, and after the Trotskyists' abandonment of that organization became editor of their own newspaper, *Fight.* With the publication of Boris Souvaraine's *Stalin* under James's translation, *The Black Jacobins* and *World Revolution,* along with the *History of the Negro Revolt* and *The Case for West Indian Self-Government,* he had proved to be an international historical and political author. Here again, he had established a promising (second or third) career and intellectual self-identity.

His fifteen-year sojourn in the U.S. represents in many ways the most curious and personally obscure part of James's life. Foremost intellectual in a small but lively Trotskyist organization with any number of fledgling luminaries (Irving Howe, Dwight MacDonald, B. J. Widick and Harvey Swados, to name only a few), he published not a single book outside the movement's own miniscule press until the very end of his stay. He edited no newspapers himself, and contributed only occasionally to the theoretical journal, *The New International.* When his collaborators and followers launched their own political movement, centered in Detroit, he remained in New York within an intellectual and cultural orbit that Marxist politics never fully encompassed. And yet he produced, in those years, the intellectual corpus of his philosophical-analytical advance beyond the notions of the Vanguard Party, his critique of State Capitalism and State Socialism as the stage of class formation to be overcome, and his cultural critique of industrial society through the pages of *Moby Dick.* Scarcely a handful of Americans outside his political group had even heard of James, let alone understood his contribution, by the time of his expulsion in 1953.

The answer lies in the peculiar conditions imposed upon James personally and politically in those years. Unlike other intellectual giants whom immigration brought to American radicalism — Morris Winchevsky, Daniel DeLeon and Moissye Olgin, to name three — James was Black and an illegal. He had to keep a low profile. Even more important, the almost shadowy character of the Left-opposition to the Communist Party held an entire milieu from public gaze. Its writers gained attention as individuals only when they abandoned revolutionary

politics for culture or delivered denunciations of Stalinism in favor of bourgeois democracy. Moreover, the very quest of the faction that broke with Trotsky became contact with working class life and collective development of theoretical-strategic-tactical options. James submerged his independent identity as a writer into a maelstrom of debates, discussions and reconsiderations. In this he followed the relentless dedication of the Old Bolsheviks at the very moment when he ruled so many of their propositions archaic for modern conditions.

He did not submerge his intellectual, cultural personal identity so thoroughly as the now-forgotten rank-and-file militants around him. He remained one of the handful of Blacks, even fewer West Indians in such circles and that alone would have divided his sentiments and interests. It should be remembered also that the metropolis, then perhaps in the most hopeful years of an emerging multi-racial identity, had secrets which could be revealed only to the participants of its day- and night-life. On rare occasions, the political documents of the era bear hints of this participation: James feels he is part of a new civilization struggling to be born, not abstractly as the intellectual might imagine, through mass acceptance of blazing new ideologies, but concretely human as the characters in *Minty Alley.*

James's own group, which in the early 1950's began to publish the bi-weekly *Correspondence* in Detroit, picked up on many of the same hints. *Daily Worker* sportswriters struggled for decades to make commercial entertainment a legitimate concern of Left journalism, while "Culture" in general never really got beyond the logic-chopping of whether film, play or novel should be judged as "objectively" progressive or reactionary. The Trotskyist publications rarely did much better. *Correspondence,* by contrast, had the ethos of the working class in labor and recreation, readers' own often brilliant commentaries upon sports and movies, teenagers' views of the generational conflict, Blacks' and whites' attitudes toward each other, and women's observations about their special sense of oppression. If the notion of "Workers Correspondence" had originated with the pre-Stalinized Communists of the 1920's, a way for workers to write about their own conditions and struggles, *Correspondence* carried the idea beyond the limits of the Third International concept of insurrection into a fuller perception of what the New Left would call "daily life." The greatest strength of this vital and unique experiment in working class politics was that it could bring the cultural sense of flow together with the struggles against the labor bureaucracy, shown vividly in the wildcat strikes of the time.* The weaknesses might be traced to limited resources, the political pall of McCarthyism and other factors, but rested ultimately upon the still-unresolved dilemma of the political stage beyond the Vanguard Party. What should the small group be and do? James's physical presence in the U.S. would at least have accelerated the discussion of the problem which would torture and destroy the New Left fifteen years later.

James's exile brought him hither and yon, from Britain to the West Indies and back again. As he said later about his university teaching in the U.S., "Life presents you with some strange difficulties and, at times, you have to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds." His versatility served him well. *Facing Reality* drew the lessons of the Hungarian Revolution, later to become so plain in France of 1968 and Poland of the present. *Modern Politics,* a series of lectures delivered in the West Indies and published (then immediately suppressed) in 1960, drew the widest interpretation of civilization, culture and politics as the inevitable background for Socialism's promise and necessity. *Party Politics in the West Indies,* published the next year in Trinidad, focused in upon problems of anti-imperialism and political transformation, as did "Nkrumah Then And Now," written a few years later but published only in 1978 as *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution. Beyond A Boundary* (1963), in part an autobiography, has been proclaimed far and wide for its more apparent element, the best historical study of cricket anywhere. Some of James's best public moments have come when he undertook the editorship of the *Nation* in Trinidad, mixing superb popularization of the European cultural legacy with an insistence upon the West Indian contribution to the world's future, and when the rise of Black Power recalled James to American platforms where he could exert an extraordinary influence upon a new generation, one-by-one or in considerable numbers through his lectures, personal presence and achieved status as Pan-African *eminence grise.*

The delayed influence of his writings, along with his more recent activity, have resulted specifically in the impulse behind the publication of this volume. Its immediate precursor, the *Radical America* anthology noted above, marked James's impact upon a New Left at the crisis moment of its short existence. *Radical America* had just come to perform duties of an historical-theoretical organ (albeit unofficial) for SDS, to project beyond the phase of student power some wider vision of constituency and deeper view of transformation. Even by the late 1960's, James was hardly more than the author of *The Black Jacobins* for most New Leftists. But there was an infallible logic to the connection. For if the New Left were not simply to return to worn-out dogmas, Stalinist, Trotskyist, Social-Democratic, Anarchist (however painted over with new titles: Maoist, "Democratic Socialist," Euro-Communist, Hippie), it had to advance conceptually and politically toward some new notion of the political group, the working class, racial minorities, women, and international revolution. New Leftists stood on ground closer to James and his co-thinkers than to any of the elder politicos and their tendencies. Here, it must be said, the seeming obscurity of the 1940's Trotskyist context hurt: the language of the pamphlets, references

to old enemies and old doctrines, seemed just beyond the reach of many potential readers. And the New Left itself passed so quickly from boom to bust, wild mass demonstrations to defeat and debacle, that there was not much time or space for serious discussion anyway. In a deeper sense, the crisis in the Movement (including Black Liberation and Women's Liberation) demanded a definite political answer to the stage beyond militance, that History had not revealed and James had not sought to disclose. Intellectually, James's influence through *The Black Jacobins* and *Radical America* had the more subtle role of coaching a generation of social historians dedicated to reconstructing the past, and bringing a relative handful of activists toward some theoretical alternatives to neo-Stalinism and Euro-Communism. More, it could not do.

Among the younger generation of Afro-American scholars and activists, James has had an almost wholly separate but equally important influence. Through Federal City College and Howard University, where he taught in the 1970's, his ideas radiated outward. A group of SNCC veterans had already reprinted *A History of the Negro Revolt* as *A History of the Pan-African Revolt.* Dignitary-militant, his own public suggestion responsible for initiating the Sixth Pan-African Congress, James took every occasion to elucidate the real history of struggle, his unrelenting interest in current developments on the Afro-American scene, and his encouragement to all sincere rebels.

Finally — and this explains the current format — James's influence has touched still newer chords as the 1980's open. Not only are his books now available as never before, his ideas have helped guide some of those currents which emerged from the 1970's slough into another stage of activity. Subtly, the process has long been in development, as one or another of the existing alternatives demonstrated their liabilities. It is natural that STO, with its roots in the "industrialization" of the New Left and in the supreme significance of the Black presence in the U.S., and which has long recognized the relevance of James's thought to its own concerns, should devote this special issue of *Urgent Tasks* to a critical appreciation of his work.

This publication is also an experiment in collective biography. It brings to this editor's mind a commemorative document published for another intellectual leader who espoused the cause of workers' self-emancipation, Daniel DeLeon.** The differences in the men and in documentation are perhaps finally suggestive of our larger purpose here. Five years after DeLeon had died, the Socialist Labor Party's National Executive Committee issued the earlier book as a sentimental evocation and as a vindication of the leader's activities. That was natural because DeLeon had single-handedly dominated the SLP and its press, alienating almost everyone else on the Left by his sectarianism but rendering himself a monument in his restricted circle. Although an extreme case, he was a typical political type of our modern age. James, by contrast, has no organization to sing hosannas. And rather than concentrating his energies (as he might have done, with greater or lesser success) on building up a following, he has for most of his political life been an instigator rather than an executive, dividing his talents into the various possible arenas of revolutionary promise. To most readers, the totality of his work has therefore remained elusive. Our effort has been to solicit commentary upon the diverse and sometimes recondite aspects of his work, to tie the whole together piecemeal.

Neither, the reader will notice, are the essays wholly uncritical. James the strapping octogenarian is by no means ready for eulogies. In a life crowded with activities there have inevitably been shortcomings, and indeed our purpose has been to put the entire person into context as much as possible, while accentuating the contributions he has made.

The reader will have to assemble the pieces into a single albeit variegated picture. James has always demanded more than passive admiration from those who take his work seriously. We welcome you into the pages of James's life. We think you will leave somewhat affected, for we have ourselves been touched, changed, subtly enriched such that we cannot imagine a political universe, a cultural perspective, a sense of what Humankind has been and might become, without the wisdom and sly humor of C. L. R. James.

— Paul Buhle

*It might be noted also that another journal of the 1970's, this author's own *Cultural Correspondence,* was in turn named after the paper of James's group and their cultural initiatives most especially, with the intention of filling in that missing category in Left thought.

***Daniel DeLeon, the Man and His Work: A Symposium* (New York, 1919).

The African Revolution

by Walter Rodney

The African continent today has less turmoil, less violence and a slower rate of social transformation than Asia or Latin America; and these are the elements normally associated with Revolution. Yet those who speak of the "African Revolution" know that African people are more aware and more determined than ever before. It is this consciousness, added to internal contradictions and external forces, which gives the African situation its revolutionary character.

For nearly forty years, C. L. R. James has been interested in the development of political consciousness among African people and in their strivings towards grasping control over their own lives. As an analyst of processes in Africa, James qualifies to be called an "academic" or "intellectual"; and as a participant in the struggle for African advance, he becomes a "revolutionary intellectual." It will be found that anyone confining himself to the supposedly pure academic understanding of Africa will in fact fall short of the objective, because of lack of commitment and failure to relate theory to practice. The value of James's contribution to the African Revolution and to an appreciation of it stems precisely from the blend of committed scholarship and activism.

Quantitatively, what James has written on Africa does not amount to a great deal, and it is certainly a tiny proportion of his numerous writings on a variety of subjects. Similarly, one could say that only a small part of his time was devoted to activity directly concerning the African continent. It is the quality and significance of his writing and political action that really matters. During the 1930's, when the "Western Democracies" were conspiring to make Ethiopia into an Italian colony, James directed from England an ad hoc committee of "International Friends of Ethiopia." This later emerged as the "International African Service Bureau," having James as editor of its journal, *International African Opinion.*[1] The main platform of this journal was colonial liberation; and it was against this background that James wrote *A History of Negro Revolt* in 1938.[2] It bears the marks of those years when even Black militants inside and outside Africa accepted the language of the European oppressor - "Negro," "natives," "tribes," etc. Beyond that, however, the book is a mine of ideas advancing far ahead of its time.

James began his section on "Revolts in Africa" by citing what historians have come to call (rather disparagingly) the Sierra Leone Hut Tax War of 1898. As James explained, it was a reaction by indigenous Sierra Leone peoples against the imposition of European colonial rule, symbolized by the enactment of legislation taxing dwelling places. It was a war of national resistance and liberation, involving the majority of the ethnic groups in Sierra Leone in unified struggle. Many years elapsed before any researcher seriously undertook investigation of this episode.[3] The reason for the disinterest is that African resistance to European colonization was not supposed to have existed as far as colonialist scholars were concerned. As late as 1957, Sir Alan Burns was expressing the orthodox view when he wrote that Africans welcomed the coming of the British. As he put it, "there was, for the most part, little fighting against the local people. In certain cases, slave dealers, pirates and tyrannical rulers were fought and defeated, but the inhabitants of these territories as a whole stood aside during the fighting and willingly accepted British rule." Burns was a colonial governor and wrote on behalf of the British ruling class. The mere mention of a different position in 1938 was an act of defiance and singled out C. L. R. James as a front-runner in the field of African studies devoted to African liberation.

WALTER RODNEY

Having cited the Sierra Leone war of resistance in 1898, James proceeded to mention a series of African social movements taking place in the inter-war years, and commonly designated as the African Independent Church movement. James unerringly identified three of the most important of these — centered around John Chilembwe (Malawi), Simon Kimbangu (Congo) and Harry Thuku (Kenya). Once more, it was many years before these protests were to gain the recognition they deserved. John Chilembwe is today an African hero known far beyond the boundaries of what was in his day the British colony of Nyasaland, and his service to his people evoked one of the fullest biographies written on an African leader.[4] Harry Thuku has also been in the forefront of subsequent historical writings on Kenya, and will undoubtedly continue to attract attention. And it is now accepted that forty years of the immediate pre-independence history of the Congo cannot be understood without reference to the popular forces and aspirations articulated by Simon Kimbangu.

Not only were African Independent Churches neglected as an area of enquiry for many years, but when they were first studied or assessed by Europeans, there was a tendency to portray them as being exclusively related to religion or superstition. By Christian missionaries, they were often presented as the work of the devil, while other social researchers came up with such mystifying terms as "millenarian," "messianic" and "atavistic." James's treatment was very brief, but he captured the essence of these anti-colonial African mass movements in a few lines. He recognized them as revolts against oppression and as part of the socio-political protest engendered by the presence of the Europeans and the system of colonialism. He distinguished between form and content, noting that the language of religion in which the protests were couched should not obscure the fact that they sprung from such things as forced labor, land alienation, and colonial taxation. It was because the leadership had formal schooling from missionaries that they expressed themselves primarily in religious terms. As James put it, "Such education as the African is given is nearly always religious, so that the leader often translated the insurrection into religious terms. . . . To every African [independent church organization] is an instinctive step towards independence and away from the perpetual control of Europeans." (pages 53, 55)

A third segment of James's treatment of African revolt was provided in his analysis of workers' organizations and their militancy. He cited the Sierra Leone railway strikes of 1919 and 1926, the Gambian sailors' strike of 1929, the spontaneous uprising of Nigerian women at Aba in 1929, and the powerful Black trade union activity of the I.C.U. in South Africa. In each instance, he pinpointed phenomena of the greatest relevance to the creation of Africa as it is today, and he was doing so a comfortable twenty years before writings on these subjects generally acknowledged these facts. For that matter, even today the tremendous awakening of the small urbanized African element in the 1920's is recorded only in texts which take the minority Marxist position on African history or as a backdrop to specialist volumes on the African trade union movement.[5] In describing the fortunes of a mass organization, James is at his best — partly because of the immediacy that he brings to commentary and more so because of his grasp of the dialectics of organization. In 1938, he had obviously had enough experience of political organization at both first- and second-hand to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the I.C.U. under Clements Kadalie. James's account is a real tribute to the fighting spirit of the Africans of South Africa who today bear the burden of apartheid. In a most economical manner, he probed the quality of the leadership, examined the relationship of leadership to the mass from which it sprang, reflected on the international context of the strikes and other protests by the African workers of South Africa at that time, and quietly indicated that within a racist situation the category of "class" must be seriously re-examined. A great deal has since been said on the South African labor movement, and much more remains to be written.[6] But the following lines by James constitute a judgment that will probably remain unshaken. He observed as follows:

> The real parallel to this movement is the mass uprising in San Domingo. There is the same instinctive capacity for organisation, the same throwing up of gifted leaders from among the masses. . . . After 1926 the movement began to decline. It could not maintain itself for long at that pitch without great and concrete successes. It was bound to stabilise itself at a less intense level. Kadalie lacked the education and the knowledge to organise it on a stable basis — the hardest of tasks for a man of his origin. There was misappropriation of the funds. He saw the necessity for international affiliation. But though the constitution of the organisation condemned capitalism, he would not affiliate to the Third International. The white South African workers refused his offer of unity, for these, petty bourgeois in outlook owing to their high wages and the social degradation of the Negro, are among the bitterest enemies of the native workers, (pages 70, 71)

European scholarship on Africa in the 1960's was ostensibly more liberal and more concerned with the history of Africans rather than the activity 01 Europeans in Africa. Yet standard general works carried scarcely a hint of the tremendous armed struggle waged by Africans in the late 19th century before falling to the European enemy.[7] It is only very recently that this topic has begun to receive the attention it deserves from African and European historians dealing with the continent in that period. (It is interesting to note that individuals like James and Padmore never receive credit or acknowledgement from later writers.) The same applies to the subject of African independent churches and to the self-mobilization by the small wage earner class in colonial Africa. How come that C. L. R. James was so prescient as to perceive the significance of all these "African revolts" when writing in 1938? And what is the meaning of such manifestations as far as the contemporary African Revolution is concerned?

Most schoolboys would have heard the axiom that each generation rewrites its own history. It does so not merely by giving different answers to the same questions but by posing entirely different questions based on the stage of development which the particular society has reached. Certain scholars will be among the first to raise the new and meaningful issues because of their sensitivity and connection with the most dynamic group in the society. Thus, when African peoples were mounting a struggle for political independence and as they

continued that struggle through military means in Southern Africa and politico-economic means elsewhere, they automatically became interested in recalling previous resistance. Initially, only a scholar committed to or at least sympathetic to the present African emancipation drive would find it possible to seek out and unearth the evidence of earlier struggles. C. L. R. James was a participant in some of the earliest pressure groups in the metropoles urging African freedom from colonial rule in the 1930's. That is why he was capable of writing *A History of Negro Revolt* in 1938.

A people's consciousness is heightened by knowledge of the dignity and determination of their foreparents. Indeed, the African world-view regarding ancestors as an integral part of the living community makes it so much easier to identify a given generation with the struggles of an earlier generation. The perception, therefore, is in terms of self — what struggles were we waging in 1885, in 1904, in 1921, and so on? It is also a learning experience in which African people often painfully find out the mistakes of (say) king Lobengula of South Africa or the Maji Maji warriors of Tanzania. To give historical depth to the process of resistance is itself functional within the African Revolution today. James knew this. His major effort to project a past revolt into present consciousness was *The Black Jacobins,* that remarkable study of the momentous victory of the enslaved African population of San Domingo against white plantation society, against the Thermidorean reaction in France, and against the expansionism of British capital. *A History of Negro Revolt* fulfilled the same purpose; and one of its most significant features was its emphasis on the continuity of resistance.

Modern nationalist African historians have recently come to the realization that the "nationalism" of the 1950's and 1960's had its roots deep in the African past, and that the political parties which won independence in so many territories were only the end product of a continuous process of resistance which took diverse forms: notably, armed struggle, independent churches, welfare associations, peasant crop hold-ups and strikes by wage earners. This has been fiercely resisted by a small number of white scholars, basically because they wish to hold to the position that nationalism was a product of colonialism and virtually a gift to the African people from Europe in the period after the last war.[8] This is not the time and place to refute such a view, and perhaps there is no context in which there is much value in so doing. However, it is worth pointing out that a perception of links and continuity between popular resistance over a long period of time is not something unique to an African nationalist historian. This is the approach adopted by Vietnamese scholars, by progressive Philippine scholars, and by Cuban scholars.

James's awareness of the continuity of African resistance throughout the colonial era can be illustrated by the following lines. "By the end of the nineteenth century, less than one-tenth of Africa remained in the hands of Africans themselves. This rapid change could not fail to produce a series of revolts, *which have never ceased."* (emphasis mine) (pages 40, 41) His awareness that this struggle evolved over time and changed form can be observed in these sentences: "in the years before the war [of 1914] the tribes simply threw themselves at the government troops and suffered the inevitable defeat. Such risings could not go on. They were too obviously suicidal. In 1915, however, we have a new type — a rising led not by a tribal chief but by a Negro who has had some education." (page 53) Then, moving to the end of the decade of the 1920's, James commented on urban workers' resistance in Congo Brazzaville: "This movement had definite Communist tendencies. What the authorities fear most is a combination of the workers in the towns and the peasants in the interior. Such a movement, however, has not yet taken place. . . . Yet railways are linking the various portions of the territory, and . . . since the war each succeeding revolt has been more fierce, more concentrated than the last." (page 62) And, finally, the brief survey was brought up to the year 1938 with reference to the cocoa hold-up that had just taken place in the British colony of the Gold Coast. James felt that "an extraordinary determination and unity linked the population", but he had no romantic illusions that victory was at hand. His assessment at that point was that, "Militant as was this movement, yet, as in most of the older colonies, there was not that militancy which thinks in terms of throwing out the British. . . . There is no national revolutionary movement." (page 84)

In the years immediately after James wrote the above lines, the tempo of events in Africa quickened, and the various strands of revolt were drawn together. There developed both the combination of urban and rural elements which the colonial authorities feared and the determination to -throw the colonialists out rather than merely seek concessions. In England, James remained part of the small group of Black men who constantly agitated on the African independence issue, expressing their confidence that at the end of the last world war the peoples of the continent would not brook much further delay in the quest for independence. The demand for African independence was voiced most insistently at the famous Manchester Conference in 1945, having in attendance both DuBois and Padmore as well as two future African heads of state in the persons of Kenyatta and Nkrumah. James himself reflects that at the time it was felt that their statements about African freedom could only have come from "lunatics or inebriates." It is true that the colonial powers and Britain in particular

spoke vaguely of self-government for Africa, but no schedule was set up and the tenor of their pronouncements suggested a delay of some forty or fifty years at least. In 1947, on the eve of Nkrumah's return to the Gold Coast colony, British experts were saying that the 1946 Gold Coast constitution would last for several decades, and exhortations were being made to strengthen the British colonial administration to meet the growing demands that were to be made on it.[9] The difference between these two perspectives is that between a people-centered approach on the one hand and a blend of racism and paternalism on the other. The Pan-Africanists were expressing confidence in the African people and they were proved right. (Even so, James frequently admitted being surprised by the speed of change in Africa. Other African leaders have made statements to this effect, showing that when the potential of a people is realized in action it literally goes beyond all expectations.)

It is difficult and perhaps unnecessary to try and single out James's role within the Pan-African movement, since it was essentially a collective venture.[10] What is well-known is that Africans in the diaspora for many years were the driving forces of Pan-Africanism, and it is important to examine the significance of this for the African Revolution. Garvey was an exception in regarding himself as "an African overseas." DuBois remained American until very late in his life, and James has always consciously identified as a West Indian. He offers the explanation that the West Indian (both French and British) has been steeped in the culture of Europe, has in many instances mastered that culture so thoroughly as to lecture the "mother countries" on it and tear it down from within. Hence Cesaire, Fanon, Padmore, etc. James certainly prided himself on mastery of everything in European culture from Greek tragedy to the Hegelian dialectic. But once in England, he moved instinctively to a Pan-Africanist platform. This is highly intriguing. Today, it is usual for the Pan-Africanist in the New World to be into a heavy culture thing. This is condemned by certain Philistines (white and Black) as being romantic racism, since African culture is supposedly alien to the Americas. What the critics fail to realize is that there are fundamental political realities which draw the conscious Black man in the New World towards the African continent. These realities operate equally whether the individual has arrived at a stage of heightened consciousness via cultural nationalism or through a more conventional approach to the struggle against exploitation and oppression.

Some attempts have been made to explain why articulate and politicized West Indians like James, Padmore, and Garvey found that their field of expression had to be within North America, Europe and Africa rather than in their island homes. The answer is to be found partly in their home environment and the socio-political inadequacies there.[11] However, the continuing validity of the Pan-African perspective throughout the years of James's career derives from the incontrovertibly international character of white racism, and the situation of African peoples as integral parts of the international political economy.

After the end of formal enslavement in the Americas, there were a few whites who would have welcomed the massive re-transfer of Africans to their homelands. But of course our labor was still needed by the capitalist systems of Western Europe and North America, so that possibility was never part of the rational calculation of white society. The alternative was to try and placate the former slaves by promises of advance within American and Caribbean society. We were told to forget slavery, forget Africa and forget that we were Africans. The stumbling block to accepting this is that the unique exploitation and oppression of the Black population could only be explained in terms of our color and origins. As young men in Trinidad, James and Padmore read Garvey and DuBois. As young West Indians they were concerned primarily with West Indian politics, but the factor of blackness could not be escaped since it was so pervasive. Similarly, within the United States, Black people were impelled to read about Africa not because of any a priori judgments that they were "African" but because of the necessity to survive and challenge white mythology within the U.S.A. itself. James drew attention to this process, saying that, "The American blacks — faced with this view of the past of Africa, a view that has been used not only to justify slavery but also to maintain segregation and oppression — found themselves driven to make the most serious studies of the past of Africa."[12]

Once the African continent was brought under colonial rule by the end of the last century, the racist factor was also evident there as a justification of exploitation and oppression. Racism had become part of the superstructure of the white capitalist world. The drive towards white domination shaped policy as an end in itself — sometimes at variance even with the profit motive which is the propellant of capitalism. It became highly probable that any Black man fighting against white oppression in his particular locality would sooner or later realize that all Africans "at home and abroad" were caught up in the same predicament. Pan-Africanism is not simply a unity of color, it is also a unity of common condition and one that retains its validity because the dominant group in the international political economy continue to define things in racist terms for their own convenience. For their own convenience, admittedly, but then they are also playing with revolution. James has more than once commented on this double-edged weapon of racism. He wrote recently that "centuries of Western domination and indoctrination . . . create in the minds of the great major-

ity of Africans and people of African descent everywhere a resentment that is never entirely absent. It may remain dormant for long periods, but it can be depended upon in a particular population at a particular time to create and cement a formidable unity and determination. Imperialism created this feeling; it has paid and will pay dearly for it."[13]

Identity is both affirmation and negation. It recognizes in the same instant the insider and the outsider. Black becomes relevant to an African at that point when he came into contradiction with white men. The continuing sharpness of that contradiction is due to white domination, and the Black or African identity has become a weapon for emancipation. At the level of organization, it is a common enough principle that unity and the enlargement of scale must be brought to bear against the enemy. It is logical enough, too, that one must maximize strong points, so the freeing of the African continent itself became the first priority for politically active West Indians who knew the limitations of their own societies and knew that the weakness of Africa contributed to indignity and low status abroad. Europeans enslaved Africans and colonized Africa. They could never have imagined that some of the slaves would be instrumental in the freeing of the colonies, but the outcome was an unavoidable consequence of the kind of international political economy that emerged under European guidance from the 15th century onward.

The African Revolution so far has already demonstrated convincingly that what has been used as a badge of servility can be turned into a bond of unity and a liberation tool. James's career is a small illustration of this. It is also an illustration that the given African identification is not sufficient as far as carrying out the African Revolution is concerned. The Revolution is by and of the mass of the people, which means in effect the workers, peasants and such leadership as

emerges from the mass struggle. This perception of classes forming within African society and his attachment to the Marxist world-view placed James in a position shared by several Black intellectuals over the course of this century. It required a reconciliation between the African and the World Revolution, as it were, and a plotting of the coordinates of race and class. The manner in which these were resolved by James is instructive.

Time and again, James found his white Marxist comrades reneging on their internationalism when it came to the cause of the Black man — be it Ethiopia, the West Indies or the U.S.A. The only course of action compatible with the welfare of African peoples was to break with such compromised crypto-racist whites, as Padmore did, as Sekou Toure did, as Aime Cesaire did. Africans on the continent do not find this course of action hard to follow. There is already a built-in suspicion of "foreign" ideologies which can be carried to irrational lengths but which at least serves as a barrier to accepting white ideological hegemony of any sort. The progressive African who is conscious of what the Christian missionaries did is unlikely to be taken in by Marxist missionaries.

A less obvious lesson which can be drawn from James's double commitment to Marxism and the African Revolution is that certain brands of Marxism have no applicability whatever to our situation, having in fact been exposed as bankrupt in Europe itself. While Stalin-ism dominated the European scene during the late 1920's through to the 1940's, James was attracted to the minority Trotskyite position,

which at least questioned some of the monstrosities carried out in the Soviet Union under the banner of Socialism. Later, James broke with the Trotskyite mainstream on the grounds that they too were too wedded to the Soviet State to perceive how completely the Revolution had been betrayed. Without entering into the substance of this argument, it can still be affirmed that the African Revolution cannot afford to draw on Marxist theory in its dogmatic Stalinist or even Trotskyist form. But, conversely, it should be equally clear that Africans can benefit from mankind's ideological heritage just as we can build on the universal technological heritage. James brings out the applicability of Marxist methodology in his analysis of some important features of contemporary Africa: notably in his evaluation of the Ghana experience and in his approach to the transformation taking place in Tanzania.

What happened in Ghana is central to an understanding of modern African politics. Many liberals paid lip-service to Ghana independence, while trying to suggest that it was a gift from Britain and was complete in itself. Such individuals were out of tune with Nkrumah's efforts to achieve genuine all-round liberation for the Ghanaian people; and his overthrow was a welcome opportunity for them to spout anti-African sentiments. In turn, James was prompted to reply in a number of public forums, restating positions he had arrived at sometime before the coup. His first concern was to vindicate the popular and revolutionary nature of the events that transpired in the Gold Coast colony between 1947 and 1957. During this period, the role played by Nkrumah was that of an authentic spokesman of the people, challenging the leadership of the petty-bourgeois educated elite of lawyers and doctors. However, James was equally emphatic that subsequently (i.e. .after 1957) the revolution in Ghana and Africa as a whole was subverted by those forces. In my opinion, this change needs to be reaffirmed not only vis a vis the reactionaries and liberals who always disliked Nkrumah, but also with regard to the ultra-leftists who suddenly decided after the Ghana coup that Nkrumah had never been leading a revolutionary movement at all, but rather a party of the petty bourgeoisie.[14]

In the many analyses which he has made of the popular movement in the Gold Coast and Ghana, James seldom if ever uses any overt Marxist categorization, or makes any citations from the spokesmen of scientific socialism. Indeed, his favorite comparison is with the French Revolution, and he is quite happy to use Michelet and Lefebvre as the sources of his quotations. But his methodology remains that of historical dialectics; and he was in effect showing the compatibility between the latter and an African nationalist or Pan-Africanist stance.

It is relevant under the present circumstances to explore the limitations rather than the achievements of Nkrumah's regime, since it is the former which have salutary lessons to offer on the nature of Revolution and counter-revolution in Africa. James traces the deterioration of the Ghanaian revolution at some length in his study *Nkrumah Then and Now,* pointing to political errors and problems such as the following:

Nkrumah's dismissal of the Chief Justice for a politically unpopular decision; the growth of a bureaucracy; the total alienation of the middle classes; the encouragement of a coterie of sycophants; failure to involve the masses politically; and personal degeneration of Nkrumah as he became overwhelmed by forces hostile to his original intentions. Not surprisingly, the strongest part of James's argument dealt with the question of the state and the political party. A correct appreciation of these issues remains one of the highest priorities to be met by the leadership of Africa today.

Among a number of well-meaning people, neo-colonialism is considered as incorporating political freedom unmatched by economic independence. Nkrumah himself fostered this distinction. However, at a much more fundamental level, it should be noted that neo-colonialism is incompatible with political independence, and that the flag-raising ceremonies effected no change on the colonial state. James suggested that, "The first problem was a state, a government. To begin with, he had no independent African government. Like all these new African rulers, he had inherited a colonial government organised for purposes quite different from his own." The African head of state found himself "in charge of a British imperialist colonial government which was constructed for British imperialist purposes and not for purposes of governing an African population." ("Reflections on Pan-Africanism.") This remarkable insight (which James develops at some length in his "epilogue" to *A History of Pan-African Revolt)* is beginning to gain wider acceptance.

In 1971, such sentiments were officially expressed by the governing party in Tanzania, in a document that declared unequivocally that the people had yet to take political power into their hands throughout the continent.[15]

In 1966, while writing on Nkrumah to a West Indian public, James made the following comment:

> It took Nkrumah six years to win independence by 1957. He could have gone on to independence in 1951. He preferred to wait. But one day he told me he didn't know whether he was right to wait, or if he should have gone forward in 1951 as George Padmore and Dorothy Padmore were urging him to do. I did not know what to think at the time but today I am of the opinion that he should have gone straight ahead. That six-year delay was one cause of the deterioration of his party and his government. A revolution cannot mark time for six years.

More prominence should be given to this idea than James himself

gave it. {See another mention in "Reflections on Pan-Africanism.") It was a fundamental aspect of the derailing of the people's aspirations in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent. The struggle for independence was a revolutionary one emanating from the masses of the people and embracing nearly all strata of the population. Colonial governments retreated before the force of popular political organizations, but at the same time they maneuvered and counter-attacked sometimes openly and more often insidiously. A period of "Self-Government" such as that in Ghana between 1951 and 1957 was one of co-option and defusing. It was in that period that the colonialists ensured the perpetuation of the colonial state and of the international imperialist economy.

Within a colonial or neo-colonial state structure the locus of power lies outside the national boundaries, having only a local representation in the form of an administration or through the persons of a small class created by and dependent on capitalism as a system. To break with this, the African revolution must transfer power to the people. In Ghana, this did not happen. The party decayed, the bureaucracy flourished in state and party, and the regime became more authoritarian behind its facade of one-party democracy. James's judgment of Nkrumah on this score is a judgment of the African Revolution.

> Nkrumah studied, thought and knew a lot. But one thing he never mastered: that democracy is not a matter of the rights of the opposition, but in some way or other must involve the population. Africa will find that road or continue to crash from precipice to precipice.

After the fall of Nkrumah and the subsequent demise of Modibo Keita, one could well ask "where is the African Revolution?" — especially given the fact in the first place that constitutional independence brought nothing but puppet regimes in so many territories.

Frantz Fanon

James, as a revolutionary protagonist for nearly half a century, is not unduly perturbed by the apparent weight of the counter-revolution. Insofar as the African leadership is not responsible to the majority of the people, it only means that the African Revolution will be aimed as much against them as against the longstanding alien forces of capitalism and imperialism. James cites Fanon with full approval in this context, paraphrasing him as follows:

> In the nationalist revolution of the twentieth century, the people must be against not only the imperialists. Some of the people's leaders who come forward to lead the revolution have nowhere to lead the people, and revolution must be as fiercely against them as against the imperialists. Some of the writers, having learned all they could from Western civilisation, will join the revolution, but bring nothing positive and corrupt the revolutionary movement. *The intellectuals must learn that they must dig deep among the mass of the population to find the elements of a truly national culture.* (Emphasis mine, taken from "DuBois to Fanon.")

It is the last of the above statements which holds the key to James's present fascination with the Tanzanian situation. James's praise for Tanzania is unstinted:

> The impact that the policies of Tanzania have made upon Africa and upon the rest of the world has already established the African state of Tanzania as one of the foremost political phenomena of the twentieth century. Tanzania is the highest peak reached so far by revolting blacks." (page 117, *A History of Pan-African Revolt)*

What has Tanzania done to receive such unqualified praise, in James's opinion? The government nationalized foreign property, which was good. It began to restructure the educational system in an entirely new way, which was an even better idea. It was planning the future on the basis of socialist rural communities, drawing upon the heritage of the people, since *Ujamaa* or family living was part of that heritage. This, in James's estimation, was the most revolutionary aspect of the political thought of Tanzania.

Reading between the lines, one can see that James has enriched his own long fruitful career of learning and teaching by turning to the pages of Fanon and moreso *Mwalimu* Nyerere. Fanon exposed the limits of Western culture and its counter productive aspects as far as a Black revolutionary leader was concerned. Nyerere and the Tanzanian developments undoubtedly rekindled James's interest in African civilization and African culture. The fact that *Ujamaa* seeks its roots in the African past and in African society must have reinforced James's long-held conviction that Revolution must be of the people. Tanzanian *Ujamaa* was of the people and about the people.

Because the majority of the Tanzanian population lives in the countryside, it means that any goals for the well-being of the country must relate primarily to the rural areas. A most obvious conclusion, one might say, but it only became obvious after Nyerere had said it often enough. Nkrumah had not discerned this. Economic development under his rule was urban-directed and oriented towards industry, which was viewed as a panacea. In evaluating Nkrumah's economic policies, James did not perceive the weakness. He merely observed that Nkrumah was trying to do too

much. It was more than that — it was an incorrect strategy for socio-economic development, because it ignored the majority of the population and was encouraging further ties of dependence with the outside world rather than self-reliance, as is Tanzania's goal.

African freedom will not be won without building on the positive elements in the history of Man.

When looking at the appalling economic plight of Africa and the Third World, James at one point tended to place reliance on an external solution: namely in "the regenerative assistance of the accumulated wealth and technical knowledge of the advanced countries." For once James seems to be defeatist when he assesses that "the regimes in Asia and Africa, with their present resources, have no possibility whatever of overcoming constant economic crisis and political and social decay." Undoubtedly, a Revolution within the metropolitan centers would be of inordinate importance to the African Revolution, but it is no pre-condition. It may even be argued that the world revolution must continue to move from the "periphery" to the "center" as far as the imperialist world is concerned. In any event, the trend pointed by Tanzanian *Ujamaa is* for self-reliance, internally integrated growth, and a self-sustaining economy which can in itself constitute exit from the economic crisis and socio-political decay attendant on neo-colonialism. There can be no guarantee of success of this particular line, but there can never be a guarantee in these matters. James himself is fond of telling political activists to do what they feel has to be done — and let the rest take care of itself. In terms of economic policy, therefore, he has taken his cue from the Tanzanian revolution.

Some Marxists are skeptical of what is going on in Tanzania. They cannot separate *Ujamaa* from the "African Socialism" of the African petty bourgeoisie. A few of these are Africans on the continent or in the Americas — a fact worth noting in the present context. More significantly, there are numerous Africans as enthusiastic about *Ujamaa* as James is, but who refuse to accept that insights can be gained from Marxism which are applicable to the African situation and would strengthen our ideological position. James has always been applying Marxism to the concrete conditions of Black society, irrespective of whether or not he announces this. Occasionally, he makes it explicit. He did so with regard to the Tanzanian Revolution, and it is worth ending with the illustration to that effect.

Drawing on his detailed knowledge of the Russian Revolution, James isolated the two matters on which Lenin placed absolute priority in his last years. The first was the break-up of the old state machinery and the second was educational work among the peasants. Marxism-Leninism was not Nyerere's point of reference, but he decided upon these same two priorities for Tanzania after the experience gained from several years in office as head of state. James holds up this relevant parallel between the Russian and Tanzanian situations as an example to those Africans who misguidedly and maliciously represent Marxism as "something that Marx had to say about the advanced countries." Equally of course one could conclude that Marxist formalism is not indispensable in the task of discerning the movement of society and building the new structures that express the interests of the mass of the people.[16] It is significant that a question as seemingly abstract as that of the value of Marxism to the African Revolution has recently been revived among African students on the continent and activists in the Black movement in America. It is a recognition of the fact that, as oppressed people, we cannot afford to overlook any weapon which could contribute to our liberation. One of the many facets of the career of *Mzee* C. L. R. James is precisely the awareness that African freedom will not be won without building on the positive elements in the history of Man. This is a propitious moment for restating that proposition, because it can be placed in the now firmly established context that the portion of that history most relevant to us is the history of Man in Africa and of Africans in world affairs.

Footnotes

1. John Gaffar La Guerre, "Cyril Lionel Robert James, 1901 — An Annotated Bibliography" (Mimeograph, University of the West Indies, 1970).
2. This has since been republished as C. L. R. James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt* (Drum and Spear Press, 1961). (All page references in the text are taken from this second edition.)
3. A major monograph has still to make its appearance on this subject. However, see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (1964) and Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui *(eds.), Black Protest* (1970).
4. George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African* (1958).
5. An example in the first category is Jack Woddis, *Africa, the Roots of Revolution* In the second category, see loan Davies, *African Trade Unions* (1966).
6. One of the more revealing volumes is that by Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope* (second edition, 1964).
7. This applies for instance to R. Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa,* which is still widely in use.
8. This view was first strongly advocated by colonial historians such as Lady Margery Perham, and is now being pursued by a younger generation of neo-colonial European scholars.
9. See, e.g, Sir Charles Jeffries, *Trans-*

fer of Power: Problems of the Passage to Self-Government (1960).

10. James himself is tireless in giving credit to the others who were involved, such as DuBois, Padmore, Wallace Johnson and Makonnen. See, e.g., his discourse, "From DuBois to Fanon" (1970).
11. A number of explanations have been offered for this phenomenon. One of the recent reviews is one by Locksley Emundson, "Caribbean Nation-Building and the Internationalization of Race: Issues and Perspectives," in Wendell Bell and Walter Freeman (eds.), *Ethnicity and Nation-Building* (Sage Publishers, 1972).
12. C. L. R. James, "Colonialism and National Liberation in Africa: The Gold Coast Revolution" in Norman Miller and Roderick Aya, *National Liberation: Revolution in the Third World* (The Free Press, 1971), page 106.
13. *Ibid,* page 129.
14. See, e.g. Bob Fitch and Mary Oppenheimer, *Ghana, the End of an Elusion* — a book with many insights but one marred by oversimplification of the class situation in Ghana.
15. *The T.A.N.U. Guidelines* (T.A.N.U., Dar es Salaam, 19V1J.
16. For an extended discussion along these lines, see Walter Rodney, "Tanzanian *Ujamaa* and Scientific Socialism," in *African Review,* Volume 1, No. 4 (1972).

Walter Rodney, an internationally renowned historian of colonialism and a leader of the Guyanese Working People's Alliance, was closely associated with James (and to his memory James's autobiography wil be dedicated). Rodney was assassinated June 13, 1980. The above address was delivered at a Symposium on James at the University of Michigan, March 31, 1972. Our special thanks to Richard Small for supplying a copy.

The training of an intellectual, the making of a Marxist

by Richard Small

> I was about six years of age when I got hold of my mother's copy of Shakespeare. There were 37 plays in it, or 36, and there was an illustration in the front of each play. The illustration had below it the Act and the Scene which it illustrated and I remember the illustration before *Julius Caesar* saying, "How ill this taper burns." Now I could not read a play of Shakespeare but I remember perfectly looking up the Act and Scenes stated at the foot of the illustration and reading that particular scene. I am quite sure that before I was seven I had read all those scenes. I read neither before nor after, but if the picture told me Act 3, Scene 4, I would look it up and fortified myself with the picture.[1]

In this quotation is contained a great deal of what helped to form C. L. R. James. Born in the West Indies at the turn of the century, the son of a Black Trinidadian school teacher, grandson just over half a century after the abolition of slavery of a sugar-estate pan boiler and an engine driver, came of age in the growing stages of a West Indian nationalist movement, proletariat[2] and developing Carnival in a society if not as scholastic as Barbados certainly one that was increasingly literate.

The quotation may suggest great audacity — but the main point is the method and that it should have been there from so early. First he was very disciplined in assessing what he could handle and set out to master that. The picture would have helped to provide a visual image to the print which a young mind by itself perhaps could not conjure up. Secondly it was done comprehensively — all 36 or 37 plays — some would stick, perhaps not all, but all would be read. The quotation is also apposite since it illustrates another aspect of James's development. Almost 60 years later on the occasion of the 4th centenary of Shakespeare, he did a series of programs for the BBC which were afterwards used widely on radio stations in the U.S.A. Here as in all the main areas of his ideas, the grounding in them can be found in his earliest years and in a method which he seemed to have developed entirely empirically.

Insofar as it is possible to break up any man's life into compartments, it could be said that there are three in the case of James's. First there is cricket. He grew up in a house that was directly in front of the local cricket ground. In Trinidad and the West Indies of the early twentieth century this game, introduced by the English colonials, was not only a major form of entertainment (this being before the era of such popular forms as the cinema and radio) but it was also the arena in which the social forces in the absence of adult suffrage or a developed trade union movement contended against each other.

The membership of the various clubs was determined by occupation and social class and at that time, even more sharply than now, that discrimination would be virtually the same as differentiation according to color. Queens Park Club, the controllers of cricket in the island, were white and wealthy; Shamrock, Catholic French Creole traders and cocoa planters; Maple, middle class of brown skin; Shannon, the Black middle class version, white collar office types, and teach-

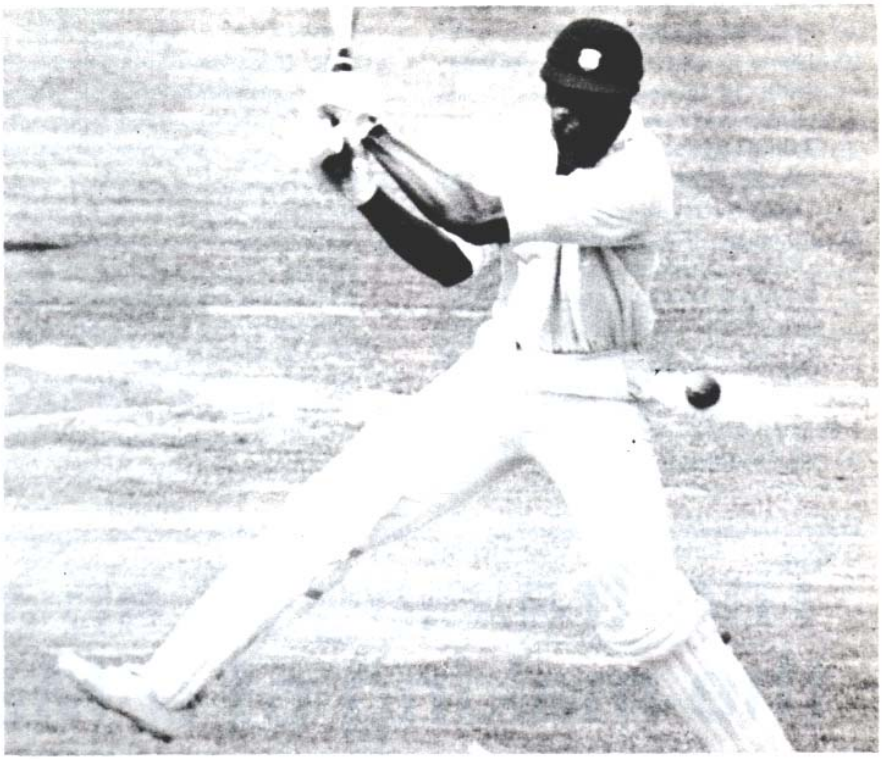
ers; and then Stingo, the tradesman, artisan, worker. Today, after Muhammad Ali there can be no doubt of the profound and comprehensive social drama that can be portrayed through a sport. Add to that that almost everybody played or took an interest in cricket and that it was played for up to eight months of the year, and some estimate of its potential for social and sublimated social expression will be grasped.

The game itself can often produce great dramatic effects:

> Down came a short ball, up went Jones and lashed at it, there was the usual shout, a sudden silence and another shout, not so loud this time. Then from my window I saw Jones walking out and people began to walk away. He had been caught by point standing with his back to the barbed wire. I could not see it from my window and I asked and asked until I was told what had happened. I knew that something out of the ordinary had happened to us who were watching. We had been lifted to the heights and cast down into the depths in much less than a fraction of a second. Countless as are the times that this experience has been repeated, most often in the company of tens of thousands of people, I have never lost the zest of wondering at it and pondering over it.[3]

The game has the virtue of a book like *Animal Farm* in that all ages can observe it and get their own stimulation.

From as early as the age of six, James was looking out from "my window," which was placed right behind the wicket. His father had given him a bat and ball on his fourth birthday. His first day at secondary school, he put his name down to play. He eventually made the school eleven, was secretary and organized the purchase of the stock for the whole school. That, however, was a small part of his involvement. He read every book on cricket in sight, and those out of sight he would go looking for. P. F. Warner's account of the M.C.C. 1903-4 tour of Australia, and his *Cricket, The Jubilee Book of Cricket* by Ranjitsinghi and the *Badmington Book of Cricket.* These were the pillars and they helped to form part of his outlook on life from when he was in school. He would organize newspaper clippings, articles from magazines, keep statistics on the game. He was up-to-date on the theories of the game and would expound on them. After a time it seems that the actual playing of the game was merely ancillary to all this. In contrast to his adventurous mind, he was a defensive batsman. He bowled medium fast and could do things with the ball — competent but not gifted. He played the game regularly and hard, right up to 1931 when he left the island, but his intellectual involvement in the game was always there. After he left school, he moved naturally into cricket journalism.



The story of James and literature is the second (only in listing, not in priority) area of his life. There is the quotation at the start on the nature of his introduction to Shakespeare. He was drawn to reading by the normal youth's interest in adventure stories, particularly James Fenimore Cooper's *The Deerslayer, The Pathfinder, The Last of the Mohicans,* and *The Prairie.* His mother had a library. She read, and close behind her he would read everything from the magazine got from the travelling salesman to Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Nathaniel Hawthorne and a Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth. He formed an association with *Vanity Fair* at the age oi eight and would read it about once every 3 months — so that till today he can recite pages of it from memory. He was very familiar with his Bible, not as is the usual case in the West Indies because he was told it ought to be read but because he discovered that the unabridged version of the stories he read in *The Throne of the House of David* could be found in that good book.

At school he would read the set books through well ahead of the class and then move on to the volumes of criticism. He read all the volumes of Thackeray's works. He studied Greek, Latin and History. It was the same with these. It led him to the collections of historic

speeches. In addition he said he read "everything."

Two quotations may help.

> I did not merely play cricket. I studied it. I analysed strokes, I studied types, I read its history, its beginnings, how and when it changed from period to period, I read about it in Australia and in South Africa. I read and compared statistics, I made clippings, I talked to all cricketers, particularly the inter-colonial cricketers and those who had gone abroad. I compared what they told me with what I read in old copies of Wisdon. I looked up the play of the men who had done well or badly against the West Indies. I read and appreciated the phraseology of laws.[4]

> It was only after I left school that I began to distinguish between the study of cricket and the study of literature, or rather, I should say, the pursuit of cricket and the pursuit of literature. I did with the one exactly what I did with the other. I paid no attention to the curriculum.[5]

C. L. R. James today, despite his acknowledged wide range, is known firstly as a political writer and Marxist. Up to the time he left school, there is no sign in him of any political inclinations.

> But this school was in a colony ruled autocratically by Englishmen. What then about the National Question? It did not exist for me.[6]

> The race question did not have to be agitated. It was there. But in our little Eden it never troubled us.[7]

It is James's view that despite some instances of racial discrimination outside, they were soon forgotten once he returned to the shelter of the school atmosphere. Yet the racial categories of the society would have been all around for everybody to see. It was certainly there in cricket and he had to make a very clear decision on it just as he left school.

Which club would he join? The choice to him was between the light colored, Maple, on the one hand, and on the other Shannon, the team that played as if they were the representatives of the whole Black population — and which they were. He searched his mind, sought advice and decided for the club in which many were friends of his — Maple. In the words of an advisor, "These are the people who you are going to meet in life. Join them; it will be better in the end."[8]

This decision summarized a great deal of James's life up to that time. Although from solid "Shannon" stock, his brightness had got him to one of the two leading secondary schools. It was a path that was expected to release a few Black men in a generation into the rare surroundings of professional life and legislative appointment. James had not applied himself to what was considered his social responsibility to complete that circuit. Yet the mere fact of being a QRC (Queens Royal College) boy for seven years presented a dilemma of decision that lesser Blacks would not have faced. It was not an easy decision for him to make, but the fact is that the decision was made the way it was. He had spent close to fifteen years making himself widely familiar with English literature, cricket, the public school code, history and general European culture. Yet when the most concrete of decisions for a Black Trinidadian came to be made, there was nothing in all that training that could point a way for him. It is almost that it had isolated him from seeing the sharp forces which were embattled before his eyes. He does write about making the decision, "My social and political instincts, nursed on Dickens and Thackeray, were beginning to clarify themselves. As powerful a pull as any was the brilliant cricket Shannon played."[9]

When you look at it, the main reason which his advisor gave for joining Maple, "These men are the people whom you are going to meet in life," had already been rejected by James. By his very interests and failure to apply himself to his formal school studies, he had disappointed his family and all around who expected him to follow the course which would have made him, despite his color, the professional if not the social colleague of the Maple players.

Was there any place in the society where he could have learned a different answer to this personal crisis in which Thackeray and Matthew Arnold could not assist? There was the aloofness of the grammar school boy garrisoned by the protectiveness of the school and its Oxbridge-trained masters who could easily, within the walls of the school, teach the old public school ethic of "playing the game," "respecting the authority of the umpire," and esprit de corps. Education was then even more than now separated from the social realities, and the few scholarship winners could hardly represent any real questioning of the applicability of the legend to Trinidad as it existed outside the school. James was further separated by his avid reading and immersion in British ideology.

Trinidad society was no calm pool, and other forces, we can now detect, were an undercurrent in his life that perhaps even he was unaware of. In *Beyond A Boundary* there is a passing reference to the calypso tents of his boyhood days.

> I was fascinated by the calypso singers and the sometimes ribald ditties they sang in their tents during carnival time. But, like many of the black middle class, to my mother a calypso was a matter for ne'er-do-wells and at best the common people. I was made to understand that the road to the calypso tent was the road to hell, and there were always plenty of examples of hell's inhabitants to whom she could point.[10]

Ribald ditties were not all that were being sung in those tents. It would be interesting to know whether James ever heard the Calypsonian, Patrick Jones, sing, in 1920, these lines[11]:

Class legislation is the order of this land
We are ruled with the iron hand (REPEAT)

Britain boast of democracy
Brotherly love and fraternity
But British Colonists have been ruled in perpetual misery.

The period immediately after the end of the first World War was one of considerable unrest among the working class.[12] Following on a series of strikes in the oil and asphalt fields, a group of independent-minded and militant workers moved to push the employers to adjust wages, which had been severely reduced during the wars by price increases and actual cuts. In November 1919 the stevedores struck, there was a march which caused business places in Port of Spain to close, and a general strike was called. Various categories of workers either joined the strike then or struck later — after the stevedores had won a 25% increase. The colonial administration had called in white troops from Jamaica during the strike. They believed that the spirit of the Taranto Rebellion in Italy, when Black troops of the British West Indies Regiment revolted in December 1918, had in fact "eventually reached the population of Trinidad generally."[13]

The unrest continued in 1920 and a Strikes and Lockouts Ordinance, a Seditious Acts and Publications Ordinance, and an Industrial Courts Ordinance were all passed that year.

There was a Stingo batsman, Telemaque, whom C. L. R. James would have often come into contact with. He was in fact an all-rounder — a bowler and fielder. He was also a waterfront worker and a member of the waterfront workers' organization. James liked the man, but in *Beyond A Boundary* he can only speculate that Telemaque may have taken part in the events of 1919-20. "Telemaque and I rarely talked."[14]

Among the publications that

were banned was Marcus Garvey's *Negro World,* but James used to arrange to get his copy and read it. After Garvey was expelled from the U.S.A., in the course of his travels he came to Trinidad. The Port of Spain City Council gave him an official welcome and C. L. R. James was among those who interviewed him. To James, Garvey was an interesting person, but he was not a follower of Garvey. If he didn't get the paper, he "would not die."[15] Many of the leaders of the 1919 strike considered themselves Garveyites.

During the strike James, as was his practice with politics at the time, took no part in it but went around to see what was going on.[16]

> I saw what was happening and later it had a great effect on me because I realized how weak and defenseless was the local government and that had an influence on my thinking. . . . I remember that the soldiers didn't frighten anybody. That had a lot to do with my attitude later because the people were not afraid, so that in 1938-39 although I was not there I read the report and could visualize it. The trouble in a Caribbean island is that the army cannot be depended on to shoot down the population and it is a serious problem up to today.[17]

Along with the reading of Garvey's paper, James recalls reading somewhere around 1921 Rene Marat's novel that won the Prex Goncourt and reading "the novel which was an exposure of colonialism in French Africa" and which caused Marat to lose his job.

Although he did not take part in any of the political activity in 1919 he was in 1919 among a group who formed the Maverick Club. It was a social club which lasted about two years. No white people were allowed to join. James was the secretary "and for the most part we were Black people and one brown." Among its members were C. T. W. E. Worrell and John Theophilus Caesar Prescod. There were lawyers and doctors as members and among other things "we would give concerts.' What racial consciousness did this represent? For he maintained

> A circle of friends (most of them white) with whom I exchanged ideas, books, records and manuscripts. We published local magazines and gave lectures or wrote articles on Wordsworth, the English Drama, and Poetry as a Criticism of Life. We lived according to the tenets of Matthew Arnold, spreading sweetness and light and the best that has been thought and said in the world. We met all visiting literary celebrities as a matter of course.[19]

A prominent member of this circle was the novelist Alfred Mendes. In an interview[20] about the period, he expresses the opinion that

> . . . the motivating forces that drove us, willy-nilly, like a sort of one of the furies, into writing at all, stemmed from two world-shattering events at that early period of our lives.
>
> The first was, of course, the first world war where a large number of us had been abroad and indeed,

> even those of us who had not been abroad were influenced considerably by what was happening in the world, and the second event was the Russian Revolution. Those, I think, were the two events in our lives at that time which drove us into writing about our islands.

James certainly had been writing about the island — in his novel *Minty Alley* and his two best-known short stories, "Triumph" and "La Divina Pastora" — and with a sensitivity for local culture that is in striking contrast to this strange aloofness from politics. There is, however, no indication that the crisis of the World War or the Russian Revolution sparked any urge in him.

From 1919 Captain Arthur Andrew Cipriani had joined the Trinidad Workingmen's Association and launched a period of nationalist politics.[21] It was not until 1924 that James started paying anything like close attention to his speeches and not till 1931 that he became a follower of Cipriani,

It is history, the third area of James's life, that really makes the link between the young man who grew up in Trinidad and the man whose life and ideas today make it so unreal to divide him into categories. He studied his history in school in the same way in which he approached literature and cricket. Indeed there was history in cricket and history in literature. History suffused everything. It was implicit in the very method he developed — first comprehensiveness, then the attempt to place the whole in some order.

> I can remember this much. I read an enormous number of history books, none of them particularly good, but I read every one I could put my hands on — chiefly the history of England and later, histories of Europe and ancient civilization. I used to teach history, and reading the whole lot of them I gained the habit of critical judgment and discrimination. I was compelled to try to find out what I should teach or what I should believe. However, I remember three Or four very important history books. They were a history of England by G. K. Chesterton and some histories of the seventeenth century by Hilary Bellock. These books violently attacked the traditional English history on which I had been brought up and they gave me a critical conception of historical writing.[22]

His historical approach to literature can be illustrated. At the library there was a set of books by Thomas Hardy. James borrowed and read them in the sequence in which they were written. Similarly, when a series of translations of the works of Anatole France became available, he imported them and read them in order.

Long before he became a Marxist he used to tell his students:

> What you need in studying any historical subject is you must get some idea of the economic circumstance, you must also get some idea of the political circumstances and you must get to know the literary circumstances. Only when you know those three, you have some idea of the historical development of the period.[23]

No doubt the power of the social movement was channelling this exceptionally trained mind into new inquiries. So his writing began to show a native preoccupation that was already evident in his creative work. In 1931 he published in the *Beacon* a study of Michel Maxwell Philip, a Trinidadian Solicitor-General. He had been writing about Prudhomme David, a Black member of the legislature. Indeed from about 1928 he had started talking to people, collecting information and government reports. That work found consummation in the writing of *The Life of Captain Cipriani,* a study that embraced much else besides the life of a remarkable West Indian. Its publication in Britain in 1932 is charged with great symbolism. It was dedicated to Learie Constantine, the outstanding West Indian cricketer of the period, and thereby appropriately linked the game with the surge of West Indian nationalism. It represented the first major fruit of the offer of James's exceptional qualities to the services of the Caribbean mass. The title of the abridged version prepared for the West Indian market caught its real spirit — *The Case for West Indian Self-Government.*

In 1938 two books that were first worked on during those last hectic years in Trinidad before departure to England were published in England — *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and The San Domingo Revolution* and *A History of Negro Revolt.*

The historical sense remains very strong. We can summarize the transition to Marxism very quickly. In 1932 when he went to England he had general socialist ideas and nationalist sentiments. He went intending to be a novelist and probably a critical essayist. He had an inclination towards the British Labor Party, not unusual as Cipriani had a great faith in the party and his organization was affiliated to it. In addition, the Calypsonian Patrick Jones had sung a calypso in honor of the first Labor Party victory.

In Britain there was tremendous political excitement going on among the intellectuals. Also in Nelson, where he stayed with Learie Constantine and his wife, workers, members of the Labor Party, taught him not to expect too much from the party. He was reading Lenin and Stalin and Trotsky. Then

> I read the *History of the Russian Revolution* because I was very much interested in history and the book seemed to offer some analysis of modern society. At the end of reading the book, Spring 1934, I became a Trotskyist — in my mind and later joined. It was clear in my mind that I was not going to be a Stalinist.[24]

C. L. R. James, even today with his strong puritan sense and Marxist politics, still remains an enigma to many. To read his *Beyond A*

Boundary, to hear him speak of what he owes to Western civilization in the same breath as expounding on Black Power, can be a puzzling experience. Still there is a natural link between all this. One should not be fooled by the aura that surrounds "the British public school code" or the failure of those who preached honesty, fair play, etc. to practice it, to carry it to its logical conclusion. It is those very qualities of fair play, honesty, etc. in their pure sense that a Black colonial would be driven to extract from the code. That is what he would need, as it was the absence of that everywhere around him that was holding him down. That is the movement that he detected in English literature. It is there in the authors to whom he was attracted.

> My social and political instincts, nursed on Dickens and Thackeray[25]
>
> Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me.[26]

Fairness contains in it the ideas of justice, equality. It pushes one toward that. It may have taken a long time but when he turned to look at Trinidadian society, he saw first the mass of the population, how they lived and what the motion of their history was propelling them towards. In *The Life of Captain Cipriani* and in his creative works, he writes as naturally about the mass of the population as if he had been looking at them all his life.

There is a way when the qualities of an older order, past times, are being betrayed by a contemporary brutality and crudeness, that this can lead someone who believes in the values of the old order either to pine after the past or to create a vision of a new order which will either restore the cherished values or at least make it possible to live by them. The spirit of Marxism that James has illuminated is very little removed from the essentials of what he was brought up on.

Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me.

Footnotes

1. Interview with C. L. R. James by author in London, October 1967.
2. "Labour Relations after World War One," *Moko,* 22/12/69.
3. C. L. R. James, *Beyond A Boundary* (Hutchinson, 1963), pages 16-17.
4. *Ibid.,* pages 41-42.
5. *Ibid.,* page 42.
6. *Ibid.,* page 38.
7. *Ibid.,* page 39.
8. *Ibid.,* page 59.
9. *Ibid.,* page 58.
10. *Ibid.,* pages 25-26.
11. *Calypso Lore and Legend,* Cook Records, LP 5016.
12. See footnote 2 and "Black Power In The British West Indies: The Trinidad Longshoremen's Strike of 1919," *Science and Society,* Vol. 33, Winter 1969, pages 71-75.
13. "Disturbances in Port of Spain, Reports by the Commissioners on The Conduct of the Constabulary," September 1920, Public Record Office (London), C.O. 884/13. For information on the rebellion, see W. F. Elkins, "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: The Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy," *Science and Society,* Vol. 34, Spring 1970, pages 99-103.
14. James, *op. cit,* page 76.
15. Interview with C. L. R. James by author in London, April 3, 1969.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.,* i.e., 1969. It was a serious problem once again in 1970 in Trinidad.
18. Interview with C. L. R. James by author.
19. James, *op. cit.,* pages 70-71.
20. "Talking About The Thirties," *Voices,* Vol. 1, No. 5 (Port of Spain, Trinidad).
21. See C. L. R. James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani* (Nelson, Lanes, 1932).
22. Interview with C. L. R. James by author in London, October 1967.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. James, *Beyond A Boundary,* page 58.
26. *Ibid.,* page 47.

Richard Small is a lawyer in Jamaica and an old friend of C. L. R. James.

In England, 1932 -1938

by Robert A. Hill

Two passages will immediately place the general outline and orient the reader to the broad limits of the interpretation to which the period of C. L. R. James's first stay in England will be treated. Both passages are drawn from his own later work, *Beyond A Boundary* 1963), and the first comes from Chapter 8. Here James states:

> In March 1932 I boarded the boat for Plymouth. I was about to enter the arena where I was to play the role for which I had prepared myself. *The British intellectual was going to Britain,* (pages 114-15)

The second passage, found in Chapter 12 of the same book, counterposes in telescoped fashion the evolved stage of James's political position. The passage reads:

> (Between 1932 and 1938) *fiction-writing* drained out of me and was replaced by *politics. I* became a Marxist, a Trotskyist. I published large books and small articles on these and kindred subjects. I wrote and spoke. Like many others, I expected war, and during or after the war social revolution. In 1938 a lecture tour took me to the United States and I stayed there fifteen years, (page 149)

Thus, the perspective of what actually overtook the intellectual development of James during the period 1932-1938 should be very straightforward. It was a leap out of the world of Thackeray and nineteenth-century intellectual concerns into the world of international socialist revolution. Simply put, *world revolution*. But what is not so simple, at least still undetected, are the actual circumstances surrounding the process through which the transformation was achieved. The present essay will attempt to suggest the contours and content of this achievement.

By anyone's standards, it was a monumental achievement, which staggers the mind simply in the recounting of it. In order that the full stature of James's actual accomplishments may be settled and recognized from the outset, it would be best to simply itemize them. The list runs as follows:

1. (Published for the West Indies) *The Life of Captain Cipriani,* 1932.
2. *The Case for West Indian Self-Government,* 1933. (An abridged English version of the above published under its real title.)
3. Learie Constantine's *Cricket and I,* 1932, the writing of which James was largely responsible for.
4. *Minty Alley,* 1936, a novel.
5. *International Friends of Ethioia,* 1935-1937.
6. *Toussaint L'Ouverture,* in which Paul Robeson played the leading role in its London production, 1936.
7. *International African Service Bureau,* official organ, formed out of the IAFE in 1937 by George Padmore. Editor of *International African Opinion,* 1938.
8. The first historical account of the Third International, *World Revolution: 1917-1936. The Rise and Fall of the Communist International,* 1937.
9. English translation of Boris Souvarine's biography, *Stalin,* 1938.
10. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution,* 1938.
11. *A History of Negro Revolt,* 1939.

All of this was done between March 1932 and October 1938, when he

a leap out of the world of Thackeray

sailed for the United States, a period of just over six and a half years. In method it meant prodigious effort and concentration; in measurement, the results were prolific and gave example of the man's tremendous diversity of interest and capacities; in consequence, it touched all corners of the world-wide revolutionary struggle. Finally, in between much of the actual work on the above matters, James went about earning some regular pail of his living by reporting on English first-class cricket for *The Manchester Guardian* newspaper.

It would be trying to reach for the impossible if we sought after a complete description of James's evolution over this pivotal six-year stretch in England. Many separate histories are bound up together in each stage of his work, and each would separately necessitate a great deal further research. In addition, it would alike be too much to attempt an exhaustive analysis of each work. In the present context and at this stage of our knowledge, it will be sufficient to give only a kind of perspective in reviewing James's life for this period, while at the same time making some tentative conclusions of the import which it has for the man's development into one of the major political thinkers of the twentieth century.

From James's own later account in *Beyond A Boundary,* we learn that in 1931 he planned to go to England so that he could "write books." (page 114) This fact came out in the course of James's agreeing to do the actual writing of Learie Constantine's projected book on the history of West Indian cricket. But this was only, according to James, "a preparatory operation," for in accepting Constantine's offer to sponsor his trip to England as a writer, the seed of a remarkable partnership and an even more remarkable future was being nourished. James himself tells us: "This transcendence of our relations as cricketers was to initiate the West

Indian renaissance not only in cricket, but in politics, in history and in writing." (page 114)

At this period, however, Constantine the cricketer was the more political of the two, for as James attests, though his "sentiments were in the right place, I was still enclosed within the mould of nineteenth-century intellectualism." Then he tells us that the shell really began to crack under the impact of the political capability demonstrated by the people of Trinidad under the leadership of Captain Cipriani. "I was caught up in it like many others and began to take notice," James states. Before this, however, it was Constantine's "'they are no better than we'" that had first made the initial breach in James's naive good faith in the fairness of sporting convention, albeit *colonial* social convention. This last was the test of a conviction in social egali-tarianism but now under the pressure of witnessing national injustice. Before leaving Trinidad, James had arrived at the point where, he tells us; "My hitherto vague ideas of freedom crystalized around a political conviction: we should be free to govern ourselves." (page 119)

This newly won conviction was the guiding principle around which he organized the two manuscripts which accompanied him to England in the spring of 1932. One was a history of cricket in the West Indies which he had already begun preparing with Constantine; the second was his biography of Captain Cipriani. Together they subsumed the discovery of political nationalism, West Indian nationalism in this instance.

The first published was *The Life of Captain Cipriani,* the cost of which was borne by Constantine, in whose home in Nelson, Lancashire, James was staying and where he finished the final draft. Constantine approved and paid for it to be printed, and it was sent home to the West Indies, where it came to play a significant role in orienting many individuals when the widespread labor riots broke out in 1937-38.

There are many unique features to the book, but here it will suffice to point out what to the present writer is the most significant. Although the political conception of the work was governed by the need to state in carefully reasoned terms the capacity then of West Indian society for self-government and national independence, the book suggests very clearly the source of James's later espousal of Marxism as a philosophical and political outlook. In this sense it could be said that James was writing as a Marxist even before he engaged consciously in the articulation of Marxism as a scientific method.

Behind the delineation of Cipriani as the outstanding West Indian political personality and the overall readiness of West Indian society in assuming self-rule, the book bases its perspective on the vindication of the West Indian soldier and his achievement in the Great War of 1914-1918. Collectively as the West India Regiment, these soldiers opened out a whole new stage in the development of West Indian life. In reviewing their achievement and its significance for Cipriani's emergence as a political leader, James informs us:

> It was in the army that many of the soldiers, a medley from all the British West Indian islands, for the first time wore shoes consistently. But they were the product of their peculiar history. The speed with which they adjusted themselves to the spiritual and material requirements of a modern war amazed all observers, from General Allenby down. Cipriani made a reputation for himself by his militant defence of the regiment against all prejudice, official and unofficial. To the end of his days he spoke constantly of the recognition they had won. ('Appendix,' *The Black Jacobins,* 2nd ed., 1963, page 403)

What this passage hints at was the fact that James by 1932 had discovered more than political nationalism. He had discovered the socially revolutionizing force of the "inarticulate" and their primary role in overcoming and breaking out of the contradictions of the historical process. Indeed, Cipriani's true stature rests on his response as a leader to "the barefooted man" and the consequent political interaction between them. The effects, a large part of which would be undone before they could finally defeat colonial rule, were not as important as the source out of which it sprang. Not the educated colonial middle-

class, but the "barefooted man" it was who showed that the society had achieved genuine political modernity, and this was signalled by the adjustment made by West Indian soldiers in the course of the War's unprecedented challenges.

However, if James's discovery of the "inarticulate" soldier in the War was prelude to his later locating a scientific method in Marxism for explaining the true nature of popular forces in history, the nationalism of the book itself suggested something deeper than mere territorial attribute. Indeed, nationalism in this instance was based on the unconscious principle which would later characterize the genuine uniqueness of James's Marxism. That uniqueness is best summed up by James himself in the following passage from *Beyond a Boundary:*

> Time would pass, old empires would fall and new ones take their place, the relations of countries and the relations of classes had to change, before I discovered that it is not quality of goods and utility which matter, but movement; not where you are or what you have, but where you have come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there, (pages 116-17)

The Life of Captain Cipriani was soon taken up by Leonard and Virginia Woolf and their circle, as a result of which James did an abridgement of the book which was published in the succeeding year under its real title, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* (1933). It appeared as Number Sixteen in the series, "Day to Day Pamphlets," published by The Hogarth Press.

Before both of these, however, came the book which he had begun working on with Constantine in Trinidad the year before arriving in England. Listening "once more to Constantine with my pad on my knee," *Cricket and I* became much more than a mere cricket book. To James it meant "the first book ever published in England by a world-famous West Indian writing as a West Indian about people and events in the West Indies."

With these works out of the way, James was quickly shedding his ties which he had brought with him from Trinidad. The completed novel which he had brought with him to England was discarded in favor of a succeeding work, *Minty Alley,* which in time was to prove to be the first of the West Indian novels to be published in England. The novel appeared in 1936 as one of the very first group of books published by the new house of Martin Seeker and Warburg Ltd. It attempted an account of a childhood in the West Indies, in which the social ambience of a fused colonial community was analyzed in terms of the simultaneously operating extremes of class privilege and class oppression. (A reprint of *Minty Alley* has been published by New Beacon Publishers in Britain.)

The general effect of this initial burst of literary activity emanating out of Constantine's home in Nelson was that, as James puts it, "henceforth the West Indies was speaking for itself to the modern world." (page 124) It was also the completion more or less of James's West Indian period, a period in which cricket and the case of West Indian self-government went hand in hand. But at a certain stage in the course of these preoccupations, James informs us "literature was vanishing from my consciousness and politics was substituting itself." (page 124) James is also very right in remarking that it was "no easy transition" to make. It was more than just a question of finding some means of supporting himself. The transition was not one from a purely West Indian focus to that of a larger political view, for even here the West Indies served as the basis or point of departure. James describes the general beginning of the new stage in the following manner:

> West Indian history now began to assume a new importance. Stuck away in the back of my head for years was the project of writing a biography of Toussaint L'Ouverture — the leader of the revolt of the slaves in the French colony of San Domingo. This revolt and the successful establishment of the state of Haiti is the most outstanding event in the history of the West Indies. *(Beyond A Boundary,* page 122)

From this beginning in Nelson, the project would move on to incorporate revolutionary ideas of history and society and to be placed at the purpose of wider freedoms. But if it is there that we can mark the real beginning of James's fundamental movement to the Left, the West Indies was his preparation, and the books which had gone before were "new material, new in that (their) premises are the future, not the past." (page 124)

It should be pointed out, however, that James had already begun to acquaint himself with left-wing ideas while in Nelson. He tells us:

> I soon made friends in the local Labour Party, attended their meetings, spoke to them. Some of Constantine's intimate friends who came to the house often found congenial company in me, apart from cricket. My Labour and Socialist ideas had been got from books and were rather abstract. These humorously cynical working men were a revelation and brought me down to earth, (page 122)

James goes on to state how, upon the publication in Nelson of his *Life of Captain Cipriani,* his "Labour friends made merry with it." Finally, James states that during this period he "was reading hard. . . . Night after night I would be up till three or four." (page 124) What was he reading so earnestly? James tells us: "I had not been long in Nelson before I began to import from France the books that I would need to prepare a biography of Toussaint." (pages 122-23)

Three different strands were being fused around the projected biography of Toussaint. The first was James's fairly regular contact with members of Nelson's working-class. The second was his reading of socialist literature, even though he

claims that the ideas which issued from it were "rather abstract." The third strand, about which one cannot say too much until James himself tells us a great deal more about how he came to write *The Black Jacobins,* was the preparatory reading in French historiography. This factor, however, has not yet received the careful attention it deserves. James indeed alludes to its significance for the eventual writing of the book in the following passages taken from the "Bibliography":

> It is impossible to understand the San Domingo revolution unless it is studied in close relationship with the revolution in France. Fortunately the French historical school of the French Revolution is one of the greatest historical schools of Western civilisation, combines scholarship with the national spirit and taste, and with that respect for the Revolution without which the history of revolution cannot be written, (page 383)

Here he is referring to Michelet, Aulard, Mathiez, Juares, Georges Lefebvre, Guerin. And then at the end of the same section James reinforces the conviction with the following conclusion:

> I have sought all through to show the direct influence of the Revolution on events and leading personalities in San Domingo. . . . I have tried to show the close parallels, hitherto unsuspected, which can be found between events in two populations so widely separated and so diverse in origin. Studies of events, in France and in San Domingo, will not fail to unearth more, (page 385)

The conclusion which the present writer draws from the foregoing is that French radical historiography, which James began to immerse himself in while still living in Nelson, played an important part in helping to create very definite radical political responses on James's part. At the very least, it was instrumental in helping James to make the transition from literature to a political consciousness, and from a West Indian to a world consciousness.

At some point during this time, though the writer cannot be certain, James left Nelson to enter upon the broader cultural and political milieu of London. The early West Indian period had ended and James was now on his way to a full-fledged career in radical Marxist politics. He read thoroughly into the Stalin-Trotsky split, which then forced him to go behind it and himself search out Lenin's own views on the development of the October Revolution. Inexorably this process led him to undertake a systematic examination of Marx's own writings and to measure these against what had taken place in Russia.

Padmore

The process of theoretical self-education, however, was interrupted in 1935 by the exigencies of directing an organized defense campaign on behalf of the Ethiopians whose country had been invaded by Mussolini's military forces. This marked James's baptism in the headwaters of the modern Pan-African movement. In response to the Italian invasion, together with Arthur Lewis, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Jomo Kenyatta, and others, James organized the *International African Friends of Ethiopia,* which aimed at educating British and International opinion and to agitate against the imperialist plans for Africa. It was also the year in which George Padmore, after his break with Moscow over the question of supporting the "democratic" imperialist countries of the West, arrived in London, where he was to settle until 1957. Padmore joined in the efforts by serving on the Committee with James as Chairman. Like so many others throughout the world at the time, Black men and women were deeply aroused to a sense of urgent unity on behalf oi Ethiopia's defense. Though it cannot be gone into here, it is the present writer's view that the Abyssinian invasion marked the turning-point of nineteenth-century and post-Wpr Black nationalism and paved the way for the emergence of an explicitly political Pan-Africanism. The difference was to be found in the new social content with which the ideas of African emancipation became infused. In this process, the contribution of C. L. R, James would prove to be one of the essential factors in clearly establishing the changed outlook.

By 1937, however, the conjunction of Pan-African agitation and organized Trotskyism was complete, for not only was James advocating both objectives simultaneously but he had become part in both cases of the type of organized activity which would characterize the rest of his entire political career, namely, *the small Marxist organization.* This is a distinct political formation with deep historical roots and deserves much greater scholarly attention than it has hitherto received. In any case, James between 1936 and 1938 had found himself ideologically as well as organizationally and was embarked upon the political course which would see him become a full-time, professional Marxist theoretician.

The first step in the direction of developing a small Marxist organization was made when James gathered about himself in 1936 a circle of Trotskyists in London. The burning question of that period for the international socialist movement was Trotsky's "permanent revolution" versus Stalin's "socialism in one

country." The Stalinists had control of the organs of Soviet state-power as well as the party apparatuses of the many Western European communist organizations. To combat this array of power and propaganda, the Trotskyist movement at the time had essentially the single resource of its leader, Trotsky. It lacked, however, any coherent theoretical statement of its position. To this end James set out to make good the weakness, and from the attempt emerges in 1937 the book, *World Revolution, 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (Kraus Reprint, 1970).

Once again the book, the second within a year, was published by Fredric Warburg of the new company, Martin Seeker and Warburg Ltd. James had been one of the first authors introduced by Fenner Brockway to Warburg, who shortly afterwards was also assisted to meet and publish George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, George Orwell, Jennie Lee, etc. Together they formed that brilliant cluster of political writers who centered around the Independent Labor Party's weekly newspaper, *New Leader*. Warburg published *World Revolution* in April 1937 and he described it in his published memoirs, *An Occupation For Gentlemen* (1959), as having achieved the status of "a kind of Bible of Trotskyism." (page 211)

The book was dedicated to "The Marxist Group," which was in fact James's small political circle of Trotskyists. James in the Preface notes that the book "could never have been written at all but for the material patiently collected and annotated in France, China, America, Germany and Russia," thus showing here also the very tightly knit relationship among political forces of the small organization in the exchange of information and in the analysis of ideas.

Though James might shortly after the publication of *World Revolution* be ready to abandon the political theory of Trotskyism, something much more fundamental would remain from his participation in the European Trotskyist movement between 1936 and 1938. This crucial factor continues to elude a great many of James's admirers even to this day. The key to what was fundamental about James's involvement in the Trotskyist movement in Europe can be gleaned from the following statement by Franz Borkenau:

> Whether there was real degeneration or whether, under Stalin, all the intrinsic trends of the dictatorship came simply to the surface, is no matter of discussion here. Anyway, earlier than in any other country, as soon as serious dissensions started in Russia after the death of Lenin, large groups of communists in France felt that this was no longer the regime they had admired. Thus a *considerable section* sided with Trotsky, mistaking him for a champion of liberty against Stalin. *(European Communism,* 1953, pages 261-62)*

When due allowance is made for Borkenau's obvious political bias against the revolutionary struggle, the significant fact remains that a

a large body of Trotsky's followers were genuine Leninists.

large body of Trotsky's followers, not just in France but throughout the European working-class movement, were genuine Leninists who, while not willing to tolerate Stalin's betrayal, went with Trotsky because he seemed to offer a possibility of sustaining the revolutionary political principles of Lenin. The cadres whom James became associated with in the Trotskyist movement were bearers of the political thought and practice of Lenin and Bolshevism at its prime. *Most of them could be classified as Trotskyists only secondarily.* From them James gained an immense knowledge of the internal make-up of the revolutionary socialist movement and the special role which outstanding workers came to play in its development. These men carried within themselves actual proof of those traditions. One of the most remarkable examples of the general type was Harry Wicks, and from him James gathered first-hand knowledge of the intimate political history of the European revolutionary movement.

Out of this same general milieu of political links with veteran Leninists issued James's translation from the French in September 1938 of Boris Souvarine's massive (704 pages) biography of Stalin. Leonard Schapiro terms it "the best biography of Stalin" *(The Communist Party of the Soviet Union,* 2nd ed., 1971, page 638). The book's publisher, the venerable Fredric Warburg, rendered the following opinion: "Thoroughly documented, written with a fine narrative sweep, imbued with a firsthand knowledge of its subject, it was and probably remains the best book available on Stalin's life and policy up to 1936." *(An Occupation For Gentlemen,* 1959, page 270)

The book was a tremendous success for its day, selling over 2,000 copies by June 1940. Two reasons accounted for its reception, one critical and the second political. The latter reason had to do with the fact that the book appeared very propitiously, within a month of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, thus increasing the public's awareness of its significance. The first reason, however, had to do with the extremely authoritative air of the work itself. He had been fortunate to receive from Trotsky many valuable and original documents which contained authentic data on political developments within the highest circles of the Russian Party and Administration. Trotsky knew very well what he was doing when he

*James's *World Revolution* was the first available history of the Comintern, appearing one year before Borkenau's general history, *The Communist International,* London, 1938.

handed these documents over to Souvarine, who while being a Russian had risen to a leading position in the French Communist Party shortly after its inception. Borkenau tells us that Souvarine was "one of the most far-sighted men in the Comintern, [who] as early as 1924 spoke of the end of the revolutionary era and the 'degeneration' of the Soviet regime in Russia." (page 261) That awareness caused Souvarine in 1924 to be deposed from the leadership of the French party-group in the Communist International. He was ultimately excluded from membership in the French Party altogether in 1928, along with those other leaders who stood firm on their independence from Moscow's line, viz., Prossard, Loriot, Monatte, Suzann Girault, Treint, Paz.

The work of translation was many months in preparation, and eventually James's lateness with the completed translation caused the, book to appear much later than originally scheduled. That, however, was a boon in disguise since it only made the book's appearance before the public more forceful in the light of the circumstances surrounding the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The actual job of translation had necessitated James spending quite a bit of time with Souvarine in Paris going over it with him. Out of this collaboration would have developed additional political insights on James's part that added to his already significant store of accumulated education in the history of Bolshevism. Borkenau reinforces this view when he points out that "perhaps the best idea of the connection of Bolshevism with pre-Marxist Russian revolutionism is to be got from Souvarine's *Stalin."*

The importance to James's work of this process of developing personal/political/organizational connections through individuals who embodied the really revolutionary political stance of the age was nowhere more fundamental than in the preparation of *The Black Jacobins* (1938), the *magnum opus* on which more than anything else James's reputation as a scholar and political theoretician rests. Before the actual historical contribution of that book is discussed, however, it will be necessary to describe the "new premises" surrounding it by explaining the way in which the book was linked in two very important directions.

The first link was in the person of Paul Robeson, about whom a great deal has been written by James himself *(Black World,* December 1970). James had completed in 1937 a script for a play based on the life of and entitled, *Toussaint L'Ouverture.* Persons who read the script were inspired to attempt a production of it if Paul Robeson could be interested in accepting the title role of Toussaint. James set out with the script to meet and invite Robeson to consider it. He succeeded and Robeson eventually starred in the London production.

What was important, however, was not so much the play itself nor the fact of Robeson's acceptance of the lead. More important than all of these was the context which the production of the play provided for James to get to know the person whom he considers to be one of the greatest political figures of the twentieth century. Indeed, James looks upon Robeson along with Franklin D. Roosevelt as being the two most important American political personalities of the age. The fact that at the time Robeson was in support of Moscow and the Stalinist parties and James was firmly wedded to the Fourth International of Trotsky was no hindrance to their mutual appreciation.

That in itself, however, would not have been sufficient to make Robeson the decisive personality that he was for James. At a very profound and fundamental level, Robeson as a man *shattered* James's colonial conception of the Black Physique. In its place the magnificent stature of Robeson gave to him a new appreciation of the powerful and extraordinary capacities

which the African possessed, in both head and body. Robeson broke the mould in which the West Indian conception of physical personality in James had been formed. That was a time when Black West Indians grew up with an unconscious prototype of the white Englishman and white Englishwoman as their absolute standards of physical perfection and development. James's encounter with Robeson was nowhere more profound than in its forcing him to abandon these inherited values.

For James, therefore, Toussaint was consequently more than just a matter of politics. *The Black Jacobins* is truly a classical achievement in the balance it maintains between the careful interpretation of politico-historical events and the unique resources of personality to have manifested themselves in Toussaint, Christophe, Dessalines, Rigaud, Roume, and the remarkable General Moise. Once we understand the nature of the balance we can begin to genuinely appreciate what appears to be those elements of paradox in the Preface to the book:

> The transformation of slaves, trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day, is one of the great epics

> of revolutionary struggle and achievement. Why and how this happened is the theme of this book, (page ix)
>
> By a phenomenon often observed, the individual leadership responsible for this unique achievement was almost entirely the work of a single man — Toussaint L'Ouverture. … Yet Toussaint did not make the revolution. It was the revolution that made Toussaint. And even that is not the whole truth, (pages ix-x)

Thus, it is the contention of the present writer that *The Black Jacobins* would have been significantly different in quality in the absence of James's relationship to Robeson.

The second link, which gave point and purpose to the book, is to be traced in James's relationship to George Padmore. In the Preface to the Second Edition, James states the essential proposition of *The Black Jacobins* very simply as follows:

> I have retained the concluding pages which envisage and were intended to stimulate the coming emancipation of Africa. They are a part of the history of our time. In 1938 only the writer and a handful of close associates thought, wrote and spoke as if the African events of the last quarter of a century were imminent.

The principal and always guiding figure among the "handful of close associates" referred to by James was the venerable Trinidadian, George Padmore, who along with James, Jomo Kenyatta, Wallace-Johnson, and T. Ras Makonnen, was the person most responsible for directing the work of the *International African Service Bureau,* which was established in March 1937 from the remnants of James's International African Friends of Ethiopia group. When the Ethiopian question was over, the problem arose as to what was to follow. Pad-more then moved to form the IASB, an organization devoted to the study of the colonial question in Africa and to agitating on the basis of spreading this political knowledge all over Britain.

The motto of the IASB was: "Educate, co-operate, emancipate. Neutral in nothing affecting the African people." Between July and October 1938, when he left for America on a lecture tour, James was editor of the group's organ, *International African Opinion,* and responsible for its literary publications generally. Here once again was James functioning as part of an innovative "small organization" and attempting to project theoretical analyses, based in this instance on slave revolt in the Caribbean, to the present concrete tasks of political life in the shape of African emancipation from colonial rule. Perhaps the most powerful section of the entire original Preface was the concluding paragraph, in which James very graphically and movingly attested to the urgent tasks which he thought his history of the San Domingo Revolution exemplified:

> Tranquility to-day is either innate (the philistine) or to be acquired only by a deliberate doping of the personality. It was in the stillness of a seaside suburb that could be heard most clearly and insistently the booming of Franco's heavy artillery, the rattle of Stalin's firing squads and the fierce shrill turmoil of *the revolutionary movement striving for clarity and influence.* Such is our age and this book is of it (1937: *note)* with something of the fever and the fret. Nor does the writer regret it. The book is the history of a revolution and written under different circumstances it would have been a different but not necessarily a better book, (page xi)

And the special "clarity and influence" which James was attempting to achieve with the book was the focus of the *African Revolution.* James later on reflected in *Nkrumah Then and Now* on the import of this endeavor as part of an organized political struggle, comparing it with Padmore's own efforts in the following manner:

> My own approach was different, and although I was immersed in the British revolutionary movement, I worked on the application of Marxist and Leninist ideas to the coming African Revolution, and for this purpose wrote *Black Jacobins,* a full-scale study of the only successful revolution of people of African descent that the world had yet seen — the revolt of the slaves in the French colony of San Domingo during the French Revolution which ended in the establishment of the state of Haiti. . . . Historical in form, it drew its contemporaneousness, as all such books must, from the living struggle around us, and particularly from the daily activity that centered around Pad-more and the African Bureau. It represented in a specific form the general ideas that we held at the time, it is still the only book of its kind. . . . The theoretical basis of the book, amply demonstrated, is that in a period of world-wide revolutionary change, such as that of 1789-1815 and our period which began with 1917, the revolutionary crisis lifts backward peoples over centuries and projects them into the very forefront of the advanced movement of the day. The slaves in San Domingo were two-thirds raw Africans from the Guinea Coast in a strange country, many of them not knowing the language. Yet with the example and slogans of the French Revolution, these for the most part illiterate blacks organized themselves in a manner fully comparable to the great achievements of the mass movement in France, produced a body of great leaders in politics, administration, differentiated among themselves in clear alignments of Right, Left and Centre, and all in all showed themselves immensely superior in every human quality to the highly educated colonial officials and ministers in France who ruled them. . . . The reader is asked to note the complete confidence in the self-emancipation of the African people from imperialism as a contemporary political issue that imbued everything we did, and if he is interested, to compare it with the dreary repetition of percentages of literacy, centuries of barbarism, centuries of training, and all the rubbish now in

the dust-bins that characterised the official attitudes and pronouncements of the time.

We can now more fully appreciate the awesome significance of the conclusion which James wrote to *The Black Jacobins:*

> Finally those black Haitian labourers and the Mulattoes have given us an example to study. Despite the temporary reaction of Fascism, the prevailing standards of human liberty and equality are infinitely more advanced and more profound than those current in 1789. Judged relatively by these standards, the millions of blacks in Africa and the few of them who are educated are as much pariahs in that vast prison as the blacks and Mulattoes of San Domingo in the eighteenth century. The imperialists envisage an eternity of African exploitation: the African is backward, ignorant. . . . They dream dreams. .. . The Blacks of Africa are more advanced, nearer ready than were the slaves of San Domingo, (pages 375-76)

This was no Utopian vision. It was based ultimately on the facts of history and directly on the organized political activity which had started among a handful of Black men but which would subsequently become encompassed in the political motion of the African peoples themselves. It was the very apotheosis of realization for the "small political organization."

There was something more specific, however, in the strategic political conclusion of the book. Few people today realize how significant that conclusion was at the time. Within the specific context of the changing balance of political forces in the world at the time, the *International African Service Bureau* was debating the political course which the African struggle would follow. *The Black Jacobins* was probably the most important factor in the evolution of the strategic perspective of the group, which became the premise that armed *struggle* would be the form of the African revolution. "But

when did property ever listen to reason except when cowed by violence?" (page 70) The historical parallel to the reciprocal unfolding of the French and Haitian Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century would be the interpenetration of proletarian revolution in the West and colonial revolution in Africa and the East, each encompassed within a specific dynamic of social movement but each also clearing the way for the other. Here is how James himself analyzes the elements on which the strategic perspective in 1938-39 for the African revolution rested, and we will have to be pardoned for quoting at such length:

> But the book had other premises, raising urgent questions which had to be radically revised and are by no means settled. It took armed rebellion for granted as the only road to metropolitan and colonial freedom and from this premise flowed

certain theoretical perspectives. The San Domingo Revolution had been directly inspired by the French Revolution, had developed side by side with it, and had had an enormous influence upon the course of that Revolution. The book therefore constantly implied that the African revolution would be similarly contingent upon the socialist revolution in Europe. It did not envisage an independent movement of Africans as being able to succeed in face of the enormous military power that a stable imperialist government would be able to bring to bear. This has been apparently contradicted by the experience of the Gold Coast Revolution, but conversely reinforced during the same period by the experience of the revolt in Kenya. If a British Government had been unable to send assistance to Kenya, or a revolutionary British Government had been in a position where the success of the Kenya revolt against the counterrevolution was necessary for its own preservation (that is what hap-

pened during the French Revolution) the revolt in Kenya, though made by the same people, Would have been entirely different. It would have had socialist allies and would have been made under socialist slogans, representatives of the British Government would have taken part in it and guided it, and the result, particularly in the modern world, would have been an African Government under which (of this there can be no question to any who have studied the San Domingo Revolution) white settlers, once they saw no other way out, would have fraternised, male and female, with General Kimathi, General China and their associates and successors. This has happened before and will happen again, and we must not be too surprised if from limbo querulous voices assure us that this too was the settled policy of His Majesty's Government. Whatever the future of tropical Africa will be, one thing is certain, that it will not be what the Colonial Powers are trying to make of it. It will be violent and strange, with the most abrupt and unpredictable changes in economic relations, race relations, territorial boundaries and everything else.

The work of the Bureau continued all through the war and in 1945 there came a sharp break with the theory outlined above. The Bureau changed its position from the achievement of independence by armed rebellion to the achievement of independence by non-violent mass action. But to say that is one thing, to carry it out in practice is another. The problem has never been treated fully even in the publications of the Bureau, and it is time that this was done. . . .

. . . In a colonial country and especially in tropical Africa, these moves and counter-moves (when the revolution and counter-revolution are approaching an ultimate crisis) are impossible. The colonial government in power can call upon the power of the metropolitan country as soon as it is aware of any dangerous movement against it. To stake independence upon armed rebellion was therefore to have as a precondition the collapse or military paralysis of the metropolitan government. It was in other words to place the initiative for African struggle upon the European proletariat. In the *Black Jacobins* are the words: "Let the blacks but hear from Europe the slogans of Revolution, and the *Internationale,* in the same concrete manner that the slaves of San Domingo heard Liberty and Equality and the *Marseillaise,* and from the mass uprising will emerge the Toussaints, the Christophes, and the Dessalines. They will hear." Those were exactly the ideas that we had had.

. . . But by the end of the war the proletariat of Britain and France had not spoken. Imperialism still held sway at home. Only a radical alteration in theory could form a basis for action. The perspective of armed rebellion was abandoned (though held in reserve) and non-violent mass action was substituted.

The Black Jacobins can finally be said to have revolutionized historical writing in ways dealing both with conception and method. Firstly, it initiated the destruction of the accepted scholarship in regard to the Abolition question in England. The death blow to the view that abolition sprang from pure and philanthropic motives came with Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1949), which was originally presented as a doctoral thesis at Oxford, but which Williams himself admitted was first outlined in Chapter II of James's book, *The Owners*. This in no way detracts from the eloquent brilliance of Williams's work in demolishing, according to James, that "venal race of scholars, profiteering panderers to national vanity, (who) have conspired to obscure the truth about abolition." (page 51) It is now part of common historical knowledge that first the slave trade, and later slavery itself, were abolished in the West Indian islands for reasons that were largely *economic,* namely, that African slavery, once the gigantic source of capital accumulation in Europe, and without which the Industrial Revolution could not have taken place at the pace and in the form in which it did, was no longer profitable. Economic growth in Europe and its accompanying demands for free exchange of manufactured goods were at the root of slavery's liquidation. The force of "philanthropy" had meaning only in that context.

If that was a considerable breakthrough in the way of historical understanding which James's work made possible, the second excavation in historical conception achieved by *The Black Jacobins* has been even more significant. Put simply, historical analysis of the existence and nature of servile revolt took on completely new meaning. Taken together with his more schematic *A History of Negro Revolt* (1939), James's work laid the foundation for the later systematic analyses of slave and colonial resistances, as well as the factor of radical consciousness realized as self-activity in the life of the "inarticulate" slave and colonized person. Prior to James's two books there had been Norman Leys' tentative inquiry, *Kenya* (London, 1926), and George Padmore's *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* (London, 1931). The work, however, which it most nearly resembles and in fact complements in a quite remarkable manner is W. E. B. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction* (1935). What both works demonstrated most notably was the essential role which Black emancipation played in effecting the course of these wider historical changes in which it was enmeshed.

But all this takes us much too wide afield. We should end simply by reiterating that C. L. R. James arrived in England in March 1932 and left for America in October 1938 — slightly more than six-and-a-half years, in which he added significantly to the emancipation and understanding of the human condition.

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Marxism in the U.S.A.

By Paul Buhle

The claim that C. L. R. James is a major contributor to revolutionary thought, not only as regards Pan-Africanism but every major aspect of the Marxist legacy, may seem even now exaggerated or mistaken. He has been no demigod of the younger generations like Herbert Marcuse, has no European intellectual reputation on the scale of a Sartre, his books do not even sell so briskly as those of his *bete noir* from decades ago, Belgian Trotskyist Ernest Mandel. When I approached a leading American Left book publisher in 1970 with a proposal for a C. L. R. James anthology, the editor politely suggested to me that the author's work could gain attention "on Black subjects only." That has been an all-too-characteristic response. Yet I am persuaded that if civilization survives the threat of nuclear annihilation another quarter century, James will be considered one of the few truly creative Marxists from the 1930's to the 1950's, perhaps alone in his masterful synthesis of world history, philosophy, government, mass life and popular culture. The retrenchment of revolutionary forces through much of the era, the growth of new conditions which caught Party leaders and theoreticians confused and wrong-headed, partly accounts for James's current obscurity. The problem of an emergent alternative beyond Stalinism and Trotskyism, beyond Welfare State and One-Party State in every part of the globe, offers the rest of the explanation. The sometimes recondite vocabulary and secluded political context of James's American writings must no longer blind us to the larger significance of what he undertook.

James has, first, been almost entirely outside what Perry Anderson has called "Western Marxism," the drift of Marxist theory from the revolutionary parties to the academies between the 1920's and today. Anderson's *Considerations on Western Marxism* names Lukacs, Korsch, Gramsci, Benjamin, Horkheimer, Della Volpe, Lefebvre, Adorno, Sartre, Goldmann, Althusser and Colletti as those key thinkers who have reshaped the conception of what Marxism is and what it can do. Only Gramsci and Korsch might be remotely considered activists, and their theoretical work mostly took place after they had been removed by prison or exile from the center of the fray. Anderson might have included E. P. Thompson or Raymond Williams; he certainly should have included W. E. B. DuBois. But his schema has a certain logic as the internalization of political defeat, the return to exegetics, to philosophic and aesthetic mediations upon Marxist theory as an end in itself.[1] Missing is an aggressive statement of politics, the working class and its allies *as they move through* these largely disastrous decades, and of their interrelations with the movements of the Third World. That was quite beyond most such thinkers, as it has been beyond the functionaries high and low of the Socialist, Communist and Anarchist movements in Europe and America who piled formula upon formula without adding greatly to what the generations of Marx and Lenin had set out.

Secondly, James has been outside the dialogue among the political Left's power-brokers for nearly all these years because of his insistence upon two points: the continuing revolutionary potentiality of the working class, and the historic obsolescence of the Vanguard Party as known in Lenin's time. Had he declined either half of this proposition, he might have garnered interest in a New Left which repudiated class along with Party, or in a post-New Left Leninism which returned to the Vanguard out of pessimism about the self-organizing capacity of its intended constituency. As far back as the mid-1940's, one of James's sharpest critics complained that he could not comprehend the organizing role of the Vanguard and therefore exaggerated "the utter collapse of capitalism" in order to promote "the spontaneous character of the rise of working class consciousness and the working class struggle, not merely against capitalism as such, but above all, for such a conscious goal as Socialism."[2] Between James's views and those of neo-Vanguardism, or James's views and Social Democratic reformism there can be no final reconciliation, any more than the political movements presuming working class disintegration and obsolescence could have any comfortable agreement with James.

The misapprehension of James' position, the sincere but mistaken reference to it as "Syndicalist" or "Anarchist" in its treatment of Party and State, throws into relief the third and greatest problem. For the essential question of politics as such has been, for James, not merely the form of intervention but the *content* inevitably replete with the heritage of Western thought and world culture, the full range of talents and energies that ordinary people bring to the revolutionary struggle, and the corruption that traditional political institutions (including those of the Left) have suffered. In an age of pessimism, even the statement of a teleology which brings forward the proletariat as outcome of a vast historical process seems anarchistic — so far has "Western Marxism" fallen. Socialism has been for James concretely, personally and theoretically what it has been only in general or rhetorical terms for the rest of formal Marxist thought: a question of civilization.

This inestimable contribution can be analyzed in a number of ways. Here I will stress the revolutionary problematic most puzzling in the world, for a number of reasons, to Marxist thought: the American scene. Most highly developed of industrial capitalist nations, behemoth of the twentieth century, it has never (and contrary to all orthodox Marxist anticipations) rendered up a European-style mass workers' party, never a Third World variety of all-encompassing political organization, remained impervious for the most part to the very texture of formal Marxism. Yet it has — in all modesty for any national claims — produced again and again political, social and cultural movements that surprised revolutionaries and others the world over, supplied heroic personalities, slogans and songs carried to every section of struggling humanity. Sometimes its labor insurgencies, most recently the CIO, have showed the way forward. The distance between Marxist political expectation and reality has surely been one of unprecedented proportions. James's contribution has spanned that gap imperfectly, to be sure, but with so much energy and insight that we have yet to measure his work's significance. He accomplished this by comparing European Marxism and West Indian Nationalism to the American situation, hardly satisfying those who carried the familiar banners or successfully reaching that massive majority outside the Left political discussion altogether. But the traces are there, and the impact has already been felt in subtle ways.

James could make a unique theoretical contribution because of his own talents and effort, of course, but also because he arrived in a key moment and stood in a special place among those on the American scene. From the late 1930's to the 1950's the political forces of the Left exhausted themselves, lost their following as the immigrant generations aged and no group of workers took their place. From the first years of the CIO to the post-

Everywhere across the Southern landscape young Negroes picked up the aspiration of their fathers, rekindled it, and started marching.

War strikes to the 1950's wildcats, and from the Black labor activity and Harlem demonstrations of the 1930's-40's to the monumental Civil Rights outbreak of the 1950's, mass movements had gone beyond the leadership that the Left had expected to provide. Meanwhile, and unlike so many other promising intellectuals from the 1930's, James was not to be overwhelmed by Hitler's rampage, Stalin's crimes and the failure of an immediate revolution after the Second World War. Historian of colonialism, James had seen greater slaughters, even, than the Holocaust of the Jews, civilizations exterminated and abolished from memory, peoples suffering incalculably from poverty and self-hatred pick themselves up and fight to throw off the oppressor. He stepped out of West Indian and British political life so confident about the colonial revolt and the character of working class solidarity that he instinctively looked beyond the weakness of the Left to the mobilized forces themselves. Having no illusions about the Soviet Union or Stalinism, moreover, he had no hopes in that quarter to lose. He saw the revolutionary process with fresh eyes.

But James's resilience, adaptability and creative energies are not a matter of race and formal politics only. He remarks in *Beyond A Boundary* that when Trotsky assailed sports as a mere distraction from the class struggle, James knew the thesis to be wrong.[3] Like the American Communists of the 1930's-40's who, in some of their finest moments, fought for the integration of professional baseball, cheered with Harlem to the profoundly political exhilaration of Joe Louis's ring victories, James recognized the ways in which popular life had in some measure displaced or replaced the literal political intensity of Europe. If he turned to Hegel and the deepest roots of Marxian thought — in tune with Whitman's proclamation of that giant as the "most American philosopher" — James did so because his background and experiences drove him to reevaluate the revolutionary process as a whole. Here, where the roads of race and class, popular life, culture and practice cross, is James's American accomplishment.

1

We can appreciate this better in light of the American Marxism that had existed for some three generations when James came onto the scene. No brief sketch will do justice to a subject that James noted as utterly unique and whose analysis he looked upon as a task that should have fallen on other shoulders than his own. A highlighting of some prominent features permits,

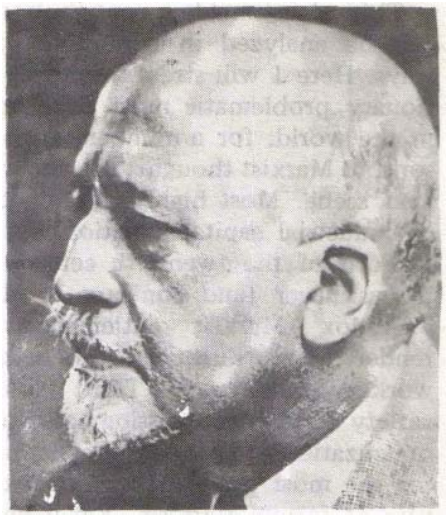
however, a sense of the crises that James alone addressed directly, in theoretical and practical terms, systematically as his circumstances allowed.

Marxism in the U.S. had been in the first instance an immigrant sensibility. The reason is not mysterious. The internal strength of collective class self-identification, of tenacity across periods of defeat and isolation, for generations belonged foremost to those who brought with them a heritage of centuries and a set of beliefs and practices which bound up daily habits in *a* coherent unity. The proletariat stood as unifying element, but the success of the Left combined small businessmen, professionals, family members and all conscientious supporters of the ethnic group and of its homeland's best interests. Socialists, later Communists offered a mediation by which the immigrant could accept the oppressive, discriminatory, chaotic and frightening American reality as transitory, international revolution and a common brotherhood of working peoples as immanent truth of real progress.

The same immigrant radicalisms, singly or together, could not by themselves transform America. Only in some industries did their nationalities hold a commanding position. Outside the industrial Northeast, the Midwest and pockets of strength elsewhere, they remained alien to the nation. Many did not or could not vote, much less challenge the power of the two-party system. At a still deeper level, they had to compromise the internal dynamics of their movements with the possibilities imposed by the economic system and the waves of labor radicalism, the objective opportunities for alliance with non-proletarian groups (e.g., farmers) and with the contours of the international revolutionary movements. To hold onto their strength and to confront wider America required more than skill and tenacity, a real sense of what a minority radical movement can do.[4]

The clues were many, but ambiguous. How to balance internationalist aims with desire for influence within an often racist, xenophobic, exclusive male labor movement? This was not a matter of mere opportunism. Frequently, the very movements which seemed to catch the threads of an impulse beyond that of European labor (like the Knights of Labor, the Populists, Woman Suffrage and Black movements) had the least conscious ideological affinity to Marxism, claimed to organize themselves on non-class lines and aim at something more "American" than Socialist. The immigrant communities repeatedly played a decisive role in the struggle for labor advance. But they found their recruits outside their own ranks only in a scattering of intellectuals, political and labor leaders, and short-lived mass constituencies. At times and places this combination nearly dominated American intellectual and cultural life, and promised to help lead the labor movement to a New Jerusalem. Still, something had never connected in the European sense. And Marxism as formal doctrine remained a curious mixture of fumbling exegesis, rote learning, and creative leaps which never quite found a spot to land.[5]

There have been instructive exceptions. W. E. B. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction,* written only two years before James's *The Black Jacobins,* is one of the classic works of modern revolutionary thought. Perhaps the key methodological truth of the study is that DuBois *brought to* Marxism a decisive view of American history, a sense of the U.S. experience in world terms, that the perspectives of Marx and Lenin helped DuBois to clarify and articulate. DuBois seems not to have been greatly influenced by other American Marxists. But he stood in a tradition of those who sought to measure the "abstract internationalism" (or a blind eye turned to any distinctions among the proletariat) against the reality of race and ethnic diversity, European Marxist orthodoxy against a



W. E. B. DuBois

more fluid and adaptive sense of history and practice.[6] In a subtle and complex way, this alternative conception had also been a key to the questions of the State and of Culture some time before James came onto the scene.

Twenty years earlier, the rise of mass strikes on an unprecedented scale, the aggressive State intervention of Woodrow Wilson's administration and the prospect of World Revolution coming out of the First World War had inspired a real (if diffuse and little-remembered) theoretical breakthrough. Translator of *Anti-Dühring,* theorist of the IWW and perhaps the deepest philosophical thinker of the Socialist movement, Austin Lewis, came to concentrate his attentions upon the fierce struggle *within* the working class. The unskilled, foreign-born and unorganized proletariat had until the strike waves of 1909-13 and 1915-19 been under the whip-hand of the native-born, skilled AFL member. Through mass actions, they asserted their own leadership. Now Lewis foresaw the future in the single metaphor of the Mexican-American workers in Southern California (for whom he provided legal counsel): lacking any union emblem for a Labor Day parade banner, they had emblazoned the simple slogan, "WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE." Likewise their counterparts among the Eastern European immigrant workers in

the new-built factories of heavy industry, brought together by the conditions of production, signified for Lewis the development of a truly modern revolutionary movement. Not the battle against feudal remnants still carried on in Europe; not the backstairs resistance of the fading American petty-bourgeoisie against monopolism that had dominated American reform and Socialist political mentality; but the machine proletariat in Marx's terms, on its own turf, learning the lessons that only mass production could teach.[7]

Lewis's contemporary, William English Walling — a founder of the NAACP's forerunner, the Niagara Movement, and for a time also a propagandistic supporter of the IWW — saw the other side of the equation. The State, manipulating the heterogeneity of the workforce to draw strength and definition at the moment of ascending monopoly capital, would increasingly tend to pull the petty-bourgeoisie, the new white collar worker and the surviving labor aristocrat into a formation which unified behind the imperialistic war effort and continued ruthless exploitation of the basic industrial worker.[8]

Intuitively, and without theoretical elaboration in classic Marxist terms, Lewis, Walling and a handful of others had guessed at the leap Lenin proposed in *Imperialism:* to explain both the basis for opportunism in the labor movement, and the possibilities of a revolutionary outbreak that began from the bottom of the workforce and swept away the accumulating State apparatus. Louis Fraina, first American Communist ideologue and populariz-er of the Russian Revolution for an American Left audience, added an element that might be seen best in the U.S. Drawn to the examination of mass cultural life even as the Russian events unfolded, Fraina proposed that the dance styles, which grew out of Black music and provided the immigrant working class youth measures of freedom in the great metropolitan ballrooms,

The Lindy Hop
Miguel Covarrubias

had in themselves an important contribution to make to the revolutionary process. As ordinary working people found the means to express themselves creatively, collectively across the Old World boundaries, they emancipated themselves for a higher level of consciousness. And — he might have added with his bohemian counterparts in other sections of the Left cultural movement — they came to appreciate at some levels that the Black contribution would become ever more apparent and essential.[9]

These few writers, looking to their own experience and a partial re-evaluation of Marxist basics, had come a long way toward the perceptions that James broadened into theoretical understanding. Between themselves and him lay twenty years of Left retreat to home base in the immigrant ghettoes, international complications, and a slow but extraordinarily painful learning process in the complexities of American life. The Garvey Movement (and the directives of the Comintern) clarified the Black experience as central to the U.S., past and future, industrial, social and political. Trade union work showed the levels of contradictions by which downgraded craft workers often led in the unionizing effort, and the industrial union leadership could actually use the available government mechanisms (as the garment workers had already in the First World War) to gain recognition. Meanwhile the vital, continuing immigrant radicalism demonstrated the tenacious self-identification of militants who remained firm in their basic racial or ethnic differences beyond the factory gates.

The irony of American Communism is that these lessons soaked in, became mass initiatives rather than slogans and good intentions, as the Communists entered the New Deal coalition. Anti-Fascism, the international Popular Front and the atmosphere of progressive democracy enabled sections of the Left to do what the revolutionaries who launched American Communism could not have imagined: to help develop "Mass Action" (i.e., the sit-down strikes), guide radical popular culture (Woody Guthrie, the public music concerts From Spirituals to Swing, a Black showcase in 1937, to Socialism in Swing, a Young Communist League spectacle two years later), ardent support of the most downtrodden sectors of labor into mechanisms for advancing Left interests *within* a State Capitalist regime.[10]

This turnabout, and the steady disintegration of the strategy from 1939, left radicals of all kinds flat-footed. Marxist theory had become among Communists even more than their rather casual Socialist predecessors a system of political self-justification; strategy a patchwork thing with hardly anything in common but general notions of class. The sharp breaks from the Second International parliamentarist expectations before World War I, from the primitivist Third International insurrectionism of the early 1920's, had been put aside, repudiated, but never seen as necessary or logical

stages in the revolutionary process. In short, nothing had prepared Marxists for the crisis of the Second World War and after. The development of a dual labor market, the erosion of the first- and second-generation immigrant base of the Left, the advance of cultural questions toward the center of the stage in the post-war working class — these were for the Left a catastrophe hidden only by the more obvious catastrophe of Cold War. Something had come to an end, without the Marxists ever coming to terms with what had been in motion. Enter C. L. R. James.

II

James set foot upon the American scene just as the old ways reached a climactic end to their development. From the "Roosevelt Recession" of 1937 to "Doctor Win the War" and the Truman administration, the ugly side of the welfare state revealed itself step-by-step, no transition to Socialism but a more sophisticated (and potentially more vicious) stage of Capitalist hegemony. Although the Communist Party reached its numerical peak of 80,000 during wartime, it had become a virtual agent of State Capitalism in Russia and America, as its bitter opposition to A. Philip Randolph's planned March On Washington, its avid support of the No Strike Pledge and of the Minneapolis Trotskyists' prosecution by the government all attested. Interlocked with the Red Army invasion of postwar Eastern Europe — "Revolution from the Tank Turret" carried out with the imprisonment or murder of opposing radical and democratic forces as if no other form of liberation were now imaginable — the Communist direction showed something more than "betrayal" had taken place. The Party's ethnic and race following, which had in a certain sense compensated for its limited cadre outside the leadership of industrial unions, drifted away. Whatever its future, American radicalism would be something very different from what it had been. James' genius was to perceive this entire political process as a natural and inevitable one, the outgrowth of newer phases of Capitalism, and to locate from within the mass of population its dialectical opposite, seeds of a new life within the shell of the old.[11]

The "Negro Question," conceived in the broadest terms, can be seen as the illuminating insight that directed James to a fresh perspective. It had been the analysis of the Black masses in the West Indies that first gave a political focus to his wide-ranging intellectual interests, helped him not only to write *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* and *The Black Jacobins* but also sharpened his critique of Stalinism in *World Revolution.* The inextricability of the international influence upon any radical prospects, the ability of Lenin to see beyond the Party to the potentials of mass stirrings and in turn to use the Party for the fulfillment of mass democratic prospects, the Communist perception that masses revolt on slogans and for concrete ends rather than from some abstract ideal — all these carried into James's observations of American Blacks. Within a year or so of his American residence, he had outlined a program which confronted not only the Left's handling of the Black Question per se but also hinted strongly at a very different orientation on a spectrum of strategic matters. Out of these, theoretical ramifications would be seen very soon.[12]

James's "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question" struck at the base of the white Left's previous approach. He insisted that Trotskyists support the "formation of an organization to rally Negroes, which would be reformist at the start, but which would develop at once into militancy." Not an organization with strings pulled by the white Left, as even the best of the Communist "front" organizations turned out to be in moments of political stress; but rather one outside formal socialist ranks, beyond manipulation as a recruiting ground, demanding no specific socialist politics as condition for membership. In short: an organization with the autonomy that had never been granted ethnic, racial or other entities within the Left; a fundamental breach of Leninist (or even Second International) concepts of discipline in the name of self-organization. This, and James's opposition to the slogan of Black (territorial) Self-Determination, proved sticking points with Trotsky, who engaged James in dialogue at Coy-coyan in 1939. James wanted revolutionaries to suggest tactics and specific struggles, to aid the formation of a movement, but to remove their hand from the lever and to support the ultimate goals Blacks themselves raised up — including Self-Determination only if they deemed this desirable to emancipation in a multi-racial American order. Organization versus spontaneity? In part, but in larger part, Europe versus America.[13]

One could draw a straight line from James's observations of Garveyism in his 1938 *History of the Negro Revolt* to the culmination of his decade-long wrangling with American Trotskyists in the groundbreaking 1947 conference document, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the U.S." The high estimation of Garvey's impact James based not on formal Back-to-Africa politics but rather on the sense of pride, racial and international solidarity against centuries of oppression that Garvey aroused. What James called the "social service attitude" of the Left could never stoke the "fires that smolder in the Negro world" and showed themselves vividly in social life:

> Let us not forget that in the Negro people, there sleep and are now awakening passions of a violence exceeding, perhaps, as far as these things can be compared, anything among the tremendous forces that capitalism has created. Anyone who knows them, who knows their his-

> tory, is able to talk to them intimately, watches them in their churches, reads their press with a discerning eye, must recognize that although their social force may not be able to compare with the social force of a corresponding number of organized workers, the hatred of bourgeois society and the readiness to destroy it when the opportunity should present itself, rests among them to a degree greater than in any other section of the population in the United States.[14]

Through that perception, moreover, James could follow and extend DuBois in turning the concept of American history around. Blacks had, with their allies the white Abolitionists, forced the bourgeoisie toward Civil War. Only by their emancipation could that struggle have been won, and the South truly reconstructed. Only through their success could a Populist movement have restrained an advancing Capitalism. And only by their actual advance could the CIO come into its own. With broadening, deepening relevance to the revolutionary prospect, the independent Black movement *precipitated* the political forces of Socialism.

No American radical had gone so far, and none would carry these ideas further until the 1960's. That James's views became gospel for the orthodox Trotskyist movement is a minor (although interesting) concern, with indirect links to white Left recognition of Malcolm X and the early "Black Power" slogans. More important, James had set himself against Communist fundamentals in a precise fashion, without renouncing revolutionary intention, Leninist legacy, or direct political involvement.

James's perception of the CIO struggle in a wholly unique fashion, his analysis of the Communists' support for bureaucratic tendencies within the labor movement, extended the insight into the process of revolutionary transformation and the limitations of the existing Marxist comprehension. With a small group of collaborators inside the Trotskyist Workers Party, James began to insist that — contrary to the perceptions that cut across other differences among the American Left — the working class was not backward by true Marxist standards. Like the keen observer of early CIO strikes, Louis Adamic, who pinpointed in the militant workers the most democratic impulse in the nation, James recognized the instinctual grasping for

Leon Trotsky in Mexico, 1940

the Universal of Socialism — not a change in the form of property but the very negation of the dominant social relations. "More political party than trade union," he was to say later, the CIO embodied the response to the foremost challenge that modern capitalist industry ever set before its exploited.[15]

The system of sweated labor pioneered by Ford evinced a totalitarian economic mentality, scientifically rationalized production with closer inter-capitalist relations and the intervention of the State as mediator. This marked the culmination of industrial and political development over the centuries, and unchallenged, would signify the subordination of every democratic possibility to the demands of capital. But intertwined with that development, at every step, had been elements of resistance, from the battles of the weavers in the medieval cities to the actions of the ranks in Cromwell's Army, to the revolt of the masses in the French Revolution to the rise of the Paris Commune and finally the Soviets in Russia. True to Marx, James had seen the proletariat as the embodiment of the revolutionary prospect. Even his San Domingo slaves of the nineteenth century, "working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories . . . were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at that time, and [their] rising was, *therefore,* a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement."[16] (My emphasis.) Not prepared by some external agent, but by the conditions of life and work, with a natural leadership thrown up in self-conscious striving for a better life. The modern class struggle pressed home the ultimate proletarian goals, abolition of value production and abolition of hierarchies invested through the division of mental and manual labor. Like Austin Lewis a generation earlier observing the mass strikes of unskilled foreign-born workers, James looked at the early, dynamic stages of CIO industrial unionism and declared

the shop-floor struggle to be "Socialism . . . the only Socialism."[17]

And still, the weight of institutions loomed heavier than ever upon the proletarian impulse. As Walling had seen the earliest stages of State Capitalism taking on craft workers as ballast against the unskilled proletariat, James analyzed the next stage as the decisive unfolding of State Capitalism. In the U.S., the working class had moved forward to institutionalize its power through the unions. But because circumstances had not grown desperate enough or the progressive forces strong enough for revolutionary change, the net result had been the creation of a new intermediary stratum, the labor bureaucracy. That the functionaries were often Communists signaled to James the new level of internal contractions within the system, generating a political mood which re-established at the new level the *essential* dichotomy of rulers and ruled.

This symmetry bespoke a weighty analysis, indeed. James had observed in *World Revolution* that Stalin intuitively chose to rely upon the Party bureaucracy or even the bourgeoisie to carry out the interests of the Russian State, as Lenin had chosen the masses in creative moments to override both. As James and his collaborators began to perceive through study of the Russian scene, Stalin was a knave but no fool. He had correctly understood the objective formation of a new power base in the State bureaucracy itself, perverse extension of Lenin's insights in *Imperialism.* Dramatic change, at least in the West, no longer served a Third International which had, like the Second International before it, been transformed from revolutionary agency to the special interest group of a particular strata. American Communist union leaders who banked the fires of resistance through crackdowns on wildcats and subtler measures like the dues check-off, who thought in terms of industrial rationalization and international consumer marketing alongside their corporate opposite numbers, constituted the "American bureaucracy carried to its ultimate and logical conclusion," State Capitalist functionaries-in-progress. Their willingness to compromise the integrity of the proletarian impulse indicated no necessary corruption or personal gain, but the hankering after a higher logic. They had repudiated private Capitalism without believing that the classic proletariat of Karl Marx could in the foreseeable future rule itself.[18]

> Stalinism is a necessary and inevitable form of development of the labor movement.

In later years, James sought to penetrate still further the logic that ruled Communist parties and kept the unquestionably idealistic ranks in a curious stasis between radical and liberal perspectives. "Stalinism is a concrete truth . . . a necessary, an inevitable form of development of the labor movement," he argued by 1951, no distortion of history (in the final sense) but the working out of a logic inherent in the uneven pace of world revolution.[19] The world *was* divided into two camps, the moreso after the Second World War. And yet despite the futility of Trotskyist panegyrics against Communist misleadership, despite the rubble of war and growing fears among non-Communists that revolutionary options had become almost unthinkable, James insisted that a promising stage had been reached.

"The one-party state is the bourgeois attempt to respond to the contemporary necessity for the fusion and transcendence of nation, class, party, state," James argued boldly.[20] The increasing concentration of social and economic power in a few hands, even in the once politically diffuse democracies, pointed in the same direction. When the society as a whole increasingly perceived the forces of production (the working class) to be essentially *social* and not merely economic, the working class stood objectively closer than ever to cutting the Gordian knot. The old categories that had held fast since the beginnings of Capitalism, the mysterious origin of the commodity in workers' labor-power on the one hand and the supposed autonomy of party and state on the other, lost their essential definitions. As Engels had predicted in *Anti-Dühring,* the last major text of the Marxian founding fathers, "concealed within" the very contradictions of this more highly organized Capital were "the technical conditions that form the elements of the solution." Working class elements themselves — and not merely their Socialist or Communist political representatives — had become (in Engels' words) "the invading Socialist Society" at the doorstep of the world order.[21]

Although hardly more than an outline of a world-view, this meditation of James compressed an extraordinary vision of socialism's place in world history into a current political position. As James explained in a 1947 position paper, "Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity," the philosophic position of Hegel that stood behind Marxism had been no more than a recognition of the human effort to resolve the contradiction between the "Abstract Universality" (equality, oneness in God's eyes) of the original Christian promise and concrete necessity. Hegel recounted — albeit in idealistic form — the stages of negation through which this struggle had to pass. Marxism gave this understanding, in turn, a material base and a political outlook. Not Rationalism, which had served the intermediate classes at every moment of bourgeois revolution, raising up the education, articulate-ness and supposed intelligence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie against the "backwardness," the "irrationality" of the masses. But the freed expression "by the prole-

tarian millions of their world-historical universality, no longer empirical but completely self-conscious . . . the total mobilization of all forces in society. That and nothing else can rebuild the vast wreck which is the modern world."[22]

So, too, was the prospect altered of what Marxism had meant and would mean to the prospects for Socialism. When James's little group published the earliest translations from Marx's *1844 Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts,* they sought to identify the sense of alienation, below the more obvious poverty and exploitation, that every modern working person suffers. "Be his wages high or low," as Marx wrote, that alienation remained fundamentally intolerable. Lenin had, in his finest moments, recognized the limitation in any change of property form as such. Trotskyism, the closest thing to a revolutionary succession, carried over the Party form without that awareness and unwittingly returned to what Marx had blasted as the "Vulgar Communism" of mistaking transcendence of private property for real socialist social relations. Now the Marxist group, if not to fall upon the same pointless contest to become the "real" Vanguard, had to take up the deeper purpose of demonstrating to the masses of people the power of their own creativity, "the socialism that exists in the population, the resentment, the desire to overturn and get rid of the tremendous burdens by which capitalism is crushing the people."[23] Or there would be no Marxism, no Socialist or Communist movement, worthy of consideration at all. From the young Marx laboring under Hegelian influence to the final Socialist impetus, the circle would be closed by Marxists who had come to grips with the world around them. The revolutionary movement would become explicitly what it had been implicitly, the amalgam of every progressive impulse in the history of the species, the vindication of humanity not for any external end (not even "Progress") but for its own sake.

Did James delude himself or disguise for political reasons the extent to which this constituted a break from all that historic Marxism (since, at least, the young Marx) had been? In one specific sense, yes. "Trotsky declared that the proletariat does not grow under world capitalism and declines in culture. This is absolutely false,"[24] James wrote in 1949. One may find hints in this or that Marxist literary commentary about the existence of a "Cultural Question." Never by the orthodox Marxists of the First, Second or Third Internationals, not even during the drive for a "Proletarian Culture" in the U.S.S.R. and abroad from the late 1920's to the mid-1930's was the proposition of culture *in itself* put forward as a basis for the revolutionary transition. Yet, understood in the broadest sense, it was the glue for James's philosophical, economic and political perspectives, his observation of workers' lives as a whole, their articulated and ill-expressed subjectivity the disproof of their supposed "backwardness." When he argued in his own last major theoretical document before his deportation that Captain Ahab of *Moby Dick* was the consummate bureaucrat ("abstract intellect, abstract science, abstract technology, alive, but blank, serving no human purpose") while the crew constituted the indestructible working class embracing risk, Nature and spontaneity, James placed the task of the true revolutionary to understand that cultural dichotomy above all and to choose Life over the promise of Power. Marxism at its best had implied this difference all along; but almost never had the cultural logic become ground for a real Communism.[25]

In another, quite intimately related sense, James had stated the basic propositions of an American Socialism which had never been the text of the formal Marxist parties. For James had cracked the nut of radicalism's relation with the racial, ethnic, social and cultural forces which had never fit into the smaller Marxism but nonetheless directed the potentialities of the revolutionary movement. The force of Blacks upon American political life seems in retrospect an almost obvious insight, but the implication that they arrived in politics under their own steam and brought Socialism upon the center-stage stood outside all conventional wisdom. The struggle within the class struggle that this interpretation implied defied the best of the Communists' "Black and White, Unite and Fight" perspective. And it was the logical outcome of the conflict between American-and foreign-born, skilled and unskilled which, as Austin Lewis had shrewdly perceived, reflected the final vestiges of a small-property tradition (translated into skill as a form of property) that reached back centuries against the totality of modern manufacture. The resolution to this conflict stood ultimately beyond the adjustments that a state-regulated Capital could make to the condition of the wage-earner.

There was much to this American radicalism that James did not and could not see from the secluded corner of the Trotskyist movement, isolated from other great elements of American reform. The significance of the ethnic strains, which had provided the immigrant with the taste of the Socialist future in the warmth of family and class ties, James glimpsed from afar. Not until the mid-1940's did he begin to write about that force which stood co-equal with Blacks in the Abolitionist movement, which bolstered ethnic radicalisms and contributed in large part the moral sensibility, the grassroots impetus to native Socialism: the women's movement. That the struggle (as James put it) against "an authority which inculcated the authoritarian character of the society as a whole" within the family circle might have an importance hardly less than that of the struggle for emancipated labor — this was a leap too far in one direction, too precise in totality for James's central conceptions.[26] Here

as in other areas like the profound effect of religious moralisms, or the unfolding of a radical aesthetic, one must say that the great questions of American Socialism received only an abstract answer at James's hands. But he achieved no small thing. The path he illuminated broadens out to a wide road that passes through valley and dale of theory and practice, the high mountain passes of profoundest human hope and the dark cities of toil and trouble. James has made his contribution to American radicalism, as a variant of the European experience. But foremost he has since the onset of his career placed international responsibilities upon the agenda, shown them inevitable as the connections between capitalism and the labor market worldwide. If he has returned Marxist theory from the darkness of the exegetical lumber rooms, it is because he has seen the working out of the deepest schema in the lives of ordinary people across the globe.

III

Many of the same themes reached a wide reading public, first in a pessimistic, then more hopeful and again more pessimistic vein. The rife alienation that James and his collaborators perceived in American life, if one can believe Albert Camus, grew out of the detective novel into the entire Existentialist philosophy. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* building upon themes that James's friend Richard Wright had developed earlier, pointed up what James had written about Communists in Harlem — but without proposing any solutions. Slowly, over generations, the Hegelianism of the Young Marx played a role in the revival of another Left, as did the vision of Corporate Liberalism (a general approximation of State Capitalism and Rationalist totality). By the late 1960's, the connection between Culture and Radicalism had become an all-pervasive topic of discussion and not only within the Left, Culture recognized as a powerful agent if not by any means coherently perceived. And in the time that has followed, the congruence of social history and radical commitment has been made abundantly evident, indeed become the Marxist scholarly commitment of hundreds who emerged with university training from the 1960's: a vision of ordinary people in the U.S. and everywhere, searching urgently for means to remake the quality of their existence. The New Left, the Women's Movement, above all the Black movement seemed at points to be expressing in political logic that insightful kernel James had opened up in his venture beyond orthodox Leninism. And the turn toward the working class by the early 1970's carried along his imperatives, to relocate the blue collar source of a future soviet.[27]

James's specific contribution and the totality of his view, with the partial exception of that emphasis upon Black initiative and self-activity, seemed however to have been lost on the cutting room floor. Part of the rationale surely resides in the groupuscule character of James's earlier efforts, publication and language so restricted by the Trotskyist context that twenty years hence the confused Fourth Internationalists James singled out for critique took the aspect of ghosts from some vanished political dynasty. And his books were, aside from the *Black Jacobins,* for all j; ractical purposes physically unobtainable.

There is also a deeper reason that goes back to the conflicts of the 1940's. When James redressed Trotsky's estimation of proletarian physical diminution and spiritual decline under later Capitalism, he militantly defended the "thesis of Marx that in the very crisis of capitalism the proletariat is ... prepared socially for its tasks, by the very mechanisms of capitalist production itself."[28] A few years after World War II, every avowed radical movement, whatever its formal ideology, shared Trotsky's pessimism. Stalinism and Social Democracy in particular had gone over to the belief that armies, bombs, political maneuver and foreign policy rather than the working class would rule the fate of the world. In James's own Workers' Party, the thesis of "Retrogression," as one key writer put it, placed "a question mark over the ability of the proletariat to reassemble a revolutionary leadership to take power before it is overtaken and destroyed by the disintegrative tendency of capitalist civilization of which threatening atomic war is the most potent force."[29] Against this defeatism every instinct of James rebelled. But his voice cried into the wind.

> the proletariat is prepared socially for its tasks by the very mechanisms of capitalist production itself.

By and large — with the exception of some rather brief political periods and some groups — the fundamental pessimism as regards the working class has never lifted. Indeed, one can say that it has permeated the best as well as the worst of political writing on the Left, from the philosophy of Herbert Marcuse to the social economics of Michael Harrington to the cultural ruminations of Ishmael Reed. When today a noticeably undoctrinaire Socialist writer looks to the possible futures of "a semi-corporatist liberalism," "a technocratic, authoritarian, neo-conservatism," or (in the best case) a "radical-democratic liberalism with populist elements," he cites as his future-looking guide the same Daniel Bell who James leveled against in 1949 for substituting technical for human solutions, and for excluding the

Socialist possibility altogether.[30] Even at the mundane level of tactics, many of James's complaints — that Marxist response to a widespread strike vacillated between complaints against labor's backwardness and assertions that it was not backward but needed the leadership of a (still unformed) Vanguard — have not been essentially outdated in thirty years.

The obscurity of James's contributions, beyond the problems of verbiage and context, can be summarized in the proposition that Marxists have not yet reconciled themselves with the subjectivity of the revolutionary subject. Whether this be the *locus classicus* proletariat is not even the essential matter. James has often glimpsed moments when the peasantry, entering into a transition to the modern order, can take the leadership of the whole social matrix. And he stressed that in the outbreaks of the future in the industrialized nations, students, women and other self-defined groups will represent themselves in the councils of transformation. Meanwhile, among the Marxist political groups, hardly even the most "spontaneist" have become seriously interested in popular life as a whole, beyond the factory gates, save to deplore consumerism, to place "real" (i.e., economic) class struggle against such delusions, to cite a Leftwing (generally Socialist Realist) artist here and there who has supposedly captured the palpitating dynamics of contemporary conflict. Only among the smallest minority have the (once) widely accepted notions of Black proletarian combativity been linked with a concept of that as lever for the rest of the working class and broader society, means for insight about the cultural particularities and possibilities across the demographic map. James, be it recalled, never elicited guilt from white workers; he made it clear that for them (and the rest of the nation) to accept Black equality in the fullest sense meant an acceptance of dramatic change in the whole social order.

Meanwhile, as the world revolutionary process has continued to accelerate, things have remained in a stasis for two generations: Socialists committed to one version or another of the State, with its perpetuation of mental versus manual labor; and Communists waiting for the working class to join some kind of Communist Party en masse. By-passed or in the future, James's contributions have never seemed quite timely.

James's perspective defies empirical proof, in the sense that nothing but Barbarism or Socialism can finally demonstrate such political conclusions. During World War II, James presciently referred to "Socialism *and* Barbarism," alive at the same moment, battling toward a finish that has only been postponed these forty years. But there is something more that James wrote from a deep sense of history and which the Left, the intelligentsia as a whole, has been unable or unwilling to absorb:

> We do not idealize the workers. . . But the very bourgeois society which has produced its most gifted body of thinkers and artists has also given birth to a proletariat which instinctively demanded the application to itself of every value which the philosophers and the various classes they represented had demanded throughout the ages. . . . Spinoza and Kant would stand aghast at what the average worker takes for granted today. But he does not demand them as an individual or in the primitive manner as the early Christian did.. .. These are the values of modern civilization. They are embodied in the very web and texture of the lives of the masses of the people. Never were such precious values so resolutely held as necessary to complete living by so substantial and so powerful a section of society. Socialism means simply the complete extension and fulfillment of these values in the life of the individual.[31]

This is even more than the prophets had foreseen, since the continuation of class society nourished a variety of liberational forces that might have been anticipated on the morrow of the Revolution. Yet it is also the ancient dream of Utopia realized.

To James, who early saw the human truth behind the civilized falsehoods about his West Indian people's capacities, this promise has never been a matter of dogma or blind faith. "We live our daily lives in the upper reaches and derivative superstructures of Marxism," he wrote in 1043. "We are not academicians and must perforce spend most of our time there. But the foundations and lower floors are huge unexplored buildings which we enter if at all in solitude and leave in silence. They have been shrines too long. We need to throw them open, to ourselves and to the public. . . ,"[32] Perhaps no Marxist has dug deeper into the subsoil of the Socialist heritage, from its distant origins to the philosophic foundation stones to the fructifying columns and arches which have been considered the holiest of holy additions. From the colonial background of the West Indies, from metropolitan London, from Harlem to Detroit to Africa, James has felt the confidence in the basic capacities and desires of plain people justified. "The unending murders, the destruction of peoples, the bestial passions, the sadism, the cruelties and the lusts, all the manifestations of barbarism . . . are unparalleled in history. But this barbarism exists only because nothing else can suppress the readiness for sacrifice, the democratic instincts and creative power of the great masses of people,"[33] James has written. The task of revolutionaries, to build upon those perceptions, those desires, has been often and sadly disappointed. But nothing short of nuclear holocaust encompassing the whole planet can obliterate the revolutionary option.

Footnotes

1. Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, 1976).
2. Albert Gates, "Politics in the Stratosphere," *New International,* IX (November 1943), page 311.
3. C. L. R. James, *Beyond A Boundary* (London, 1963 ed.), page 151.
4. See my essay, "Jews and American Communism: The Cultural Question," *Radical History Review,* No. 23 (Spring 1980).
5. I have explored this in my dissertation, "Marxism in the U.S., 1900-1940," University of Wisconsin, 1975, now being revised for publication.
6. See Paul Richards, "W. E. B. DuBois and American Social History: Evolution of a Marxist," *Radical America,* IV (November 1970).
7. Lewis's writings are scattered through *The New Review* and other publications. His most incisive single text is *The Militant Proletariat* (Chicago, 1911).
8. Waiting's major works were *Socialism As It Is* (New York, 1912), *The Larger Aspects of Socialism* (New York, 1913), and *Progressivism — And After* (New York, 1914).
9. This "Cultural Question" is explored at length in my forthcoming *Literature and the Multitude* (New York, 1981). See the collage of Fraina's essays from *Modern Dance* magazine in *Cultural Correspondence,* Nos. 6-7 (Spring 1978).
10. See my essay, "Jews and American Communism."
11. This view of the 1940's CP is argued best in a special number of *Radical America* on the 1940's, IX (July-August 1975), and most especially in Stan Weir's reminiscence, "American Labor on the Defensive: A 1940's Odyssey."
12. My thinking has been influenced by an unpublished paper, David N. Lyon, "C. L. R. James and the Negro Question in American Marxism," whose author we have been unable to locate to request permission for the essay's publication. James explained the origins of his historical analysis in *Letters on Organization* (Detroit, mimeographed, 1962), page 12.
13. The discussion has been reprinted in *Lean Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination* (New York, 1970 ed.).
14. James's resolution is now most accessible in *The Future in the Present* (Westport, 1977), quotation from pages 126-27.
15. Louis Adamic, *My America* (New York, 1938). James's quotation from *Notes on Dialectics* (Detroit, 1971 ed.), page 188.
16. C. L. R. James, *History of the Pan-African Revolt* (Washington, 1969 ed.), pages 5-6.
17. A separate essay would be required to trace James's evolution from the early 1940's; the evidence is abundant in *The New International* and in the *Bulletin* of the Johnson-Forrest Tendency (available in the Raya Dunayevskaya Papers).
18. C. L. R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Detroit, 1969 ed. from original 1950 publication), page 42. Like a number of other documents from the time, this work was in fact a collaboration with Grace Lee (now Grace Boggs) and Raya Dunayevskaya. See also C. L. R. James, *The Invading Socialist Society* (Detroit, 1972, from 1947 ed.), co-authored by Lee and Dunayevskaya.
19. *Notes On Dialectics,* page 22.
20. *Ibid.,* page 192.
21. *The Invading Socialist Society,* page 62; see Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duehring* (Moscow, 1969), pages 328, 331.
22. Reprinted as C. L. R. James, *Dialectic and History: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 1972).
23. Best articulated in C. L. R. James, *Perspectives and Proposals* (Detroit, mimeographed, 1966), page 39.
24. State *Capitalism and World Revolution,* page 34.
25. C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways* (New York, 1953), page 14.
26. Reprinted (from an unfinished work on women) in Selma James, "The American Family: Decay and Rebirth," *Radical America,* IV (February 1970).
27. Expressed in *Radical America* of the early 1970's: see, e.g., my essays borrowing upon James, "Marxism in the U.S.: 39 Propositions," V (September-October 1971) and "The Eclipse of the New Left: Some Notes," VI (July-August 1972).
28. State *Capitalism and World Revolution,* page 34.
29. Ernest Erber, "The Class Nature of the Polish *State," New International,* XI (August 1947), page 178.
30. David Plotke, "The United States in Transition: Toward a New Order?" *Socialist Review,* No. 54 (November-December 1980).
31. C. L. R. James, "Laski, St. Paul and Stalin," reprinted into *The Future in the Present,* page 100.
32. C. L. R. James, "Production for the Sake of Production — A Reply to Carter," Workers' Party *Bulletin,* No. 2 (April 1943) in Raya Dunayevskaya Papers.
33. *The Invading Socialist Society,* page 14.

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The fall of Kwame Nkrumah

by Manning Marable

> A man who has just come in from the rain and dried his body and put on dry clothes is more reluctant to go out again than another who has been indoors all the time. The trouble with our new nation . . . was that none of us had been indoors long enough. … We had all been in the rain together until yesterday. Then a handful of us — the smart and the lucky and hardly ever the best — had scrambled for the one shelter our former rulers left, and had taken it over and barricaded themselves in. And from within they sought to persuade the rest through numerous loudspeakers... that all argument should cease and the whole people speak with one voice. (Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People* [Garden City, New York. Anchor, 1967])

I

The heroic yet tragic figure of Kwame Nkrumah represents a major paradox within the history of African liberation struggles. As a leading theoretician and practical politician of Pan-Africanism, he shaped the direction of the British and French colonies in Black Africa during the post-Second World War period. Nkrumah's emergence as Prime Minister of the Gold Coast, or Ghana, his rise as a leader of the Third World, and his fall into political oblivion in the wake of a military coup in 1966, have been exhaustively explained and reviewed by Africanist scholars. One key toward understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Nkrumah's revolution, however, is within the writings of the Trinidadian socialist, political organizer and historian, C. L. R. James. James, along with Pan-Africanist George Padmore, had a pivotal role in young Nkrumah's intellectual development, and guided his steps to power. Before most Black and/or socialist critics, James also recognized the deep problems inherent within the Ghanaian revolution. The Nkrumah-James relationship reveals the distance between the rhetoric of Pan-Africanism and Ghana's "scientific socialism" and its reality.

Born in the village of Nkroful, Gold Coast, in 1909, Kwame Nkrumah was educated first at the teacher training college at Achimota. Borrowing money from a distant relative, he left the Gold Coast and spent twelve years abroad in the United States and Great Britain. It was during his sojourn in the U.S. at the time of the Great Depression and Second World War (1935-1945) that the young African intellectual became involved in the currents of Black nationalism, international socialism and Pan-Africanism. He was particularly influenced by the militant nationalism of Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914, and advocate of Black independent movements across the African diaspora. In New York City, Nkrumah first met another Black activist/intellectual who would play a major role in his subsequent political development, C. L. R. James.

It was through James that Nkrumah was initiated into the broader and more complex events of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialist struggle. During the years 1934-1936, James had been chairman of the International African Friends of Abyssinia, a committee whose "main purpose was to arouse the sympathy and support" of the West for the state of Ethiopia, having been overthrown by the fascist troops of Mussolini. In early 1937 James and other Black intellectuals formed the International African Service Bureau, which was the "forerunner" of the historically significant Pan-African Federation. James served as editorial director for the Bureau and later became editor of the Federation's journal, *International African Opinion.* James's international contacts during the decade of the 1930's and 1940's included a number of militants who would determine the political character of post-war Africa: Jomo Kenyatta, then an anthropology graduate student; T. R. Ma-konnen of British Guiana, general secretary of the Pan-African Federation in Britain; Chris Jones of Barbados; West African trade unionist Wallace Johnson; Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and premier scholar of Afro-American and African sociology and history, and George Padmore, born Malcolm Nurse in the West Indies, a former Communist and chairman of the London-based International African Service Bureau. When Nkrumah left the U.S. to enroll as a graduate student in London's University College, James provided him with a letter of introduction to Padmore. A firm personal and political relationship developed quickly between Nkrumah and Padmore, as both men served as joint political secretaries of the Fifth Pan-African Congress held at Manchester in March 1945.

With the active support of the Bureau, Nkrumah left London and returned to the Gold Coast in 1947. In James's words, Nkrumah's task was "to begin his preparations for the revolution which was to initiate a new Africa." He was immediately hired by Dr. Joseph Boakye Danquah, leader of the United Gold Coast Convention, to serve as the organization's general secretary and principal organizer. Within two years, Nkrumah had succeeded in mobilizing the African masses against British colonial rule beyond

anyone's expectations. On June 12, 1949, Nkrumah launched his own formation, the Convention Peoples Party <CPP). Demanding immediate self-government, the CPP gained the support of thousands of students, small cocoa farmers, market entrepreneurs, trade unionists and the growing African urban petty bourgeoisie. In January 1950, CPP trade unionists and militants called for a "positive action" campaign against the British leading to massive strikes and some violence against foreign-owned property. The British arrested and subsequently imprisoned Nkrumah, hoping that his detention would divide and destroy the independence movement. In the general elections of 1950, however, the CPP received overwhelming support from African voters, winning 34 of 36 legislative seats. Sir Charles Arden Clarke, the British Governor, had no alternative but to release Nkrumah and invite him to become "leader of government business." Nkrumah became Prime Minister of an all-African cabinet in 1956. In 1957 Ghana became the first independent African nation-state in the postwar period.

It was here that the paradox of "Nkrumaism" began to take shape. By the late 1950's, Nkrumah appeared on the world stage as the leader of African independence. With Fidel Castro of revolutionary Cuba, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Gamal Abdul Nasser, Nkrumah represented a new wave of Third World militancy and self-determination. Loved as a political leader abroad and studied as a serious socialist theoretician, he seemingly combined the attributes of a revolutionary "philosopher-king." His old comrades-in-arms were pleased with their successful protege. During the difficult years of the independence struggle, Padmore was Nkrumah's "personal representative" in London. Pad-more was appointed to a major foreign policy post and continued to advise Nkrumah until his death 1959. DuBois left the U.S. in October 1961 upon the invitation of Nkrumah to direct a major scholarly project, the *Encyclopedia Africana.* In his history of Ghana's revolution, James declared that Convention People's Party was "a creative adaptation of the most advanced political ideas of Western civilisation" within Africa, "the most important political instrument that has yet resulted from the European contact with tropical Africa." Speaking in Accra in July 1960, James asserted that if Nkrumaism "were adopted by the labour and socialist elements of the most advanced countries in the world it will not roll over Africa alone but it will lead to the emancipation of all oppressed peoples and classes in every section of the globe." James predicted that "when the time comes and the history of international socialism and the revo-

CLR James, George Padmore, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah (L to R).

lution to overthrow capitalism is written, at the head will be names like" Marx, Engels, Lenin and "Kwame Nkrumah." "The centre of the world revolutionary struggle is here in Accra, Ghana."

On February 23-24, 1966, the Ghanaian armed forces successfully initiated a coup d'etat against the Nkrumah government. There can be no doubt that the army's operation was generally supported by a significant percentage of the population. "The most astonishing aspect of the February coup was not that it took place at all," writes Trevor Jones in *Ghana's First Republic, 1960-1966,* "but that the ruling party and its integral wings collapsed so completely within the course of a few hours, offering no resistance to the takeover. Nkrumah's calls from exile for resistance over the next weeks fell on deaf ears. No elements of the party went underground and carried the struggle into the hills and forests." In his sometimes rambling, uncritical defense of the coup, Colonel A. A. Afrifa explained that "the only tangible basis for Nkrumaism is the man's own protean personality, maniacal tendencies, and essentially blurred visions of personal glory." Since 1957, "the former heroes like J. B. Danquah and others who were ready to sacrifice everything . . . had been killed or pushed aside. The new politicians became self-centered cowards without ideas, or 'comrades,' willing to denounce everything — honour, name, truth, and morals — in order to keep their place in the new ruling class and in the hierarchy of Nkrumah's circle." In *The Ghana Coup,* Hungarian political scientist Tibor Szamuely, a former instructor at Nkrumah's Ideological Institute, wrote:

> A careful scrutiny of the actual workings of Nkrumaism reveals that for all the "progressive" trappings and "socialist" declarations it was basically much nearer to the fascist than to the communist pattern.... The adoration of the Leader was indeed vital to the continued existence of the Convention People's Party dictatorship, for the "party" was totally dependent upon him. Apart from Nkrumah it had no real existence of its own — he was the sole expression of its corporeality. . . . Nkrumahist Ghana was an ideological state without an ideology, a one-party dictatorship without the party. It was also a Socialist state without a trace of socialism, whether of the Western or Eastern brand — if by "socialism" we mean something more than just extravagance, waste, incompetence and shortages. The Ghanaian economy under Nkrumah was basically a capitalist one. The "commanding heights" — the foreign currency earners — were ranged firmly in the private enterprise sector.

How can one begin to reconcile fundamentally contradictory views of Nkrumah's Ghana? Was Nkrumah's overthrow the failure of Pan-Africanism as an ideology for the emancipation of the Black diaspora? Or does the ordeal of Ghana's first republic provide a critical lesson in the strategies toward developing a theory and practice of Third World Revolution? What were the strengths and weaknesses of Nkrumah's politics?

II

The origins of the February 23-24, 1966 coup were formed over a decade before. An African opposition to Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party emerged with the establishment of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) in September 1954, at the old Ashanti capital of Kumasi. Its leader was Bafour Osie Akoto, a wealthy cocoa planter who had political ties to the ruling Ashanti chiefs. (Note: Nkrumah's people were the Nzima, who lived among the Fanti along the country's southwest coastline along the Atlantic Ocean.) Defeated at the polls, Danquah joined forces with the newly formed NLM, charging that his former associate was moving the nation down the road to communism. Ghanaian entrepreneurs and the aspiring Black bourgeoisie were also unhappy with Nkrumah's performance. The nation's major banks, Barclay's and the Bank of British West Africa, did not lend sufficient money to African businessmen to promote local commercial expansion. The British still controlled the currency system; even after independence, the country's currency was simply "the British pound printed on different colored paper." Ghana's Black bourgeoisie attacked Nkrumah for perpetuating British financial hegemony at their expense. And finally, the Ewe people of Eastern Ghana and the Mamprussi people of the Northern and Upper Regions expressed dissension because Nkrumah's public policies were, in their opinion, oriented heavily toward the South and specifically urban constituencies (Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi, etc.). By the elections of 1956, the joint opposition factions won 33 legislative seats to the CPP's 71 seats, and tallied over 40 percent of the popular vote.

From 1957 until early 1960, Nkrumah's general strategy was one of cooperation and nonconfrontation with U.S. and British capitalist interests. The Ghanaian state assumed control over the cocoa export trade, and ran the basic means of communication and transportation. The central means of production remained firmly under British control. Profits from gold mining production increased *annually* 35-50 percent in the late 1950's. Cocoa exports increased from 206,000 tons in 1956 to 405,000 tons in 1961. The CPP-controlled Trade Union Congress had grown more conservative. Graft and corruption among trade union bureaucrats helped indirectly to depress African workers' wages. Nkrumah's opponents were encouraged by the growing discontent against the government. However, the opposition was unable to stop the passage of a law banning tribally based political organizations in 1957. In 1958 the Preventive Detention Act was passed which allowed the government to arrest dissidents without criminal

charges. One of the first detained was Dzenkle Dzequ, an old colleague of Nkrumah who had left the CPP bitterly in 1958. Danquah was detained in 1961 and died in a small cell in Nsawam prison on February 4, 1965.

Part of Nkrumah's dilemma was found within the composition of the Convention People's Party. Unlike Amilcar Cabral's African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the CPP was not a vanguard party but a mass-based formation. Africans from all occupations and social strata had rallied to defend Nkrumah during the struggle against British colonialism in 1947-1951. The Black women who bartered and sold fresh produce in the crowded streets of Accra; the African intelligentsia, the enterprising attorneys and civil servants seeking to replace white officials in government posts, the militant trade unionists, mine and dock workers: all looked to the Osagyefo, Kwame Nkrumah, to deliver them from the shackles of their peculiar class/caste bondage. The contradictions and outright graft within his government had to be understood as part of the uneven process of political development within any newly liberated zone. As James later admitted, upon his visit to Ghana in 1960, "I found the educated section of the population seething with anger" against the "cancer" of official corruption. "They felt that they had made history — which they undoubtedly had. And now corruption was eating away at the foundations of the new state they so proudly cherished."

James recognized that "Ghana, from being the finest jewel in the crown of Africa, was [in 1960] obviously in a state of impending crisis." Despite delivering a speech to CPP leaders and cadres that spoke indirectly of "the perils I saw ahead," James made a difficult decision not to attack the Nkrumah program. "Against all criticism of the unquestioned anomalies of his regime, I stood firmly by the fact more important than all others added together that in a situation of enormous difficulty, on the whole he was not only doing his best but was, as politicians go, one of the most enlightened." James was not overly concerned about the detention of Danquah and other Nkrumah oppositionists. This "severity . . . drew no protests nor anguish from me," he noted later. "They were advocates neither of democracy nor even of the Christianity they professed." In a personal letter to Nkrumah, dated July 21, 1962, James stated, "you are one of the few of whom I can say that from the time I have known you, you have always had as your undeviating aim the emancipation from a subordinate position of the people of Africa and of African descent and your struggle for that emancipation in the context of worldwide events and the emancipation of the whole of humanity."

Nkrumah attempted to resolve the crisis of confidence by moving to the left, toward a domestic strategy of "peaceful transition" to state-directed socialism. The Cocoa Purchasing Company, for example, established in late 1952 to provide loans to small farmers and purchase cocoa for the export market, was dissolved amidst charges of massive fraud in administrative circles. Its bureaucratic successor, the Ghana National Trading Corporation, further undercut Black merchants and petty bourgeois entrepreneurs in the cocoa trade. Small cocoa farmers experienced severe losses in real income after 1960. Massive state-sponsored industrial projects were launched, chief among them the Volta Dam endeavor. In theory, the huge dam should have helped the nation's balance of payments deficit by providing electricity to export to neighboring countries. Unfortunately, no proper coordination existed between the hydroelectric dam project and planning centers in the privately owned corporations, Too much money was allocated for the dam, and not enough for state-controlled heavy industries that could have used the electricity. Since the vital means of industrial production was still retained by the British, the government could not develop a serious national economic program effectively or efficiently. On the international front, Nkrumah shifted from a pre-1960 policy of nonalignment toward a generally favorable attitude toward the Soviet Union and China. Junior officers who as late as 1959 were trained at the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy were being sent by 1962 to the Soviet Union. Nkrumah's involvement in the Congo crisis on the side of martyr Patrice Lumumba, combined with the growing presence of Soviet military and political advisers, created enemies among the conservative, British-trained officers in the military.

It must be emphasized that most of Ghana's fiscal distress could be traced directly to metropoles of world capitalism. Nkrumah's industrial and agricultural programs pro-

noted by the state sector were to be financed by the capital generated by cocoa exports. The price of cocoa peaked at *L*476 per ton in 1954 aid had never dropped below *L*200 per ton. The Seven-Year Development Plan projected a modest figure for cocoa at *L*200 per ton for the mid- and late-1960's. In 1965, the U.S. and British governments adopted policies which artificially lowered the world price of cocoa to i87 a ton. Both countries refused to lower trade barriers against processed and semi-processed cocoa products, as they had promised to do at the Geneva meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1964. The "economic squeeze," which would be used by subsequent American administrations against Allen-de's Chile in 1970-73 and Manley's Jamaica in 1978-80, was developed and perfected first against Nkrumah. The crisis within Ghana was also essentially a crisis within the CPP. This can be illustrated by a brief sketch of the careers of three of Nkrumah's most influential supporters: Komal Gbedemah, Krobo Edusei, and Tawia Adamafio. Gbedemah represented the petty bourgeois-entrepreneurial wing of the CPP. Imprisoned by the British in 1949 for six months, he nevertheless prepared his party for the municipal elections of the following year. As Vice Chairman of the CPP, Gbedemah stood second only to Nkrumah as the chief architect of the liberation struggle. James himself referred to Gbedemah in *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* as the "Trotsky leading the revolution" contrasted to Nkrumah-as-"Lenin." By the late 1950's Gbedemah was considered the party stalwart, first among all CPP activists who had built the organization from 1949 onward. As Minister of Finance and principal member of the presidential commission which ruled Ghana in Nkrumah's absences abroad, he wielded tremendous authority among middle class, urban and intelligentsia constituencies. In 1961, however, the control of the budget was transferred from the Finance Ministry to a newly formed Budget Secretariat under Nkrumah's control. After the labor strikes at Sekondi-Takoradi in September 1961 the government passed a Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill which greatly restricted domestic civil liberties. At the second reading of the bill, Gbedemah finally made public his opposition to the government, denouncing even the Preventive Detention Act as "an instrument of terrorism." He left Ghana in late December 1961 and joined the growing expatriate opposition against Nkrumah.

Krobo Edusei was perhaps the most popular leader of the CPP. A real "man of the people" in Achebe's terms, Edusei was a complete opportunist. In 1949 he organized people's courts to levy fines against Africans who refused to join in the boycott of white-owned stores. Monies were divided between himself and his own supporters. For years he enriched himself by pedaling governmental favors to the highest corporate bidder. Traveling extensively between Europe and Africa, Edusei acquired the reputation as a lavish entertainer and bon vi-vant. After one of his endless series of fiscal improprieties, Nkrumah dismissed him as Minister of Industries in April 1962. Despite all this, Edusei remained a leader of the powerful right wing of the CPP. His base of support was provided in part by his close personal/political ties to the Ashanti people. Edusei had participated vigorously in the construction of the police state apparatus. As Minister of the Interior in early 1957 he introduced the Preventive Detention Act without even first discussing the legislation with his party or cabinet members. To protect himself, he collected damaging political information on the Osagyefo with the intention of using the data "should he fall too far from grace."

Tawia Adamafio was certainly the most ambitious of all of Nkrumah's cadre. Born Joseph Tawia Adams, he Africanized his name as an act of defiance when he was employed at the supreme court as a clerk. Adamafio opposed the CPP during its early years. As a writer for the Accra *National Times* in 1952, he denounced the CPP as "the party of fooling and thieving." He participated in a raid against the CPP's central newspaper offices, and physically attacked the editor. In 1953 he served as assistant general secretary to an anti-Nkrumah political faction. By this time, however, Adamafio reassessed his political situation and decided to join Nkrumah's ranks. After the 1954 general election, Adamafio rose to the post of assistant general secretary of the CPP. As a law student in London in the mid-1950's, he worked with Padmore to establish the National Association of Socialist Student Organizations, a militant formation supported by the CPP. Despite Gbedemah's opposition, Nkrumah appointed Adamafio general secretary of the CPP in January 1960. Adamafio soon developed a strong base of supporters among the Ga people in the government, including Foreign Minister Ako Adjei and Cofie Crabbe, CPP executive secretary. By early 1961 a serious power struggle had emerged between Adamafio's "leftists" within the state and party bureaucracy and the Gbedemah faction, who primarily occupied seats within the legislature and controlled the African private sector.

Adamafio's fall from power was as rapid as his emergence. As Minister of Presidential Affairs, Adamafio was largely responsible for the suppression of striking workers in September 1961, calling laborers "despicable rats" and "agents of neo-colonialism.' Adamafio led the purge of the right wing in 1961-62 and was widely considered the heir apparent to Nkrumah. Adamafio praised his mentor from the floor of parliament as "the Great Emancipator who delivered Ghana from the bondage of imperialism." In August 1962 Nkrumah was nearly killed in an assassination attempt. Adamafio's enemies within the CPP

gathered circumstantial evidence which indicated that the Adamafio faction was somehow involved. Adamafio, Adjei, Crabbe and others within his group were promptly arrested. Tried in 1963, the Adamafio faction were declared not guilty by Sir Arku Korsah, the Chief Justice. Within two days, Nkrumah dismissed Korsah and nullified the court's proceedings. All three were detained in prison until the 1966 coup.

Nkrumah's decision to dismiss Chief Justice Korsah provoked a sharp response from James. Dated December 14, 1963, James's correspondence described the dismissal as "a terrible business, bound to have effects far outside Ghana and in Ghana itself." James requested detailed information on the incident in order to explain the case in the *Trinidad Evening News.* "I hope . . . you have people around you able to tell you quite plainly what is now required from you," he confided. Nkrumah did not respond to the correspondence, and in early 1964 James made the letter public. With a degree of sadness, James issued a brief but insightful essay in the *News* on the "failure" of Nkrumah:

> I suppose it brings to an end an association of twenty years that I have valued more than most. I signed myself a sincere supporter of Nkrumah: a bad phrase. Nkrumah did not and does not need my support. I needed his. I have been and am concerned with and active in a lot of politics, one part of which was and is the expulsion of imperialism from Africa and the development of under developed countries. . . . In all this Nkrumah played a great role: he is one of the greatest of living politicians. I always appreciated the splendid work he was doing amid immense difficulties. When people pointed out what they considered negative aspects of his regime I held my peace because I knew the positive aspects, the immense positive aspects.

James stated that Nkrumah should publicly declare that he had made a grievous mistake in the Chief Justice's dismissal. Unfortu nately, none of Nkrumah's closest supporters were in a position to tell the President the truth. "A prime minister who has not got people around him who can tell him that is living on borrowed time," James predicted. "If he hasn't got such people around him it is his misfortune and his fault. Worse still it is the misfortune of the people over whom he rules." One reason for the current "catastrophe," James argued, was that Nkrumah "has been fooling himself and a lot of other people with a dangerous fiction — Its name is democratic socialism."

Africa will go crashing from precipice to precipice unless the plans for economic development are part of a deep philosophical concept of what the mass of African people need. That is where Nkrumah failed.

Because the Osagyefo takes himself so seriously, he has "ended up with the totalitarian state — no democracy and no socialism." The large, state-sponsored public works campaigns and the rhetorical commitment to rapid westernization helped generate the collapse of parliamentary government and an inevitable emergence of a dictatorial, one-party state. James warned, "Africa will go crashing from precipice to precipice unless the plans for economic development are part of a deep philosophical concept of what the mass of African people need. That is where Nkrumah failed."

In the introduction of *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution,* James wrote that Nkrumah's decision in the case "showed the degeneration not only of the regime but of his own concept of government." Nkrumah had to be aware of the consequence of his act. "The very structure, juridical, political and moral, of the state is at one stroke destroyed, and there is automatically placed on the agenda a violent restoration of some sort of legal connection between government and population. By this single act," James stated, "Nkrumah prepared the population of Ghana for the morals of the Mafia."

In the span of two years, Nkrumah had decimated both the right and left leadership of the CPP. In a curious pattern, Nkrumah's policies parallel those of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1924-31. Of course, Stalin's major opponents to the left were destroyed first, notably Leon Trotsky and the "Left Opposition." As Nicolai Bukharin and the rightist Bolsheviks participated in the destruction of Trotskyism, so did Adamafio and his supporters lead in the overthrow of Gbedemah. And within months, both Bukharin and Adamafio would themselves be overthrown. The destruction of both ideological factions in the Soviet Union initiated Stalin's infamous "left turn" as a massive program for superindustrialization and the physical elimination of the well-to-do peasantry became the order of the day. The destruction of the CPP's left and right wings merely left the real control of the government under the personal domination of Nkrumah. After 1963, he "never again permitted one of his lieutenants to build up a personal following within his party comparable to Adamafio's," wrote Trevor Jones. "He continued to tolerate private baronies of wealth and patronage, but only on the unspoken condition that the barons themselves eschewed any political ambitions. He allowed the radicals to continue to press their uncompromising view of revolution, but denied them the means of bringing it about." As in Stalin's Russia, the only force in society capable of commanding a serious challenge to the leader's hegemony was the armed forces. Stalin took care of

this potential source of opposition during 1937-39, when Marshal M. Tukhachevsky, the leader of the army, was shot. Within the army about 20,000 officers, 25 percent of the entire officers' corps, were detained and several thousand eventually executed without trial.

Nkrumah was no Stalin — both in the positive and negative meanings of the word. James revealed this in his assessment of the man. "Nkrumah is a man of great generosity of spirit," James wrote in the 1950's, "and it is common talk in Ghana that even in internal party relations, except where political principle is involved, he is a soft rather than a hard man." Unlike Stalin, he preferred simply to arrest nis opponents rather than torture or murder them. Aware of the problems he encountered within his own army, in August 1965 Nkrumah removed from office his Chief of Defense. Major-General Stephen Otu. and Ours chief deputy. Major-General J. A. Ankrah. Both generals were actively involved in a conspiracy to overthrow the government organized by Nkrumah's police chief. John Harlley, and Colonel Emmanuel K. Kotoka, commander of the infantry brigade. Nkrumah's announcement declaring that he was assuming personal control over all armed forces was, for most officers, totally unacceptable. In late November 1965, in an emergency session of the legislature, the government passed the Africa Defense bill, granting to Nkrumah the right to send the nation's armed forces anywhere on the African continent. This act, more than any other, set the wheels of the coup into irreversible motion.

With Nkrumah out of the country on the morning of February 23, 1966, the rebel leaders struck. The coup was virtually bloodless. Kotoka announced over the radio that "the myth surrounding Nkrumah has been broken. Parliament is dissolved and Kwame Nkrumah is dismissed from office." Dozens of Nkrumah's "firmest supporters" immediately backed the military junta. Nkrumah's destruction of the left wing of his own party meant that no working class base could be organized immediately to oppose the regime. The intelligentsia, the African petty bourgeoisie, the entrepreneurs and laborers had long since grown indifferent at best, and usually hostile, towards the government. Had Nkrumah developed and trained thousands of serious younger cadre committed to his ideals of socialism and Pan-Africanism, he might have succeeded in reversing the military coup. Ac one of the conspirators freely admitted as late as 1967, "the irony of the present situation in Ghana is that it is quite probable that President Nkrumah and the CPP would command the support of a majority of the electorate, even in genuinely free elections." But Nkrumah's party had never developed any ideological consensus. Despite the existence of Ideological Institute of Winneba, there was no real theoretical development that was an on-going part of mass-based CPP politics. Nkrumah's primary constituency between 1962 and 1966 was the bureaucratic caste of public and party officials who benefited personally from the state. Devoid of any viable working class or peasant base of support, Nkrumaism gave way without a fight.

III

The coup solved absolutely none of Ghana's pressing problems. In 1969 Dr. K. A. Busia succeeded the military junta as President. An old ally of Danquah from the 1950's, Busia represented the local Black petty bourgeoisie and reactionary bureaucratic elite. With Nkrumah's fall, the U.S.-inspired boycott of Ghanaian cocoa ended, and its price rose 220 percent in two short years. Busia received a 1.5 million dollar loan from the World Bank at generous terms, and initiated a strictly capitalist fiscal policy at home. Nationalized firms under Nkrumah were restored to private ownership, workers' real wages were cut drastically. These and other austerity measures did not halt the acceleration of the balance of trade deficit, and served to galvanize working class/peasant opposition to the new rightist regime. The military again took charge by ousting Busia in January 1972. A series of military takeovers and unstable civilian governments have since followed. As for Nkrumah, his political career had come to an end. The last years of his life were spent in exile, producing a series of thoughtful studies in African political economy and theory. In *Revolutionary Path,* he described his stay in Conakry, Guinea, as "one of the most fruitful periods of my life. For, in a secluded villa by the sea, my enforced freedom from the day to day work of government leaves me time to study, to contemplate deeply on the problems of Africa, to write, and to prepare actively for the next vital phase of the African Revolution. . . ." Nkrumah died in Bucharest, Rumania, on April 27, 1972.

Writing in the *Black World,* James reflected on the meaning of Nkrumah's life and thought in an essay published in July 1972. "Kwame Nkrumah was one of the greatest political leaders of our century," he noted. "We must be on guard that his years of exile do not remove from our constant study and contemplation the remarkable achievements of the great years." Perhaps deliberately avoiding any discussion of Nkrumah's contradictory record in power between 1957 and 1966, James concentrated his analysis instead on the period of "positive action" against British colonialism in the Gold Coast. James applauded the manner in which "Nkrumah mobilized" the masses, but did not mention the invaluable contributions of Gbedemah and other lesser CPP leaders. James did not analyze the shortcomings of Nkrumah's model of political praxis, the choice of creating a mass-based party rather than a vanguard-style party, along the lines of Cabral's PAIGC or Agostinho Neto's MPLA, to pursue the anti-colonial-

ist struggle. Instead, he asserted, "there is not a political leader or a political party anywhere in the world which cannot learn from Nkrumah's politics in the revolutionary Gold Coast, 1947-1951." James agreed that "it would be dishonorable to attempt to deny Nkrumah did not establish a viable regime in Ghana." However, he justified Nkrumah's failures as being a legacy of British colonialism. "Nkrumah's failure was not a failure of individual personality," James observed. "It was the impossibility of establishing a viable regime and bringing some order into the messes the imperialists had left behind."

This was, strictly speaking, historically true. Nkrumah's achievements against overwhelming odds throughout his entire career are a matter of record. Under his leadership, the First and Second Five-Year Development Plans (1951-56 and 1959-64) established the foundations for the cultural and industrial transformation of modern Ghana. Nkrumah's assertion that "in ten years we had achieved more than in the whole period of colonial rule" was no empty boast. Between 1951 and 1961, the amount of paved or gravel motor roads in that country increased from 3,491 miles to 5,396 miles; the number of telephones more than tripled, from 7,383 to 25,488; post offices increased 75.4 percent, from 444 to 779; the number of health care clinics increased from 1 to 30; the numbers of dentists and doctors rose 159.9 percent, from 156 to 500. Nkrumah's commitment to mass literacy and a general improvement in the educational apparatus was unequaled in Africa. The enrollment of primary and middle school children increased from 220,535 in 1951 to 1,286,486 in 1964-65. By the mid-1960's, there were 89 secondary schools with 32,971 students; 11 technical schools; 47 teacher training colleges; and three major universities in Ghana. In 1945, the Gold Coast's only nursing establishment graduated 8 nurses annually; in 1961-62 Ghana's 6 nursing schools produced 265 midwives and nurses.

Nkrumah's unfulfilled Seven-Year Development Plan projected the creation of 500,000 jobs in agriculture and industry; 400,000 jobs in construction, commerce and government services; and 100,000 in mining, transportation and government utilities. Unemployment remained at relatively low levels throughout Nkrumah's tenure in public office. Most of the nation's balance of payments difficulties were due less to the state's mismanagement, graft, etc., and more to the inflation in prices for imported consumer goods and the U.S.-sponsored boycott of Ghanaian cocoa. For these and other reasons, W. E. B. DuBois wrote privately to Nkrumah on November 30, 1961: "You [have] set the highest standard of African training with worldwide recognition and [have taken] the great step forward toward uniting the old classical learning and modern technology into one broad plan of education for human uplift."

In late 1963 a Ghanaian political journal requested from James a contribution on African politics. James refused "to write anything about Africa — I knew the hopelessness of the situation in which the African leaders found themselves, and knew that *all* that I had to say would not be published in any African paper." He suggested instead a seemingly neutral and somewhat esoteric topic on V. I. Lenin's final writings on Soviet development and the problems involved in socialist construction in a so-called backward country. The essay, drafted in a kind of Aesopian language, spelled out the problems of the Soviet Union's struggle for socialism in such a manner that comparisons to Nkrumah's Ghana were not only clear but unavoidable. Any social revolution must commit itself to two goals — "the reconstruction of the governmental apparatus" and "the education of the almost illiterate peasantry." Echoing Lenin, James condemned the growth of a state bureaucracy that promised much, but produced only official corruption and social stagnation. Lenin "always believed and often said that any serious and notable change in the social and political construction of Russia came from the proletariat ot from the masses, only when the masses take part does real politics begin." The implications for Ghana were specific — Nkrumah must smash the vestiges of the colonial state apparatus that still existed, and make an uncompromising break from those CPP factions who were willing *end* eager to pursue neo-colonialist policies. Real politics for Ghana would begin again, as in the period 1947-51, when the broad working masses, the peasantry and the proletariat, were dictating the direction of the struggle.

The sad failure of Nkrumah and the destruction of his government rests here. Ghana had begun the long and painful struggle down the road toward socialism. Measured in terms of educational institutions, culture, transportation and communications systems, and even in some sectors of agricultural production, Nkrumah's Ghana represented a qualitative leap toward the inevitable reality of a unified, socialist Africa. Nkrumah pursued the socialist vision through the sterile corridors of a bloated and inefficient bureaucracy, the worst legacy of British colonialism, a state apparatus largely devoid of any fundamental commitment to the leader's ideological aspirations and bold public policy imperatives. By the early 1960's, an elite stratum of opportunistic CPP officeholders, trade union bureaucrats and petty civil servants acted as a permanent buffer between the material needs of the working masses and the publicly stated goals of Pan-Africanism and socialism. The party had begun to educate the masses in technical skills, but failed to re-educate itself and transform its membership ideologically from its motley origins as a purely anti-colonialist, united front. The CPP never evolved into a tough, effective apparatus for social con-

struction and cultural revolution. Ignoring James's repeated warnings, Kwame Nkrumah failed to transform himself from being an anti-colonialist activist into a genuine revolutionist, while he still occupied a position of state power. Nkrumah relied instead upon the CPP and state bureaucracy to support his programs. This was the reason that millions of his former allies and supporters rejected him in February 1966.

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The Caribbean Revolution

by Basil Wilson

Living standards in Central America and the Caribbean islands have decreased precipitously in the last decade. World inflation and high oil prices have shaken out of balance the delicate mechanism of these developing economies. Countries like Jamaica have experienced consistent years of negative growth, further exacerbating the unemployment situation which even in times of reasonable growth rates was already staggering. Jamaica's unemployed presently constitute approximately 30% of its labor force. This vast army of unemployed, mostly concentrated in urban enclaves, is becoming quite restless and seeking ways out of a desperate situation.

These kinds of horrendous conditions give rise to the germination of radical alternatives to the decrepit established order. Marxist thought is quite new to the Caribbean. Marxist parties of formidable strength are even more recent. Democratic socialism, as epitomized by Michael Manley and the People's National Party, has much deeper roots. This species of socialism was extracted from the British Labor Party and during the colonial era slept in the same bed with imperialism. During the 1980's, parties of this ideological pursuit offered some mild reforms but were dauntless in accommodating themselves to the capitalist order. Under the leadership of Michael Manley, the PNP in 1974 reprogrammed democratic socialism, refrained from taking an anti-communist position, and managed to frighten the hell out of a semi-literate bourgeois class. This class — in alliance with the middle strata, the working class and agro-proletariat incensed at the inability of the Manley government to stem inflation, unemployment and deteriorating living conditions — shifted to the right and voted for the return to power of the conservative Jamaica Labor Party, much to the delight of the Reagan administration. The setback has left the anti-imperialist forces in a serious state of befuddlement.

The nation of Guyana has a much older and established history of radical politics. Unlike Jamaica, Guyana has no bourgeois political party of any consequence. The three major political parties, the governing People's National Con-

Photo on left: Picket in London

Photo below is of Eusi Kwayana, Elder ofASCRIA, and Executive member of the Working Peoples Alliance.

gress, the People's Progressive Party and the Working People's Alliance, all subscribe to some form of socialism. The Burnham dictatorship unceasingly makes claims of having established a co-operative republic, but the PNC has managed to cling to state power through adroit management of the voting process. The People's Progressive Party demonstrated during the 1950's and the 1960's that it was the majority party in that racially divided country. The PPP is a Marxist-Leninist Party that continues to give credence to Burnham's dictatorship by its ever-willingness to participate in the electoral masquerades that Burnham holds intermittently before his coronation. This revolutionary party insists there is no revolutionary situation in Guyana and participates in Burnham's charade to preserve its recognized constitutional role as the opposition party.

The Working People's Alliance is a relatively new party that espouses Marxism, but is far more committed to revolutionary democracy than the PPP or the PNC.

Other Marxist and/or radical political parties sprang up throughout the Caribbean in the 1970's. The New Jewel Movement seized control in Grenada on March 13, 1979, and established a revolutionary government that enjoyed excellent relations with the former Manley government and has developed a close relationship with the revolutionary government of Cuba. Marxist parties have emerged in Dominica, St. Vincent, Antigua, etc. All these parties contested recent elections held in their respective territories and the few votes they managed to muster reveal the embryonic stage of Marxist thought and organizations in the Caribbean. Many of these Marxist parties held an unreal notion of their strength in relationship to the bourgeois political parties. The recent elections should force them to return to the scientific path of real politics.

Marxist-Leninist political parties like the Workers Party of Jamaica commenced with a naive conceptualization of what was necessary to become a mass party. It was presumed that lavish quotes-from Lenin would precipitate a flock of workers coming into the revolutionary fold. Experience has taught them that the economistic unions — like the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, affiliated to the conservative Jamaica Labor Party, and the National Workers Union, affiliated to the reformist People's National Party — won the allegiance of workers at the genesis of the working class struggle and thereafter, political loyalties remain deeply ingrained. That kind of first chapter naivete is understandable, but what I find more disturbing is the inability to look at the political heritage of the Caribbean and adapt the theory of Marxism in a creative way. Is that too much to ask of revolutionary political parties?

Although the Caribbean lacks a history of Marxist scholarship, in recent years a number of scholars from the region have been forced to reject capitalism. If one lives in a society where barbarism is seeping in daily, one has no choice but to explore alternative models of social organization. We have begun that process but too many of our exceptional minds have been trapped into becoming prisoners of radical metaphysics. There is a tendency unfolding that critical thought is "counter-revolutionary"; that the recitation of platitudes is a healthy exercise; that intellectual rigor is a bourgeois pastime. The political activists — our people of action — cannot find time to read, which is understandable. This leaves a burden on the scholars in the region, and if they succumb to the apocalyptic "magic" of the activists, who will produce that body of literature necessary to construct the new society? It is not surprising that one seldom finds a radical scholar or political activist in the Caribbean who has read C. L. R. James. Yet many can recite passages from Lenin and are ready to apologize for Stalinism. This goes on in a region that has produced an important Marxist scholar whose life ingenuously

Buzz Butler, leader of the Home Rule Party and working-class rebellion of the 1930s (left). Workers occupying union headquarters (below). 'House-slave, free coloured, colonial middle-class' leader, Eric Williams (far below).

combines scholarship and political activism. Even more important, James never flinched from intellectual honesty.

Building the Mass Party

C. L. R. James left the Caribbean in 1932, shortly after completing a biography of the Trinidadian trade union leader, Captain Cipriani. In *The Life of Captain Cipriani* James eloquently made the case for self-determination in the Caribbean. In his formative years on the island of Trinidad, he studied the intellectual tradition of Western civilization. Like many of his contemporaries, such as Aimé Césaire and Ras Makonnen, James, a product of plantation society, journeyed to the metropolis not in search of affluence, but to march with the forces of history which were willing to smash Western imperialism and liberate the working class.

After much wandering and many theoretical battles (covered elsewhere in this journal), C. L. R. James returned to the Caribbean in 1958. In that 26-year absence, the power configuration of the world had changed dramatically. The gale force winds of Third World Nationalism unleashed in the post-World War II period were also sweeping the Caribbean. Eric Williams, historian and author of *Capitalism and Slavery,* was instrumental in forming the nationalist People's National Movement. Williams' party reaped the nationalist whirlwind. From 1956 to the present, the PNM has dominated the politics of Trinidad and Tobago.

As the British prepared to make their gracious exodus from the Caribbean, they attempted to create an impotent federal polity. After centuries of governing the English-speaking Caribbean territories as separate entities, the British now felt compelled to foster a spirit of political unity. This experiment in political ecumenism fell apart in 1962 when Jamaica withdrew from the federation.

It was the determination on the part of the Caribbean masses to resist British colonialism that prompted James's return. Despite his unflagging commitment to Marxism, James was never troubled by nationalism. In 1948, he published the essay, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the U.S.A.," and stated quite lucidly that the Black movement in the United States had an autonomy and validity of its own. When James

returned to the Caribbean, he did so without any romantic illusions about establishing a revolutionary society. He returned to the Caribbean willing to abandon temporarily his own revolutionary activities and to work sacrificially for the building of the People's National Movement into a mass force. Here, one has to pause, catch a few gasps, and ponder awhile. Now this is truly the act of a remarkable man. Convinced that was where the mass movement in Trinidad was at this historical juncture, C. L. R. James buried his revolutionary Marxist position, not to lead the nationalist struggle but to edit the PNM paper and to do the nitty-gritty, unglamorous, organizational tasks most theoreticians simply shun.

I have attended political meetings with James and heard "revolutionary comrades" from the Caribbean chastise him for his work with the PNM and for the West Indian Federation. Nonetheless, this veteran of Marxist thought is never apologetic. His positions were always so principled that he does not have to tread through the yesteryears and apologize for past action, The decision to return to the Caribbean was not one that was taken lightly. James was convinced there was no revolutionary situation in the Caribbean and the advance of Caribbean people to self-determination was a critical period requiring enormous sacrifice. The native son returned and put his shoulders to the wheel to heave the mass movement forward.

James's sojourn with the PNM came to an end in July 1960. By then, he had his bellyful of the wishy-washy elite who dominated the moribund PNM. During the two-year span, James tried to get the leadership of the party to take financial responsibility for the party paper, *The Nation,* He felt the party should be used as the instrument to build the mass party. The PNM leadership now had control of state power and building the party apparatus had become superfluous. Concerned by this state of degeneracy, James lamented:

> In many cases the party does not exist, except in name and the most urgent and repeated efforts to correct this, meet with the indifference, carelessness, ignorance and now, the obstinacy and hostility of the party leadership![1]

James tried to get the Premier of Trinidad, Eric Williams, to intervene. The goodly doctor remained undisturbed and replied tersely, "There was nothing to discuss."[2]

Commitment to Revolutionary Democracy

Throughout his long life, James has manifested an unabiding faith in democracy. Revolutionary politics means the deepening of the democratic process. This is what James sought to do with the People's National Movement. Williams would have none of it. He was more fascinated with building a political party that served as the extension of his imperial personality.

Because of this commitment to revolutionary democracy, James went to the trouble to publish a pamphlet on the West Indian Federation. There was no attempt to include the Caribbean people in the making of the Federation. It was left to the hand-work of middle-class politicians and colonial lords. This is why the first time the Jamaican people were given the opportunity to vote on the issue, they rejected the federation outright. James foresaw the dangers. At a time when the federation appeared shaky, he suggested salvaging this noble attempt at political unification by abandoning the present structure and to start anew with a constituent assembly. Constitutions in the region, both national and federal, were offered for ratification without any involvement at the draft stage by the mass of the population. Understandably, the situation was much too far gone to be salvaged and the undemocratic experiment at political unification failed abysmally.

James and the Middle Class

James emerged from that experience convinced that the Caribbean middle class was an impediment to reconstructing the new society. The democratic system had been effectively enshrined, but the politicians were quite adept at playing games with people's lives. "Very few Caribbean politicians had a firm grasp of the productive forces in their country. They were mostly from the trade union' movement, clerical assistants, small business men, and administrators in the public sector. Thus, the politicians carry into politics all the weaknesses of the class from which they came."[3]

In their quest for office, the aspiring politicians would promise jobs without being clear about how these things could be realized. What incensed James was that the middle class had seized control of the nationalist movement, yet had not been the instigators of the working class unrest that served as the catalyst for mass politics.

> The democracy and West Indian nation was won by mass revolt. Even this revolt was led by men who were not typically middle class. When, after 1937-38, the democratic movement started, it was a labour movement. Gradually, however, the British Government felt itself compelled to make the Civil Service West Indian, i.e., middle class. By degrees, the middle class took over the political parties.[4]

This was what definitely occurred in Trinidad, Barbados, and Jamaica. Political leaders like Eric Williams, Grantley Adams, and Norman Manley came out of that middle class milieu. They were by nature conservative men, nationalist but subservient to British imperialism, believing in democracy but frightened of mass mobilization. This leadership core and the class to which they belonged had demonstrated an intellectual capacity unequalled anywhere else in the colonial world. They had acquired skills indispens-

able to the running of a modern society. They were part of the modern world, knew how to survive in it, but nonetheless failed to understand the real nature of that world. As a class, they were too terrified of authority. They avoided struggles and were much more comfortable accommodating themselves to existing institutions.

James saw clearly the deficiencies of this class and wrote quite poignantly:

> I do not know any social class which lives so completely without ideas of any kind. They live entirely on the material plane. In a published address, Sir Robert Kirkwood quotes Vida Naipaul, who has said of them that they seem to aim at nothing more than being second-rate American citizens. It is much more than that. They aim at nothing. Government jobs and the opportunities which association with the government gives, allows them the possibility of accumulating material goods. That is all.[5]

They were certainly not familiar with the politics of ideas. The commitment to democracy was perfunctory. They surely were not interested in asking fundamental questions, never questioning the efficacy of the system inherited. They glorified the British past and always insisted they were "brown men," ensuring that the distance between themselves and the mass of the population was kemptly kept. They were the king-makers and they strutted around in tweedy English three-piece suits, oblivious to the rags of the noon day sun.

Another leadership style had also emerged. These were the gung-ho, trade union type who identified with the mass of the population. From a different class background, these rebels were always willing to fight the British and to lead the workers in rebellion. They empathized with the workers and demanded an equitable distribution of wealth, especially while in opposition. Although excelling in rebellious posturing, these political leaders, once in control, spent their time devising schemes to ensure they would not fall from grace. Maintaining control of state power remained paramount. They cursed the British, yet went cap-in-hand to the Americans, begging for foreign aid. They were ferocious lions in opposition, pussycats in power. Leaders like Bustamante (Jamaica), Uriah Butler (Trinidad and Tobago) and Eric Gairy (Grenada) in particular accommodated themselves to an imposed democratic system and unlike their more educated middle class counterparts, were of an autocratic bent.

Both the grass roots autocrats and the middle class parliamentarians failed to develop any real appreciation for democracy No attempt was made to redefine democracy and/or adapt it to the specific conditions in the Caribbean. One group sought to manipulate the mass movement for its own sense of aggrandizement while the other sought to maintain its distance from the mass movement. Thus, at its new dawn, the Caribbean suffered from intellectually bankrupt political parties.

James sensed the discrepancy that was developing between the conservative political leadership and the restlessness of the multitudes. The political parties were without vision and had no plans to proceed with economic development outside of inviting in foreign capital. James recognized there had to be a reckoning:

> The old order is gone. No new order has appeared. The middle classes have their work cut out for them. Their brief period of merely enjoying new privileges after three-hundred years of being excluded is about over.[6]

The mass of the population would not remain indefinitely excluded from the nerve center of power. They were not interested in substituting "new masters for old. They want no masters at all. Unfortunately, they do not know much. Under imperialism, they had had little opportunity to learn anything. History will take its course, only too often a bloody one."[7]

For James, the mass movement was not static, but an irreversible force propelling history. The task of the revolutionary was to depict the stage and state of the mass movement and push it along. James returned once more to the Caribbean in 1966 to form a revolutionary political party. James's political organization, the Workers and Farmers Party, participated in the 1966 election in Trinidad and Tobago. All the party's candidates except one failed to muster sufficient votes to warrant the return of the cash deposits required by law to discourage the frivolous. The middle class politicians were still in control, the mass movement still feeling its way.

The Rise of the Black Power Movement

The first decade of Caribbean independence was marked by a serious attempt at industrializing the region through attracting Western capital and technology. Especially in the larger regions, such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados, this strategy for economic development produced high growth rates in the gross national product. Concomitant with the high growth rates, however, was growing unemployment. The weaknesses of the strategy of industrialization by invitation was attacked by the radical social scientists whose writings carried them beyond the bourgeois paradigm.

The New World group of academicians critiqued the dependency theory which had become the conventional wisdom of the dominant political parties. This created a climate in which new seeds of social organization could be sown. A new generation shattered the insularity of Caribbean political thought and marched in step with the revolutionary nationalism that was sweeping America. Indeed, a native of the

Caribbean, Stokely Carmichael, was a chief architect of the Black Power Movement in the United States.

Walter Rodney was instrumental in adapting the Black Power Movement to the Caribbean. Rodney had just been assigned to the History Department at the Mona Campus, University of the West Indies. An African scholar and Marxist, this young Guyanese scholar had a marked impact on the student body at the Mona Campus. Rodney appealed not only to the intelligentsia but was able to forge links with the more politically inclined members of the Rastafarian Movement.

The Jamaica Labor Party government, epitomizing that conservative middle class which dominated Caribbean politics hitherto, pronounced Walter Rodney *persona non grata* in October 1968. The University students protested, and on October 16, 1968 there was rioting in downtown Kingston.

The 1970 Black Power revolt in Trinidad was further evidence that a new political trend had crystallized in the Caribbean. The National Joint Action Committee harnessed the energies of the mass movement and challenged the elite democracy in Trinidad and Tobago. Parliamentary democracy of the Westminster variety for a moment teetered but eventually — with the show of military might by the Venezuelan and United States governments — the armed forces remained loyal to Williams and order was restored. The Black Power Revolt nevertheless marks the beginning of a new type of politics. New radical parties emerged, like the New Jewel Movement in Grenada which overthrew Eric Gairy on March 13, 1979 and immediately established a revolutionary state. In 1972, Michael Manley came to power in Jamaica and trail-blazed a new developmental strategy. The left forces in Dominica used mass demonstrations to topple the government of Patrick John, after it was revealed that he was forging links with the racist South African regime. In the election held in 1980 to replace the Patrick John government, however, it was not the left which triumphed but the pro-American Freedom Party led by conservative Eugenia Charles. The Jamaican masses meanwhile struggled with Michael Manley for eight years and decided in October 1980 that the promise of democratic socialism did not match the deterioration in the living standards of the working class.

Peoples Liberation Army, Grenada taken by Angus Thompson

The rise of radical thought in the Caribbean has put an end to the ideological monopoly that the bourgeois parties enjoyed in the first decade after independence. Socialism of whatever species is no longer just an envisioned theory in the Caribbean. It has been tested in Jamaica and found wanting. The experiment in Grenada is only two years in the making.

The Atavisms of Leninism

Modern Caribbean society was created as an outgrowth of the international capitalist economy. Despite the malady of insularity, the fate of the Caribbean is subject to the state of the world economy. Simultaneously in the Caribbean, there is taking place the birth of new societies and the resurrection of old ones. That dialectic between the old and the new is reflective of the two-tier world crises going on inside and outside the Caribbean. Not only is world capitalism in a severe crisis, but we find Soviet Marxism also in a severe crisis.

The dependency nature of Caribbean society seems to encourage either a willingness to subjugate the national polity to the vicissitudes of imperialism or to break out of that dependency by immersing the body politic into the Marxist-Leninist fraternity of nations. The left forces in the Caribbean, like the People's Progressive Party of Guyana and the Workers Party of Jamaica, have taken this latter route. But the mass rebellion of the working class cannot be seen as a historical aberration. Just as the Communist Party of Poland is forced to come to grips with the working class, Marxist-Leninist parties in the Caribbean, where democratic precepts are highly institutionalized, will have to come to terms with revolutionary democracy. It is a nigh impossible task to patch up capitalism in the Caribbean. What is going to be critical in the coming decade is the debate about the new society. It is in this regard that James's writings become most propitious.

James never succumbed to using Marxism as a dogma. It wasn't to be used as a sledge-hammer to intimidate political opponents. He believed in the innovative capacity of Caribbean people.

> We are too much dominated by the ideas and theories of advanced countries. We should, we have to develop, for example, economic ideas and theories and practice of our own, which can help not only ourselves but help to regenerate the bankrupt West; distinguished economists abroad expect it from us.[8]

Caribbean scholars and political activists have done just that in their struggle outside the Caribbean. James, like Fanon, was calling on Third World people not to follow the European past, but to create a new world. He was aware of the pitfalls of revolutionary consciousness — how callous men could become when power was up for grabs. He never saw these qualities in George Padmore and commented:

> Politics, above all revolutionary politics, frequently make men hardened and indifferent to normal human relations and even the elements of civilized intercourse. There was never a trace of that in George, despite all he had been through and all he had seen.[9]

James likewise never became so intrigued by political power that he was for a moment willing to bury his humanity. He has been appalled by the degradation of official society — the death of ten million soldiers in World War I, thirty-five million in World War II, Hiroshima, the gulag archipelagoes in Stalin's Russia. The crimes of the latter forced James to re-examine the Soviet model. He rejected the precepts of the vanguard party and said of Leninism:

> It was a particular theory designed to suit a specific stage of working class development. That stage of society is now past. The theory, and the practice that went with it, are now an anachronism, and, if persisted in, lead to one form or another of the counter-revolution. The first thing we must do is to purge ourselves of it.[10]

There is always the danger in the Vanguard Party that it sees itself as the repository of all wisdom and reserves the right to pontificate. The mass of the population should follow like sheep or stand accused as counter-revolutionaries. That kind of politics, that so many Caribbean Marxists with middle class backgrounds subscribe to, was totally unacceptable to James. Jamesian Marxism is aware of the oppressive nature of official bureaucracy. What would replace the vanguard party? The working class would emancipate itself. James was heartened when he saw this possibility come to fruition in Hungary in 1956. The Workers' Councils in Hungary were the true expression of proletarian democracy. Only Soviet tanks ended that noble social experiment.

Martin Luther King once said, "Truth crushed to the ground will rise again." We have witnessed the rise of yet another demand on the part of workers for revolutionary democracy, this time in Poland. Again, the working class has been exemplary. Its members are not concerned with vengeance or economism. They wish to humanize Soviet state capitalism and abolish the privileges accruing to members of the Stalinist vanguard party. What we have seen unfold in Poland is not just faith, but the verification of Marxist thought. What we observe is mass movement in all its quintessence.

Marxist-Leninists in the Caribbean must also strip themselves of the atavisms of that creed. They must understand the meaning of the gulags, the Workers' Councils in Hungary in 1956, the proletarian uprising in Poland in 1980. They must understand the nature of the mass movement in the Caribbean, where it is, where it is going. If they continue to function outside of his-

tory, they will succumb to the politics of histrionics, rather than understand the dialectics of history. It is their historical duty to prod the mass movement and take it to the advanced stage we see unfolding in Poland. James is always fond of saying that the choice before man is a simple choice, "It is socialism or barbarism," The Caribbean has already had too much of the latter.

Footnotes

1. C. L. R. James, *Party Politics in the West Indies* (Vedic Enterprises, San Juan, Trinidad, 1962), page 5.
2. *Ibid.,* page 109.
3. C. L. R. James, "The Middle Classes," published in David Lowenthal and Lambros Comitas, *Consequences of Class and Color: West Indian Perspectives* (Doubleday, New York, 1973), page 81.
4. *Ibid*., page 83.
5. *Ibid.,* page 84.
6. *Ibid.,* page 91.
7. *Ibid.,* page 92.
8. C. L. R. James, *Party Politics in the West Indies,* page 87.
9. *Ibid.,* page 111.
10. C. L. R. James, *Facing Reality* (Correspondence, Detroit, 1958), page 87.

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In quest of Matthew Bondsman: some cultural notes on the Jamesian journey

by Sylvia Wynter

I. What Do Men Live By? From the National to the Popular-Aesthetic Question

He, Garfield Sobers (the West Indian batsman), does not need the half-volley of a fast or a fast-medi-, um bowler to be able to drive. From a very high backlift he watches the ball that is barely over the good length, takes it on the rise and sends it shooting between mid-off and mid-off. . . . The West Indian crowd has a favorite phrase for that stroke, Not a man move. *(Beyond A Boundary)*

In the fine points of Marxist thought, confronting the work ethic is an esthetic of non-work or play. . . . This realm beyond political economy called play, non-work or non-alienated labor . . . remains an *esthetic,* in the extremely Kantian sense, with all the bourgeois ideological connotations which that implies. Although Marx's thought settled accounts with bourgeois *morality, it remains defenseless before its esthetic, whose ambiguity is more subtle but whose complicity with, the general system of political economy is just as profound.* (Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production)*

It took England to reveal to me the hidden aspects of Constantine's personality. . . . (He) was the same man on the cricket field as he was in our private and public life. *The difference* was that there, or rather in the Lancashire League, he was able to *give his powers full play. (Beyond A Boundary)*

We are still in the flower garden of the gay, the spontaneous, tropical West Indians. We need some astringent spray. *(Beyond A Boundary)*

In the autosociographical system of *Beyond A Boundary,* James places his act of separation from Trotskyism within a *larger question,* which is the structuring motif of the book. In posing the fundamental Tolstoy an question *"What do men live by?"* the system of *Beyond A Boundary* displaces at one thrust the bourgeois "mirror of the natural" and its related "mirror of production."[1]

The presuppositions of both "mirrors," i.e. .of man as a "natural being," of man as identified by the *labor* with which he produces his *"material life,"* his means of *physical subsistence,*[2] represses the awareness that these definitions are cultural representations. That, like the feudal definition of man as a *spiritual* being, they are *context-bound and historical,* and become a "mythology" when they are spread over the expanse of human life; made into a teleology.

Beyond A Boundary relativizes and deabsolutizes the "material representation" of man's identity when it asks the question central to the *cultural life* of man: *What do men live by?* The answer to this question moves the Jamesian poeisis beyond the national, the class question, into the contemporary dimensions of the popular question.

"Fiction writing," James writes, chronicling another stage on his journey, "drained out of me and was replaced by politics. I became a Marxist, a Trotskyist. . . . In 1938, a lecture tour took me to the United States and I stayed there for fifteen years. The war came . . .

It did not bring Soviets and proletarian power, instead the bureau-

cratic totalitarian monster grew stronger and spread. *As* early as 1941, I had begun to question the premises of Trotskyism. It took a decade of incessant labor and collaboration to break with it, and recognize my Marxist ideas so as to cope with the post-war world. . . . That was a matter of doctrine, of history, of economics and politics.

In my private mind, however, I was increasingly aware of large areas of human existence that my history and my politics did not seem to uncover. What did men live by? What did they want? What did history show they had wanted?

A glance at the world showed that when the common people were not at work, one thing they wanted was organized sports and games. They wanted them greedily, passionately.

The pattern of *Beyond A Boundary,* working out the logic of its own motifs, uncovers "large areas of human existence," as James points out, that his "history, economics, politics" had left unaccounted for. Here it reveals that a separation, a gap appeared between the mode of popular desire, i.e., what the masses wanted to "live" by and what the "ruling elements" wanted them to live by. In other words, what is at issue here in a struggle between two modes of desire — that of the bourgeoisie and that of the popular forces: the bourgeoisie for whom sports were "mere entertainment", for whom play served as "recuperation" from the *real work* of *labor,* rather than as an *alternative life-activity in its own right,* for whom the aesthetic was a luxury or even in the case of bourgeois *aesthetes,* for whom the "fine arts" — split off from the popular arts — were the high culture used to cultivate individual sensibilities to mark off the differential value of bourgeois concerns, to be guarded from the hoi polloi, as the sacred animal in the sacred pool (in Levi-Strauss's term) that canonized the middle-class mode of desire as a desire for the "higher

things" whilst stigmatizing all non middle class desire as crass.

James first analyses the reflex stigmatization of the masses' desire for sports, by a middle-class eye's view.

> They wanted them greedily, passionately. So much so, that the politicians who devoted themselves to the improvement of the condition of the people, the disciples of culture, the aesthetes, all deplored the expenditure of so much time, energy, attention and money on sports and games instead of on the higher things. Well, presumably it could not be helped. It had always been so and was likely to continue for a long time. *(Beyond A Boundary)*

He then reverses the stigmatization, revealing the "mythology" of the middle-class eye's view.

> But that was quite untrue. Organized games had been part and parcel of the civilization of Ancient Greece. With the decline of that civilization they disappeared from Europe for some 1,500 years. People ran and jumped and kicked balls about and competed with one another; they went to see the knights jousting. But games and sports, organized as the Greeks had organized them, there were none. *(Beyond A Boundary)*

And, although James does not mention this, the intervening ages were not to miss organized games,

because the great festival-complex common to pagan traditional societies (the dominant element in the imperatively popular cultures of Africa), incorporated by the Catholic church, had provided the macro-institution of Carnival. That institution, as Mikhail Bakhtin points out, had functioned in pre-capitalist Europe, as it functioned in traditional Africa, as it functions in the Afro-Euro-derived Trinidadian, New Orleans and Brazilian Carnivals, to provide the great "dramatic spectacle" that the Greek games, and its successor, Greek tragic drama, as James notes, had provided. The same dramatic spectacle of which organized sports were to be the contemporary modality of industrial society.

> Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very ideal embraces all the people. During carnival time life is subject only to its own laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal in which all take part.[3]

Thus the grace and style of Bondsman's batting, the innovative genius of W. G. Grace, the "ferocious" wit and inventiveness of a Mighty Sparrow, all derive finally from the same source — the overwhelming vitality of the exclusive nature of the popular arts — popular in the sense of being both the "common people" and the "whole body of the people."

With the rise of the bourgeoisie, Bakhtin points out, *Carnival,* the dramatic spectacle of the whole body of the people, disappeared from Europe. The categories of *blood* and *birth* had enabled the aristocracy to mingle with the peasantry, at least during the Carnival period. The bourgeoisie, like the Jamesian clan, had no such *permanent* and "inherent" mode of status-differentiation. The "class-body" had to be kept from "physical" contact if it were to signify — and thereby realize — its "differential value." Both the categories of the bourgeois code of knowledge, and as Bakhtin points out in his study of Rabelais, the canons of bourgeois aesthetics were to reflect this setting apart. The "fine arts" separated themselves off from the "popular arts," establishing a categorization into higher and lower. The aesthetics was the politics. The new mode of social relations in which an absolute breach occurred between the two groupings was reflected and constituted by the aesthetics of the bourgeoisie, an aesthetic which now redefined the mode of co-existence in what was now not the polis of the whole body of the people, but the polis of the bourgeoisie in which the popular forces, transformed in the bourgeoisie's definition, into the mass, came to serve the same signifying role of the "Negroes," i.e., as the symbolic inversion of the bourgeoisie, the memento of all that they were not.

The categorizing of art into higher and lower reveals that the bour-

geois aesthetics replicates *within* the structure of its own aesthetic system, the same bimodal Head/ Body, Reason/Instinct categories that subtend both the categories of bourgeois thought; and of its global polis.

The separation of the class-body, representationally constituted itself in the languages of the arts, of their critical canons, as Bakhtin points out:,

> The Renaissance saw the body in quite a different light than the Middle Ages, in a different.. . *relation to the exterior non-bodily world.* As conceived by these canons, the body was first of all a strictly completed, finished product. Furthermore, it was isolated alone, fenced off from all other bodies. . . . The accent was placed on the completed, self-sufficient individuality of the given body. Corporal acts were shown only when the borderlines dividing the body from the outline world were sharply defined. . .. The individual body was presented apart from the ancestral body of the people. Such was the fundamental tendencies of the classical canons. . . . [From] the point of view of these canons the body of grotesque realism was hideous and formless. It did not fit the framework of the aesthetics of the beautiful as conceived by the Renaissance.[4]

The popular forces desired "organized sports and games" because they, unlike the middle classes, had no other institutional framework which could provide in modern contemporary terms what Carnival and rural life had originally provided before their disruption into industrial civilization; into the stresses and trauma of the factory-system and industrial colonization. Organized sports provided what Carnival and the rural ethos had provided in another form. As James reveals, the act of watching is a participatory act. When the West Indian crowd shouts "Not a man move!" as they do after a stroke by Sobers so escapes the trap both of bowler and of the set field that neither bowler nor fieldsman could react fast enough, the game is no longer a spectacle, seen by the people. Rather, as in Carnival, they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces *all* the people. Like Carnival too, the game is "subject only to its own laws," which are the laws of freedom.[5]

Thus if for the bourgeoisie the condition of the realization of its powers is an imperatively individual and class-restricted realization (brilliant in its own way yet incapable, as in the great ages of transition — i.e., of a Rabelais, a Cervantes, a Shakespeare, a Chaplin — of drawing on the multiple resources of a cross-fertilization of aesthetics for the popular imperative), then the realization of its powers, the aesthetics of its participatory art, depends precisely on its ability to enact and incorporate and give image to the "whole body of the people."

The people wanted organized sports because these sports and games were institutions that they helped to found and continue, institutions that they had helped to found as surely as their working class struggles led to the formation of trade unions, as their struggles for the right to vote — to control the conditions of their life-activities — had also led to the founding of modern mass-political parties; to the grounding of the concept of democracy. However much when wearing bourgeois masks on their popular skins, they would be led to negate their own imperative.

Cricket as a national sport, with universal elements, as James chronicles it, was to be a re-organization of the contributions of the different elements in the social order, under the hegemony of the middle classes. In other words, cricket was to be a fusion of three different aesthetic canons, three different imperatives:

> The world-wide renaissance of organized games and sports as an integral part of modern civilization was on its way. Of this renaissance, the elevation of cricket and football to the place that they soon held in English life was a part, historically speaking, the most important part. The system as finally adopted was not an invention but a discovery, or rather a rediscovery. . . . Cricket and football provided a meeting place for the moral outlook of the dissenting middle classes and the athletic instincts of the aristocracy. Finally, cricket was one of the most complete products of that previous age to which a man like Dickens always looked back with such nostalgia. It had been formed by rural and artisan Englishmen who had aimed at nothing but the creation of an activity which would disinterestedly express their native artistic instincts. If it could so rapidly be elevated to the status of a moral discipline it was because it had been born and grew in an atmosphere and in circumstances untainted by any serious corruption. The only word that I know for this is culture. . . . The proof of its validity is its success, first of all at home and then almost as rapidly abroad, in the most diverse places and among peoples living lives which were poles removed from that whence it originally came. This signifies, as so often in any deeply national movement, that it contained elements of universality that went beyond the bounds of the originating nation. *(Beyond A Boundary)*

Cricket, then, was very much the invention and creation of the "whole body of the people," even where it was to be expressed in a middle-class form.[6] The middle class was to contribute, as James points out, the least, yet due to their gift for rationalization and organization they were to appropriate the game and convert it into a national institution. *(Ibid.)*

Yet, if the struggle was not as obviously political as in Trinidad, the middle classes, as they prepared themselves for class hegemony, had to face the new pressures of the popular masses, whose organizations had emerged precisely out of the collective struggle they waged

in cooperation with the middle classes for popular democracy in England.

As James notes, the organization of modern sports and games was co-temporal with the modern popular forms of trade union and political struggle. The "intervention" and input of the popular forces into the creation of the national game of cricket — into the aesthetic production of the more-than-bread by-which-men-live — went *pari passu* with trade union struggles for a *higher living standard.* Here the Marxian doctrine which revealed the labor contribution to the national product played a powerful role. But the praxis had been initiated before Marx. And the struggles of the working classes at a cultural and epistemological level were struggles which stopped the automatic functioning of the accumulative dynamic, a dynamic kept in motion by the global differential structure of social relations, by the bourgeois cultural control of the mode of identity and desire, by its diffusion of bourgeois masks, its equation of identity-value with accumulated value.[7]

If, as Castoriadis points out, it was the working class's struggles that fueled the dynamic expansion of capitalism — since the higher wage packets led to the rapid development of internal markets, and to the wider social provision of technological skills, thereby compelling higher levels of development — its input into the national game of cricket was no less decisive.[8] In other words, the conjunction that hit James was not fortuitous, and the conjunction is itself crucial to the doctrine of his book.

The co-evolution of new popular forms of social organization, i.e., trade union organizations, political parties, international organization, organizational forms of struggle for popular democracy with the rise of the desire for organized sports all within the decade 1860-1870[9] provide the basis for the Jamesian reflection on the complexity of human needs, for his implicit affirmation that the "realization of one's powers" at both the individual and the group level is the most urgent imperative of all. Thus the conjunction of the institution of organizational forms for the struggle for popular democracy — in multiple forms, the trade unions, political parties, the Communist International, etc. — was a conjunction that hit James, only because unlike Trotsky he had moved outside the mono-conceptual Labor frame to the wider frame of a popular theoretics.

For if, as James argues, the "conjunction had hit me as it would have hit few of the students of the international organization to which I belonged" *(Ibid.),* this was because James had already *moved outside the categories in which they were still embedded.* For if within the Labor conceptual frame, whose logical goal is the development of the productive forces, *the development of production is the means of realizing one's labor-value,* the value through which one expresses one's human potential, then Trotsky was quite right to say that "sports" deflected the worker from politics — "Labor" politics.

With popular politics, it was a different matter. In the ecumenicism of the politics of the latter, labor, and labor geared to a specific end, the realizations of men's powers both singly and collectively, was only one of the possible means for Man's self-realization of his powers.

Which leads us to Matthew Bondsman and the popular imperative versus both the public school and labor code. Bondsman lived next door in Tunapuna to James, the child. "His eyes were fierce, his language was violent and his voice was loud," he refused to take a job but "with a bat in his hand [he] was all grace and style." The contradiction seemed inexplicable. "The contrast between Matthew's pitiable existence as an individual and the attitude people had towards him," James recalls, "filled my growing mind and has occupied me to this day."

Matthew Bondsman played cricket but moved entirely outside the public school code. For him a straight bat was literal, not figurative. And it "isn't cricket" was meaningless in its moral/ethical sense.

Indeed he would not even stand to benefit from the normal workings of the code. One might theoretically widen the code to struggle with the problems that Matthew Bondsman, who would not work, presented for the implicit morality system of the labor code — but the class-body of James's schoolmates would refuse Matthew charity on the grounds that poor chaps ought to be deserving. Matthew was certainly not.

Nor was he in any sense of the term a member of the *deserving proletariat.* In the great utility-code of the productivist ethos of bourgeois classarchy, he was in the words of James's aunts *"good-for-nothing else except to play cricket.* " Bondsman, like contemporary ghetto Blacks as defined by J. B. Fuqua, an adviser to ex-President Carter, was *precisely depreciated machinery.*

Matthew Bondsman, then, like the ghetto Blacks today, like the good-for-nothing macho Benoit of *Minty Alley,* like his Becky-sharp-type heroine, Maisie, who refuses to work for pittance-wages and finally escapes to America, and who, like Bondsman, breaks every prohibition of the bourgeois code in order to realize her powers, to take her womanhood upon account, cannot be revindicated in the name of their *labor-value* (or needless to say, of their capital-value). Yet, Matthew Bondsman, like the Blacks of the ghetto-prison-system-shanty-towns archipelagos of the modern world system, had not always been useless.

In fact in the earliest phase of the historical process of bourgeois accumulation, Matthew Bondsman and his ilk had been amongst the skilled slave specialists who had actually run the plantation, then the most highly organized and efficient mode of accumulation in existence, until it was displaced by the new

mode of accumulation, the factory-system of production.

At that time, Bondsman was the value core of the world that the bourgeoisie modelled in their own image.[10] He was both capital value and skilled labor-value, as James pointed out in a talk in Montreal in 1966 — "The making of the Caribbean peoples."[11] In other words, Matthew, coerced, yet trained in necessary skills, had been subordinated to the "time" of the great positivity of the development of the productive forces. He had truly done his bit to set in train *"their"* liberation.

And the paradox was that since he was central to the process, he was allowed to realize those skilled and specialist powers that the accumulative telos needed to realize its objective rationale. Those powers not needed for the telos of accumulation, therefore not historically viable, were pushed aside, excluded. To realize his own powers, to give them full play, the Bondsmen had to live in an alternative cosmology, an underground culture which they reconstituted for themselves. In addition, it meant that the total blockage of the realization of their powers, the prevention of their living of their own radical historicity, their subordination, to the historicality of the productive forces would therefore impel the Bondsmans of the world (des damnes de la terre, as Fanon defines them) to demand, *to desire as that by which alone they can live,* not the liberation of the productive forces (Liberalism and Marxism-Leninism) but the "liberation of Man."

For the autonomy of a Bondsman had been totally subordinated *to the autonomy of the accumulative telos.* When the logic of its own process needed him as a specialist, he was made one. As a sharecropper breaking his back, he became one. As a native agro-proletariat, he accepted his one shilling per week and withstood his lot. When it needed him as labor reserve to the "real" proletariat he left the rural area for

the town. He reserved his Labor.

As the Cybernetic Revolution began to displace the Industrial Revolution and it became clear that his Reserve Labor was in reserve in perpetuity — machines were the skilled specialists now — Bondsman would have to come to terms with the fact that he had become *"refuse"* (the term given to the slave too old and worn-out to contribute labor). He could hustle a day's work here and there, sweep a yard or two, live from hand to mouth. Jump Jim Crow. Or he could drop out.

Matthew dropped out. His "abominable life" was the end result of a historical process which had built a world that had no place in it where Bondsman could realize his powers. Establish his identity. Enact his radical historicity.

Above all, where Matthew could live according to the popular-aesthetic code that surfaced only when he batted. And the perceptiveness of James in *Beyond A Boundary* is to have counterposed Bondsman batting at the beginning of the book with the problematic of a cricket now trapped by the barbarism of a rationalized code one which had led not only to the perversion of "body-line" cricket, but had also compelled cricket greats like Sir Donald Bradman of Australia, one of the greatest batsmen of all times, to bring to a close the Golden Age of Cricket, subordinating the aesthetic code of the game to the technicized rationality of the "national" competitive code.

For *"it isn't cricket"* had functioned only partially as a moral code. It had functioned too as an *aesthetic code.* It was *by this code alone that a Bondsman could even contemplate batting.* The great Bradman, responding to the technological rationality of his time with its imperative of efficiency and utility, could — as he tells us in his autobiography — afford to bat like that only once in a lifetime. All his life Bradman had batted a "defensive" game designed to win matches — except for one glorious inning when he cut loose.

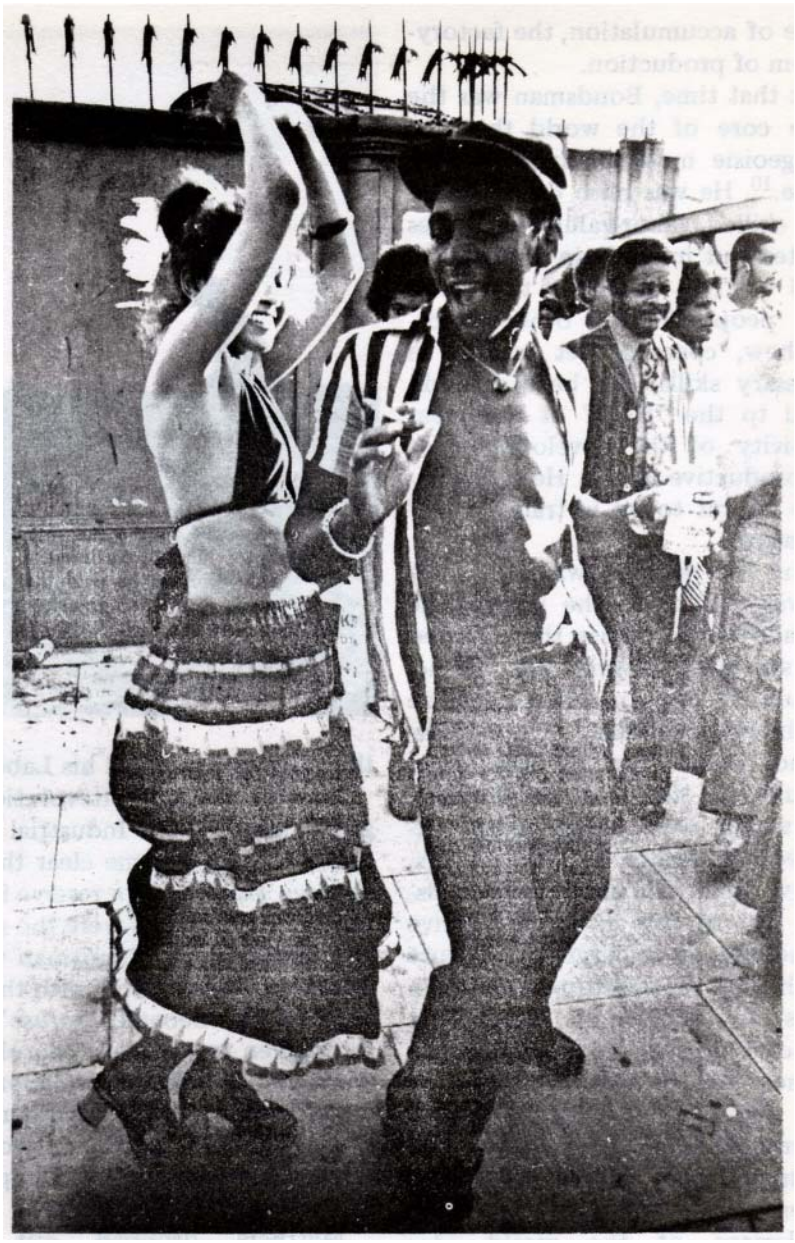
James quotes the incident, for it is crucial to the aesthetic imperative of his own "doctrine":

> Yet what are his sentiments after he has made the hundredth run of the hundredth century? He felt it incumbent upon him, he says, to give the crowd . . . some reward. . . . *He therefore proceeded to hit 71 runs in 45 minutes. This, he adds, is the way he would always wish to have*

batted if circumstances had permitted him. (Ibid.)

James, startled by this admission of Bradman, uses it as the point from which *Beyond A Boundary* can reflect on the question — What had happened to the game that W. G. Grace had built, that Arnold had transformed into a part of the educational system, transforming it into a vision of life? What, too, had happened to the "art and practic part of cricket?"

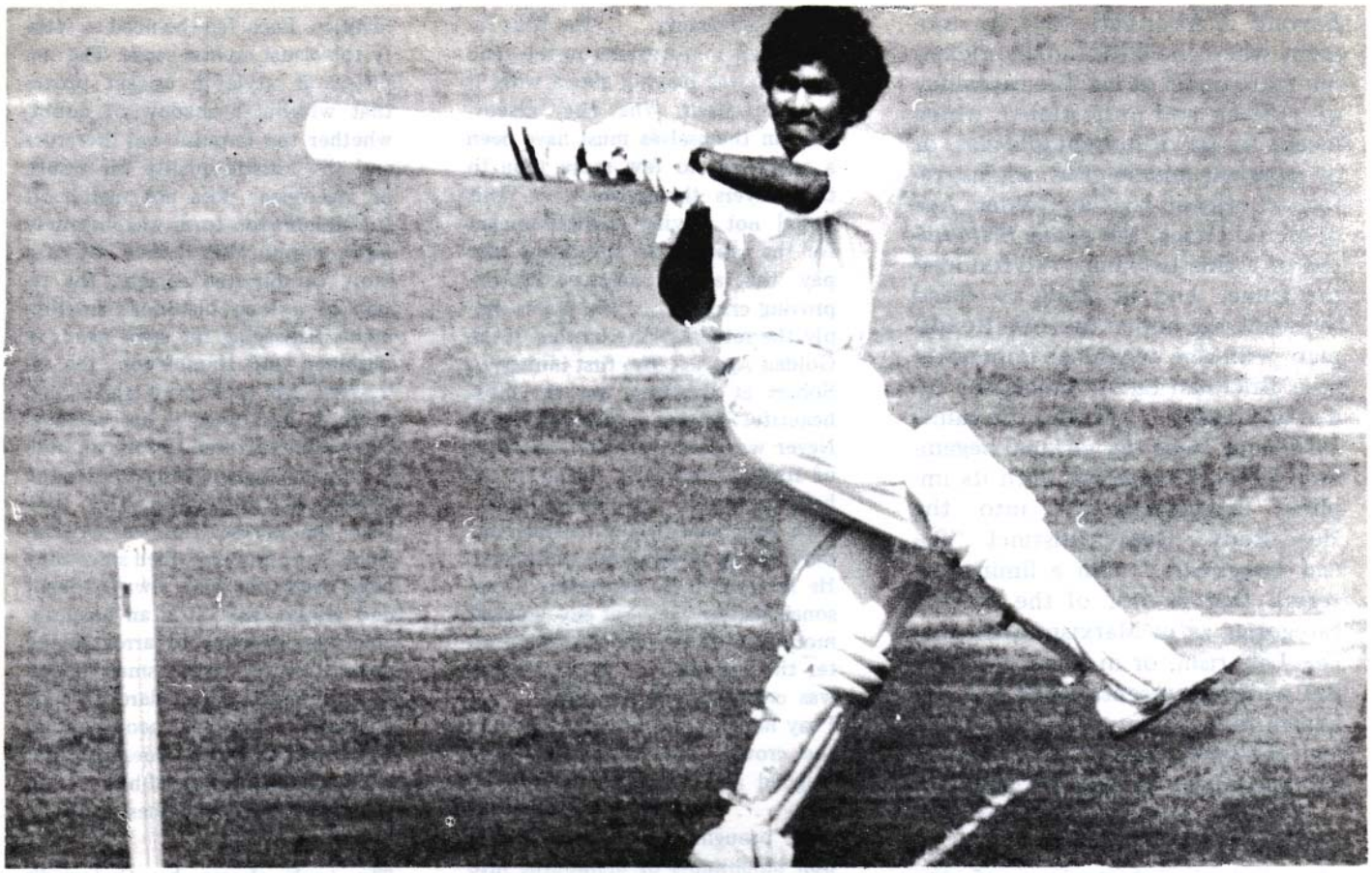
The times had changed. The ruthlessness of body-line cricket, the technicized efficiency of a Bradman's batting, were merely the logical development of that crisis of bourgeois *rationalism,* a philosophy and master-conception which, creative in its springtime,[12] had now become destructive in its decline, focussing only on one end, losing the balance between the *aesthetic* and the technical, the physical and the mental that had calibrated the great cricket of the Golden Age, its fusion of mind and body, its flow of motion and "mechanics of judgment." The fusion that had marked a W. G. Grace, that defined the grace and style of a Bondsman batting in the *only* way he could bat; a *Bradman,* in that Carnival moment when he made 71 runs in forty-five minutes. And said to hell with the utility code! With the bourgeois mode of rationality!



Here the juxtaposition in the structure of *Beyond A Boundary* — of a Bondsman and a Bradman, the latter subordinated to the code of technological rationality, the former immersed in the imperatives of the popular underground counterculture of Trinidad, a culture derived from Africa, yet toughened, suffered a sea-change, transformed from a normative culture of traditional African societies to a culture of liminality,[13] liminality with respect to the global polis of bourgeois classarchy, reveals a culture clash, a clash of *Reasons.* A clash between the rationalism of the bourgeoisie and a new popular reason. This latter reason is the reason of the culture of that Afro-American archipelago which gave rise to the Calypsoes of Sparrow; to the Jazz popular culture, the first universal musical culture; to the Rastafarian reggae. A culture in which the reason of accumulation of the bourgeois polis had been contested and held at bay by a counter-reason — the reason of the social that had defined the imperatively popular cultures of African traditional societies.[14]

What we note here is a fundamental clash of telos between a society coordinated symbiotically by the imperative *of redistribution,* the imperative of the social, and another coordinated by the imperative of accumulation and expansion, i.e., the reason of the productive forces. As Rodney himself comments:

> The above is a beautiful set-piece of the moral terminology of capitalist accumulation — the "assiduous" and the "industrious" who will inherit the earth, while those who do not share grace are the ones who were "lazy." It pointedly illustrates the difference between the African and European cultures. Even within the empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, the explosiveness of class contradictions was lacking, as Diop stresses in his Nations Negres et



> Culture. In the states of Ashante and Dahomey, whose growth was contemporaneous with European mercantilism, there was no concept of the "market" in the sense of supply and demand, and the social redistribution of goods made accumulation impossible.[15]

It is this dialectic and tension between the technological rationality of the bourgeois master-conception in its decline and consummation, i.e., the complete mechanization of men,[16] of thought (theoretics), of feeling (aesthetics) — and the counter-reason of the underground popular-aesthetic imperative, that gave rise to the West Indian cricketers. In very much the same way, as James tells it, another great age of transition, the age of Hazlitt's England,[17] had given rise to W. G. Grace, the innovative genius — and founder of Modern Cricket.

Thus, that technological rationality which had discarded a Bondsman as "refuse," which had dictated the technical reason that held the full powers of Bradman in check during his normal batting lifetime, found its sovereignty overturned by the autonomy of the aesthetic imperative which ruled the playing of the West Indian Cricketers in their triumphant tour of Australia with Frank Worrell — the first *Black* player ever selected as Captain.

With the governing categories of the bourgeois polis reversed socially, aesthetically, the West Indian cricketers kept the theoretics of its technological rationality in the rightful place — as the mere secondary means to a Jamesian defined and popular end, the realization by the genus homo of the free-play of faculties.

Thus the climax of *Beyond A Boundary* is the climax too of the Jamesian quest to assert the autonomy and radical historicity of men over the historical process; over the time of the productive forces and the mode of social relations which the sovereignty of the latter necessarily entails. For if, as James quotes in *Beyond A Boundary,* a poetic work must be defined as a verbal function whose aesthetic function is its dominant, then the value-system implicit in the contrast between the batting of a Bondsman and the everyday batting of a Bradman, between the everyday efficient batting of a Bradman dictated by the overriding criteria of utility of winning, and the glorious innings when Bradman *batted to reward the crowd and to purely realize his own powers, suggest that in cricket too as in all organized sports, there is a criterion of evaluative judgment that responds to the aesthetic imperative of all art.* For in that crowning inning, Bradman's batting rewarded the crowd — and the Australian crowds, James notes, are at once proud of Bradman and ambivalent towards his mode of batting — by making the aesthetic function, hitherto secondary to the technological code, the *dominant.* This was/is the apex moment of

Beyond A Boundary too, the moment when the West Indian cricketing team under at last the captaincy of a Black and professional, which means to say of non-middle-class or of marginal middle-class origins, returned cricket to the Golden Age of W. G. Grace, the *genus Britannicus* of a fine batsman who founded the game. And in doing so, fused the aesthetic imperative of a Bondsman with the technical imperative of a Bradman but reversing the order of priority — yet won the game. Displacing then the rational hegemony of the bourgeoisie with its implicit categorization[18] into the Head/Body, Reason/Instinct *"Social Imaginaire"* with a liminal reversal, that is, not of the specific categories as in Marxism-Leninism, i.e., Laborism, or in *Black* nationalism which represents *Black* as a biological rather than as a socio-historical category, but of the mode of categorization, the system itself.

It is this transformation of hierarchical categories into a continuum, this transformation of the bourgeois *social imaginaire* which defines the aesthetic imperative of the great popular arts — the arts of the whole body of the people. The arts of the Greek games, its tragic drama; of the great African festival complex; of modern organized sports. It was the affirmation in action of the popular *social imaginaire* — of the Bondsman aesthetic — that drew a quarter of a million people of Melbourne, Australia, out in the streets to pay tribute to and say goodbye to the West Indian cricketers who had rewarded the crowd with the kind of playing in which the "aesthetic function" was the dominant. With stroke after stroke hitting ball after ball beyond the boundary, strokes after which as the West Indian crowd would say *Not a man move!*

James's prose as he tells it enacts the "flow of motion" of bat and ball and fieldsmen in the rhythms of his prose:

> Frank Worrell and his team in Australia had added a new dimension to cricket history. . .. The West Indies team in Australia on the field and off was playing above what it knew of itself. What they discovered in themselves must have been a revelation to few more than to the players themselves. . . . This [was] not playing brighter cricket for the sake of the spectators who pay, that absurd nostrum for improving cricket. . . . No, it was simply the return to the batting of the Golden Age. .. . The first innings of Sobers at Brisbane was the most beautiful batting I have ever seen. Never was such ease and certainty of stroke, such early seeing of the ball, such late and leisured play, such command by the batsman not only of the bowling but of himself. He seemed to be expressing a personal vision. . . . Yet my greatest moment was the speechmaking after the last test. . . . Frank Worrell was crowned with the olive. . . . If I say he won the prize it is because the crowd gave it to him. They laughed and cheered him continuously. . . . I caught a glimpse of what brought a quarter of a million inhabitants of Melbourne into the streets to tell the West Indian cricketers goodbye, a gesture, spontaneous and in cricket without precedent, one people speaking to another. *(Ibid.)*

Or as James would say, insisting on the fusion of man and nature, on the continuum rather than hierarchy of mind and body, insisting with the elegance of a Worrell driving through the covers:

> We have had enough of the flower-garden of the gay, the spontaneous West Indians. We need some astringent spray.

Never was there such ease and certainty of phrase. Such late and leisurely play!

II. The Jamesian Ethics/Aesthetics

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

The tools chosen by Castoriadis were those of orthodox Marxism. Yet the implicit logic of his political approach contained in germinal form an essential element of his later critique of Marx, which bears mention here. *The working class will* continue to revolt against its immediate condition showing its willingness to struggle now for a better life. Yet so long as that better life is imagined in Russian tonalities, the political translation of this can only be the Communist Party. Implicit in the suggestion is *that it is the stunting of the creative imagination of individuals, due to the existence of a socially legitimated collective* representation — an imaginaire social, as Castoriadis refers to it later — which must be analysed. The imaginary social representations are in effect a material force in their own right. (Dick Howard, *The Marxian Legacy)*

Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it is satisfied? — Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out. (Thackeray, *Vanity Fair)*

Put baldly, the second central question of *Beyond A Boundary* might seem remote from the Jamesian clash with Trotsky; from the Negro Question; from the Bondsman contradiction and the popular question; from the decline of orthodox Marxism as a viable alternative projection of the futural and a new hope for our times, from the 6th Pan-African Congress and the stagnation of Pan-Africanism, for the debate of the Third World, for the growing totalitarianism of both Wests, i.e., the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union, a tendency foretold by James.

Yet they are all of a piece. The aesthetic question that James raises when he asks and answers *What is Art?* is all of a piece and cut out of the same cloth as all other aspects of the Jamesian quest.

The chapter, *What is Art?* delegitimates bourgeois mythology in its aesthetic form and deconstructs a central aspect of the ruling *social imaginaire.* It critiques both the theoretical canons of a Trotsky, for whom productive labor is necessarily hegemonic, and the aesthetic canons of the Liberal art critic, Berenson. James first takes issue, however, with the distinguished cricket commentator Neville Cardus, who had often defended cricket's right to be called an art. Yet, James points out, it is the same Cardus who nevertheless stigmatizes cricket's audience. "Nothing fine" in music or in anything else, Cardus wrote, can be understood or truly felt by the crowd. Given this initial presupposition, it is logical that whilst Cardus often introduced music into his writing on cricket, he never introduced cricket into his writing on music. As James comments:

> Cardus is a victim of that categorization and specialization, that division of the human personality which is the greatest curse of our time. Cricket has suffered but not only cricket. *(Beyond A Boundary)*

James then breaches this categorization with a deliberate flinging down of the critical gauntlet.

> I have made great great claims for cricket. . . . [Cricket] is an art, not a bastard or a poor relation but a full member of the community . .. and we have to compare it with other arts. *(Ibid.)*

And in his brilliant analysis of cricket as "a dramatic spectacle . . . [which] belongs with the theatre, ballet, opera and the dance,"[19] he not only takes issue with the aestheticians, but like Bakhtin, he liberates the critical imagination from the closetted confines of the *aesthetic* as a separate realm from the realm of the real, and from the value categories of fine arts and non-fine arts.

> Cricket is first and foremost a dramatic spectacle. It belongs with the theatre, ballet, opera and the dance. In a superficial sense all games are dramatic. Two men boxing or running a race can exhibit skill, courage, endurance and sharp changes of fortune, can evoke hope and fear. They can even harrow the soul with laughter and tears, pity and terror. The state of the city, the nation or the world can invest a sporting event with dramatic intensity such as is reached in few theatres. When the democrat Joe Louis fought the Nazi Schmelling the bout became a focus of approaching world conflict. . . . These possibilities cricket shares with other games in a greater or lesser degree. Its quality as drama is more specific. It is so organized that at all times it is compelled to reproduce the central action which characterizes all good drama from the days of the Greeks to our own: two individuals are pitted against each other in a conflict that is strictly personal but no less strictly representative of a social group. One individual batsman faces one individual bowler. But each represents his side. The personal achievement may be of the utmost competence or brilliance. Its ultimate value is whether it assists the side to victory or staves off defeat. This has nothing to do with morals. It is the organizational structure on which the whole spectacle is built. The dramatist, the novelist, the choreographer, must strive to make his individual character symbolical of a larger whole. He may or may not succeed. . , . The batsman facing the ball does not merely represent his side. *For that moment, to all intents and purposes, he is his side.* This fundamental relation of the One and the Many, Individual and Social, Individual and Universal, leader and followers, representative and ranks, the part and the whole is structurally imposed on the players of cricket. What other sports, games and arts have to aim at, the players are given to start with, they cannot depart from it. Thus the game is founded upon a dramatic, a human relation which is universally recognized as the most objectively pervasive and psychologically stimulating in life and therefore in that artificial representation of it which is drama. *(Ibid.)*

The aesthetics is the politics. James is not negating the fine arts. He is taking them out of the box in which bourgeois critical canons, responding to a socio-ideological code rather than to a purely critical conceptual imperative, have confined them.

And in this displacement of imperative the fine arts too, like cricket closetted from the reality of their times, face the same aridity, the same death. James points out that in defining the arts according to bourgeois prescriptions, the aestheticians have scorned to take notice of popular sports and games to their own detriment.

> The aridity and confusion of which they mournfully complain — will continue until they include organized games, and the people who watch them as an integral part of their data.

James engaging with the art critic Berenson refutes the latter's decision to deny the criterion of art to wrestling matches because (as Berenson argues) of the game's "confusion and fatigue of actual-

Trouble in Frisco
Fletcher Martin

ity." Thus, Berenson maintains, only the artist manages to extract the "significance of movements," as in the rendering of tactile values solely the artist can embody the corporal significance of objects. Against Berenson's emphasis on the solitary artist as mediator and on the painting as the only medium of art, James argues:

> I submit . . . that without the intervention of any artist the spectator at cricket extracts the significance of movement and of tactile value. He experiences the heightened sense of capacity. . . . [The] significant form is permanent present. It is known, expected, recognized, enjoyed by tens of thousands of spectators. Cricketers call it style. . . . What is to be emphasized is that whereas in the fine arts the image of tactile values and movement, however . . . magnificent, is permanent, fixed; in cricket the spectator sees the image constantly recreated and whether he is a cultivated spectator or not has standards which he carries with him always. He can recreate them at will. He can go to see a game hoping and expecting to see the image recreated or even extended. . . . The image can be a single stroke, made on a certain day, which has been seen and never forgotten. There are some of these the writer has carried in his consciousness for over forty years, some, in fact longer, as is described in the first pages of the book. *(Ibid.)*

Here James notes a significant fact about Berenson's art criticism — the fact that whilst praising paintings like Pollaiuolo's "Hercules Strangling Antaeus" as well as Michelangelo's drawings as the ultimate yet reached in the presentation of tactile values and sense of movement, never once does Berenson analyze the fact that is for

James of central importance, "the enormous role that *elemental physical action plays in the visual arts throughout the century."*

The omission is not accidental. The separation of the physical and the mental is maintained even for a "physical" art such as painting. The abduction system of the Head/ Body division rules *inaesthetics* too.

The wrestling match or the game of cricket could not be regarded by Berenson as being among the "fine arts." The bodies always in tense dynamic movement, the coordination is never static, finished, completed. Its aesthetic is itself dynamic.

Cricket, in fact any ball game, to the visual image adds the sense of physical coordination, of harmonious action, of timing. The visual image of a diving fieldsman is a frame for his rhythmic contact with the flying ball. Here two art forms meet. *(Ibid.)*

But James's greatest breach with bourgeois aesthetics is his refusal to see it as "play," as the Marcusean-defined rest from labor and recuperation for labor. Rather, the art of cricket or of any sports is seen as a creative activity in its own right and one intimately linked to human existence as is labor. In other words the aesthetic ceases to be merely a residual social activity; it becomes centrally meaningful.

In this part of his book James expresses the summa of his poesis — a summa that expresses what Geoffrey Bateson calls the *aesthetics of being alive.*[20]

In the chapter, the *Art and Practic Part,* James formulates an aesthetics that moves outside the bourgeois aesthetic code. He calls in question the ruling *social imaginaire,* i.e., the *socially legitimated collective representations* which "value" the value-systems which control the mode of desire through the mechanism of its representation of the optative identity, of the optative canons of thought and feeling.

It is here that we grasp the dimensions of the Jamesian heresy. The critique in *Beyond A Boundary,* rather than merely an attack on *capitalism* as the economic expression of bourgeois society, goes beyond the absolute of the economic.

As James writes, summing up his credo:

> After a thorough study of bull-fighting in Spain, Ernest Haas, the famous [photographer's] . . . conclusion is that the bull fight is pure art. The spectacle is all motion.. . . The perfection of motion is what people want to see. They come hoping that this bull-fight will produce the perfect flow of motion. Another name for the *perfect flow of motion is style, or, if you will, significant form.*
>
> Let us examine this motion, or, as Mr. Berenson calls it, movement. Where the motive or directing force rests with the single human being, an immense variety of physical motion is embraced within four categories. . . . The batsman propels a missile with a tool. The bowler does the same unaided.. . . He may bowl a slow curve or fast or medium, or he may at his pleasure use each in turn. There have been many bowlers whose method of delivery has seemed to spectators the perfection of form, irrespective of the fate which befell the balls bowled. Here, far more than in batting, the repetition conveys the realization of movement despite the actuality. Confusion is excluded by the very structure of the game.
>
> As for the fieldsmen, there is no limit whatever to their possibilities of running, diving, leaping, falling forward, backwards, sideways, with all their energies concentrated on a specific objective, the whole completely realizable by the alert spectator. The spontaneous outburst of thousands at a fierce hook or a dazzling slip-catch, the ripple of recognition at a long-awaited leg-glance, are as genuine and deeply felt expressions of artistic emotion as any I know.
>
> You will have noted that the four

works of art chosen by Mr, Berenson to illustrate movement all deal with some physical action of the athletic kind. Mr. Berenson calls the physical process of response mystical. . . . I believe that the examination of the stroke, the brilliant piece of fielding, will take us through mysticism to far more fundamental considerations, than mere life-enhancing. We respond to physical action or vivid representation of it, dead or alive, because we are made that way. For unknown centuries survival for us, like all other animals, depended upon competent and effective physical activity. This played its part in developing the brain. The particular nature which became ours did not rest satisfied with this. If it had it could never have become human. The use of the hand, the extension of its powers by the tool, the propulsion of a missile at some objective and the accompanying refinements of the mechanics of judgment, these marked us off from the animals. Language may have come at the same time. . . . Sputnik can be seen as no more than a missile made and projected through tools by the development hand.

Similarly the eye for the line which is today one of the marks of ultimate aesthetic refinements is not new. It is old. The artists of the caves of Altamira had it. So did the bushmen. They had it to such a degree that they could reproduce it or, rather, represent it with unsurpassed force. Admitting this, Mr. Berenson confines the qualities of this primitive art to animal energy and an exasperated vitality. That, even if true, is totally subordinate to the fact that among these primitive peoples the sense of form existed to the degree that it could be consciously and repeatedly reproduced. It is not a gift of high civilization, the last achievement of noble minds. It is exactly the opposite. The use of sculpture and design among primitive people indicates that the significance of form is a common possession. Children have it. There is no need to adduce further evidence for the presupposition that the faculty or faculties by which we recognize significant form in elemental physical action is native to us, a part of the process by which we have become and remain human. It is neither more nor less mystical than any other of our faculties of apprehension. . . . The impression I get is that the line was an integral part of co-ordinated physical activity, functional perhaps, but highly refined in that upon it food or immediate self-preservation might depend.

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

The aesthetic is not less "material" than the *economic.* The expropriation of the means of aesthetic perception, of the mechanics of critical judgment are no less and perhaps far more terrible with respect to its consequences than the expropriation of the means of production. The means of providing for material existence are vital, but so too are the means of enacting, exercising, developing the innate faculty — *the eye for line and for significant form,* an eye physical in earlier circumstances where the natural environment was the dominant challenge, now conceptual and aesthetic in a situation where man's greatest obstacle to the realization of his powers, to the free play and development of his faculties is now the socio-cultural environment.

This socio-environment is never natural; nor is it arbitrary. Nor are the attitudes and responses, of approval, recognition, or aversion, rejection, in other words, of intersubjective valuation ever purely subjective. Rather these subjective attitudes are responses in line with the value-systems of the hegemonic *social imaginaire.*.

And it was this *imaginaire* that persuaded the masses that their desire for organized sports had nothing to do with their *material* needs, that aesthetic needs were for egg-heads. That the satisfaction of a "visual artistic sense" could only be fed in art galleries. That aesthetic appreciation was something from which they were excluded.

Like the man speaking prose without knowing it, so the West Indian cricket audience shouting "Not a man move!", the bullfighting crowd shouting "Ole!" and "the spontaneous outburst of thousands . . . the ripple of recognition" at a moment when the player plays above himself, outside himself, is engaged, as *Beyond A Boundary* reveals, in "genuine and deeply felt expressions of artistic emotions." For it is this above all that people live by. Deprive them of it. Or sell the game by faking it, by massifying it. Reduce the aesthetic to the mechanically orchestrated in thought and feeling — as in Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union, Jonestown, and now increasingly in the United States, and in many areas of the Third World — and all that is human of Man will be gone. The "stunted" creative imagination will call for gas ovens. And the burning has already begun.

Footnotes

1. "Marx shattered the fiction of *homo economicus,* the myth which sums up the whole process of naturalization of the system of exchange-value, the market and surplus value and its forms. But he did so in the

name of labor power's emergence in action, of men's own power to give rise to value by his labor *(producere).* Isn't this a similar — naturalization — a model bound to code all human (life) in terms of value — and production? Through this mirror of production, the human being comes to consciousness in the imaginary, finalized by a sort of ideal productivist ego . . . in the identity that a man dons with his own eyes when he can think of himself only as something to produce, to transform, or bring about as value." (Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production,* tr. Mark Poster [St. Louis, 1975])

2. "The definition of labor power as the source of concrete social wealth is the complete expression of the abstract manipulation of labor-power, the truth of capital culminates in this 'evidence' of man as producer of value. . . . For [Marx] . .. men begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their *means of* subsistence. . . . But is man's existence an end for which he must find the means? … Is he labor-power (by which he separates himself as means from himself as his own end)?" *(Ibid.)*
3. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* tr. Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. "In all essentials the modern game was formed and shaped between 1778, when Hazlitt was born, and 1830, when he died. It was created by the yeoman farmer, the gamekeeper, the potter, the tinker, the Nottingham coal-miner, the Yorkshire factory hand. These artisans made it, men of hand and eye. Rich and idle young noblemen and some substantial city people contributed money, organization and prestige. Between them, by 1837 they had evolved a highly complicated game with all the typical characteristics of a genuinely national art form, founded on elements long present in the nation, profoundly popular in origin, yet attracting to it disinterested elements of the leisured and educated classes." *(Beyond A Boundary)*
7. The "white masks" worn by Blacks (Fanon) are not so much *white* as "normative masks," i.e., the set of desires, aspirations, in the identity package which it then codes as Norm. In attaining to this normative middle-class identity, the individual acts according to the grammar of action coded in the identity package. In realizing his "individuality" as prescribed, the "unit" acts so as to constitute and verify middle-class reality as the really real. The middle-class cooptation of the identity and desires of the popular forces is even more powerful because more invisible. Nazism — and the rise of the moral majority, Jonestown — reveals this contradiction, i.e., the power of middle-class pseudo-populism to coerce the popular forces through their control of the social imaginaire. James's reading of *Moby Dick* reveals the hold of Ahab on the others prefiguring Hitler, Stalin, Jim Jones. Who next? Others by compelling a reversal of the accumulative telos; compelling some measure of redistribution at the popular levels.
8. Carnelius Castoriadis, *L'Institution Imaginaire de la Societe* (Paris, 1975),
9. ". . . after this long absence they seemed all to have returned within about a decade of each other, in frantic haste. . . . Golf was known to be ancient. The first annual tournament of the Open Championship was held only in 1860. The Football Association was founded only in 1863. It was in 1866 that the first athletic championship was held in England. The first English cricket team left for Australia in 1862 and a county championship worthy of the name was organized only in 1873. In the United States the first all-professional baseball team was organized in 1869. [Lawn] tennis was actually invented and played for the first time in Wales in 1873 and was carried next year to the United States. The public flocked to these sports and games. All of a sudden, everyone wanted organized sports and games.

   "But in that very decade this same public was occupied with other organizations of a very different type. Disraeli's Reform Bill, introducing popular democracy in England, was passed in 1865. In the same year the slave states were defeated in the American Civil War, to be followed immediately by the first modern organization of American labour. In 1864 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels founded the First Communist International and within a few years Europe for the first time since the Crusades saw an international organization composing millions of people. In 1871 in France Napoleon III was overthrown and the Paris Commune was established. It failed, and popular democracy . . . seemed doomed. In only four years it had returned and the Third Republic was founded. So that this same public that wanted sports and games so eagerly wanted popular democracy too. Perhaps they were not exactly the same people in each case. Even so, both groups were stirred at the same time." *(Beyond A Boundary)*
10. "Concerning the treatment of slaves, I may mention as a good compilation, that of Charles Comte, *Traite de la legislation,* Third Edition, Brussell, 1837. Those who want to learn *what the bourgeois makes of himself and his world,* whenever he can, *without restraint, model the world after his own image,* should study this matter in detail." (Marx, 1930: 1: 752)
11. James quoted from an excellent work of Richard Pares to prove his point. Pares noted inter alia that: "in all the inventories which are to be found among the West Indian archives it is very usual for the mill, the cauldron, the still and the buildings to count for more than one-sixth of the total capital; in most plantations one-tenth would be nearer the mark. By far the greatest capital items were the value of the slaves and the acreage planted in canes by their previous labor.

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

    "They were not only numerous but, because of their skill, they had a high value. If we add their cost to that of the instruments and machinery which they used, we find that the industrial capital of the plantations, without which it could not be a plantation at all, was probably not much less than half its total capital." (Reprinted into *Spheres of Existence.)*
12. In *State Capitalism and World Revolution* James defines this crisis. As always where he analyzes the crisis in terms only of the division of labor in production, I suggest that his literary and fictional system and the un-

derground heresy of his theoretics widen this analysis to the *global social division* imperative *to the telos of accumulation, and based* on the *social imaginaire* of the Reason/Instinct, Head/Body division. The division of labor is then seen as a subset, as the division *white* captain, *Black* team; or *white* quarterback, *Black* footballers. As James wrote:

"The crisis of production today [the crisis then of the global social order — S.W.J is the crisis of the antagonism between manual and intellectual labour. The problem of modern philosophy from Descartes in the sixteenth century to Stalinism in 1950 is the problem of *the* division of labour between the intellectuals and the workers. . . . In the springtime of capitalism this rationalistic division of labour was the basis of a common attempt of individual men associated in a natural environment to achieve control over nature. Today this division of labour is the control in social production of the administrative elite over the masses. Rationalism has reached its end in the complete divorce and absolute disharmony between manual and intellectual labour, between the socialized proletariat and the monster of centralized capital." *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Detroit, 1950).

13. "The structural analysis [of Borana society, Ethiopia] demonstrated that structures resting upon cognitive discrimination can be as orderly as the grammar governing language. We cannot assume that this is the only kind of order in human society. In the analyses of instability we saw the kinds of regularities that are not based on *native conceptual schemes.* .. . There are rather events, processes, and trends that exist in spite of structure. . . . [Yet] .. . there is a third domain that is both anti-structural and anti-empirical. This is the domain of creativity, ecstatic religion, prophetism. . . . This is where Turner's classic, *The Ritual Process* . . . has finally established liminality and multi-vocality as the third major area of anthropological analysis. . . . He [Turner] has established the interpretative power of the concept of liminality . . . [and] has established that the topsy-turvy world of transitional and marginal groups, dominated as it is by a rich multi-vocal symbolic medium, is nothing less than the third facet of human society.… It is a domain *in which the categoric distinctions* that normally segmentalize the social field are temporarily held in abeyance, allowing the human community to experience the bonds of total empathy. These inordinately fragile liminal societies exist only for very brief periods of history, and in the very process of dying, they give rise to new forms of social structure or *revitalized versions of the old order.* Liminality is the repository of the creative potential underlying human society. (Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* [New York, 1973])
14. Walter Rodney was the first to underscore this clash of ratio between the accumulative telos of the bourgeoisie and that of African traditional societies at the beginning of the Atlantic Slave Trade:

"What is most fundamental is an attempt to evaluate the African contribution to the solution of the problems posed by man's existence in society; and hence the stress placed in this paper on matter pertaining to social relations: codes of hospitality, processes of the law, public order and social and religious tolerance. In each of those areas of human social activity, African norms and practices were given a high value by Europeans themselves. They often reflected that the hospitality they saw in an African village was lacking in their communities; that the security of goods stood in marked contrast to brigandage and depredations in Europe.

". . . On the other hand, African norms were frustrating to capitalists. For instance, the whites resented the polite formulae of African greetings since they were lengthy and could delay business for a whole day. One European denounced African hospitality in the following terms: "The law of hospitality is obstructive of industry. If there is provision in the country, a man who wants it has only to find out who has got any, and he must have his share. If he enters any man's house during his repast, and gives him the usual salutation, the man must invite him to partake. Thus, whatever abundance a man may get by assiduity, will be shared by the lazy, and thus they seldom calculate for more than necessaries. But the laws of hospitality are not restrained to diet. A common man cannot quietly enjoy a spare shirt or a pair of trousers. Those who are too lazy to plant or hunt are also too lazy to trade.'" (Walter Rodney, *Groundings With My Brothers* [London, 1969])

15. *Ibid.*
16. "When we reach state capitalism, one-party state, cold war, hydrogen bomb, it is obvious that we have reached ultimates. We are now at the stage where all universal questions are matters of concrete specific urgency for society in general as well as for every individual. As we wrote in *The Invading Socialist Society:*

'"It is precisely the character of our age and the maturity of humanity that obliterates the opposition between theory and practice, between the intellectual occupations of the "educated" and the masses.'

"All previous distinctions, politics and economics, war and peace, agitation and propaganda, party and mass, the individual and society, national, civil and imperialist war, single country and one world, immediate needs and ultimate solution — all these it is impossible to keep separate any longer. Total planning is inseparable from permanent crisis, the world struggle for the minds of men from the world tendency to the complete mechanization of men." *(The Invading Socialist Society* [Detroit, 1950])

17. "Hazlitt's strength and comprehensiveness were the final culmination of one age fertilized by the new. In prose, in poetry, in criticism, in painting, his age was more creative than the country had been for two centuries before and would be for a century after. This was the age that among its other creations produced the game of cricket." *(Beyond A Boundary)*
18. Cf. James: "The revolutionary bourgeoisie which established its powers against feudalism could only develop a philosophy of history and of society in which, on the one hand, it spoke for the progress of all society, and on the other, for itself as the leaders of society. This philosophy can be summed up in one word: *rationalism.*

"Rationalism is the philosophy of bourgeois political economy. It is materialist and not idealist in so far as it combats superstition, seeks to

expand the productive forces and increases the sum total of goods. But there is no such thing as a classless materialism. Rationalism conceives this expansion as a division of labour between the passive masses and the active elite. Thereby it re-instates idealism. Because it does not and cannot doubt that harmonious progress is inevitable by this path, the essence of rationalism is uncritical or vulgar materialism, and uncritical or vulgar idealism. *(State Capitalism and World Revolution)*

19. Television reproducing the movements of footballers, baseball players, basketball in slow motion, reveals not only that sports are modalities of dance, but also why all theoretical dance, classical ballet and modern, have become the vestiges of a museum — performance, irrelevant.
20. "Today, we pump a little natural history into children along with a little 'art' so *that they will forget their animal and ecological nature and the aesthetics of being alive and will grow up to be good businessmen. "* (Geoffrey Bateson, *Mind and Nature* [New York, 1979])

Sylvia Wynter, a native West Indian, is a writer and teaches Afro-American Studies and Comparative Literature at Stanford University.

Interview

Ken Lawrence interviewed Darcus Howe in London last October.

DH: We are having an 80th birthday series of lectures by Nello here in London in early January — three lectures sponsored by *Race Today* and supported by the Black Parents Movement and the Black Youth Movement. The titles of the lectures are: *Lecture 1* — Socialism or Barbarism; *Lecture 2* — Britain and America: Two English-Speaking Democracies; *Lecture 3* — Immigrants to Britain: Formerly Colonial Peoples. Those are the three we are sponsoring and we are having a birthday party for him. He will be 80 on the 4th of January and we will pay his passage over from Trinidad, charging for the lectures so we can recoup our costs.

KL: By the time this interview gets into print, that will have already taken place. I think you should tell me what C. L. R. James means to you and to the movements that you have been part of.

DH: First of all, I think we have to identify the period in Nello's work that we are talking about. The theoretical work he did in the United States on his way out of the Trotskyist movement forms the basic pillar on which our political activity rests. I think the first one, the most important one that has influenced us, particularly myself, is that in political activity, revolutionary political activity, it is not what the working class *ought* to be doing, but what it is doing at any given point, and to keep one's eyes firmly fixed on what workers are thinking and doing. That is for us the primary consideration, the self-activity of the working class, and where it is at any given stage as the basis for what has to be done, as opposed to where it ought to be and the guess work that follows, the adventurism which flows from that.

Secondly, many of us have come from the Caribbean, a colonial situation. And in making the break with colonialism, one always looks for models as to what kind of society one ought to build. And Nello was I think pretty instrumental, even key, in debunking the myth that Russian society is the model through which we should develop. The Russian model has adherents in the Caribbean, particularly with the rise of Cuba as the revolutionary, or imagined revolutionary society. One finds in the Caribbean, among leftists, the tendency to fall under the hegemony of the Moscow/Cuban axis. The only alternative to that presented in the development of Caribbean politics at all is the work Nello has done in the United States, on his way out of Trotskyism. This illustrates the second position, on state capitalism, worked out by the Johnson/Forest tendency.

The third position arises from the first two: what kind of revolutionary political organization do you build in an advanced capitalist society? And the question of the vanguard party arises, which is the third plank in Nello's work which assists us. And let me give you an example as to how that is practiced insofar as we are concerned. We have organized ourselves at *Race Today* in a collective around a journal. We have influenced a lot of Black and white people throughout the United Kingdom. And the question would have arisen whether or not you build a vanguard party to lead Blacks to some emancipation. In rejecting this course, we have relied heavily on Nello's analysis. So those are the basic pillars of his theoretical work which we find of great value in facing the struggles in which we are involved here and inside of the Caribbean.

KL: The next thing I'd like to ask you is, it seems to me that the most revolutionary situations arising today in the English-speaking Caribbean would have to be listed as Guyana, Jamaica, and Grenada.

DH: And Trinidad and Tobago.

KL: . . . OK. And there are obviously very sharp differences in each of these places. And particularly along the lines of each of the things that you just itemized as his contribution. Would it be too much to ask you to say how you think his contribution has played a role, or will play a role, in each of those

situations, and to what extent they've departed, organizationally or politically, from the direction in which he's pointed?

DH: I do not think that there could be a revolutionary movement in a Caribbean country without reference to Nello's work. You either have to reject it, accept it or modify it. But the one thing you cannot do is ignore it. Many of the present crop of revolutionaries would have to face his work at some time or another and come to terms with it. He has informed our tendency. There are several tendencies inside of the Caribbean. Maoism and Stalinism are predominant and the Trotskyists are the least important. They figure in the French colonies, Martinique and Guadeloupe. The Moscow tendency draws its strength from Cuba. Nello's position in regard to underdeveloped countries is stated in *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution,* in particular the chapter titled "Lenin and the Problem."

Among leftists and intellectuals there has been and will continue to be a lot of debates, a lot of polemics, a lot of discussions, a lot of hostility and so on, but that is not crucial. What is crucial is what workers think about him and how they express what they think. Here is an example. The major revolutionary force in the entire Caribbean is the Oilfield Workers Trade Union, because of its organization of the workers who are employed in the oil industry in Trinidad and because of the strategic position of oil production in the international economy. The productive capacity of these workers has placed Trinidad and Tobago in a powerful position in regard to her Caribbean neighbors. She lends them a lot of money and passes off all kinds of deficient goods on them. And the Oilfield Workers Trade Union is independent, self-organized, perhaps representing all Nello's confidence in working class self-activity and the ability of the working class to take power on its own. The Oilfield Workers Trade Union, under the revolutionary leadership of George Weekes, represents that. And truth to tell, Nello is presently living at their premises in Trinidad under their care and attention. Nello lives in one of their properties which is in walking distance from their headquarters and he walks pretty slowly there and they look after him. So I suspect he'll be spending his last years in the ambience of mass independent working class organization. So there is no better example of the acceptance of his work than the fact that workers themselves, having built their own organization, are now able to see him through the last years of his life. They provide people to look after him, they see to it that he gets to and from the airport when he is travelling. They see that he gets three meals a day and so on in order that he writes his autobiography free from the hassles of life.

Here in *Race Today* we are for workers' and peasants' power inside the Caribbean, and we are for the complete destruction, without trace, of the colonial state. We hold the view that the Caribbean working class is advanced enough for a self-organized workers' and peasants' state. I believe that was to some degree Walter Rodney's view. And if you are talking about the Caribbean now, in terms of the ideology of the left, one would always have to look at what Walter Rodney was saying, because he was the major exponent of Marxist and leftist political theory in the Caribbean. I suspect that was his view;

we are not too sure about that. Or perhaps he might have been moving from one position to the other, that other position being Nello 's position.

KL: Back to the differences.

DH: My interpretation of the major difference translates the position of several left tendencies as follows: that the political struggle for working class emancipation would be led by a political party of intellectuals drawn from the middle classes with a handful of advanced workers in tow. Once in government the leadership would provide proper welfare, organize the workers to produce more in order to meet the costs, the workers to be motivated either by incentives, the moral whip or Siberia. The surplus goes towards projects sanctioned by the leadership and the massive bureaucracy which hangs over to corrupt the new. Surplus for guns, travelling expenses for bureaucrats to beg loans abroad. From time to time, with less regularity as the years go by, the working class would be called to large gatherings then sent home after being told of the latest in the development plan to which they must shout their assent. All this is spiced with revolutionary slogans. All independent attempts at working class and peasant organization are to be squashed with a ferocity which surpasses that meted out by previous colonial masters. Mind you, I do not believe this tendency will hold power for any length of time in Caribbean politics, vulnerable as they are to imperialism on the one hand and working class and peasant revolt on the other. As I understand *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution,* what is called for is the break up of the old colonial state and the institutionalizing of a workers' and peasants' state. This process involves the self-organized masses deciding on, implementing, and administering a national economic plan. Nello holds the view that because of the size of those islands and the advanced maturation of Caribbean peoples that this historical stage is on the order of the day.

KL: There are also other political tendencies that I perceive as more reactionary than those you described as the alternatives, like Seaga, for example, who seems to me to be just a surrogate of the United States.

DH: Do you mean you are more reactionary if you are a surrogate of the United States than if you are a surrogate of Moscow?

KL: In that it's certainly, if nothing else, a lot closer, and that makes it militarily more dangerous.

DH: I am not sure about that. In fact, I don't agree with that. Now on the question of Seaga and Manley in Jamaica, I have this to say. It is the complete state of insurrection that the Caribbean working class has been in since the late 1960's in Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, Grenada, etc., which informs the politics of both leaders and their parties. That insurrection pushed Manley from a right-wing trade unionist to what he calls democratic socialism, which is neither democratic nor socialist. It has pushed Seaga from a liberal democrat to a rightist position. I believe both of them are preoccupied with how to contain this insurrection and how to use this energy and force for the full development of the middle classes. You see, it is not only the working classes who are in rebellion in the Caribbean. The middle classes, particularly the professional middle classes, are in rebellion as well. They feel pretty stunted in the colonial Caribbean. Most of them have been to America, have been to Britain, those who have not been are equally influenced by the fact that in those societies the way is open for the full development of the middle classes. You can become a barrister and blossom within a fairly well organized legal system. You can get your cars without the limitation of the shortage of>spare parts. You can get your houses built without a shortage of cement. You can get the artifacts of civilized culture without any problems. You can make fine films without having to face a shortage of celluloid. And so on. So that when all these difficulties appear inside the social crisis in Caribbean society, the middle classes rebel in their own interests. Large areas of the Jamaican economy, sugar in particular, has collapsed and therefore the crisis is acute. From the middle class standpoint the rebellion of the working classes provides the energy for the former's full -emancipation. They have behaved this way for more than sixty years. For them Manley was the perfect leader until he offered too many crumbs to the workers and peasants. Seaga is a much more complete representative of that class. Not much choice between both.

KL: Let me say this. I recall four or five years ago Nello had very warm words of praise for Manley.

DH: I disagree with him and I have told him so. At one point Nello did say that his support rested among other things on the fact that Manley had reduced imports in relation to exports, or something like that.

KL: But you don't believe Manley is following his direction.

DH: Nello's direction? Absolutely not. I don't even think Nello believes that. I think Nello is sympathetic that he's trying to do something. But Nello has never come down anywhere that I have seen to say Manley's position is his position. He says Manley is looking for a new orientation and democratic socialism is more or less what he (Manley) sees as this new orientation. And to the extent that Manley is looking for a new orientation is to that extent that Nello is sympathetic. But I have neither sympathy

Maurice Bishop Prime Minister of Grenada

nor support for Manley. I disagree with Nello on his sympathetic approach.

KL: What about Maurice Bishop?

DH: What took place in Grenada on March 13th, 1979 was a revolutionary seizure of power in that previous changes in power in the English-speaking Caribbean have been through electoral means. Since then the material condition of the Grenadian masses has improved to a great degree. They have won enormous welfare benefits. But our strict analysis on class divisions in Caribbean society must apply. Our position on the break up of the colonial state must apply. Is it the case that the old colonial state in Grenada has been destroyed without trace? The answer must be no. Is it the case that the middle class has been in rebellion against Gairy and in its own interest? The answer must be yes.

Any retreat from both positions is bound to cause enormous social and political problems sooner or later. Let me tell you what I have come across recently in the *Free West Indian,* the national Grenadian weekly. It was reported that the Grenadian government recently passed an anti-terrorist law, a law which would have imprisoned them all had it been passed 18 months previously. Secondly, they quote as justification for passing that law the fact that the British government discovered that in dealing with the evil terrorists in Northern Ireland you have to do away with juries. The British created new courts, the Diplock courts. I don't know if you have heard about those. Therefore, the *Free West Indian* reported, the government of Grenada was instituting the identical law, the identical courts as the British state had done to repress the Irish liberation struggle. For me that is an astounding development, because the struggle in Northern Ireland is perhaps one of the most courageous anti-colonial struggles of our time. They have their problems as each revolutionary struggle experiences but, by and large, one supports the Catholic section of the Irish working class in their struggle to break up that Irish state and to establish a new society. When the Grenada government takes a page out of the repressive end of the Irish struggle, one has to begin to ask some questions. Now why is it that the Grenadian government finds itself in the position in which it believes it cannot rely on the democratic form of jury trial to secure the regime against counter-revolutionaries? Revolutionary development means more democracy, not less. And the reason in my view is that they have not destroyed the colonial state and instituted an extreme democracy on the overthrow of Gairy. Such a regime is the most powerful and potent force in the struggle against imperialism. Now if you don't do that, you do something else. You govern by proclamation. You believe that the leadership knows best and could justify what it is doing by pointing to the amount of welfare they provide. That does not alter, in my view, the basic colonial production relations in that society. In fact it makes it much worse. It sharpens the contradictions even further because on the overthrow of Gairy the working class would be that much further on the road to emancipation within a Caribbean context. The Gairy regime did two things in Grenada. The reactionary that he was, he stifled and strangled the working class and the peasantry. That is the first thing. Secondly, he created no room for middle class development inside Grenada. Once he was overthrown, both these classes would be contesting each other for supremacy. It is out of this struggle that the new society is born. The Grenadian government is hovering precariously above this conflict, which is bound to acceler-

ate in the coming months.

KL: It's my recollection — I am not absolutely certain of it, but it's my best recollection — that back in the sixties Maurice Bishop was quite fond of Nello and his ideas.

DH: We published in the May 1974 issue of *Race Today* an interview by Maurice in which he outlined the basis of the workers' and peasants' state which would replace Gairy's colonial dictatorship. He talked about the organization of workers' and peasants' assemblies which would form the basis of a constituent assembly from where the country would be governed. We republished the interview in the February/March 1979 issue of *Race Today* shortly after they seized power. We agreed with that position. Things have not developed in that direction.

KL: Let me shift a little now and ask you what role Nello and his ideas have played within the West Indian community in England.

DH: The 1948 resolution on the Black question which identified the Black struggle as having an independence, validity and vitality of its own, which resolution preceded Black Power, served to develop and strengthen the Black movement here in Britain. Much more than that, one must be able to grasp the importance of his political ideas in relation not only to Blacks in Britain but in the society as a whole. Presently, the British working class is feeling its way and will have to discover what to do about the Labor Party, what is socialism, and so on. And there is no one on the horizon who knows and understands British society, the British working class in particular, politically, socially and culturally, and who is revolutionary, to give them some sense of themselves in order that they be fortified to transcend the Labor Party. We are living in a society in which the whites are pretty lost, drifting hither and thither, preferring the haven of religious sects like the Moonies or some Asian sect led by a Maharishi. There is this bankruptcy of direction. Nello came here a few months ago and suddenly they discovered that here is a man who knows them. He knows them more than they know themselves. Again, here is this man with a wide range of intellectual and political pursuits. So that regularly in the newspapers, on radio and television, you read, hear, and see something about C. L. R. James. He asked me, "Why is there all this interest?" He was taken aback by this surge of interest. And I told him that it was because they need him, they needed some clarification of their past and direction for the future urgently. And he provides it. And one can remember those days when it could be quite difficult to get him on the screen. Now, lots of people want to speak to him, to hear what he has to say. And that's his influence here, right across the board, in both the Black and the white community.

KL: What is the political aim, or strategy, of the independent, autonomous Black movement here?

DH: The tendency to which we belong is for workers' and peoples' power in Britain. That's what we are for. It is a hell of a climb from fighting a campaign to free George Lindo, a Black worker who was falsely imprisoned in the north of England, to workers' and peoples' power. But that is our perspective.

KL: I want to ask you a little bit more on this last question, because in the U.S. the aspect of the Black movement that makes it independent, autonomous, increasingly is taking the direction of sovereignty, separateness, territorial independence. And whereas, during the sixties there was a lot of argument about that and that position had not been fully developed by Malcolm X, who was the most advanced proponent of that strategy, today a wide range of nationalists hold these views, as well as a wide range of Black Marxists who are not building multi-national organizations, but who base themselves around a perspective of independence. Now I have not heard a similar perspective put forward here and it seems to me that

DH: You wouldn't hear it from me.

KL: Right, I know, and it seems to me that one of the differences is that whereas the Black Nationalists and Black Marxist nationalist movements in the U.S. identify Black people as a nation within the U.S., that the identity here seems to be a Caribbean identity. Is that basically correct?

DH: Not quite. The long and barbaric history of lynchings, of brutal murders by gun-toting southerners did not take place in this country. Also there is not, anywhere in Britain, a socialized separateness. No Harlem through which you could travel all night long and not see a white person except a policeman. So one is always socially and culturally in contact with whites every day, all day. In the process of this socialization, one has to some extent been able to undermine the divisions between Blacks and whites which modern capitalism tends to foster and encourage. And I would give two major examples of this. In 1970 the Black community in Netting Hill, West London, organized itself to carry out a struggle against police brutality and corruption. The issue centered around the Mangrove Restaurant, an all-night restaurant, which offered a legal advice service during the day. The resident lawyer was made available to the Black community by the proprietor of the Mangrove for anyone arrested at local police stations. The lawyer would nip down to the police station before the police had time to force the suspect to sign a state-

ment of admission. He would be able to secure bail in circumstances in which suspects were not normally granted bail. The police, in turn, took the position that the presence of the lawyer disrupted their hegemony over the Black community. So they moved to close down the restaurant by objecting to its license, raiding the premises for drugs, etc. We called a demonstration which ended in street fighting between ourselves and the police. And nine weeks later, following a series of press reports about Black Power agitators, the police arrested nine of us, including myself, and charged us with inciting members of the public to riot and making an affray. The maximum sentence was life imprisonment. Their strategy was to deem a few of us leaders, incarcerate us for a long time, and dissipate the rest of the Black movement. We got to court and argued for a Black jury. We believed we could win the case with Black jurors. The judge turned down the application. We then asked for a list of jurors and chose those from the white working class. Anyone with any pretense to Marxism knows that the working class at some point in its development had to feel the sharpness of police oppression in order that they be molded into obedient producers for capitalism. The police keep them in order so that the working class had to have some experience of the police, that the police were not the saints that bourgeois propaganda made them out to be. So we said to the court authorities, well, give us a list of jurors and we chose them by occupation and appealed to them as working class folk as ourselves, sure in the belief — some of us weren't so sure — in the general belief that if there was any section of the population who could deliver us out of the mess in which we found ourselves, it would be white workers. And they did. Some of them began the trial as racists. At the end of it, when I was making my closing speech — I defended myself — one of the white women wept as I spoke, you know. So one knew it was possible to move white workers in support. And more than that, freed as we were from institutions like the Labor Party and the trade union bureaucracy and so on, we are able to move much faster in debunking a lot of myths inside British society, although we do not have the accompanying power to transform British society on our own.

Then recently some Asian women went on strike for unionization in a factory called Grunwicks and showed tremendous fortitude in keeping up that strike for week after week. One would have found that by and large, white workers would have got pissed off with it and moved on into other areas of the economy. So the Asian women held out and were able to mobilize, on their side, coach loads of miners, engineering workers, in their thousands on the picket line. And I am not talking about white leftist ideologues — they were there too. Such was the rush of the white working class to defend these women. The trade union bureaucracy refused to carry out the directions from the white workers to cut off the gas and the electricity to that factory. Resolutions were passed in several trade union branches calling on the leadership to isolate the factory. Such was the mobilization that even right wing MPs were forced to join the picket line. The election was coming up so they had to be where the action was. Then there came the reaction in press and pulpit that the Labor Party was associating itself with this radical and revolutionary picketing of militant workers and thereby creating a lot of disorder in the society, making matter's difficult for the police and so on. So that leadership — members of parliament and trade union bureaucrats — which tentatively supported the strike was the very leadership which refused to sanction the cutting off of gas and electricity. They turned tail and ran.

So those are the two examples which indicate that white workers can be made to move in support of our struggles. Now, I could well see in a situation where that is not the case, where white workers not only don't move in support but do something else, that you're forced to

work out theories about a separate state and all that. I could see that as a reaction to a political condition at a given moment in history. But I don't see how any Marxist, anyone who calls themselves a Marxist could advance that position. You have to believe that the white working class is irretrievably racist to hold such a position.

KL: Obviously if white workers were as advanced as they ought to be, there would be no need for the independent organization at all; that is, it's clear to you that there's something more dynamic and revolutionary and advanced about the oppressed community than about the white working class generally, and I assume, maybe wrongly

DH: But one has to see that the development of the revolutionary dynamism that you identify has necessarily to incorporate the influences that white workers have had on the Black community. I will give you some examples. In 1974 *Race Today* took the decision to interview Asian workers who were at the time involved in several strikes. And who are these Asian workers in Britain? By and large they had come from the Punjab in India. They were small farmers farming a plot of 5 acres or so. And the acreage and what they produced on it were no longer capable of feeding, clothing and looking after the family. So they would migrate to Delhi or Bombay. That's how they started. Eventually, some of them migrated to the factories in different parts of Britain. In one of these interviews I mentioned earlier, I asked an Asian worker, "When you first arrived here in Britain, how did you understand this country?" He said when he first began working in a factory, he saw his boss as someone big who could do a lot of things to people. So he saw his boss in the factory in the same way as he saw his feudal lord for whom he worked for a portion of the day in the Punjab. I then asked him at what point did he cease thinking that way, and he replied that it was when he saw that white workers did not see the boss in that way. So when he came to Britain he was prepared to do just about everything his boss required, to break every single law of working class organization in that factory, and only through witnessing the militancy of white workers was he set in motion. And when I interviewed him he was on strike.

So it seems that one has to give some credence to the dialectic in the relationship between Black and white workers. And not just to say that there is something dynamic in the Black community without identifying the fact that we have been influenced by what whites have been doing and what they have achieved. Once set in motion, we perhaps move a little faster because we are not clogged at hand and feet by all sorts of cultural and historical disciplines and traditions. But one cannot under any circumstances overlook the contribution that the white working class has made to the development of the Black struggle. One can't do that. That would be totally erroneous in my view.

KL: Is there any sector of that working class or people who have been involved with it who have an outlook comparable to the one you've described based on Nello's thinking?

DH: We have come to that position in opposition to Black nationalism inside the Black movement in this country. What one does find inside nationalism is a class division between the working classes and the middle classes. And if you are from the Caribbean, in which nationalism held sway before and after the Second World War, you absolutely know that there is a class division inside nationalism. Now, have the Black workers discovered the contribution of white workers?. The answer is yes. I suspect in the United States today, on the one hand you talk about the racism of the white workers, but at the same time, as dialecticians we have to be able to see, and to be quite clear about it, as to what the contribution of the other side has been.

KL: Let me ask you for one final observation about Nello. What do you anticipate history will judge his stature and his major contribution?

DH: I think the overthrow of the Russian state by the Russian working class will be the final seal on the contribution Nello has made. That event would prove without dispute the post-Trotskyist theoretical basis of society that Nello had worked out.

My grandmother and his mother were sisters so that he is a very close relative of mine. He is very close to my eldest daughter, who is doing quite well as a linguist at school. He advised her to study Russian because he forecasts that the next major revolutionary outburst in the modern world is the revolution in Russia, which would just about transform everything.

The personal impact that Nello has made on me is the fact that he spent virtually all his life in the political wilderness. If you are a Caribbean person, your success in political life is judged by whether you are a prime minister or minister in government. And Nello would have been able to secure that with the greatest amount of ease. And to resist that temptation as he has resisted it means that his eyes are permanently fixed on the working class and his confidence in their revolutionary capacity is absolute. That is what I admire most about him, that you have to spend a lot of time in the wilderness and not as someone who's all-powerful in government. There are a lot of us who have followed his work and have been influenced by him in the last 25 years.

Darcus Howe is a member of the editorial collective of Race Today.

Letters

In addition to the voluminous writings of C. L. R. James which have been published in one form or another, there is also a massive correspondence which is virtually unknown except to those who were the recipients of his letters. These include responses to letters he received, discussions which he initiated, responses to events or activities of those associated with him, of which he became aware, and letters of guidance and instruction.

These letters varied from short notes to letters of many pages. Those of us who were in groups with which he was associated sometimes got long letters every day for a week or two, sometimes received no letters for months on end. In any case, it was one of the most rewarding aspects of association with James. For we who were Americans it was, in the years after his expulsion from the United States, almost the only contact we had with the man who founded our tendency in 1941.

Unfortunately, most of James's correspondence is scattered over most of the earth. Some of it, I am sure, will never be recovered. A few individuals, in the U.S. and elsewhere, have small collections of James's correspondence. The letters which follow are a part of the Martin Glaberman and Jessie Glaberman Collection in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit. Most of this correspondence covers the period during which there was an organized "Johnsonite" Tendency in the U.S.

The first letter was written as a report on a visit with Martin Luther King in London. It was sent as an addendum to a short letter addressed to "Dear Friends" and dated March 25, 1957. The language and concerns obviously reflect the time in which it was written. "CPP" in that letter is the Convention Peoples Party, which Nkrumah headed and which was the leading party in Ghana. "UGCC" is United Gold Coast Convention.

The last two letters were responses to letters written by me. The first was to a Black activist in Detroit. The 1948 resolution referred to in this letter was the Resolution on the Negro Question of the Socialist Workers Party. The second letter was written to James and concerned the draft of a pamphlet on which we were all working, a pamphlet eventually published as "Negro Americans Take the Lead." The relevant parts of my letters are included.

Martin Glaberman

March 25, 1957

. . . .

Yesterday the Rev. Luther King and his wife had lunch with us and stayed here from 12.30 until nearly 5 p.m. With us was George Lamming, the West Indian writer who has just received a distinguished literary prize, the Somerset Maugham award of L500 for his book IN THE CASTLE OF MY SKIN. The award demands that the winner must travel and he is going to Ghana. There was also with us Dr. David Pitt, who is likely to be the first West Indian or African to run for Parliament in England. His constituency is likely to be Hampstead, and of course he is running as a Labour Party candidate. He also was in Ghana.

After about two hours of general conversation, Luther King and his wife began to speak about the events in Montgomery, Alabama. I shall include a chapter on their experiences in the book on Ghana, and as I give you an account here of what he said, I shall introduce one or two parallels from the Ghana experience. The more I look at this the more I see that we are in the heart of a new experience which demands the most serious analysis.

One Thursday, on a day in December, a woman was arrested for travelling on the bus in a seat reserved for white people. In Montgomery, Alabama. The woman resisted, and to this day she says she does not know why she did. Thousands of Negroes had obeyed the regulations for many years. A local trade union leader went down and bailed her out and called up Dr. King, suggesting that they should "do something." It was the kind of statement that is made a hundred times a month in variouss parts of the South whenever one of these outrages takes place. This time, however, King called up a few of the better class Negroes and parsons in the community and they called a meeting for the Friday. About 60 of them, upper class Negroes, got together and they decided to call for a boycott. The idea was not entirely new, because some months before, a girl of 15 had defied the bus regulations and people had spoken of the necessity of doing something and had talked about the boycott, but it passed, as so many of these things pass. They decided to call for the boycott and started off at once to inform people by phone. They also prepared a document telling the people not to travel on the buses from Monday morning. The news spread, and on the Monday morning there began one of the most astonishing events in the history of human struggle. The Negro population of Montgomery is about 35,000. From the Monday morning and for about one year afterwards, the percentage of Negroes who boycotted the buses was over 99%. The Commissioner of Police and the head of the Bus Company have stated that never on any day did more than 35 people ride the buses.

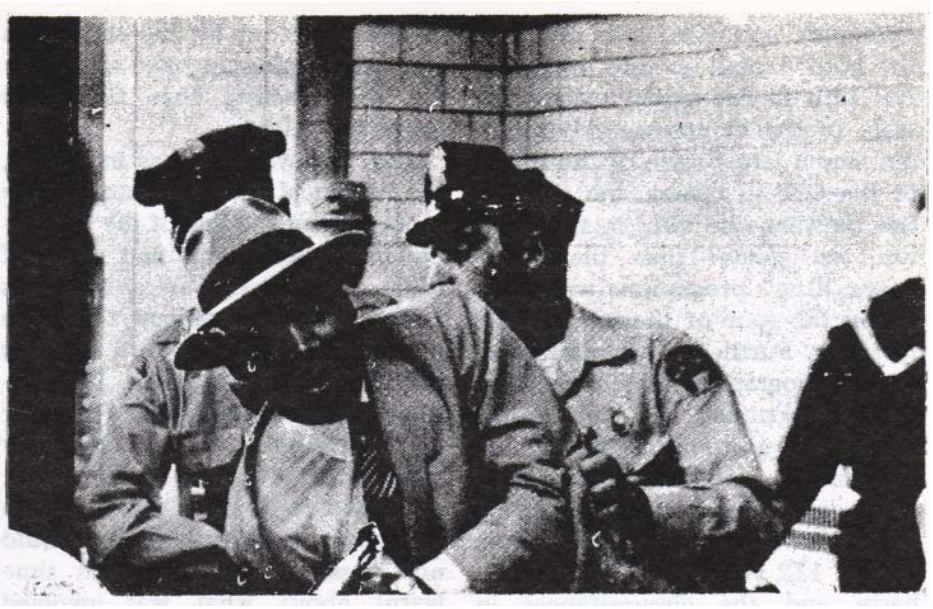
In addition to calling for the boycott, the committee had called for a meeting on Monday evening at the Church of the Rev. King.

When they saw the tremendous success of the boycott they were nervous about going through with the meeting. King says that they thought along these lines:—

The boycott has been a tremendous success and if we have a meeting now and nobody turns up, or very few people, then the whole movement will be exposed as a failure, (and at some other time I shall give my own experience of what the failure of a movement in the South can mean. It is usually the signal for fierce reprisals by the whites.)

King and the others, however, decided that they would go through with the meeting. From about 3 o'clock in the afternoon there were people waiting to get into the Church for the meeting at 7 p.m. The Church itself could hold only a few hundred people, but there were thousands packed around it, but luckily the Church had loudspeakers so that they could hear. Half an hour before the meeting began, King, who had been elected Chairman of the committee, left the company and went outside for half an hour's meditation. He recognized that this movement had to have some political policy to guide it. He had had no idea whatever of being a leader for the struggles of his people. He was a young man of 28 years of age, but he had read philosophy and he had read also the writings of Gandhi, but with no specific purpose in view. In the course of the half hour's meditation, however, the idea came to him that what was needed to give this movement a social and political under-pinning was the policy of non-violence. But as he explained, non-violence as he conceived it, had nothing passive about it. While it stopped short at armed rebellion, it is incessantly active in its attempt to impress its determination and the strength of its demands upon those upon whom it is directed.

King worked out his policy in that half hour and submitted it to no committee. There was no time.



When he was called upon to speak, without any notes, he delivered his address, and from that moment he became the guiding principle of the movement.

King was elected Chairman of the committee by a unanimous vote. He himself had had someone else in mind to propose. It turned out that they had thought of him as Chairman because in his preaching he had always emphasized a social gospel, that is to say preaching with an emphasis on the improvement of the social situation of the community, and not with the emphasis on individual salvation. That was all, but it had singled him out in the minds of his fellow preachers, and other members of the upper class Negro community who formed the committee.

After that, the movement was on its way and for one whole year never looked back until victory was won.

It is one of the most astonishing events of endurance by a whole population that I have ever heard of. There are other details which on another occasion I shall go into. But there are a few points I want to make at once.

(1) *The always unsuspected power of the mass movement.*

Some of you may have beside you Padmore's book, *Africa: Britain's Third Empire.* Now Padmore is one of the most forward looking and inwardly confident of all who have interested themselves in Africa, and if you look on page 207 of this book which bears the date, May Day 1948, you will see that Padmore is still thinking that "the strained relationship which existed between the chiefs and intellectuals, . . . is giving way to a united effort between the chiefs and people." I do no injustice to George when I say that as late as 1948 he shows no knowledge or indication of the tremendous power of the *mass movement,* which the CPP would soon unloose. At that time the movement had taken the form of the boycott of European and Syrian merchants, and later the march of the ex-servicemen who had been shot down. Nkrumah and five others were arrested and deported for six weeks. It was only one year later in June 1949 that the CPP was formed and launched with a rally of 60,000 people, and when it did get underway, just as the masses in Montgomery, Alabama, it never looked back.

(2) *The significance of the leadership.*

(a) At first sight it would seem that Nkrumah had had a long training. Whereas King had had none at all. (This is undoubtedly true and the question of the various trends of thought which went to the development of Nkrumah is an

extremely important one which in the book I shall go into in detail.) But with all due regard to the small scale of the Montgomery occasion and much larger scale of the action of the CPP in Ghana, the similarities between the two, in my opinion, are greater than the differences. King's programme was created on the spur of the moment, so to speak. Further, in Chapter 10 of his autobiography, it is obvious that if even Nkrumah was clear in his own mind as to what positive action meant, not only the Government did not understand it, but the public did not either, and on pages 110 to 112 you can see the frantic haste and the circumstances in which Nkrumah wrote down for the first time a pamphlet with the significant name, "What I mean by Positive Action."

In other words, both of them put forward decisive programmes which the crowd caught up almost in passing.

You will note how close the idea of positive action is to King's spontaneous conception that non-violence was in reality the opposite side of an unceasing attack upon the enemy.

(b) The critical moment in the history of the CPP is the decision at Saltpond to break with the UGCC. All who have studied this episode, a highly important one, know that Nkrumah and the leadership had more or less decided for the time being not to break and it was the rank and file delegates and the crowd outside who practically dragged Nkrumah from the conference hall and told him to go inside and resign. I am positive that at these and other critical moments when the leadership seemed to waver, it was always the demonstration by the mass of its force and determination and its confidence in them, that enabled them to take the forward step.

You note the precisely similar situation with the Montgomery committee on the Monday afternoon when they were ready to call the whole thing off, but were impelled to go on by the thousands who were lining up since afternoon for the meeting that they had called that night.

(By the way, just as in Ghana, the historical accidents are for the most part on the side of the advancing mass movement, and some of them, as in Ghana, are as funny as hell. A coloured servant took one of the leaflets to her white mistress on the Saturday morning. The mistress called up the local newspaper and the whites, anxious to know what these Negroes were up to, published it. A lot of Negroes who had not heard anything and could not possibly have heard in time learnt about what was involved from this gratuitous stupidity of the white newspaper.

Rumour spread that some Negroes were intimidating others from riding the buses. The Commissioner of Police, in order to prevent this, appointed two motor cycle riders to go along with each bus. The sight of them scared off all those Negroes who may possibly have had the idea of taking the bus.)

* * * *

September 30, 1963

Dear Luke Tripp,

I would like to thank you and Uhuru for your participation in our meeting on the Negro revolt on Friday, Sept. 20, 1963. Your participation helped make it a meeting of great value and significance.

The presentations were divided into three parts: A personal statement of great power and feeling by Francis H. Mitchell, who witnessed much of what happened in the struggle in the South as an Associate Editor of *Ebony;* a theoretical statement presenting the viewpoint of Facing Reality by myself; and your militant statement of principles and views for an organization taking an active part in the struggle.

I believe that the combination of these points of view helped to clarify many things for us and for the audience, some of which were dealt with in the summary at the conclusion of the meeting. The question of "hate," for example, was one of the important ones raised in the discussion. In the summary it was noted that although we believe in the basic goodness of all men (that is why we are socialists), that is an abstraction which does not move people. People begin to act to change the society precisely when they are so fed up with all the degradation, discrimination and humiliation that is forced on them that they hate that society completely and unequivocally, and all who identify themselves with it in any way whatever. One questioner insisted, you may recall, that nothing creative could come from hate. The reply made it clear that if hate resulted in just one person striking back instead of submitting to police brutality, it brought a new society that much closer.

The essential point made by the meeting, it seems to me, was this: It is not a matter of whether we agree with every point of program or of policy which you put forward. We disagree with some of your views just as people within your organization or within ours disagree on specific points of policy. What we all have to understand is that the policies of Negro organizations do not have to pass muster with anyone but the masses of Negroes themselves. No one else has any right to stand in judgment. And our basic pmnt of agreement and support is, first, that the Negro movement is and should be led by Negroes, and, second, that the actual struggle itself places the Negro movement in fundamental opposition to capitalist society and spearheads the fight for socialism.

Let me thank you again for your participation in our meeting and express the hope that the opportunity may arise for us to collaborate again in the future.

Fraternally yours,
Martin Glaberman

* * * *

Oct. 14th, 1963

My dear Marty,

This is in reply to your letter to Luke Tripp. I notice some sentences in it to which I wish to draw your attention. As long as you see what I am getting at, there will be no need for me to polemicize with you or to go into it at length. In the paragraph before the last you say,

"What we all have to understand is that the policies of Negro organizations do not have to pass muster with anyone but the masses of Negroes themselves."

That is simply not true. A massive movement like the Negro movement is bound to consider the effect of whatever it says upon others besides Negroes. The point is of course that Negroes have to take their positions and not be concerned about "pleasing" or "not pleasing" sections of the white population. No doubt you are aware of that. But the phrasing could be misinterpreted and it is as well that we make that clear at this time when the false implications of what is a genuine Negro desire for independence are in fact making headway. You go on to say,

"No one else has any right to stand in judgment."

That is simply untrue. Everyone has every right to stand in judgment. Then comes a final sentence which not only contradicts what has been said before but contains a first-class error of its own.

"And our basic point of agreement and support is, first, that the Negro movement is and should be led by Negroes, and, second, that the actual struggle itself places the Negro movement in fundamental opposition to capitalist society and spearheads the fight for socialism."

That the Negro movement should be led by Negroes is of course a new stage of the struggle which has enormous implications for Negro independence. But when you go on to say that "the actual struggle itself places the Negro movement in fundamental opposition to capitalist society," that is true but I don't like your saying that in that way because that is not what is essential at the present moment. We can say that in a certain way in our analysis that we publish in our own name of our analysis of capitalist society. But I am pretty sure that it is incorrect, in fact very wrong to make this a part of a letter to a leader of the Negro struggle. And what is worse, you go on to say, the struggle "spearheads the fight for socialism." My dear Marty, it does nothing of the kind. That is not only a mistake in the approach to the Negro people, but is a very serious theoretical error. Don't mind my calling it error. I know that you *know* differently. But you above all especially today have to be careful. The 1948 resolution and speech state with great precision and I assure you with deep roots in the theory and history of our movement precisely what the Negro struggle can and I have no doubt will do. But it does not "spearhead" the fight for socialism. I go into this in some detail first because it is not a private letter and secondly because it shows more than ever the urgent necessity of your discussing the question and placing down in ordered form what is the attitude of a Marxist and a revolutionary socialist to this remarkable struggle. Unless you all do this, this kind of thing is bound to happen.

Yours as ever,
J

* * * *

August 31, 1964

Dear J,

, . . .

The question of the white working class and the Negro struggle is a crucial one and I added a section on it to the document, which you have. The basic thing, it seems to me, is to get away from this subjective business of educating workers against prejudice. The alliance between Negroes and whites is not founded on the views but on the objective conditions of life of both sections of the working class. What we have to (and can) demonstrate is not that white workers are pro-Negro or can be taught to be pro-Negro or that they can be won over to support the Negro movement (although that will undoubtedly happen on particular questions) but that the white workers are *revolutionary,* that they are struggling against this society and for a new society and that *therefore* they will have to join with the Negroes against the common enemy. The Northern coalition of classes before the Civil War is a valuable example: Negroes, farmers, industrial capitalists, sections of the working class united, not on their view of the Negro but in the struggle against a common enemy. And, of course, that coalition was much more unstable and temporary than the inevitable one between the working class and the Negroes. This is something which no one sees (although John Lewis of SNCC seems to come close) and the best of them cannot get beyond the need to win over whites to the struggle because the Negroes are a minority and need allies. The social democrats in the Negro movement (Randolph, Bayard Rustin) can't overcome that limitation and find that by pushing for an alliance with labor they appear as compromisers and Uncle Toms.

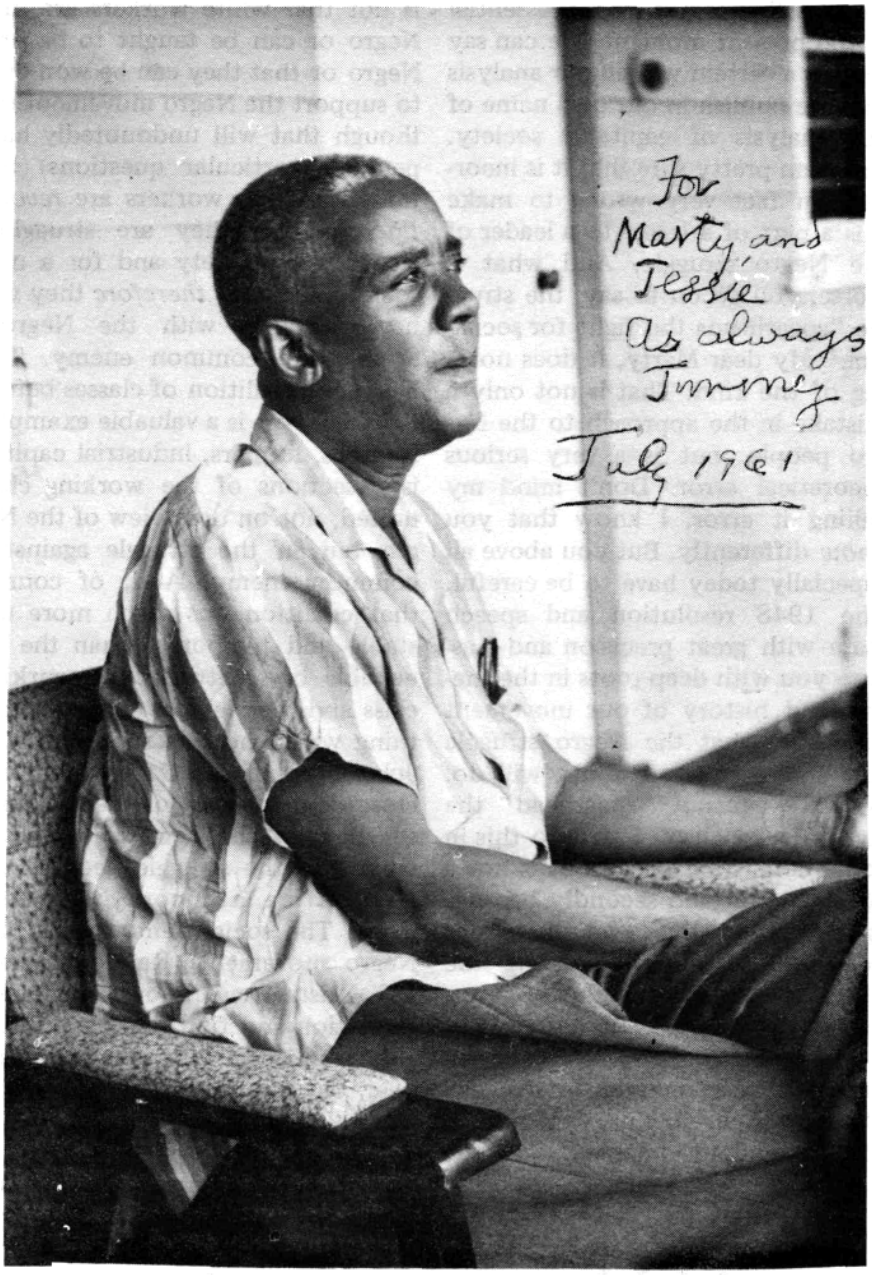
With very best wishes,
Marty

* * * *

11 Sept. 64

My dear Marty,

I am making a public reply to one section of your letter of Aug. 31. It seems to me that at this late stage you are still fighting the question of the subjective attitude of white workers to Negroes (and vice versa) and similar irrelevancies. I cannot understand that after all these years of Marxism and all that we have been saying and teaching that this question is a question which you seem to be taking up as



From the very start that is the position that must be the centre of what we have to say. And if at this stage you have to be convincing the membership that it is not the subjective attitude of whites to Negroes that will be decisive, then it is obvious that we have not got in our own minds what is our special independent contribution to the whole business and to which everything else that we do is subordinate.

I can't go on with this any more. I suggest that you publish the section of your letter which deals with this as a preliminary to my reply. I want to end with the following. I have found in Marxists in general and particularly in American Marxists that they accept the doctrines in theory and devote their attention to it in practice. But over and over again you will see in some of the most devoted Marxists that there is a little piece that they keep for themselves to which Marxism does not apply; yes, they are completely Marxists, but in regard to this they are going to keep an independent opinion. I may add first that this special piece that they keep to themselves which is usually the beginning of their ruin could quite often be exactly something like this on the Negro question.

So then I suggest that you print at once for the membership and friends your extract and this letter. And if it is not fully understood by anybody, let them write to me, and I will clear up this matter once and for all. I shall reply to your letter in full later.

J

if it is something new in the organization.

Let me say with the utmost finality. There is no question, absolutely none whatever, for a Marxist of what is the subjective attitude of white workers and white people to Negroes. It was your business to begin by making clear that this was our position. I feel depressed at having to do it but I want to draw your attention to Lenin in March 1917. He admitted freely that the workers still had belief in the new bourgeois government. He put forward his programme, All Power to the Soviets. He said, the workers don't believe in all power to the soviets, they believe in the bourgeois government; therefore our business is: "Patiently explain." He didn't end his programme and policies with this. He began that way. He said, this is the objective situation. This is the necessary move that the classes will be compelled to follow and this is the line that we put forward.

Martin Glaberman was managing editor of Correspondence, *editor of* Speak Out, *and chairman of Facing Reality; he has long been a collaborator with C. L. R. James.*

Interview

The following has been excerpted from two interviews of C. L. R. James, the first by James Early and Ethelbert Miller in October 1980 and the second by Noel Ignatin and Paul Buhle in January 1981. The interview was transcribed and edited by Paul Buhle.

Q. What would you say your greatest contributions have been?

A. My contributions have been, number one, to clarify and extend the heritage of Marx and Lenin. And number two, to explain and expand the idea of what constitutes the new society.

Q. What do you believe is your most important work?

A. .Votes *On Dialectics,* at the present time, particularly after the events in Poland. I wouldn't have said so before. Now it is important to understand that Poland is no accident but part of revolutionary working class developments as foreseen by Marx and Lenin and Mao.

I would like to quote the following from *Notes On Dialectics:* "When a revolution takes place in Italy, it will mean that the victorious party will within a few days of the victory number in all probability some six or seven million workers alone — all organized labor. There are two million already, and those in the unions who follow the Communist party are even more. We have a similar situation in France**.** The Communist party in the *only* advanced country in Eastern Europe made one in every three a member of the Party."

It was clear to me in 1948 that the future development of parties would not be the development of parties as in the Second International, with some leaders in parliament and unions, but a massive upheaval foreshadowed by the Fascist parties**,** of millions of people. To talk about the new revolutionary movement as Vanguard Parties was nonsense. I said six or seven million for Italy. I underestimated. There are now ten million in Poland. I am confident that Poland would also have given Lenin no trouble. Lenin knew that the International would face disaster in the coming War, and new parties would rise up. The kind of development he had in mind — like Marx and Engels — was like what happened in Poland. I was confident that kind of party was coming, in 1948. Marx had seen it in 1848, had studied it.

Thus Marx says in the *Eighteenth Brumaire:*

> Proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltrinesses of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out:
>
> *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*
> *Here is the rose, here dance!*

Marx makes it clear that all sorts of things will happen until the time when there is nothing to do for workers but to take over. That's why Marx says the workers will do what they have to do. This statement was written in 1851 and he never returned to it again. He had made it clear. He knew that in 1789 France in general had gone democratic. The Constituent Assembly had been created by the people themselves. Later on, he had the case of the Paris Commune: that was the dictatorship of the proletariat, its own working existence.

Lenin said not the Party was essential but three things: the country in turmoil, the advanced class, that advanced class in conflict with a ruling class that does not know what to do. Under these conditions, insurrection becomes an art. What was going to make the Revolution? Not the party, Lenin said: the soviets. Mao concluded there were two things in his own life that mattered, throwing the Japanese out of China and the Cultural Revolution,

which aimed to make the proletariat and peasantry rather than the party the masters of the State. Marx, Lenin and Mao were all trying to point out that something new had appeared, and that is what is important.

It happened in Hungary. When the ruling party members heard there was a revolution going on, some of them went out to join it! That is most comic to me. It happened again in France, in 1968. The only thing that saved DeGaulle was the Communist party. Now Poland is decisive. It shows a mass upheaval, a tempest, an earthquake, just the events Marx and Lenin had in mind.

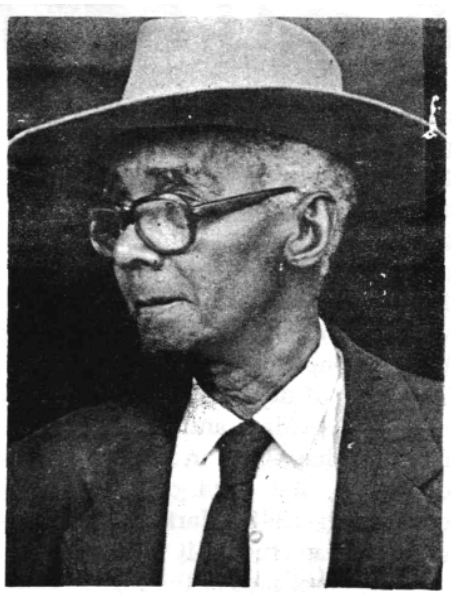
Q. Does the small party have any role?

A. Marx wrote in the *Critique of the Gotha Program,* you must understand that the unity of the working class does not *depend* upon the International Workingmen's Association. You can't make it depend on that organization. I had this out with Trotsky. I said, why is it that the working class movement in France is rising but the Trotsky-ist movement is going down and down? He said, well, there's no correspondence between the rise of the movement and the rise of the party. He said a few more things but I didn't pay any attention. And I worked it out afterward. There was no need for that kind of party anymore. If you had been trying to form a Vanguard Party in Poland this year, or in Hungary in 1956, you would have been stranded. As Lenin saw from the Soviets: a new Universal has been reached.

Of course, the small group can help the workers. It is doing so in Poland today. But they must *help,* not go around trying to tell people that the Revolution depends upon realizing them as leaders.

Q. What is the importance of Euro-Communism?

A. No one can tell what will happen to Euro-Communist parties.



It depends upon the revolutionary movement. Euro-Communism will split, go with the revolution or not be powerful enough and form neo-Stalinist parties. My whole thesis is that these Communist parties are parties, not tools of the Kremlin as Trotsky said (i.e., everything was going well but the Stalinists made a mess of it — a purely subjective idea). Communist parties are *part of the development of the capitalist society,* a part that knows the old capitalism cannot continue but is afraid of the proletariat, so joins up with something larger. Once Socialist parties belonged to the Second International, which failed; then Communists belonged to the Third International; and now these Euro-Communist parties have a foot in both camps, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.; they play both sides. Only what took place in Poland can solve that.

Q. You have said that you are a Marxist, a Leninist and a Black man. What is the special relation of these identities?

A. I am a Black man in the sense that Blacks are maltreated in the world up to this day, as no section of society is maltreated. And part of the maltreatment is the discrediting of the great achievements made in the building of civilization very formation of Culture in Africa. In that respect I am a Black man number one, because I am against what they have done and are still doing to us; and number two, I have something to say about the new society to be built because have a tremendous part in that which they have sought to discredit

Q. In this light particularly. There any work that you wish you would have had the opportunity to write, but did not?

A. If I had remained in the U.S., I would have written a serious study of the Negro Question. Then I would have prepared for what happened in the 1960's. Of course it was no surprise to me.

Q. And the significance of a new edition of *Black Jacobins,* as you work on your autobiography?

A. That this book, written in 1938, is still eagerly sought in 1980 is an extraordinary event. The autobiography is all my life, since I was six years old, a life of books and looking at the world from an intellectual point of view: personal, political and intellectual. Since I have come to the Caribbean, a great deal of my time has been spent in seeing how much I failed to understand when I was young and my whole life was toward European literature, European sociology. Now I'm beginning to see and it is helping me to write.

Williams was no genius... the oil saved him

by Harry Partap

The late Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams was not a man of talent neither was he a genius, but he was a man of great ability.

This was the sharp verdict of Dr. Williams' one-time mentor, teacher and fellow nationalist C. L. R. James, who insisted that the late prime minister's leadership was a disaster for the people of the country.

Following the death of Dr. Williams, I thought it would be interesting to hear what 80-year-old James had to say. I found him tucked away in an Oilfields Workers Trade Union bungalow overlooking the Mon Repos Housing Scheme, in San Fernando.

Death did not heal the political bruises and James unleashed some strong sentiments against the political leadership of the late prime minister while the rest of the country sang praises and showered open emotions of grief and loss.

He criticized Dr. Williams for allowing no member of his nationalist movement to have personal views. "You had to have none, your business was to do what he wanted done," James said.

This is why, argued James, the new prime minister, George Chambers, does not have any views on which people could assess his capacity to lead the nation.

James, popularly described as the political mentor of the late prime minister, expressed doubts about the future of the ruling People's National Movement, claiming that "Dr. Williams himself did not know what was going to happen to the party." And *he* insisted that Dr. Williams "left nothing with anybody."

James contended that there was "no visible sense of direction of the party because Dr. Williams had depoliticized and miseducated every aspect of the country."

He, however, noted that the country would not go into an election without a sense of direction. Said James: "It is not the nature of people to drift. They will decide and decide decisively."

This is how James, who was once put under house arrest by Dr. Williams during the social unrest of the mid-1960's, responded to questions on his early association with the departed political leader and prime minister:

QUESTION: You have been described as the late prime minister's mentor during the formative years of the People's National Movement (PNM) in 1956. What was your reaction to the death of Dr. Williams and what was your association with him like?

JAMES: This long association with Dr. Williams came to a sharp end in 1963, so that from 1963 to the present day, I have had no claim of relation with him at all. But I must make it quite clear to everybody that I believed that his leadership of the people of Trinidad and Tobago was a disaster for the people.

QUESTION: Do you still hold that view now?

JAMES: I have always held that view, so that this long association with Dr. Williams is a complete fiction. I have already stated elsewhere why I left him. The road he was going I could see was the road to disaster. I keep saying this country was going to explode the way he was going and everybody thought so too. You read the two daily newspapers and you would see what I mean.

QUESTION: But surely, before 1963, there was something in Dr. Williams' character which attracted you to him?

JAMES: But why do you want to know about events before 1963? It is more important to look at the period 1963 to 1981. I have sympathy and respect for his family and political friends and the mass of people who saw the changes taking place as the work of Dr. Williams and would look upon his death as something of a catastrophe for the country. But there are a lot of people today who say how they love Dr. Williams. I do not believe that at all, because the proof of that is in the newspapers circulated in the country carrying the people's views over the last 25 years.

QUESTION: But then, what accounts for the spontaneous flow of tribute to Dr. Williams from his countrymen since he died?

JAMES: I will answer you. You tell me what accounts for the fact that both daily papers were attacking him as a person who was a danger to the country. Why were they doing this? The fact is he was not leading the country anywhere. Nobody knew exactly where he was leading the people. Williams himself did not know. The country had come to a crisis; he had nothing to say. That is the plain truth of the matter. But people felt strongly about the fact that he was there as the first prime minister who led the country for 25 years. People seem to forget every other thing, but that will not make me change my opinion.

QUESTION: But despite what you say, there is still a lot of sympathy for the man. How is that?

JAMES: Let me say I understand

that sections of the population must view his death with concern and feel that an era has come to an end. But I cannot have any sympathy for all those who jump up today saying Dr. Williams, Dr. Williams, we loved you so much. Everybody said they loved him so much, but I do not believe it. I believe they are trying to exploit a situation and hope that this will allow the continuity of the past into the present.

QUESTION: You still have not told me what attracted you to Dr. Williams.

JAMES: Williams, in my opinion, was a very bright man with certain limitations. He was not a man of genius. There are two men of genius in the Caribbean, Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led the Haitian Revolution, and Fidel Castro, who still leads the Cuban Revolution. And then, there are men of talent like Andrew Cipriani, Grantley Adams and Michael Manley. Williams was not a man of talent, neither was he a genius. But he was a man of great ability. He could get information and gather it up with tremendous speed and great concentration. But anything creative — that he did not have.

QUESTION: How do you justify this assessment?

JAMES: The proof is, what has he left the country? Take unemployment. Has he even had anything creative to say about this problem? And people seem to forget the events of 1970. Let me tell you the prosperity in oil now experienced by this country had nothing to do with any policy of the Williams regime. It was a result of the decision by OPEC countries. And when they asked him to join, he refused. And when he wanted to join they refused, because OPEC did not want an agent of the British Government in their fold. In 1970, the whole country moved against him and in 1974, he was all ready to go because the country was bankrupt. The oil saved him. It saved everybody.

"I get the feeling there is not sufficient awareness . . . of our deliberate policy. . ."

QUESTION: It had been said that Dr. Williams was the PNM. Now that he is dead, what, in your view, would be the future of the party?

JAMES: I don't know what is going to happen to the party. I want to tell you, and I say this with a lot of confidence, that Dr. Williams himself did not know what was going to happen to the party. He left nothing with anybody.

QUESTION: So you are saying that Dr. Williams did not offer any sense of direction to the party which he founded?

JAMES: There was no sense of direction at all and I was saying this since 1969. Where was the Williams who stood up and spoke in Woodford Square, the university? Why did he disappear? That Williams nobody had seen him for years. Because he wanted the power then, and that was the only way he could get it, but having got it, that Williams disappeared.

QUESTION: But, then, what kept the man in power for so long?

JAMES: For one reason. Williams came in 1955 and started a political campaign. He came here with ideas he got from George Padmore and C. L. R. James. We had been carrying on a great agitation in London against continued colonial rule and Dr. Williams was there. He used to come from Oxford and stayed at my house. He read my books and papers. He would even send his papers to me for comments. He was fully educated as to what was the current thinking on freedom and colonialism. When he came here, it was these ideas he was putting forward. But the minute the British Government told him it was o.k., that was it. He was their man. He had to stay.

QUESTION: Are you saying he was acceptable to the British Government and they preferred to deal with him?

JAMES: Precisely.

QUESTION: Was that the reason he stayed in power for so long? JAMES: You tell me.

QUESTION: What is the future position of the country? Do you see any changes?

JAMES: The country did not know what was happening. The

PNM do not know where to go. Karl Hudson-Phillips came forward but he has also said nothing so far. There is no clear cut political statement from Hudson-Phillips. So here we are within a few months of an election and nobody is saying anything new.

Let me emphasize that the same thing is happening throughout the Caribbean. So far, the only Caribbean politician who attempted to get out of this decay was Michael Manley. But you saw what happened.

QUESTION: But do you think the country would go into an election with the lack of direction you spoke about?

JAMES: I don't think so. People will not continue to drift. It is not in the nature of people to drift.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the violence you spoke about elsewhere last year is still an option now that Dr. Williams is out of the way?

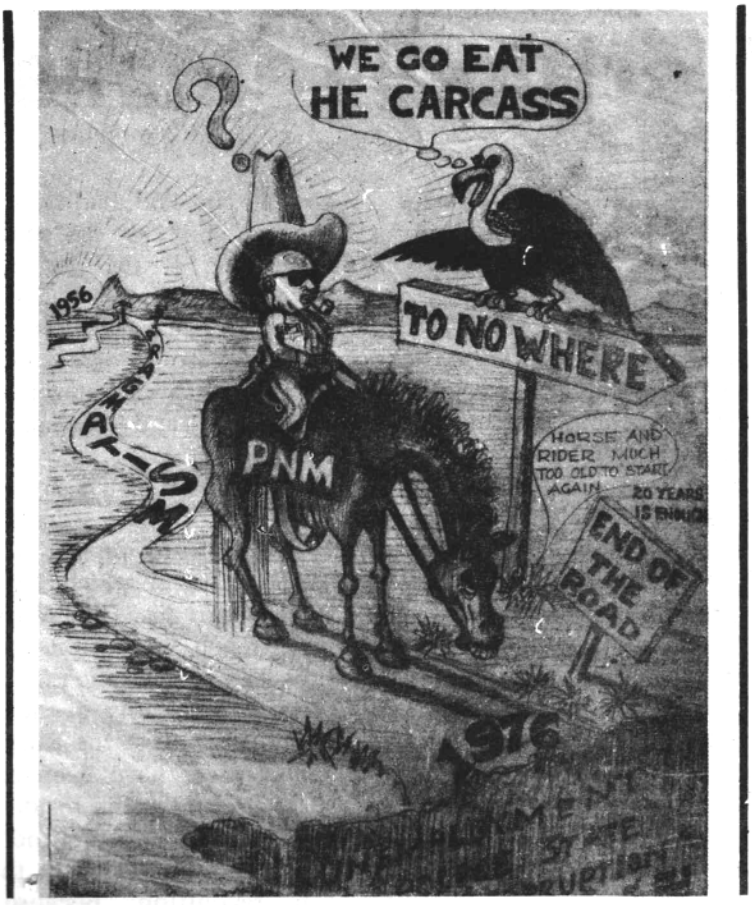
JAMES: Yes, unless something takes place politically. If the country continues to drift as it had been doing under Williams, then I am afraid that violence would come. What will happen now, I do not know, but surely something has to happen.

QUESTION: Do you think the Organization for National Reconstruction, led by Mr. Hudson-Phillips, can stop this drift you spoke about?

JAMES: Do you see any new direction in the ONR? Why is Hudson-Phillips saying he is available? He is available for what? He has not come out yet with any precise statement. As for the (three-party) Alliance, Lloyd Best has been saying the same things he said 10 years ago, but no one is listening to him.

QUESTION: What then is the alternative to the PNM? ONR or the Alliance?

JAMES: A whole new political



attitude is necessary and this has to come from the people. Cipriani started something, then Butler started something new. Williams came and people thought he had something new, so now we will have to wait and see.

QUESTION: Do you see anyone with the capacity and political support to fit the role of leader for this new era?

JAMES: I do not see any. But there are people of a high caliber who could do the job a lot better than those we have at present. One is George Weekes. He is a first class union man and a good politician. Also there is Raffique Shah, who I know does not have any racial prejudices.

QUESTION: But these two men you have named do not enjoy mass political support and it certainly contradicts your view that they could be national leaders.

JAMES: Because the Press, the PNM and all of them have made it their business to keep on saying Weekes is a good man in union business but not a politico.

QUESTION: Finally, do you see any changes in the direction of the PNM coming from the new prime minister, George Chambers?

JAMES: I do not know what are his views. Dr. Williams never allowed anybody to have views. You had to have none. Your business was to do what he wanted done. Williams' main concern was to hold on to power and to destroy anybody who looked as if he would be any kind of rival. This is why nobody knows what Mr. Chambers' views are.

Harry Partap covers the San Fernando desk of the Trinidad and Tobago Express, *from the April 7, 1981 issue of which this article is reprinted.*

A critical reminiscence

by James and Grace Lee Boggs

When most American radicals think about a revolution in the United States, they visualize the oppressed masses, workers, Blacks, women, rising up to sweep away the bourgeoisie and institute a new socialist society. So preoccupied are they with the social forces — which are necessary for any revolution — that they lose sight of the role which revolutionary theoreticians must play in creating the new, different and challenging ideas without which no mass uprising can go beyond rebellion to revolution. Or they believe that the last word on revolution was written by Marx and Engels in 19th century Europe or Lenin and Trotsky in 20th century Russia.

From the moment that C. L. R. James came to the United States via Europe in 1938, he was recognized by the leaders of the Trotskyite organization as a revolutionary intellectual who could inject new life into a radical movement bogged down in sectarian disputes around "the Russian Question." Born in Trinidad, that peculiar crossroads of Europe, the Western Hemisphere and Africa, he brought with him not only a tremendous knowledge of European civilization going back thousands of years but a passionate belief in the contribution that Black people *must* make to their own liberation and *can* make to the advancement of all humanity.

Challenging the rigid and dogmatic ideas of revolution which were held by all tendencies in the socialist movement, he insisted that the Black movement has independent validity, not only as an expression of the hopes and aspirations of Black Americans but as a catalyst for the American revolution. So it must not be subordinated to the struggles of the workers against the bosses. The whole concept of class struggle, he said, had to be enlarged and enriched by the values which have been created by civilization down through the years. The second American revolution, he said, will have to be grounded in the unique historical development of capitalism and racism in this country.

James was always trying to reconcile the two strands of the French Revolution and the American revolution which have shaped the modern age. Like Marx, he saw the French revolution as a prototype, but at the same time he sensed the unique quality of the American experience. Since the Russian Revolution there have been continuing struggles and splits inside the U.S. radical movement around the "exceptional" character of the American revolution. Because of his unique background, James brought a new and exciting breadth to this struggle.

Projecting the American revolution and the American working class as the heir to all the achievements of Western civilization, he inspired a few of us, known as "thre Johnson-Forest Tendency" first inside the Workers Party and then inside the Socialist Workers Party, to fantastic studies. We struggled to understand Marx in the light of European history and civilization, reading *Capital* side by side with Hegel's *Logic* in order to get a sense of dialectical and historical materialism. We explored the world of Shakespeare, of Beethoven, of Melville, Hawthorne and the Abolitionists, of Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africanism.

At the same time most of us worked in the plant, struggling to squeeze every ounce of revolutionary significance out of what American workers were saying and doing.

While he was here, C. L. R. James had a real feeling for the American revolution, but when he left the country in 1953 he became a cosmopolite. In the United States, although he had been to some extent underground, he had in the Johnson-Forest Tendency an organization, a base, of Americans of very different types: Blacks, workers, youth, women, middle class professionals and intellectuals. All of us were passionately concerned with the American revolution, although we had some very idealistic views about American workers derived from reading Marx. After 1953, James no longer had the challenge of the United States, which had never failed to excite him. He went to Trinidad, formed a group based on class struggle being the answer to everything, and left. It seemed as though he was experimenting. His lectures on the West Indies were brilliant but they lacked the feeling for the American revolution which had been fed by the passions of those-of us in the organization who were very much a part of his life and of whose life he was also very much a part.

In the years to come historians of radical politics will be examining and re-examining James's lifelong contributions to revolutionary politics mainly because of his identification with Pan-Africanism. Some will accuse him of having been too close to western civilization to appreciate the role which that civilization played in the systematic underdevelopment of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Others will proclaim him as one of the great architects of Pan-Africanism and the African struggle against colonialism. Those of us who were so close to him in the '40's and early '50's will always remember him for introducing us to revolutionary ideas and politics on such a high level. We will honor him also for challenging us to grapple with the contradictions of our country and with the perspec-

tives of an American revolution. That he did not or could not see himself assuming the responsibility for creating an American revolutionary organization can be traced, in part, to his belief in spontaneity. But it also had to do with the fact that his only roots were in Trinidad, which was too limited an arena for his fantastic talents. As we continue to struggle to build the organization necessary to lead the second American revolution, we will treasure the lessons we learned from him and particularly the drive that he instilled in us to be always asking ourselves, "What else do we have to do to go beyond?"

Grace Lee Boggs was, along with Raya Dunayevskaya, a major collaborator on several of James's works; James Boggs was editor of Correspondence, *later author of* The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook, *among other books. They are now active in the National Organization for an American Revolution.*

Revolutionary artist

by Stanley Weir

I have visited with C. L. R. James only a handful of times in the last thirty-three years. I knew him best during and in the period immediately following World War II. Early in the war I was taken to his cold water tenement room in uptown Manhattan to be introduced to him. He was surrounded by piles of newspapers and magazines from around the world and was involved in reading and annotating articles from them as we entered. He was ill, but had just finished a draft of an article on the national liberation movement in Western Europe. Just feet away, Grace Lee Boggs was in the process of typing it at high speed. I was a merchant seaman at the time, twenty-one, and only months earlier had been recruited to the Workers' Party. In large part, the meeting and ensuing discussion caused me to make New York my home port for extended periods.

James had been in this country only a few years when the war broke out. After having led the formation of the Trotskyist movement in England he had felt, it was my impression, the need to be in a major industrial society which contained a significant Black population. Immediately upon his arrival he involved himself in the bi-racial Southeast Missouri sharecroppers' strike. At the same time the Trotskyists here were in deep debate on the nature of the Russian State. James, like Max Shachtman, James Burnham, James Carter and Martin Abern, was unable to believe that Russia was any longer a workers' state in any form, "degenerated" or otherwise. The division of Poland and the invasion of Finland at Stalin's command had finally polarized the debate. A split in the movement occurred in which many of the intellectuals and youth left the orthodox Trotskyist group (Socialist Workers Party) of James P. Cannon and formed the Workers' Party. They were dubbed "Shachtman-ites," but C. L. R. played an important part in the formation of the new group, the only sizeable Marxist organization in America to refuse political support of the War. Like Shachtman, James believed that it was impossible to defeat the forces of fascism from a capitalist base. It was felt that such an effort and war could only end in a devastation which would increase the degree of totalitarian rule world wide. Instead the Workers' Party raised the idea of the Third Camp, maintaining that to continue to raise the concept of an independent socialist alternative to the policies of both Washington and the Kremlin was a necessity. But unlike Shachtman, James felt that Russia in no way represented a separate though reactionary or "bureaucratic collectiv-ist" alternative to both socialism and capitalism. While he agreed with the Shachtman position in many ways, James pointed to the nature of social relations in Russian production and insisted that a form of "state capitalism" was the result. For all factional tendencies, James's included, the Workers' Party provided a valuable base for the generation and testing of alternative ideas. While only six hundred in number, as compared to the Communist Party which contained the overwhelming majority of the left, the Workers' Party provided basis for practical development of theory. Most of its membership was employed in heavy industry. Its weekly newspaper, *Labor Action,* circulated in the tens of thousands. In nearly every branch there were people who influenced or led in the formation of progressive union caucuses that were trying to keep the employers from using the war effort as an excuse for taking back gains made by workers during the '30's. In turn, this automatically had them play a prominent role in rallying resistance to the Communist Party's super-conservative policies inside unions and Black communities. Many thousands of rank and filers whose struggles had until recently been led by the Communists faced a leadership vacuum as entry into the war progressed. Suddenly, the Communists made all-out attempts to put unions on record for a wartime and post-war "No Strike Pledge," "National Labor Conscription," and "A Return to Piecework." Furthermore, they sought to postpone efforts to obtain a Fair Employment Practices Act for the war's duration. By default, responsibility for leadership

was in large part placed on those who opposed the Communists from a radical and not conservative position. The ground was laid for an alliance between militant rank and filers and socialists who were to the left of the Communists. C. L. R. James, among others, did not sidestep.

By 1942, C. L. R. James had formed a total faction inside the Workers' Party. This development was inevitable and necessary for survival on the part of any grouping with significant differences from the majority. While the Workers' Party was consciously structured with specific democratic practice guarantees to avoid the development of bureaucracy. We were still operating on an interpretation of Lenin's vanguard party concept. The presence of James's grouping of workers and intellectuals, among others, operationally maximized those guarantees.

Trotsky's evaluation of the objective situation going into the Second World War had been that the end of the conflict would see the disintegration of Stalinism in Russia and the outbreak of further revolutions in Europe. This did not happen. Even by mid-war, it became clear that the displacement of working class forces in Europe had become so total that there were no more critical mass groupings to win over. The rank-and-file associations that had been hidden strengths were displaced, rearranged, even atomized. New conditions were an aid to organization from the top down only. Each expansion of Russian control in Europe, moreover, brought the roundup and disappearance of Trotskyists. There would be no quick recouping of the Russian Revolution or any revolution in Western Europe.

The Shachtman leadership, having lost the basis for any success in the Third Camp perspective for the foreseeable future, in major part lost its perspective. The goal became "to hold on," waiting for a break. James did not share the pessimism and was accused of romanticism. Not long after the War, he led his group back into the Socialist Workers Party. But this re-association was to have short life. The Bolshevik success in the 1917 revolution against the Tsar had shown that small groups could grow into mass parties almost overnight. We had been operating as if that was a permanent condition. It could now be seen that periods of this sort are temporary, that longer-range views are necessary and that attempts to adapt the Bolshevik vanguard party model to all societies under all conditions results in a form of elitism. On the agenda was the need for the formation of tendencies whose function would be the development of theory for socialist experiment that could be both revolutionary and democratic — in relation to a new epoch. The going was to be hard for all.

In less than two years after joining the Socialist Workers Party, it became necessary for James to lead his group out again in a try at go ing-it-alone. By the 1950's the organization suffered two internal splits. After continued government harassment of James during the McCarthy period, he was forced to return to England. Within a few years and despite heroic efforts, in effect, the group dissolved.

None of the above experiences caused C. L. R. James to give up a life design based on opposition to oppression. It was native to him regardless of changing political circumstances. Splits, for example, are an experience which often have devastating effects on the participants of both sides. To survive them takes a degree of objectivity. James understood that political-organizational divorce is often what people must do when they find it necessary to test new ideas. But this goes only a little way to explain why James has continued to be a major presence in the resistance community of the world.

It has always seemed to me that the strength of C. L. R. was somehow tied up in his self-respect and consequent ability to have faith in the strengths of others. In the Workers' Party, for example, when the demoralization began to raise a tendency which felt that the "problems" of Blacks might somehow be resolved without a socialist revolution, James countered without ambiguity. More, he put forth the idea that to survive and build for a new and integrated society. Black Americans would need to form their own separate struggle organizations, a development that would come and of which he had no fear.

James was the first and only leader in the entire Trotskyist movement, or any socialist movement, from whom I heard discussion of the special form of workers' control v/hich develops in every workplace naturally and informally. He knew of the existence of informal cultures and that they were the basis from which to broach the entire question of workers' control.

In a somewhat abstract discussion within the Workers' Party in about 1946, James wrote a document containing a sentence which went something like the following: "It is not impossible to conceive there could be workers' councils within the United States in two years." His opponents crowed that this was proof of a deep-seated romanticism overriding all his expectations for American workers and Blacks. If his prediction was firm, time-table intended, he was clearly mistaken. But that does not take away the fact that his methodology and approach were absolutely correct. I feel sure that he had not read any of the literature that has come out of the Hawthorne experiments, but he listened to workers. For me, he introduced the ideas which demonstrated the value of what is done socially from below on the job to get out production and to survive. All differences recede behind that, and I, like many others, am deeply indebted.

It wasn't all just politics. In my early twenties, C. L. R. was (and remains) one of the most attractive personalities I had ever met. In fact,

in the 1940's he was one of the few leaders that I knew in any movement who from childhood had experienced real social adjustment. A teenage star in cricket, the major sport of Trinidad at the time, he had early developed an ease which allowed him to relate without difficulty in almost any social stratum.

I particularly appreciated the enthusiasm with which he ate good food and drank good booze, his eagerness and insight when evaluating moving pictures, and, at a time were both single, his ability to initiate discussions with attractive women without formal introduction. To mind springs a late supper in the Village at Connie's Calypso Restaurant after seeing "The Glass Key" starring Alan Ladd. Our table companions had never heard cinema analysis used so effectively to relate the depths of alienation in our society, but I knew as I switched attention momentarily from them, to myself, and back to James, neither had I.

For me, it would be impossible to comprehend James without seeing him as an artist and literary critic first, as is indicated among other ways by his novel, *Minty Alley,* and by *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways.* He is an artist upon whom history imposed the need for full-time participation in revolutionary politics — an artist who came to the world movement with the natural strengths of the heritage that is the history of Black revolution in the Caribbean.

Stanley Weir is currently co-publisher of Miles & Weir Books, with its Singlejack Series of workers' literature.

Young Detroit radicals, 1955-1965[1]

by Dan Georgakas

I first heard of what was then Correspondence (soon to split into two groups, one taking the name Facing Reality) at a meeting of the News and Letters group, where a speaker noted that their former comrades had started a new round of public meetings. I had been introduced to News and Letters by an English teacher at Wayne University, but I was not overly impressed by what seemed to be little more than a publishing committee for the thoughts of Chairwoman Raya Dunayevskaya. I decided to check out the rival group.

The period was the late 1950's and one of the major issues under discussion by Correspondence was the significance of the Hungarian Revolution. Marty Glaberman and Seymour Faber were particularly passionate about this subject. I felt that I had come in during the middle of a running debate about something extremely important, but somehow, no one got around to spelling out the underlying principles. It would be many years before I comprehended how Hungary related to workers' self-organization at the point of production and lessons that could be drawn regarding methods of radical organization. At the time I was disturbed by the apparent strength of right-wing elements in the Hungarian movement and was not convinced that the workers had really directed the revolt, much less that they had direct ed the revolt from their factories.

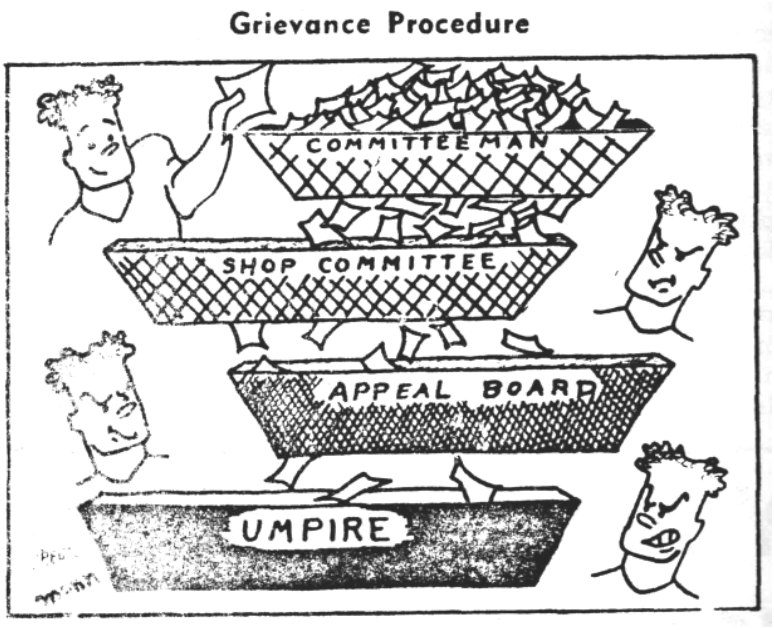
My inability to grasp the Correspondence Hungarian analysis was shared by the other young radicals, Black and white, then becoming active in the city. Nonetheless, the discussions were not in vain. Although most of us did not make the connections to theories of the vanguard party or think too deeply about the development of the European working class, we did become engaged with other basic concepts. Paramount among these was that what was really important in analyzing social ferment was to determine what the workers were doing. Simple as that may seem, it was quite different from the usual emphasis on what parties are doing and saying, and even what workers are saying.[3] Glaberman never missed a chance to speak about the No Strike Pledge of the war years, how when asked to make a "patriotic" pledge not to strike, the workers agreed enthusiastically, but as soon as the pledge was used against them in the workplace, the same workers had no hesitation about striking. Even though we were not convinced at the time about the radical nature of the Hungarian revolt, we were convinced that if the facts as Correspondence presented them were reality, then indeed it marked a new phase of socialist development, a phase not unlike the emergence of the first Soviets.

The person who made the strongest immediate impression on us, particularly among the Blacks who would become the nucleus of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, was James Boggs. He had been through numerous rank-and-file movements and racial initiatives within unions, and he spoke eloquently about his experiences. Although Marty and others in the group also worked in factories, Boggs was the only one who seemed to be the kind of militant who

spoke and acted in terms that had immediate application. When he spoke about workers, he described the kind of people we all knew rather than the idealizations projected by other radical groups and even other members of his own circle. Boggs was especially intriguing when he enumerated the shortcomings of the class and its internal problems, emphasizing underdevelopment among Black as well as white workers. Later, of course, he and his wife would develop these ideas more fully in a number of writings.[4]

A number of people involved in the Correspondence-Facing Reality orbit were also involved in the defense of Robert Williams. At the time, non-violence was being touted as a strategy and tactic for the emerging civil rights movement. Williams' response of armed self-defense to KKK attacks in North Carolina seemed to make a lot more sense. That he was charged with kidnapping a white couple when he had actually been protecting them from potential mob violence seemed a typical example of the kind of "justice" militants could expect in state and federal courts. Williams' newsletter, *The Crusader,* published mainly during his self-exile in Cuba and then China, was widely read in Detroit. Early on, people thought he was a bit daffy, but they supported his thesis of armed self-defense. Individuals in his support group were active in a series of local groups — the Negro Action Committee, UHURU, *the Inner City Voice* — which lead to the creation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

In contrast to the influence of Glaberman, Boggs, and personalities of the civil rights movement, the influence of James was indirect. Some of his books were thrust at us and had quite an impact, but there was little attempt to present his ideas in a systematic manner. Nor was there any effort to explain how *News and Letters, Correspondence, Facing Reality,* et al. had evolved out of Trotskyist politics.



Such information surfaced in personal conversations with individual: or as background on specific issues I got the impression that the group was a bit schizoid about its relationship to James: they were extremely attentive to his views on all subjects, but did not wish to become one more cult wed to a leading personality in exile whose every whim could convulse the faithful. Consequently, while his letters from Britain were read and studied within the immediate circle, in public events his leadership was played down. A complicating factor was that James seemed distant in style from the kind of informal give-and take Detroiters preferred. When visiting the Detroit area in the 1960's (forced sometimes to speak across the border in Windsor, Ontario), he seemed too much the Great Author to attract the scrappy younger generation in personal terms.[5]

Perhaps the single greatest barrier between the perspective of the young radicals and the James group was the different attitude regarding socialist revolutions in the Third World. Ironically, *The Black Jacobins,* James's most widely read book, was mainly interpreted in a kind of Maoist fashion as an example of how an underdeveloped Third World nation could defeat the most powerful imperialists of its day through a protracted people's war. But groups like Facing Reality had little input to offer on specifics. When they did speak out. they seemed to know less about the details and nuances involved than other sources available to us. Even though James's groups had published important material on Africa, they seemed unable to cope with the reality of the new guerilla movements in southern Africa and Latin America.

For our part, we were neither particularly pro- or anti-U.S.S.R. What we saw was that the U.S.S.R. was not then actively leading or enthusiastically supporting revolutionary struggles around the world. The nation that seemed most promising in that respect was China. Luke Tripp and Charles Johnson used to say that whatever the Man says is bad, is good.[6] It followed that since China was the number one villain of the hour, China was the nation to learn from. Another Detroit comrade of mine expressed

the same thought by indicating that the intelligent way to read the *New York Times* was to assume the opposite of whatever was printed was true and work backwards.

Behind these jests was a genuine knowledge of the particulars of the Chinese Revolution. We were primarily concerned with the history of that struggle while the older radicals, whatever their affiliation, seemed to be obsessed with ideology. The older radicals gave the impression that if they could show parallels between Mao and Stalin, the discussion on China was sealed. This greatly irritated those of us who saw the Chinese Revolution as a process that had transformed the lives of millions of people and which still had enormous revolutionary vitality and potential.

If China was important, it was also distant — geographically, culturally, and generationally. Cuba was close, extremely close. When the revolution came to power, we were delighted. A socialist revolution had been made in Uncle Sam's back yard by people culturally similar to ourselves and only a few years older. Individuals who would be at the core of the League took part in Cuba support committees, visited Che Guevara at the United Nations, and took part in trips to Cuba that defied the State Department ban on travel to the island.

Another foreign policy focus for us was Palestine. Detroit happens to have the largest Arab population in the United States; and from the early 1960's onward, anti-Zionist positions that were not anti-Semitic were carefully articulated in speeches, publications, and activities of a new generation of Detroit-based Arabs with a radical perspective. Discussions about the differences between various Palestinian groups and debates about the efficacy of terrorist tactics were the norm of political discussion. With the influx of Yemeni and Palestinian immigrants into the automobile plants, an alliance between Black and Arab workers took on a pragmatic edge, inside the plants and out. One of the first major public activities of the young Arab militants of the 1960's was a series of legal actions and demonstrations aimed at Mayor Hubbard of Dearborn, infamous for years as the area's number one racist official. Eventually, Blacks involved with the League would travel to the Middle East as guests of various Arab hosts, and the major attempt to remove the League from control of Wayne State University's daily newspaper would center on the support Mike Hamlin, John Watson, and others gave to the Palestine Liberation Organization.[7]

"Looks Like a Good Day for Work Around the House"

These international concerns, important as they were to all of us, were eclipsed by the Black liberation struggle in the United States. In addition to purely local initiatives such as the Northern High School strike, there were contacts with national groups. Typically, the Detroit area SNCC group was dissolved early in the 1960's by the national office because we wanted to take direct action in the North at a time when SNCC wanted to preserve the North as a fundraising base. James Forman, who was responsible for this ouster, would, six years later, become an ally of the people he had bumped, when they would unite in an effort to create a Black Workers Congress. In spite of this temporary falling-out over tactics, Detroit Black radicals preferred SNCC over the other mainline civil rights groups and were very supportive of people like H. Rap Brown. There was always strong antipathy to Martin Luther King and admiration for Malcolm X throughout his various ideological phases. Resistance to serving in the white man's army for any purpose was a given, and when draft notices were received by local militants there was resistance of various types. The most dramatic was in 1965, when a campaign was launched to urge 50,000 angry Blacks to appear at the Fort Wayne Induction Center to "Destroy the Draft." Among those involved were General Baker, John Robinson, Sidney Fields, Charles Thornton, John Watson, and John Williams.[8]

Facing Reality made a real contribution in connecting our internationalism and our immediate struggles. We were seeking an analysis that could specifically relate the racism that permeated American society to international revolutionary

currents and to the grim realities of an advanced capitalist economy. Marxism became accepted as the best general analysis available, but people wanted a specific critique of our particular time and place, an analysis that could lead to a program of action. Facing Reality, through its general emphasis, opened the road to some answers.

More than any other group, Facing Reality provided the historical, and ideological base for concentrating organizing activities at the point of production. This re-enforced the existing skepticism most of us felt about relying on the courts, churches, neighborhoods, electoral politics and schools as the main focus of agitation. The accent on the work-place drew an early and distinct line between programs tailored to the needs of workers, employed or unemployed, as opposed to those which appealed to street people, usually referred to by us even in the early 1960's as lumpen. Furthermore, Facing Reality provided a sophisticated critique of the United Automobile Workers and a thesis for supporting the demands of Black workers over those of white workers when they were in apparent conflict. With its talk about workers' councils, however fuzzy the details, Facing Reality illuminated a way of thinking about organizing workers that did not require a vanguard party.

Perhaps Facing Reality was most influential in its views of a workers' press. It was not accidental that the *Inner City Voice* was the immediate precursor of the League or that the use of Wayne State University's newspaper as the de facto daily organ of the League was one of the organization's most inspired and successful ventures. Although neither Lenin nor Marx was widely read by the League activists, Lenin's pamphlet on the press, *Where To Begin* (1903), was well known, mainly through the Facing Reality group, and one of the major goals of the League was to establish its own printing facilities, a project which fell just short of success. On the issue of a press, Glaberman's influence on John Watson was considerable.

The paradox involved in Facing Reality's relationship with the younger radicals was that the fervor and insight the group brought to its analysis of workers' movements elsewhere and at other times seemed to be absent from its commentary on our immediate reality. The organization gave the impression of being a spent entity in terms of direct action and even in offering theoretical solutions to the strategic and tactical problems at hand. When the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was on the brink of capturing some of the UAW locals, for instance, and most radicals in the city were deeply concerned with helping them win, Marty Glaberman would point out that the League might be in worse shape for having to enforce the union contract if it won. Likewise, when radicals proposed running for judge and mayor, Glaberman wondered aloud if winning might not prove more disastrous than losing. This position seemingly echoed the old IWW refusal to sign contracts with employers. Abstractly correct or not, it seemed like workerist anarchism returning through the back door. With a Facing Reality agenda for direct action apparently absent, Detroiters clamoring for relief from existential burdens and radicals anxious to make a bid for leadership roles in local and national struggles were not impressed.

Undoubtedly the most painful moment for Facing Reality was when its members realized that, at the very time when new student. Black, and worker organizations were on the rise, the group had not grown in numbers or obvious influence. The decision to dissolve the organization at that point was a brave and honest one, a course motivated by a sense of realism and modesty lacking in most leftists. The move also indicated that in some decisive way, the influence of Facing Reality (and that of James's ideas) was destined to be manifested in less public, more personal if hardly less important ways, and through the printed word.

Facing Reality had all along set a high standard for personal ethics, respect for culture and non-sectarian communications. These virtues became increasingly important as the decade of the 1960's wore on. The group always talked a great deal about the importance of the committees of correspondence in the American Revolution. Often, the homes of Facing Reality people, particularly Marty and Jessie Glaberman, were a flesh and blood committee of correspondence. People coming into town or members of rival groups or residents of different areas of the city used the Glabermans to stay in touch with one another. If Marty often seemed more interested in setting up a speaking engagement or publishing a pamphlet or getting another James title into print than in taking action, he never operated on a subjective or self-serving basis. It was Marty who put me in touch with Paul Buhle, who was then putting out *Radical America.* Later, Paul would pass along my name to Gary Crowdus, who was trying to get together a staff for the fledgling *Cineaste.* When Italian militants from Florence and Turin came to Detroit, they usually stayed with Marty and Jessie and were put in touch with whomever they wanted

to see, whether the Glabermans were on good terms with them or not. This kind of interaction went on all the time and was all the more impressive because it was never put in the context of building a Facing Reality organization or even a Facing jxeality network. The group, in short, lived up to its commitment to communication.

The influence of Facing Reality on the arts was considerably stronger than any of the other leftist groups in the city. There was never any question of pushing socialist realism or imposing a political line. The first of my poems ever printed were published in *Correspondence,* exactly as composed. In 1958 when I founded a literary magazine called *Serendipity,* the Facing Reality response was to make me aware of *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways.* Most important was the support Facing Reality extended to all efforts toward self-publishing, whether the focus was political or artistic. We could feel we were part of a tradition that was much richer and far more sophisticated than that of Ferlinghetti's City Lights Press in San Francisco, the immediate inspiration for the literary small press movement of the 1960's.[9]

Frank Monico, one of the Facing Reality stalwarts, was also an established local actor. I had first seen him in a mid-1950's production of *Awake and Sing.* Later, in the early 196U's, we were both involved in theatrical productions of the Unstabled Coffeehouse. He played John L. Lewis in a play we put on for UAW workers in Flint. Lily Tomlin, Rev. Malcolm Boyd, William Snodgrass, and Woodie King Jr. were among other local writers and performers involved with the coffeehouse at various times. As chance would have it, Marty and Jessie Glaberman were the first people to put me in touch with the group. This linkage of culture and politics seemed natural to us. James's book on cricket was well known, and people immediately grasped the social implications of what West Indians had done to the British sport as Black athletes were just beginning to enter the various professional major leagues.

It is against this rich cultural background that one can think more charitably about John Watson's and Ken Cockrel's hopes for Black Star Productions.[10] After completing *Finally Got the News,* the League hoped to involve Jane Fonda and Don Sutherland in a film about Rosa Luxemburg. Few people not directly involved realize how close film projects of this kind came to realization. Without belaboring the point or unduly emphasizing the impact of Facing Reality, I think the group provided a definition of culture that was far more profound than that which surrounded most political movements of the 1960's. For us, culture was never a tag on to politics but part of the center. We assumed that sophisticated art went hand in hand with sophisticated politics. One did not go to workers with a debased version of either.

That "the personal is political" has become a given for the radical movement of the late 1970's and 1980's. Here, too, Facing Reality was ahead of the times. Many of the younger radicals felt confident in seeking out the Glabermans or James Boggs for personal advice. A number of people involved in pre-League groups lived near Boggs and would drop by for personal and political chats. The Glabermans served a similar role for others, Blacks and whites. In my own case, I remember a talk we had about my decision to go to Europe. I wondered what their political position on it would be. They said that the revolution was not such an invalid that everyone had to stay home and nurse. They felt that as long as I had not forsaken my political views, what was good for me personally would work out to be constructive for my comrades as well. Jessie was particularly alarmed at how the movement burned out people or made them crazy with personal frustration. When we had this talk, I thought I was going to go to Greece. It turned out that I went to Rome and because of contacts made there, some five years later, I was able to arrange for members of the League to be guests at various workers' conferences sponsored by Italian militants. No one could possibly guess at the time of our conversation that there would be a League or an extra-parliamentary movement in Italy. I've thought about this incident many times because I know of several individuals in Detroit who belong to groups of 12 to 50 and have to mortify themselves to get "permission" for summer travel or to pursue "personal" projects.

Another warning about leftist megalomania was offered to me by George Rawick. He asked me to consider how it *felt* to be a socialist militant at the outbreak of World War II — to know that in all the world, among all the brave workers and activists, only a handful of Trotskyists understand the real issues, and that among that revolutionary remnant, only your minority tendency has the right line.

Interchanges like this could be multiplied many times, and I believe the biggest impact of James's ideas on us came through such experiences. The Detroit radical scene would not have been the same without those ideas and their power

over major and minor personalities who would take roles in local struggles. Certainly the influence might have been greater if the set of ideas had been systematized and abstractions reconciled with the tasks before us. But the problem is more complex than whether individuals had the will for such a task or made a strong enough effort. Those were new and strange times for the veterans of revolutionary struggles of the 1940's and 1950's. In addition, Facing Reality people did not know whether to regard us younger radicals as college students who would eventually enter the middle class world, or advanced workers who might one day become part of the leadership of a Detroit workers' council. As a group, we did not really know either. Some of the people mentioned in these pages have become writers or full-time intellectual workers; some have remained factory workers; some are members of vanguard parties; some have returned to survival in the streets; and some have gained elective office without lowering their socialist banners. Facing Reality members had known some of these people since their high school days, had been supportive in the abstract and often helpful in various political initiatives, but had never locked into the new movement in a sustained or final manner.[11]

Of course, no Marxist group succeeded in placing its imprint upon the movement of the 1960's, a movement that, for its part, perished without leaving many institutional bases that could help guide following generations. From that perspective, the modest successes of the small group of people around Correspondence/Facing Reality are quite remarkable. They were able to preserve and pass along a sophisticated body of analysis, making it accessible in some degree to a new generation of rebels and activists interested in the socialist transformation of society. If the influence was less than it might have been, it was far greater than that of many larger and better-financed groups. Many of the books and pamphlets produced remain, and in the light of the Polish strikes of 1980, the ideas developed by James and his groups are more relevant than ever.

Footnotes

1. This memoir has been written without consulting any written materials from the time covered. As requested by the editor, I focused on my perception of the influence of the thought of C. L. R. James on individuals who later became involved with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and on the influence of James on my own thinking.
2. When the names of political groups and their publications are identical, I have used italics to indicate the publication and regular typeface to indicate the group.
3. Scholars trying to evaluate the ideological orientation and level of various Black groups in Detroit (1955-1970) should be wary when dealing with printed materials. The divergence between rhetoric and reality can be enormous, as outlandish language and extreme positions were tactics used to influence politicians, funders, and political foes. These materials often were deliberately misleading.
4. When James Boggs' *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook* was published in 1963, it was widely admired in Detroit radical circles. I believe it was read by almost every person who later became a member of the League's Executive Committee.
5. A contrast can be shown here with the immediate influence of a man like Harry Haywood. Long before Haywood's *Black Bolshevik* was published in 1978, his views and experiences were known to the Detroit radicals through extensive personal contact. Haywood lived in John Watson's home for a short period. Suck an intimacy never developed with James, and I think I am the only Detroit radical of my circle to have made the effort of visiting James in Great Britain in the early 1960's.
6. Luke Tripp had a long history of political activism and was a member off the seven-man Executive Committee of the League, its organizational center. Charles Johnson was a prominent activist in Detroit until he moved to New York City in the mid-1960's. He remained in personal contact with the League but did not become involved in its affairs in any significant fashion.
7. Mike Hamlin and John Watson were members of the Executive Committee of the League and frequent public spokespeople.
8. General Baker and John Williams were members of the Executive Committee of the League.
9. There was a strong self-publishing movement among 'Black writers in the city, as Black writers were then virtually excluded from literary anthologies of major publishing houses. Dudley Randall began the influential Broadside Press in the 1960's. His press and mine had one joint venture, a wall poster by M. B. Tolson. . This kind of interaction between the Black artistic community and radicals was considerable but totally unstructured. Glanton Dowdell, sometime artist, sometime stickup man. and a League activist, was another figure who could bridge culture and politics.
10. Cockrel was a member of the Executive Committee of the League and its legal voice.
11. Boggs was asked to be part of the pre-League and then League activities, but a role could never be negotiated.

Dan Georgakas, a New York-based writer, is co-author of Detroit: I Do Mind Dying. *Cartoons in this article were reprinted from* Correspondence.

Only connect

by Ferrucio Gambino

I

"In our neighborhood, we were feeling that we were with the others, with the Ethiopians, with the Spanish," said Margitt, a rank-and-file militant woman in the Po Valley, Italy, as she recalled the mid-1930's.[1] More or less at the time when Margitt and her comrades were debating the burning issues of those years and printing illegal leaflets in the basement of her house, C. L. R. James heard George Pad-more knocking at the door one night in 1934, on his last journey back from Moscow,[2] The re-establishment of harmonious relations between Stalin and "the grand democracies" had left no room for those like Padmore who had devoted all their energies to build an internationalism comprehending anti-colonial struggles.

The dawn of this century was a strange time to be born at: too late to be part of the first world war generation, too early to be part of the second world war generation. In between lay the vast gulf of the 1920's and 1930's, with the profusion of revolutionary activities in the name and for the sake of socialism in one country. That dedication burned out a large part of a generation of revolutionaries who would more often identify with foreign lands than with their native grounds as potential crucibles for deep social change. Born at the beginning of this century, C. L. R. James was among the few intellectuals of his generation who avoided the easy trap of transferring allegiance to distant Central Committees. In the organization of the African Bureau and in the agitation and propaganda against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, in projecting the long trajectory of Caribbean fight against imperial domination into the future, and in forcing a new debate on "the Negro question' in the United States, he was able to link the self-activity of the proletariat in the industrialized countries with the self-activity of the proletariat in the colonized countries.

II

"We want a decent wage. If we get it, we will work. If we don't get it we will not work. . . . We may have to die for democracy in Java or in Iceland. We can die for 30c an hour here first."[3] In the late spring of 1942 so demanded a pamphlet that C. L. R. James wrote under the dictation of the protagonists of the sharecroppers' strike in Southeast Missouri. It was an early example of the resistance to the no-strike pledge, a few months ahead of the United Mine Workers wildcats that would set the pace to the collapse of the tight regimentation of the working class that the U.S. state and the union bureaucracy intended to enforce throughout the war and post-war reconversion. A few months later also, in February-March 1943, the working class in Turin struck production on a scale that had been unheard of in fascist-dominated continental Europe. The workers in Turin took action against the most vicious war machine that had ever confronted an urban proletariat in the West. Today no historian would dispute the notion that those strikes decided the fall of Italian fascism in July 1943. The consequences were far-reaching:

> The first eyewitness accounts from Germany on Berlin's reaction to the fall of Italian fascism reveal that the Reich capital experienced its most troublesome day since Adolph Hitler assumed power. . . . Numerous Italian metal workers in the Siemens-Schuckert plant took the lead in the Monday pause to celebrate the news, just announced by the Reich radio, singing the *Internationale.* Their German fellow-workers joined in. . . . In the afternoon illegal tracts appeared as from nowhere. . . . In the working men [sic] slums in Wedding and Moabit such inscriptions abounded as "Hitler dead, Berlin stays red."[4]

It was the sign of the tragic clash between the potential of human liberation inherent in such revolts as in Southeast Missouri, Turin and Berlin on the one hand and the iron cage of the Yalta diktat on the other that inspired small groups of Marxists throughout the world to rescue the universal experience of the proletariat during and after world war two from the fangs of the cold warriors in the whole range of their livid colors. The convergence of the self-activity of the masses against exploitation with the contribution of dedicated intellectuals in legitimizing such self-activity took unique features in the United States in the 1940's and 1950's under the leadership of C. L. R. James, but was not a trait unique to the United States in those years. For those like me who discovered Marxism later, journals such as *Labor Action* and *Correspondence* provided a glimpse into the debates of those years. What is less easily perceivable today is the intensity of their reflection and anticipation of future developments, their setting an example of agitation and propaganda to other countries and other groups, their boldness in sizing up the conditions of the working class in the U.S. and elsewhere in light of working class needs, and not of ossified bureaucracies:

> The productive system of the United States created the basis of the Negro situation and it is the productive system which is creating the basis of its solution. It is the mass production industries which have within recent years placed whites and Negroes together on a basis of equality in that most fundamental

> social sphere — the process of productive labor.[5]

And in anticipation of Montgomery, Alabama:

> When you get on a bus, do you know how it feels to be told to go to the back when there are plenty of seats in front?[6]

III

The Berlin workers' revolt of 1953 and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 did not take the most alert participants to postwar proletarian politics by surprise. What the workers in Budapest had accomplished for all of those who had stuck to resistance against state and corporate exploitation was now clear: the dissenting voices in the European left and throughout the world could now be listened to while the most brutal traits of Stalinism were retreating to the background. This was the time when tiny groups and individuals in Southern Europe discovered and read "the American comrades" — two words that at long last it was possible to put together again — "the American comrades" who contributed to *Socialisme ou Barbarie.* It was a time when discussion started about Danilo Montaldi's translation into Italian of Paul Romano's *The American Worker* and Daniel Mothe's *Journal d'un Ouvrier.* The conditions of the working class looked strikingly similar throughout the so-called First World — and, we argued at that time, it could not be dissimilar in the Second World. State capitalism was a living category whereby we could relate in solidarity to the people who were bearing the brunt of the opposition to "actuated socialism."

The spring of 1968 may have been a difficult season for what would later be known as the Italian extra-parliamentary left, but after the April strikes at Fiat the battle for an alliance between workers and students became possible to both sides. Now on a mass basis, this alliance was still developing along the pattern worked out in Detroit in the 1940's. C. L. R. James was at the center of the conference on liberation in London in the summer of 1967, once again ahead of the European events that would unfold months later at an accelerating speed from France. Having been a protagonist in the struggle for the demise of colonialism, it was now possible for him to rebuild the bridge between different sections of the proletariat in the First World and the Third World by looking at the Black movement in the United States as the main reference point. McCarthyism had dealt its sharpest blow when it had succeeded in expelling C. L. R. James from the United States. It was the Black movement of the late 1960's that brought him back, and it was that movement that provided inspiration and guidance to groups and individuals in Europe. The first interview abroad to the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was published in *Potere Operaio* around the same time when *Black Jacobins* appeared in an Italian translation. The publication of *Black Jacobins* led to some radical rethinking not only of world history and world accumulation but also of the very notion of imperialism, class, and social formation. The interview of the League to *Potere Operaio* led to more than the well-known slogan of Potere Operaio: "Turin, Detroit, Togliattigrad, class struggle will win." It signalled the death knell of the isolated within the narrow confines of the official left's "Italian road to socialism."

"Only connect," opening up channels of communication internationally, this is at least as urgently on the Italian agenda in the 1980's as it was in the early 1960's — in spite of a new dimension of massive arrests, authoritarian threats, and attempts to atomize collective interests. "Only connect" remains the working class keynote. It spells the name of C. L. R. James.

Footnotes

1. Danilo Montaldi, *Militanti politici di base* (Einaudi, Torino, 1971), page 171. It is hoped that this book, as well as other works by Danilo Montaldi, can be published in English soon. A young participant in the Resistance in Cremona, Montaldi became the bridge-man between *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and its intercontinental ramifications on the one hand and the Italian non-Stalinist groups on the left of the Italian CP and SP on the other. Of him it can be said that nobody in post-WWII Italy listened more carefully than he did to the voice of the Po Valley proletariat and shared more communally political experiences and organizational skills. He died in 1975. The only work of his that studies an elite was published shortly before his death: *Saggio sulla politico del PCI, 1919-1970* (Quaderni Piacentini, Piacenza).
2. The Stalinist condemnation of Padmore is to be found in Greenwood, "A Betrayer of the Negro Liberation Struggle," *Inprekorr* (English edition), No. 37 (June 29, 1934), page 968. Whoever believes that "during the twentieth century the prestige of the Russian Revolution and its subsequent consolidation of state power long guaranteed the hegemony of the Stalinist Third International over revolutionaries throughout the world" (Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution* [Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London. 1979], page 125) would be well advised to re-examine the history of Pan-Africanism as well as other anti-colonial movements after the Stalinist alliance with "the grand democracies."
3. C. L. R. James, *The Future in the Present.*
4. *New York Times,* July 31, 1943. page 1, in a correspondence from Stockholm that was based on Swedish businessmen's direct report from Berlin.
5. J. R. Johnson [C. L. R. James], "One Tenth of the Nation," *Labor Action.* October 21, 1946, page 2.
6. J. R Johnson [C. L. R. James], "One-Tenth of the Nation," *Labor Action.* December 23, 1946, page 2.

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Minty Alley

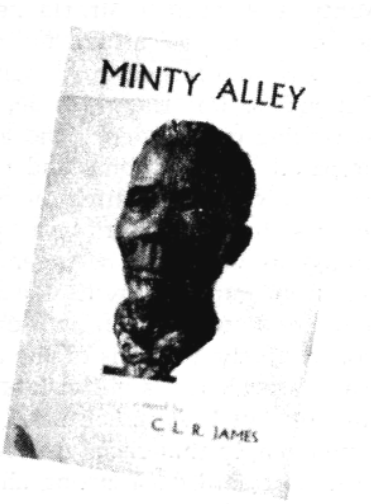
by D. Elliott Parris

Minty Alley, first published in London in 1936, is C. L. R. James's only novel. Had he written nothing else, had he not established himself later as a major historian and political theorist, this novel, written in his youth before he departed Trinidad in the mid-1930's to establish himself in Europe as one of the most celebrated of West Indian exiles, would have earned him a lasting reputation as a literary artist. On the strength of it he has gained the reputation of being a major forerunner of the Caribbean literary movement in English, which has flourished mainly after 1950. But *Minty Alley* foreshadows and even goes beyond much that was to follow in West Indian fiction.

James's novel displays a concern for class, color, and race relations in the Caribbean that would be central to the works of writers who were to follow, such as Mittelholzer, Naipaul, Lamming and Selvon. Unlike Mittelholzer, however, James's view of the society reflects an identification with those at the bottom rather than at the top. The sensibility he wishes to celebrate is that of the peasant and proletariat, the people of the "yard." Unlike Naipaul, James displays no hysterical embarassment about Caribbean identity, but depicts it as it is with realistic candor and implied love. Lamming and Selvon would therefore seem to be more closely his disciples; but much of their work is created within the framework of protest — protest against the colonial system that imprisoned Caribbean societies for over 350 years. *Minty Alley* is no protest novel. Though written in the 1930's, when the fires of nationalism were beginning to enflame the region, the novel pays scant attention to the political causes that ultimately account for the circumstances of poverty which encircle its characters. Colonialism is assumed, but not discussed. The white colonial officials who no doubt managed the affairs of Trinidad at that time, and who controlled its economy, are nowhere in the novel. The race relations that concern James here are not between White and Black, but between African and East Indian fellow Trinidadians. The class struggle here is not that of Bourgeois versus Proletariat, but the struggle of petit-bourgeois, educated Mr. Haynes to come to grips with life and the vitality of living personified in the lower class residents of No. 2, Minty Alley, where economic circumstances have forced him to become a boarder and fellow resident.

The landscape of *Minty Alley* is sparse. Emphasis is on characterization rather than setting. Much of later West Indian fiction is rich in descriptive passages of the landscape and lengthy explanations of cultural life against which the plots unfold, practices partly dictated by the conscious awareness of some authors that they are writing for a foreign audience. But James wrote *Minty Alley* for the familiar; description is kept to a minimum, to what is necessary for the interests of the plot. The author's skills are those of the playwright, a keen ear for the nuances of dialogue and a deft dexterity with character revelation and development. If transposed to the stage as a full-length play, *Minty Alley* would hardly need a change of scenery. Most of the events that take place in the novel occur at No. 2, Minty Alley, and what happens elsewhere is most often retold to the residents there, sometimes in more than one version, depending upon who brings the news.

Although the hero of the novel, Mr. Haynes, is from a petit-bourgeois background, C. L. R. James shows very little interest in this novel in analyzing the psychology of the West Indian lower middle



class that Haynes represents. All we learn about Haynes is that his education (he is a high school graduate) and his socialization prepared him for nothing more than to be a book store clerk while he waits to go on to higher education. In terms of real living, his life is a blank when he arrives at No. 2, Minty Alley. It is there he is to be confronted with life, first as a voyeur, and then, ever so gradually, as a participant, as he observes and eventually gets drawn into the life of the working class residents, who include his landlady Mrs. Rouse; her niece Maisie; Mr. Benoit, common-law husband of Mrs. Rouse for eighteen years; the nurse, boarder and best friend ol Mrs. Rouse, who steals Benoit away; the nurse's young son, Sonny; Miss Atwell, another boarder and Philomen, the trusted East Indian servant.

This novel is important as a political statement more in terms of what is implied than in terms of what is directly stated. The implications are many. First, the novel implies that the vitality of Caribbean identity is to be found in its working class, the people of the "yard," people like the residents of Minty Alley. Moreover, while possessing great sensibility and a keen common sense, the lower class still looks with respect on the petit-

bourgeois educated class for guidance in areas that require more formal training, as the residents of Minty Alley turn to Mr. Haynes for assistance in legal affairs and other business, and respect his judgment. But just as Mr. Haynes is depicted as lacking in confidence and as unprepared for emotional and physical involvement in life, the novel implies that the Caribbean petit-bourgeois class had been rendered relatively impotent by its education and stood to benefit from more exposure to the passions of the lower class. Mrs. Rouse's initial trust and love for her East Indian maid, Phil-omen, imply that racial differences need not impede a strong alliance between African and East Indian Caribbean peoples, but the later break in the relationship between these two women on the advice of an obeah priest that the East Indian's presence in her home is the sole cause of all Mrs. Rouse's problems, also implies that superstition and ignorance can easily sever the fragile bonds between the two communities, as they struggle to deal with the reality of their circumstances. In retrospect, then, James's vision of the 1930's seems prophetic of the nationalist struggle that was to be waged in the Caribbean in the decades to follow, a struggle that saw the alliance of the petit-bourgeois leadership class with the working class, whose strength lay in the acquisition of the vote and newly organized trade unions; a working class that in some cases was to experience internal division along the lines of African versus East Indian.

Because we know what the young James went on to become we cannot help but draw these political implications from the novel. But the focus of the young writer, James, in *Minty Alley* is kept the human interest of the drama that he unfolds, and as we watch these vibrant characters emerge from the pages, as we weep with their sufferings and exult with their joys, we become clearly aware James's humanism, a quality that stayed with him and permeates his later historical and political writings.

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A profound thinker

by Peppino Ortoleva
(translated by Noel Ignatin)

One of the best ways of distinguishing *a* truly profound thinker from others perhaps suggestive and intelligent but superficial is the fact that the former's writings are able to be read in different ways in different times, to give, to each new question, a new answer. In other words, the profound thinker is worth rereading. C. L. R. James is one of these thinkers.

I read *The Black Jacobins,* the first time, almost ten years ago. At that reading it seemed to me singularly well written (a quality found too rarely); but above all it seemed an exemplary analysis of a revolutionary process: able to pick up all the complexity and richness without underestimating the aspects of tortuousness and uncertainty, able to pick up, in mutual interdependence, but also partial autonomy, the social, political and economic components. It constituted, in substance, a mine of suggestions and observations on a revolution which had taken place, which a revolutionary could make use of in his political activity.

I reread *The Black Jacobins* this past month. Naturally, I found there what I had found when I read it the first time. But this time I had different problems while I was reading it: the recurring triumph of the enemies of mankind, even within the ranks of the revolutionaries (a problem which C. L. R. James had addressed many times in the course of his, fortunately, long life), required of me, and requires of me, that I take up the challenge of what seems to me the most intimate weakness of the Marxist philosophy of history, and perhaps of any philosophy of history, the obstinate claim to give a unitary, global and linear sense to historical development. Rereading it in this light, it was easy to see *The Black Jacobins* as an openly and fruitfully heretical work, and to understand the consistency of that heresy with other singular and important aspects of the author's work.

The choice of subject is already uncomfortable for a determinist Marxism: an anti-colonial revolution preceding the epoch of imperialism, a revolution that carries to power slaves who have not reached the stage of wage labor: no accident that Marxism, before James, had not taken up that great revolution so difficult to place on the agenda of evolution. And then, what on first reading had appeared to me simply as literary felicity now revealed its true root: the attention to the political, but also ethical choices of the individual, the refusal to reduce to pure symbol or symptom the superindividual entities the field. And this is valid not only for the great Toussaint but for the protagonists of that great event. The concept, by itself banal, "history is made by man," is applied by James in a non-banal fashion: that it is to the individual, well as to the collective movement, that one must look. Because it is individual hands, and not only those of the collective movement that are weighed the choices that lead from a given situation to one

of the many future possibilities, that make history.

The secret of that rebellious and non-deterministic Marxism is found, perhaps. at another point in James's where (as in *Dialectics and History*) he underlines that the will of the oppressed mass to impose its own rule and its own free sociability is not limited to a specific phase economic and social development, to a particular technology or class structure, but crosses history, at least Western post-Christian history, in its entirety. In his reading of history, therefore, the dynamic of development and of the succession. of various modes of production is intertwined with the extraordinary permanence of what we have sometimes called the "need for communism," that one can also call the need for human liberation. To that permanence of class oppression, that cuts across human history in its entirety, is counterposed, therefore, the need for liberation: a clash which, in actual history, is as determinant as the regular succession of the forces and relations of production.

It is thanks to that complex, non-evolutionary dialectic that James is able to identify, in history and in society, the true protagonists, those who do not wait on orderly progress to make themselves felt: he could understand Toussaint and the Garveyites, the African liberation movements (which everyone had ignored, thinking that it would always be Europe that decided the fate of the world) and the American workers, on whom already at thit time, no Marxist was ready to bei, a penny. It is thanks to that dialectic that James has been able to teach us to read not only history, but Melville and baseball, transforming his limitless and thirsty curiosity into a tool of knowledge.

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Philosophy and culture

by Dave Wagner

Toward the end of his 1947 essay,. "Dialectical Materialism and Fate of Humanity," C. L. R. James says something very simple and very remarkable:

> The dialectician [i.e., the serious philosopher] is often seriously thrown back by the fact that the great masses of workers do not seem to think in a way that corresponds to these ideas. He should remember that the number who thought of socialist revolution in Russia in February 1917 was pitifully few. There is no record of one single republican in France of July 14, 1789. How many of the Founding Fathers advocated independence in 1776? The anticipation of these ideas accumulate and then under suitable conditions explode into a new quality. But with the masses the matter goes deeper. They do not think as intellectuals do, and this intellectuals must understand.

I have always taken this as a rebuke and a consolation.

On the one hand, James's insight can serve as a tombstone for the New Left, an epitaph both for those who withdrew into theory and sealed the tomb after them with the declaration that theory was all that remained of practice; equally for those who impatiently — and, as they sometimes correctly imagined, heroically — stepped forward to "accept" the leadership of history before being ground down by it. That's the rebuke.

The consolation, of course, is the assertion that for the masses "the matter goes deeper." Despite the repeated failure of American intellectuals to make decisive interventions into the historical experience of the masses in recent history (even when conditions seemed suitable for an "explosion," in James's term), the process continues in the daily experience of ordinary people. Hope is not absent.

James's use of the metaphor of "explosion" is contained and expanded in another more modern and equally Hegelian metaphor: that history at points reaches a "critical mass" in which "suitable conditions" bring together the power of critical thought with the objective situation of the mass of humanity. (Yes, it's only a metaphor, but it's been turned on the lathe of history.)

So it seems intellectuals must accept their ambiguous relationship with History, frustrating as that may be. Most philosophers would have let the matter rest at the point, but not James. In the late 1940's we find him delivering a series of letters on Hegel's *Science of Logic* to his working class following in Detroit. It is one of the finest introductions to Hegel ever written. The conversational tone, always one of the benchmarks of James's genius and key to his ability to tie philosophy to daily life (the culture of the masses), was never more graciously put to use.

"Hegel," he told the Detroit readers, "is going to make a tremendous organization and analysis of thoughts, categories, etc. But he takes time out to say, and *we will forget this at our own peril,* that categories, the forms of logic, in Desire, Will, etc., are *human feelings and actions."* (James's emphasis) History, in other words, is the animation of muscle and bone by hope and desire.

In James's writings there is a wholeness that suggests itself in each part. And so we have the flesh

and blood masses in his own novel, *Minty Alley,* in which. James as an intellectual says good-bye to the *experience* (but not the understanding) of the masses in his farewell to the spontaneous, beautiful, wonderfully vindictive and wholly human Maisie:

> Maisie had disappeared, but suddenly there was a shout from a few of the people who had crept into the yard to witness the disturbance. She had slipped through the window at the back. By the time Haynes [James?] reached round he could just catch a glimpse of her walking up Victoria Street, bareheaded, her head and neck still plastered with mud from Mrs. Rouse's tumble, and a small crowd walking behind her. Gone. And gone for good.

The glimpse of Maisie in this account is the glimpse of daily life in Hegel's categories, a free play of perception that gives James more sheer range than any other modern dialectician who has dared to live and write as a whole person.

I've been dealing with some of the more obscure of James's works here, and I can't help but conclude with a reference to one of the most obscure — but one that gave me a boost in literary matters I will never forget.

Somewhere on the flip side of James's 33-rpm recording of a lecture comparing and contrasting Melville and Shakespeare, James observes that all the Bard's histories are concerned with one theme: the impossibility of being a king.

With that, the key to at least a third of Shakespeare fell into our hands. Of course! No matter how serious, sincere (in that romantic preoccupation) or accomplished a human personality may be, it i incapable of the inhumanity *of* kinghood. There is too much to reconcile. To write about the great est kings in their fullest glory is an immanent critique of the existence of kings. History, after all, works through the daily activity of off members of the species. Kings are finally going to be left behind.

As, of course, in the Jamesian view, are intellectuals to whom the Maisies of the world are lost. In James we have the hope of finding them — and ourselves — again.

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Mariners, *Renegades, and Castaways*

by David Roediger

C. L. R. James's *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways,* like most American-published writing of lasting value from the past half-century, appears ephemeral in the extreme. A self-published little paperback on Herman Melville's fiction, a rare book almost from its appearance, *Mariners* is nonetheless a minor classic. Written largely while James sat in an Ellis Island prison awaiting a McCarthyite deportation hearing, the book is no academic treatise. Instead, it concentrates upon a sustained and brilliant explication of two books, *Moby Dick* and *Pierre,* with brief asides treating other of Melville's famous works. The central thesis of *Mariners,* that Melville was the first great critic of bureaucratic capitalism and totalitarianism on a world scale, would have benefitted from consideration of other works that James would take up decades later, notably the profound Hegelian *Benito Cereno.* The absence of lesser-known Melville fiction, probably unavailable to James at the time, reminds us that writing from jail is hardly the adventure some romantic critics imagine it to be. On the other hand, James's contact with the renegades and castaways of Ellis Island breathes fire into the book and a final section on the confinement stands as an interesting memoir of the period, especially because James comes to grips with the mixed motives and the humanity of some Communist prisoners whom he might have dismissed as his "Stalinist opponents."

Three further considerations (among many) mark *Mariners* as a groundbreaking work. One is that James succeeds in writing a work of literary criticism which can be readily appreciated by those who have no familiarity with the books discussed. To a peculiar degree, and ir a way deserving study by radical writers, James combines the functions of critic and storyteller, of popularizer and analyst. Second, *Mariners* in its fascinating observations on the working crew of the *Pequod* and especially of Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo, opens the way for analysis of Melville's perception of capitalism as a world system and of the industrial metaphors in his sea-set novels (a theme recently addressed in a clever chapter of Ron Takaki's *Iron Cages.* which owes much to James). James, more than any other modern author, appreciates, finally, the humor of Melville, noting at one point, "Almost every sentence [of a section of *Moby Dick*] can be the subject of a comic strip." That James could write such a line, and mean it as high praise, suggests the degree to which imagination and shrewdness coexist in his criticism.

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Pioneers of West Indian Surrealism

"No nation now but the imagination."
— Derek Walcott

by Franklin Rosemont

Although unremarked by his commentators, C. L. R. James's encounters with surrealism have been sufficiently numerous and significant to warrant a closer look. Let no one be misled by the disparaging allusion, on the last page of *The Black Jacobins,* to "the dabblers in *surréalisme."* The evidence suggests that this aspersion was directed not against surrealism, but against dabblers — an attitude with which the surrealists would heartily concur.

Chronologically, surrealism parallels the two movements with which James's life has been most closely intertwined: Leninist Marxism and Pan-Africanism. As an organized revolutionary cultural movement, surrealism began in France in 1924 with the publication of André Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto.* Its basic aim was then, as it is now, a thoroughgoing revolutionary social transformation, the elaboration of a truly free society in which the inspiration and exaltation customarily regarded as the prerogative only of poets and artists will be acknowledged as the common property of all. The surrealist program is ably summed up in the battle-cry of the movement's great precursor, the Uruguayan-born poet Lautréamont: "Poetry must be made by all!"

Starting from a position of radical "idealism," the surrealists quickly advanced through, the successive stages of modern European thought and soon recognized themselves as Marxists. This theoretical clarification and political commitment were accompanied by the rapid growth of the movement worldwide. By the end of the 1920's surrealism was flourishing not only throughout Europe, but also in Argentina and Japan.

The founders of surrealism were Europeans, but their rigorous practice of poetry led them to criticize mercilessly the dominant values and institutions of Christian/bourgeois civilization. Surrealism is the culmination of a long succession of avant-gardes arising out of European High Culture, but it also rejoins and extends the dreams and aspirations of ancient "accursed" traditions, long-forgotten heretical movements, "primitive" societies, as well as emancipatory popular currents in the industrialized countries. In this sense it can be said to represent, epochally, the dialectical supersession of Western culture.

From the start, the surrealists were especially active in the struggle against racism and imperialism. Their orientation in this regard clearly was influenced by Marxism, but it also had a specifically surrealist character. The surrealists have been vociferous in their appreciation of the cultural contributions of nonwhite peoples: their art, their dances, their whole ways of life, so admirably counterposed to the abject miserabilism that has increasingly infected Western culture throughout this century. This appreciation underscored the surrealists' solidarity with the Scottsboro defendants in the U.S. the Vietnamese guerrillas, the Rif tribesmen of Morocco, and the emerging revolutionary movement in the Caribbean.

West Indian surrealism began in 1932, when a group of Martiniquan Blacks sojourning in Paris published a journal, *Légitime Défense.* Its central figure was the poet and theorist Etienne Lero. "More than a review," Leopold Senghor wrote many years later, *"Légitime Défense* was a cultural movement. Beginning with a Marxist analysis of the society of the West Indies, it discovered in the Caribbean the descendants of the Negro-African slaves held for three centuries in the stultifying conditions of the proletariat. Léro affirmed that only surrealism could deliver them from their taboos and express them in their integrity."

The journal included Léro's devastating critique of what then passed for poetry in the French West Indies. In opposition to this sentimental, lifeless verse, crushed under the dead weight of white colonialist values, Léro hailed not only the example of his European surrealist comrades but also "the rising wind from black America" — the work of Langston Hughes and Jamaica-born Claude McKay, as well as the great creators of jazz. Surrealism thus had a hand in developing international Black solidarity.

In *Légitime Défense* we can discern the origins of what would a few years later be known as Negritude. In its twenty-four vibrant pages between blood-red covers, we see the first brave steps of an indigenous French-language Caribbean literature.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, during the same period, much the same role was played by two journals with which James was closely associated: *Trinidad* and *The Beacon,* both published in Trinidad. Like *Légitime Défense,* these journals were characterized above all by *revolt,* nourished by the growing self-assurance of the forces of West Indian emancipation. And like *Légitime Défense,* these journals were not narrowly literary; along with poetry and fiction they concerned themselves with art, music, social criticism and politics.

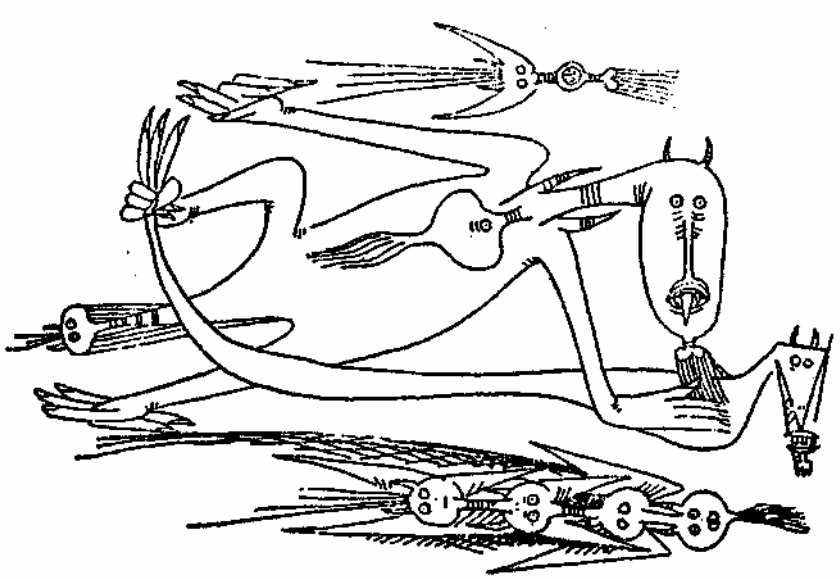
That the Trinidad group did not adopt surrealism is hardly surprising, especially in view of the general delay in the development of sur-

realism throughout the English-speaking world. A discussion of this question here would take us too far afield; suffice it to say that the first surrealist group in England was organized only in 1936, and yet another thirty years would pass before an indigenous surrealist group would be formed in the United States.

James and his co-thinkers, however, were committed at that time to the principles of literary realism. James's only novel, *Minty Alley,* is firmly situated in the realist tradition. But one cannot fairly generalize, on this evidence alone, that he would have disdained the views of *Légitime Défense.* Surrealism is not, in any case, simplistically and absolutely "against" realism. It would be more correct to say that surrealism *includes* realism as one element in a larger synthesis. *Légitime Défense* printed an excerpt from Claude McKay's *Banjo;* André Breton had only the highest praise for Jacques Roumain's *Masters of the Dew.* Surely *Minty Alley* is comparable to these.

The community of interests between Léro's Martinique group and James's Trinidad group could be said to constitute an *objective* link between surrealism and the author of *The Case For West Indian Self-Government.* As West Indian surrealism expanded throughout the '30's and after, and as James multiplied his international relations, his association with surrealism became direct and personal.

In 1937 he wrote the preface to *Red Spanish Notebook,* an important firsthand account of the Spanish Revolution, by Juan Breá and Mary Low. "The pulse of the revolution," James wrote, "beats through every page." Fighters in the workers' militia, the Cuban Breá and his Australian companion were also militants of international surrealism. Their collection of essays, *La Verdad Contemporanea* (Havana, 1943), was the first full-length work of surrealist theory published in the Caribbean; it was prefaced by Benjamin Péret, one



Wilfredo Lam: Drawing

of surrealism's most outstanding figures.

In his preface to *Red Spanish Notebook,* James refers to Péret as "the great French poet" and one of the leading revolutionists in Spain. In addition to writing numerous volumes of extraordinary poems and tales, as well as important critical studies of Brazilian slave revolts and pre-columbian art, Péret was a lifelong political activist — in France, Brazil, Mexico and in revolutionary Spain, where he served as a militiaman in the Durutti Division.

In his 1962 epilogue to *The Black Jacobins* James devoted several pages to an appreciation of the Martiniquan poet Aimé Césaire and his *Return to My Native Land,* which James heralded as "the finest and most famous poem ever written about Africa." It also happens to be one of the greatest poetic triumphs of surrealism. Originally published in a journal in 1939, its first integral publication in book form was prefaced by Breton (Paris, 1947). Lydia Cabrera's Spanish translation appeared four years earlier (Havana, 1943), prefaced by Péret and illustrated by the Cuban surrealist Wifredo Lam.

Although he is better known as the leading protagonist of Negritude and a prominent political figure, Césaire has repeatedly affirmed the decisive influence of surrealism — and of Breton particularly — on his life. His journal *Tropiques* (1941-45) unquestionably represents the high point of surrealism during the second imperialist war.

The activity of the *Tropiques* group exemplifies the immense ground covered by West Indian surrealism in its first decade. The original impetus of a small nucleus of exiles had effloresced into one of the largest and most active sections of the surrealist international. By the mid-'40's the surrealist presence was evident throughout the islands.

Juan Breá died in 1941, but surrealist perspectives were defended in Cuba by the painter Wifredo Lam, the sculptor Agustin Cardenas, and the poet José Alvarez Baragaño, later a guerrilla in the 26th of July Movement. Carlos Franqui, a leader of the Cuban Revolution, was also an ardent supporter of surrealism.

In Haiti, Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude's *Dialogue of My Lamps, Taboo* and other works situated him among the finest surrealist poets.

In the Dominican Republic a group formed around the journal *La Poesia Sorprendida.* Among them was the Spanish exile E. F. Granell, painter and poet, a militia leader in the Spanish Revolution, and author of a lyrical celebration

E.F. Granell: Drawing from Isla: Cofre mitico

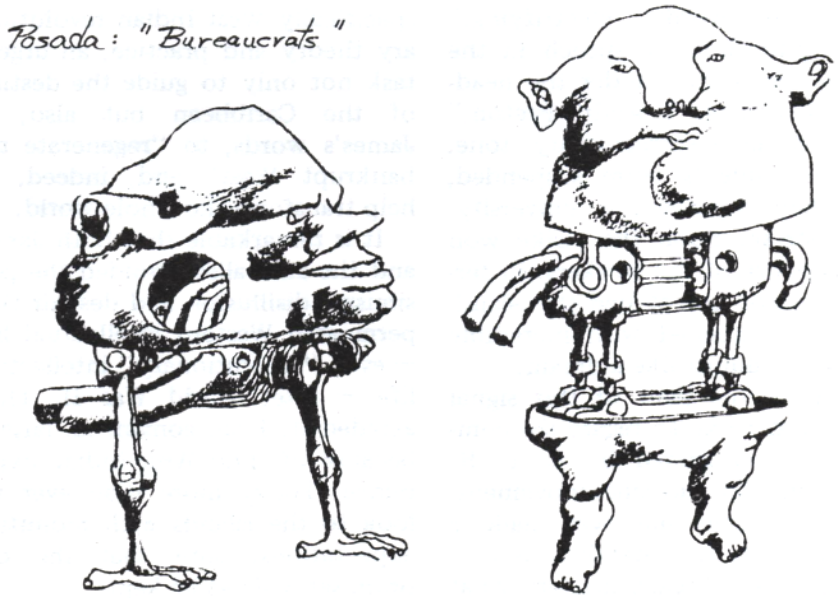
of West Indian folklore, *Isla: Cofre mitico.* Granell later organized an important surrealist exhibition in Puerto Rico.

At the end of the war, in a "Speech to Young Haitian Poets," Breton avowed that "the greatest impulses toward new paths for surrealism" were coming, precisely, from Black West Indians. Breton's book, *Martinique: Snake-Charmer* (1948), demonstrates that the Caribbean had become a focal point of the movement. That it has remained a focal point ever since is indicated by the large number of West Indian artists represented at the World Surrealist Exhibition in Chicago, 1976.

In his introduction to the New Beacon reprint of J. J. Thomas's *Froudacity,* James observes that a particular historical situation "has produced a particular type of social and intellectual activity which we can definitely call West Indian." Aimé Césaire emphasized that for him, as a West Indian, surrealism was "more of a confirmation than a revelation" — above all, a "liberating factor." These insights help define the specificity of Caribbean surrealism: its sense of life brought to the highest tension — its dazzling awareness of human possibilities scarcely even dreamed of yet entirely realizable and, indeed, urgent. Admirably free of the ancient curses, West Indian surrealism proves that everything under the sun can be always new.

In this short paper it is possible to touch on only a few points of contact between James and the surrealists. Several other conjunctions and affinities would require a more detailed presentation. Both James and the surrealists, for example, constantly refer their activity to the philosophy of Hegel. Both regard Herman Melville as a central source. Both have made effective critical use of the discoveries of psychoanalysis. Both had a long association with the Trotskyist movement, and even with Trotsky himself. Both participated in the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana. Both have long appreciated the revolutionary significance of the Rastafarian agitation in Jamaica. Both have long been admirers of the writings of Wilson Harris, the great poet and novelist from Guyana, author of *The Palace of the Peacock* and other magisterial works. And both have drawn deeply on the inspired and inspiring traditions of Black music; James's vivid appreciations of calypso, for example, in his *Party Politics in the West Indies* and elsewhere, harmonize perfectly with the theses advanced by the surrealist Paul Garon in his pivotal study, *Blues and the Poetic Spirit.*

We cannot conclude, however, without a salute to Toussaint L'Ouverture, that grand historic personage who always has been one of surrealism's heroes — one of those who have given the cause of human freedom its greatest social resonance — and who is also, of course, the subject of James's greatest book. Today it is to *The Black Jacobins* that one must turn to know the truth, the grandeur, the burning actuality of the San Domingo Revolution.



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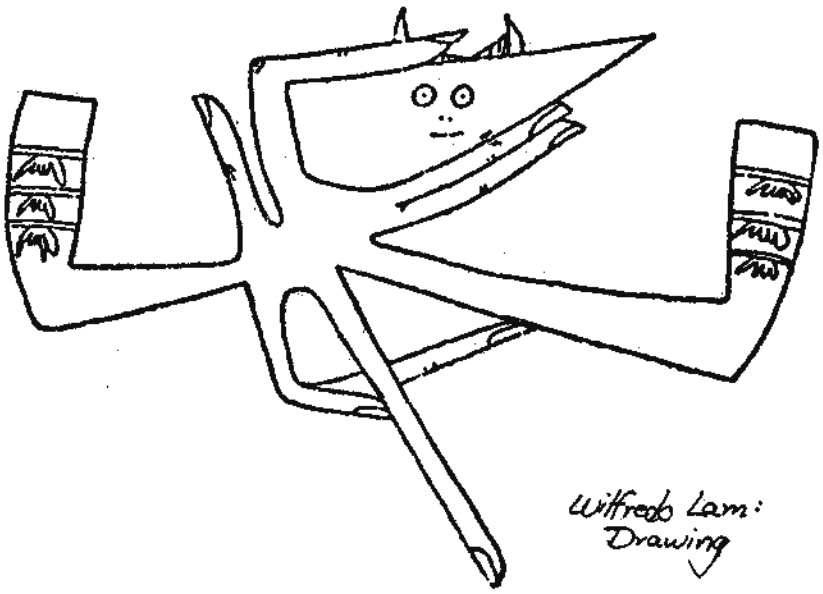

André Breton was forced to seek asylum in the U.S. during World War II, when the Nazi occupation made it impossible for him to remain in France. In his first U.S. interview the founder of surrealism told of a dream in which he was Zapata, "making ready with my army to receive Toussaint L'Ouverture the following day, and to render him the honors to which he was entitled." Returning to France after the war, Breton stopped in Haiti, where he was invited to speak at the university in Port-au-Prince. As he reaffirmed surrealism's fundamental aims and saluted the island's revolutionary heritage, the students found his words "electrifying." They published his speech in the school paper and, under the headline "Hommage à André Breton," adopted an insurrectionary tone. Several students were suspended, but they organized a university-wide strike. Soon the strike won the support of the workers. In terror, dictator Lescot fled the island. All this happened with incredible swiftness, almost like a dream.

It is in the light of this signal event that I like to regard the common ground shared by C. L. R. James and the surrealist movement. Whether James has ever made a special study of surrealism is not, of course, what really matters. What matters is that at several crucial junctures he has made surrealism's *evidence* his own. What matters even more is the degree to which, starting from very different points of departure, they have arrived at the same conclusions. And what matters above all is that the points of contact noted here have implications capable of great development.

In recent years James's work has been an important and growing influence on surrealism. And surely his young political followers are discovering for themselves the surrealist adventure. These distinct but related currents are helping to fulfill James's dream of a new and specifically West Indian revolutionary theory and practice, an urgent task not only to guide the destiny of the Caribbean but also, in James's words, to "regenerate the bankrupt West" and, indeed, to help transform the whole world.

It is remarkable that both James and the surrealists avoided the pessimism, disillusion and despair that permeated Western intellectual life — even "revolutionary" intellectual life - after World War II. They avoided it, I am convinced, largely because of their West Indian experience. Today more than ever we look to the islands with mounting expectations, sure that the old promises will yet be kept.

Bibliographical Note

Légitime Défense and *Tropiques,* long unobtainable even in libraries, have recently been reprinted by Editions Jean-Michel Place in Paris. An English translation of the *Légitime Défense* manifesto was published in *Arsenal/Surrealist Subversion* No. 2 (Chicago, 1973).

Red Spanish. Notebook has been reprinted by City Lights (San Francisco, 1979), with a new introduction by E. F. Granell.

Aimé Césaire's *Return to My Native Land* is available in a bilingual (French and English) edition from Présence Africaine (Paris), and in another translation from Penguin (New York and London). An English translation of *Cadastre* has been published by The Third Press (New York, 1973). His *Discourse on Colonialism* is available from Monthly Review.

André Breton's essay on Aimé Césaire, his "Speech to Young Haitian Poets," the anti-imperialist manifesto "Murderous Humanitarianism" and other writings relating to the West Indies are included in *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings of André Breton* (New York, Monad Press; London, Pluto Press, 1978). Breton's essays on Lam, Cardenas and other West Indian artists are included in *Surrealism and Painting* (New York, Harper & Row, 1972).

The best monograph on Lam is Michel Leiris's *Wifredo Lam* (New York, Abrams, 1972).

Paul Garon's *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* is published in England by Eddison Press and in the U.S. by DaCapo. See also "Black Music and the Surrealist Revolution" in *Arsenal/Surrealist Subversion* No. 3, and the surrealist supplement to *Living Blues* magazine (Chicago, January-February 1976). The second issue (1980) of *The Insurrectionist's Shadow,* journal of the Surrealist Group in Australia, is entirely devoted to Black music.

For a list of currently available surrealist publications in English, write to Black Swan Press, 1726 West Jarvis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60626, U.S.A.

Franklin Rosemont is the editor of Arsenal/Surrealist Subversion.

Facing Reality

by Paul Lawrence Berman

C. L. R. James's *Facing Reality* had a considerable impact ten years ago on certain intellectual-minded circles of the New Left, and looking back, it is easy to see why. In the early 1970's the New Left had entered its Leninist phase and at the same time had begun to disintegrate. Quite a few of us thought these two developments had something to do with one another. Leninism, we thought, at least in the form in which we encountered it, was leading the Movement to doom and disaster. No sooner would a group of student Leftists, or Black militants, or Puerto Rican activists, start waving around volumes from the Little Lenin Library than they would proclaim themselves to be the secret of world revolution, or anyway would claim to know what the secret was. And soon they would plunge into a ghastly cycle of intolerance, dogmatism, splits, bloody purges, and ultimately, of course, despair. Perhaps Lenin was not to blame for this — perhaps he was rolling in his crypt. But many of us suspected that in crucial ways he was, in fact, responsible. Those Little Lenin editions were not doing anyone any good.

Only what theoretical alternative was there? The New Left, rich in numbers and courage, was dirt-poor in knowledge, theory, and experience. By the early '70's the presence of an older, presumably wiser generation of radicals had virtually disappeared from Movement ranks. A hodge-podge of priests, nuns, and earnest professors exercised what passed for leadership. The old-line socialists, called "democratic," had long ago indignantly repudiated the younger generation. The Old Left groupuscules showed an alarming tendency to horrify anyone who saw them in action. Various middle-aged radicals were looking to 19-year-olds for leadership. If ever a movement resembled a decapitated chicken, it was the American New Left in the age of President Nixon.

Many of us, in this circumstance, searched among the classic anarchist writings for a useful alternative. Anarchism had a direct appeal. Like Leninism, it cried out unrestrainedly against injustice and oppression. It was four-square for social revolution, four-square for the victims of exploitation. At the same time it offered a view of radical action and of a self-managed, libertarian socialist future that was much closer than conventional Leninism to the feelings and instincts that had originally impelled many of us into the movement. We liked anarchism's skeptical nature. We liked the fact that it criticized the state and that it contravened the standard Marxist-Leninist argument for a left-wing dictatorship (Marx's and Lenin's subtler views played little part in these New Left debates). And we appreciated anarchism's compatibility with the egalitarian and anti-authoritarian thrust of feminism in that period. Anarchism consequently underwent a boom: all but a handful of the anarchist classics came back into print; numerous anthologies, including one I assembled, received general distribution. And yet the classic anarchist texts did not solve our dilemmas either — this was immediately obvious.

It was Paul Buhle and *Radical America* who introduced James's *Facing Reality* into the (mostly student) milieu in which this anarchist-Leninist debate was being conducted. James had written the book in 1958 in a period when he himself and his comrades were struggling out of the "vanguard" fallacies of the old orthodox Trotskyist movement. The book impressed us with what we felt was its authentically proletarian outlook. By this I mean that James never mistook an ideological assumption for a real-life worker. On what to think about the Soviet Union, for instance, he was able to sweep away the torturous uncertainties of the traditional Left by noting that for real workers, life under Communism lacked even the primitive rights workers enjoy in democratic capitalist societies. He was full of practical suggestions for socialist activity that were decidedly different from the shoddy manipulations that many of us associated with "vanguard" politics. He advised socialists to provide workers with accurate information, so that workers could make their own decisions. The socialists should help workers express themselves, which is different from preaching at them. Of course the socialists should preserve and develop socialist theory. And they should put forth their own views, in his words, "as a contribution to that democratic interchange and confrontation of opinion which is the very life-blood of socialist society."

This last point about democratic interchange and confrontation of opinion was especially important. It seemed to many of us that a certain — I do not hesitate to use the word — totalitarian impulse had become part of the standard ideological baggage of the Left. A large number of militants were afraid of public debates within their own ranks, and were unable to distinguish between dissension and chaos. In the papers and journals put out by the various organized sects, you would almost never see views that the party leaders disagreed with. To disagree was to condemn, and many an honest radical seemed to consider it his duty to protect his own comrades from the virus of incorrect opinion. James did not share this conception.

His most original advice to socialists was to keep an eagle eye on the changing forms and contents of workers' struggles in order to identify what about these struggles re-

Hungary 1956

veals the existence already, before a revolution, of *a* socialist society in embryo. The truly "urgent task," to borrow Lenin's phrase, is in short that of "visualizing the content of socialism." By this James did not mean Utopian dreaming but instead sharp observation of the here-and-now of workers' activity where the "facts of the future" (someone else's phrase, not James's) are also facts of the present. To illustrate what he meant by this, James pointed to the Hungarian revolution of 1956. The workers' councils that arose there, he concluded, showed what historical stage of development the international working class had reached, and showed that democratic workers' councils, not the all-powerful state, is the fundamental form of authentic socialism.

Now, not once in any of this, nor in any of his other works, did he acknowledge that these views had anything in common with classical anarchism. He has always called himself, in spite of everything, a Leninist —.though I think that even some of his most fervent admirers will admit privately that James's definition of Leninism is a bit idiosyncratic, not shared by 99.99% of the rest of the world that calls itself Leninist. As to anarchism, in all of his writings he condemns it forcefully. But I must say, James's forcefulness on this point reminds me of nothing so much as Rosa Luxemburg's similar forcefulness in the opening pages of *The Mass Strike* — an instance of protesting too much. For without question, *Facing Reality* expresses some anarchist ideas.

"The whole world today lives in the shadow of the state power," the book begins. "This state power is an ever-present self-perpetuating body over and above society. It transforms the human personality into a mass of economic needs to be satisfied by decimal points of economic progress. It robs everyone of initiative and clogs the free development of society. This state power, by whatever name it is called, One-Party State or Welfare State, destroys all pretense of government *by* the people, *of* the people. All that remains is government *for* the people.

"Against this monster, people all over the world, and particularly ordinary working people in factories, mines, fields, and offices, are rebelling every day in ways of their own invention. …"

A brilliant beginning to the book, in my opinion, but also a not unfamiliar line of thought. A moment ago I referred to the author of the phrase about the facts of the future existing within the facts of the present. That author was Bakunin, and I think that anyone who has read Dolgoff's or Lehning's editions of Bakunin's writings will recognize a Bakuninist resonance to James's anti-state proletarianism.

Those of us who noticed this in the early '70's felt quite excited by our discovery. Surely here, we thought, in James's careful social analysis was the argument that would show the foolish Leninists of the time the error of their ways. Reading on, though, the thought also began to dawn that here too was the book that would show those of us who were drawn to anarchism the error of our own ways, For if there was a Bakuninist resonance to James's book — and there is — there was also much more, James had improved on anarchism His book was a theoretical advance.

The book improved on anarchism in the first case simply by being modern. Modern anarchist thinkers existed, of course, Paul Goodman and Murray Bookchin prominent among them — neithei of whom was without a following or without intelligent things to say But these modern anarchists by anc large paid scant attention to industrial workers or the problems of the working class in general, and slighted the historic role of class conflict Serious anarchist thinking on industrial organization and class struggle hadn't been done since the collapse of Spanish syndicalism in the 1930's. James made up this lack in our view, and in this respect alone this book was bound to have an impact.

Facing Reality improved on anarchism in another respect too however — improved, if that is the word, on it by being, in the end not really an anarchist book at all, For although James's conclusions and choice of topics were plainly in the anarchist mode; and though he articulated a visionary sense of socialist potential that was fully acceptable to anyone with a fondness for Bakunin — nevertheless his method of analysis was not that of anarchism. Perhaps it is misleading to speak of an anarchist methodology at all. Anarchism as an intellectual tradition has *insights* — lots

A Lodz textile worker sits on an idle machine

of insights, lots of true ones — but no particular method of analysis that Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Rocker, etc. can be said to have shared. Anarchist thinkers who have come after them have thus had no established system of analysis to fall back on, and have all too often substituted for system a rote repeating of the old insights, thereby reducing insight to dogma.

James, in *Facing Reality,* on the other hand, was by no means a dogmatist of the anarchist type. He was an observer, an analyst, above all a dialectician, able to see the sweep of history, the meaning behind the confusion of conflicting and misleading ideologies. That is, he was a true Marxist, philosophically (if not politically in the conventional sense), and on the basis of this was able to liberate libertarianism — to separate out the core of useful anarchist insights from the doctrinaire insistences that for many years have crippled anarchist activity. He was too attached to the flesh-and-blood events of the world around him to cling to musty old doctrine. James used his respect for working people to argue, for instance, that the allegiance of American workers to the Democratic Party is not altogether stupid. Right or wrong (and I happen to believe he is right), this was a point that an out-and-out anarchist, who might agree with James on everything else, cannot even consider without shooting himself in the doctrinal foot.

James had managed, in brief, to restate the theory of socialism in a way that recognized the validity of major libertarian insights and yet still preserved, through its reliance on Marxist dialectical and historical methodology, suppleness and solidity of mind. No mean achievement.

Certainly he is not the only thinker in recent decades to come up with a version of socialism that wittingly or unwittingly incorporates elements of anarchism within a larger Marxist framework. Theory along such lines is a main current of the modern period. In the United States the groups around *Root and Branch* and *Telos* magazine have in my opinion been particularly effective at this — though I realize any number of people would gladly clobber me with a baseball bat for thinking such a thought. Perhaps the most profound exemplar of this modern theoretical tendency, and the thinker most like James in adhering absolutely to Marxist orthodoxy in philosophic matters, is the Yugoslav philosopher Mihailo Markovic, whose main concern has been to contrast the official Communist Marxism with the writings of Marx himself, which Markovic reveals have a libertarian content.

It should be mentioned that *Facing Reality* is not exactly the best known of works. There have been several editions since it was first published, each, it seems, obscure and harder to find than the last. At one point three or four years ago, some labor militants who were comrades of mine in New York were passing it hand to hand in xerox. The book does not deserve this obscurity. It is passionate, logical, original, practical, visionary, inspiring, instructive, and (rarest of rarities among books of socialist theory) knowledgeable about the United States. I would say that, for the American Left in this last quarter century, this book, *Facing Reality,* is our underground classic.

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What if C.L.R. James had met E.P.Thompson in 1792?

by Peter Linebaugh

We can't hope to know what they would have said to each other, for they saw such different things. Yet, for us, it is impossible to even walk in that decade without the legs of Thompson and James. We can ask where they might have met and who might have introduced them. Let us compare the openings of *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938) to see if they can help answer these questions.[1]

James opens his book with Christopher Columbus praising God and inquiring for gold and with Liverpool slavers scouring the Guinea coast. Within a few pages James has spanned three centuries from 1492 to 1792, introduced us to massacre, genocide, and what Malcolm X called "the world's most monstrous crime," crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic to take us to three continents before leaving us in San Domingo, the revolutionary apex of that famous triangle whose base angles were formed by England (capital) and Africa (labor). The sugar and tobacco circuits provided capitalist unity to the triangle, a unity requiring the maximum distance between the two largest concentrations of labor — on one side of the ocean the African masses on the plantations ("they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time"), and on the other side, the working class of "England's green and pleasant land." Despite capital's fantasies, the two sides of the ocean had to be joined: "mariners, renegades, and castaways," the first true workers of the world, effected this miracle by carrying the labors (and experience!) of one to the other, posing the possibility of a working class unity to the triangle. James, like Thompson, does not see labor as an appendage or aspect of capital: on the contrary, he shows how the Voodoo drums of August 1791 in sounding revolt sent a message of liberty to the powers of Europe stating the unequivocal and independent existence of the Afro-American working people.

In 1792, then, it would have been an Afro-American and an ex-slave who introduced James to Thompson. But how would an Englishman have met such a man?

Perhaps in the warm, smoke-filled room of "The Bell" off the Strand where Thompson's book opens in January 1792. We find ourselves seated with pipes and porter in the congenial company of Thomas Hardy, shoemaker and student of the American revolution, with some of his colleagues, artisans and "free-born Britons" all. A miniature scene perhaps when compared to Atlantic vistas, and one in which apparently just another discussion of dues, membership, and rules is taking place (the London Corresponding Society is being formed); however, being in England we must listen carefully. Thompson teaches our ear patience as he takes us closer to the accents and undertones of the talk: we hear 17th century Dissent and 18th century constitutional talk. By analyzing a single inflection from the Putney debates — when the Levellers strode on the world stage — Thompson has us poised between two epochs in the history of English and world democracy. If a curse blasts our ear, he shows that this is energy from the London street whence in the previous two years William Blake made a new kind of poetry. Sometimes when these sober voices grow louder than usual, we hear first the world-cracking phrases of Tom Paine.

We can remark now, after the publication of *The Making;* how English is the scene — the starting up of a new society and the careful attention to the layers of language, but in 1792, at the birth of the first strictly working class political organization, these were momentous tidings.

No doubt about it, Thompson and James would have met at a political meeting in a London pub, and the question is not how an Englishman would have met an Afro-American but the other way around.

The two themes, the surge to freedom of the Afro-American slaves and the making of the English working class, can no longer be separated as part of the fragmentation of nations or of labor powers that a capitalist unity requires. Let us look at six scenes from the life of Olaudah Equiano, in whom the themes converge. Slave, mariner, barber, castaway, and founder of what has been called "proto-Pan-Africanism," he's the boomerang of the triangle trade.[2]

First: Education and the Sea. In 1761 we join Equiano aboard the *Aetna.* He is sixteen and already an experienced man. In the Bight of Benin he'd seen a slaver's captain flog an English sailor to death. He'd seen a Highlander scalp an Indian chief at the siege of Louisburg, and as a powder monkey 'tween decks he'd faced death and the French fleet off the coast of Gibraltar. Historians today might find aboard the *Aetna* a "total institution" like the prison or the factory, and there are similarities, but looking at it with the eyes of Melville or Traven, it

will appear not quite so "total." Thanks to Daniel Queen, his messmate, Equiano learns not only to read and write, but to shave and dress hair and to read the Bible. They stay up all night under the stars: Daniel Queen expounding the Bible and Equiano making succinct and materialist observations comparing the "tribes of Jaweh" with his African experiences, a habit of comparative ethnography that will never leave him. How did Queen expound the Bible, we wonder? What else from the English Revolution did he teach besides Milton?

Second: The Wage and the Methodists. Five years later we see Equiano in Philadelphia, where he sells four barrels of pork to the Quakers, "a very honest discrete sort of People." Class relations in 18th century England were characterized by the incomplete imposition of the money-form, which is to say, that work-PIN took their income in the form of a customarily regulated cut in the product. In the West Indies trade this free freightage or mariner's portage was simply called the crew's "Privilledge" or "Benefitt," and slaves evidently possessed it too. Having sold his pork he went to Church. Passing a Quaker meeting house where a tall woman was speaking, he stopped and stared. Would this have been Rebecca Jones, the Quaker evangelical and ardent abolitionist?[3] He asked what she was preaching but none would say. It is true that in 1761 the Philadelphia Friends had voted to prohibit slavery among themselves, but even five years later there was a lot of tension on that score. Later that morning he saw a church so crowded that people had mounted ladders to peer in the windows. He squeezed in and saw George White-field, the great Methodist who went among "Harlots, Publicans, and Thieves." He heard him preach and saw him sweat ever as much as Equiano did "in slavery on Montserrat beach." The wage-form not yet possessing its purely capitalist character, the tense early development of Quaker abolitionism, the "City of Brotherly Love," the mass power of the Great Awakening and the trans-Atlantic brotherhood of the Methodists: Equiano is present at the gestation of great events.

Third: *"Liberty" and a General Strike.* In the winter of 1767-1768 Equiano is in London cutting hair and shaving beards in Coventry Court, Haymarket. At night he takes arithmetic lessons and learns the French horn from one of his neighbors. It is a very hard winter. In January the weavers go on strike (silk cloth is the most important industry after the port). Many thousands of them march across London with drums and banners, chanting "Wilkes & Liberty" to petition the King. Certainly, Equiano would have heard them, for their route passed Pall Mall. And of course in a Westminster barber shop he would have taken part in the libertarian talk of Wilkes, the free press, general warrants, and Parliamentary privilege. In these years Granville Sharp was formulating his anti-slavery views. Who trimmed his beard? Equiano cannot live on his wages, so in May he ships out to Smyrna, but he has to wait for the ships to sail because the sailors and coal-heavers have shut the port in a general strike which even Admiralty frigates cannot break. While waiting he would have heard about "The Massacre of St. George's Fields," where eleven people were slain protesting Wilkes' imprisonment, and he may have seen the destruction by five hundred sawyers of the first steam-powered saw mill. Did he participate in these events? What would he have made of them?

Fourth: Before the Blues. In December 1771 we find Equiano under the hot Jamaican sun. Four and five years earlier there had been large slave revolts and the Jamaican planter class had trembled. So here for the second time (Wilkes' London was the first), he'll encounter the unmistakable experience of the power of oppressed masses in motion. It's here where he confronts the contradictions of slave rule: he sees "negroes whose business it is to flog slaves." This he had not seen. And he would have heard tales of the maroons. On Sundays Equiano joined African assemblies "at a large commodious place called the Spring Path. Here each different nation of Africa meet and dance after the manner of their own country." What a triumph the sight and sound of a French horn would have made! He took or found music wherever he went: once cast away in New Providence (Bahamas) he passed the happiest time of his life with some free Black people and "the melodious sound of the catguts under the lime and lemon trees." Amid the trans-Atlantic Babel of tongues, music was a passport, a declaration and an invitation. Among the deceits and equivocations made possible even by Milton's tongue, music offered a surer guide. In Naples or Turkey, in Georgia or Nicaragua, in London or Kingston he sought out the rhythms and melodies of the people, compared them to those of his Nigerian childhood, and found another vocabulary of freedom. Music brought people together, in Kingston, for example, an accomplishment feared by rulers everywhere, and justly so. What else did the music do? Did it tell stories of "Tackey's Rebellion"? What promises did it bode, what vows seal?

Fifth: 1787 — Annus Mirabilus of Abolitionism. Back in London, most likely in St. James's with the independent electors of Westminster, with access to the Nonconformist churches and proximity to the Black ghetto — "St. Giles's blackbirds" — Equiano divides the leadership of London's Black population (between 4% and 6% of the population) with Ottobah Cugoano: indeed their work for abolition in 1786 and 1787 can be compared in historic importance to the Pan-Africanist work conducted in those same London streets by C. L. R. James and George Padmore exactly 150 years later.[4] How well Cugoano mastered the English mind: as the first African to call for the abolition of the slave trade and the

emancipation of slaves and "reasonable wages" for the freedmen, he expressed his arguments in the thunderous terms of the Old Testament and the balanced money-changing terms of Adam Smith. Words alone do not move masses of people, nor do they sail ships. Equiano, the man of action, intelligence, and astonishing experience, at the age of 42 makes his move: He gets himself appointed Commissary for Stores for the Black Poor going to Sierra Leone. This, the first back-to-Africa movement, brought to completion the boomerang of the triangular trade, but its ambiguities ("Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter," Cugoano wrote) and corruptions led to Equiano's dismissal.

Sixth: Black and White. After this personal defeat (some 411 men and two score prostitutes arrived in Freetown — another story), Equiano picked up the pen and wrote an autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789), which besides showing an exact and sympathetic understanding of his Nonconformist audience and in addition to being, like the autobiographies of Douglass, Nkrumah, or Malcolm X, a great testament of human liberation, it took Equiano onto a new organizing path: it was a means of travel and a way of opening doors. Between 1790 and 1792 he tramped up and down the British Isles (blazing a trail Frederick Douglass would follow fifty years later) selling his book and helping to form abolition committees in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Who else but a man of the world could have moved so easily among these four kingdoms? Conversant with Quaker and Dissenting networks, he was welcomed into middle class reform groups. He's in Manchester as its Constitutional Society is formed. In Sheffield he departs just before the Society of Constitutional Information is founded. Besides these entrees, Equiano has the sailor's passport into working class settings, a story only hinted at in the six editions already published of his book. He'd suffered an accident in a Shropshire coalmine. He's in Sheffield in August 1790 at the height of a furious grinders' strike against the scissor smiths: this is the city which will have the most militant and least ambiguously plebian Corresponding Society. He did odd jobs in London, and perhaps took to trimming hair and shaving beards in Coventry Court again. If so, he would have been only around t le corner from Thomas Hardy's place where Thompson begins his story of the making of the English working class.

Two years ago in 1979 at Dr. George Rawick's seminar at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, Professor James Walvin of the University of York (England), who knows as much about the history of Black people in England as anyone, stated that Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Hardy had indeed met, that they knew each other and had probably worked together back in 1792.

Also in 1792, at the news of yet another of Toussaint's victories, one of his defeated generals said, "This man makes an opening everywhere," and that is how he got the name of "L'Ouverture." The same can be said of Thompson and James. One opened to view the stamina and creativity of the English working class at the moment of industrialization, rescuing it from "the enormous condescension of posterity." The other opened up continents and races to the historian's gaze, while rebuking the racism of both capitalist and Comintern orthodoxies. Just as one was written within earshot of "the booming of Franco's heavy artillery [and] the rattle of Stalin's firing squads," so in the other the echo still sounds in the ear of Khrushchev's tanks rumbling across Freedom and Kossuth bridges into the streets of Budapest. The Pan-Africanist and the New Leftist rejected the academic philosophy of history which was compulsively transfixed by the "triumph of the capitalist mode of production" and which recklessly sought "the laws of development" with an Ahab-like mania. Burning for the future and searching for a fulcrum that was neither Stalinist nor liberal, they both returned to the 1790's, the last great worldwide crisis, to analyze the movement of the workers of the world. Neither of them, as far as I know, saw Equiano sitting in the back of the room at "The Bell," ready to pass his experience on: "Brother Thompson, may I present Brother James?"

Footnotes

1. Besides these two books my essay relies on C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (New York, 1953).
2. There are many editions of Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African* and these I have not, unfortunately, been able to compare. I have had to rely on two abridged editions, Paul Edwards (ed.), *Equiano's Travels* (New York, 1967), and Francis D. Adams and Barry Sanders, *Three Black Writers in Eighteenth Century England* (Belmont, California, 1971).
3. When there is evidence that former slaves like Cugoano and Equiano actually had to goad early abolitionists to activity sometimes, it is astonishing to me that there are not even references to them in David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, New York, 1975).
4. James Walvin, *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (New York, 1971) has been helpful, and the early chapters especially of Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa,* translated by Ann Keep (New York, 1974), have been indispensable.

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Black women writers

by E. Ethelbert Miller

He stayed not far from where I lived. The Chastleton on 16th street in Washington. On several occasions I went to visit him. James was always the same. I would find him in bed, surrounded by books and newspapers, the television always on.

Any impression that James was ill was immediately displaced by the conversations that would develop. One could witness him thinking, analyzing, reaching new conclusions about the world, explaining daily events by making references to history.

Now and then I took James books written by Black American women writers. He was deeply impressed by what they were writing. He felt that the work of Morrison and Shange was important. He was moved especially by the novels of Alice Walker.

Walker

In an interview conducted by Dr. L. Anthony-Welch and published in *Sturdy Black Bridges* (1979) edited by Bell, Parker and Guy-Sheftall, James mentions how Black women writers possess a view of society which is based on what the common and ordinary people are doing. In his own words:

> That's why the black society is so torn with Alice Walker and Toni Morrison and Shange. A famous Englishman once said, never — you cannot ignore reality. And reality begins with common people. These people — these black women — were not writing ten years ago. This is something new. They're the product of the sixties in a way.

The use of folk material, the focus on the Southern landscape, the personal relationships between Black men and women can be found in the work of several Black women writing today. As James

Toni Morrison

states in his interview, it is a product of the sixties. The Black woman writer who emerged in the seventies extended as well as transformed the Black Arts movement. Their work adheres to the Black aesthetic in regards to elevating the lives of Black people. What is important and is pointed out by James, is that the Black aesthetic is no different from any other aesthetic.

In 1959, James delivered a lecture at the Mona, Jamaica, campus of the University of the West Indies. This talk is published in his collection of selected writings, *The Future In The Present,* as "The Artist In The Caribbean." James makes three statements which I believe support his present enthusiasm for the literature created by Black women. I find James's comments pivotal in understanding what he sees in the work of such writers as Morrison and Walker. James states the following:

> 1. I have made clear that in my view the great artist is the product of a long and deeply rooted national tradition. I go further. He appears at a moment of transition in national life with results which are recognized as having significance for the civilized world.
> 2. But the universal artist is universal because he is above all national.
> 3. A supreme artist exercises an influence on the national consciousness which is incalculable. He is created by it but he illuminates and amplifies it, bringing the past up to date and charting the future.

What James states is similar to what Richard Wright wrote in 1938 in his "Blueprint for Negro Writing":

> Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must possess and understand it.

According to C. L. R. James, Morrison, Walker and Shange have begun to write about the common people. This has placed their work within the confines of nationalism. By developing women characters in fiction, they add a new dimension to literature. C. L. R. James's opinions are indicative of his ability to grasp the changes occurring in our society. He suggests that Black writers can make significant contributions to the world — that is what they are doing.

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The Gospel According to St. James

by Gregory Rigsby

To me, the characteristic which best defines the essence of C. L. R. James is his faith — his abiding faith in Truth. More than that, and this is the very substance of his faith, C. L. R. James sincerely and honestly believes that he knows something of the Truth — some important fraction of it. In his work is reflected as hot a zeal as that of any missionary who was willing to give his life for his faith. This is his claim to sainthood. In proper time, the hardships and sufferings which C. L. R. has endured for what he believes is the truth will be chronicled, it is well-nigh impossible for any thinking person to hear C. L. R. express his views or to read his penetrating analyses of society and not get caught up in the truth that this man is expounding — not *his* truth but *the* truth (or a facet of it) through his eyes. This is the saintliness of the man; this is the essence of his work — the fierce tenacity with which he has pursued Truth. So much for St. James! Now for his gospel!

Perhaps I should begin by telling you what C. L. R. James does *not* consider "the good life." He does not consider that a higher standard of living will provide the good life. Describing the good life in his work *Modern Politics,* James writes: "It [the good life] is *not* (his emphasis), it never has been, merely a question of what the vulgarians call 'raising the standard of living.' Men are not pigs to be fattened." Two observations ought to be made about this question: first, the appositional and emphatic clause, "it never has been," and second, the word "merely." Let us begin with the second observation first. James is not saying that material well-being is not a just pursuit of man. Rather, he is insisting that *merely* material wealth, that is material wealth *alone,* will not provide man with the happiness he seeks. Man finds his happiness in the quality of his relationship with his community. Individual well-being does not constitute the good life; rather, man achieves happiness when he becomes an organic part of a living community and actively participates in helping to realize the purpose of his community. James unequivocally condemns this modern narcissism, this self-obsession of modern man (Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick* is the prototype), this modern religion of individualism, where everyone continually consults himself as a separate entity, viewing the phenomena of life and all transformations of the universe as a truth peculiar to himself. Condemning Ahab in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways* as "the most dangerous and destructive social type that has ever appeared in Western Civilization," James pin-points the source of Ahab's degeneration: "he is a man who wants to live fully and completely according to his beliefs." Indeed, the major focus of James's study of *Moby Dick* is the debilitating and corrupting influence of individualism which tends to separate and isolate men from one another. Individual well-being ("a higher standard of living"), be it reflected in wealth, or prestige, or intellectualism, never in itself brings the good life.

Counter-pointing the isolation born of individualism is the congeniality which communal brotherhood breeds. James believes that if man genuinely wants to extricate himself from his present hell, he has to align himself with the principle, the law, as it were, of relationship. The law of relationship governs the cosmos, and only when men reflects this cosmic law in his dealings with his fellow-man will he achieve true happiness. In his short stories and in his novel *Minty Alley,* James creates this human fellowship. As early as 1929, in his short story "Triumph," James deliberately sets the action among characters who did not enjoy a high standard of living — the porters, the prostitutes, cartermen, washerwomen, and domestic servants of the city. Yet, despite their material deprivations, these people enjoy a liveliness and vitality which is the essence of the good life. The law of relationship governs this back-yard community. Here is one of the characters speaking to a neighbor whose man has left her stranded and destitute, with no money, no food: "As long as you livin' here an' I cookin' I wouldn't see you want a cup o' tea an' a spoonful o' rice." This is the stuff of which happiness is born; this is charity — not a condescending giving but an unself-conscious sharing. Describing his idea of the good life, James focuses on the communal oneness of these materially deprived people: "They shared their rum and their joys and troubles." Significantly, for James happiness is not the absence of hardships and miseries but the fraternizing and sharing of the good with the bad. Later in the story James creates a new Eden — no Adam, master of the beasts and eating as many apples as he wants, but human beings who on Sundays would sit together, drink together, sing hymns together. James caps the description of this scene, "everything would be peaceful and happy." It is clear, then, that for James, peace on earth and good will among me are one and the same

thing. So, too, *Minty Alley* is set among "ordinary people" who are busy with the business of living.

Does this mean that James condones poverty and applauds deprivation? Is he suggesting that lack of food to eat or clothes to wear, or that inadequate housing is necessary for the good life? Of course not. What James is saying is that among these people, where nobody is anything, among these people who owe no allegiance to anybody or anything except the relations with one another, among these people who live and work and play together, one can find the essence of happiness, the essence of the good life. The problem then is *how to improve the material well-being of these back-yard people and still retain the communal relationship which charges their work and actions and keeps them vitally alive.* That is a political problem. To understand James's answer to this question, we must gloss on the observation of the quotation which I made earlier — "it [the good life] never has been [a higher standard of living]."

We must clearly understand that C. L. R. James has a "sense" of history. I use the term "sense" in a very deliberate manner as opposed to "non-sense." James sees all history as the unfolding (evolving?) of an action. Here again my use of language is deliberate. "Action" is used in the Aristotelian sense of a beginning, a middle, and an end. For example, he sees the San Domingo (Haitian) Revolution in his masterpiece *The Black Jacobins* as an action in itself, but depending on where you see the beginning of this slave revolution and where the end, *The Black Jacobins,* as the title of the book suggests, can be seen as an incident in a larger action, the French Revolution. So, too, for James, Pan Africanism is an incident in a larger action, the world-wide revolt of the oppressed masses. James is convinced that in these various actions, be they enacted by slaves on a Caribbean island, or by the bolsheviks in Russia, or by the struggling working people in a back-yard or in an alley in Trinidad, or by the detainees on Ellis Island, or by the crew on the Pequod, or by his ownself in his life experiences, wheresoever and by whomsoever these actions are enacted, there is contained in them some principle, some pattern, some law governing the relations of these people involved. This is the truth about which James is certain. James knows with every cell of his body that a proper empirical examination of actions will reveal the law of social behavior, the law which I have termed above, the law of relationship. This is why James can say with authority when speaking about a higher standard of living, "this never has been," and by implication, "this never will be," the criterion to define "the good life." James believes that he has identified *the* essential truth about human behavior — a system of mutuality.

Here let me inject that I think that it is James's own experience and his own self-analysis which gave the direction and character to his critical thought far more than anything he learnt from Thackeray or Rousseau or Kant or Hegel or Karl Marx himself. Let me use just two examples from his quasi-autobiographical work, *Beyond a Boundary,* to make my point. As a nine-year-old boy, James won an exhibition to one of the best high schools in the country. To win an exhibit-

tion in the early decades of this century was a major achievement which brought prestige to one's school, to one's family, and, most of all, to one's self. But to be "the youngest boy ever to have won an exhibition," that was an achievement par excellence. The little boy was lionized by his family, relatives, friends, teachers, newspapers — "Congratulations poured in from all over the island." To add insult to injury, this nine-year-old boy comes second in an island-wide essay contest among sixteen- and seventeen-year-old competitors. Now he is placed on a pedestal, and as any little boy, he laps up the adulation and attention. But deep down, perhaps beyond levels of which C. L. R. himself was aware, the boy was not satisfied; he was not one with his peers. Earlier in this same book, James recalls sitting at the window in his house overlooking the local playground ("my grandmother and my two aunts . . . preferred me . . . in the house where they could keep an eye on me") and waiting for a local cricketeer to make a stroke — a cut — the likes of which James claims he has never seen bettered in his life. When Arthur Jones went to bat, everybody waited to see him cut. How James tells it interests us: "The crowd was waiting for it, I at my window was waiting." Notice the separation! James does not brood on this; in fact, he is infected with the anxious waiting of a crowd that anticipates a show of athletic mastery by one of its local heroes. When he was not watching cricket, he sat at his window reading voraciously. I am not suggesting a lonely boy who seeks retreat in the world of books. Not at all! James is a lively boy ("adventurous" he calls himself) who has to be reined in, and his energy spills over into books. It is this circumscription of his liveliness together with his intellectual achievements in competitive tests which tended to isolate him.

I have heard C. L. R. lecturing on George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin,* and James's focus was on the protagonist's recognition (and feeling of guilt) that his education separated him from his closest friends. I am suggesting that this is what C. L. R. James, as a young boy, instinctively felt was happening to him, and he resisted it. He resisted it with every sinew, every fiber, every muscle of his ten-year-old body. Writing about his high school years James is explicit: "My scholastic career was one long nightmare to me, my teachers and my family." Modern psychologists might say that he was afraid of success. I think, more correctly, that he rejected, albeit unconsciously, the isolation which intellectual excellence within a colonial educational system bred. It isn't that he played too much cricket and so fell back in his studies; it is that he chose the camaraderie of the cricket field over the isolation nourished by the intellectual elitism which was being bred into him. This was the awakening in James's breast, a revelation if you like, of the law of relationship. When he came to Karl Marx, James brought the truth with him; in Marx he found a structure and a methodology which clarified and confirmed what his experience had already taught him.

In *Modern Politics,* James examined all of Western civilization as one action. The beginning is Greece; the middle is comprised of the complication and conflicts of major movements and thinkers; the end is in the beginning. Since James sees history as evolving toward a world society similar to what existed in the Greek city-states, he concludes that the political structure which the law of relationship demands exists in its, essential form in the Greek city-states. The form of government which existed in these city-states was called direct democracy. Direct democracy means that "the public assembly of all the citizens was the government." In other words, every man helped in a direct manner to shape the laws which governed him. Administrators were chosen by lot, and invariably no one was allowed to serve a second term. In this way, all people had a chance to serve as a member of the administration. It is this direct democracy, modified to accommodate modern circumstances, which will allow for a general improvement in everyone's material well-being without the loss of the camaraderie enjoyed by the people who lived in Minty Alley. So thought James and so too he taught. He describes his ideal society, his republic, his city of the people as "a form of government which reproduces, on a more highly developed economic level, the relationship between the individual and the community, that was established so wonderfully in the Greek city-state." Emanating from the law of relationship, as it were, is a collective will of the people, "the general will," Rousseau calls it. This "general will" is real to James. He captures it in *Beyond a Boundary:* "whenever Matthew sank down and made [a sweep to leg], a long, low 'Ah!' came from many a spectator, and my own little soul thrilled with recognition and delight." Society has to learn to trust this general will of the ordinary people — the grocer, the waitress, the porter, the dishwasher.

It will be a mistake to leave with the impression that James rejected individual worth. Indeed, it is for individual freedom which he thinks all government must work. Each individual is like an incident in a larger action, the society, but the growth and development of the society depends on the free activities of the individuals. Individual worth is best expressed when a person knows that he is vitally and meaningfully participating in the development of his society. Even as a member of a family feels his fullest self-expression when he uses the strengths of his family tradition and family values to help nourish the further development of his family, so must an individual feed on and, in return, nourish the members of his community. James expresses the idea more precisely and more grace-

fully: "The citizen is alive when he feels that he himself in his own national community is overcoming difficulties. He has a sense of moving forward through the struggle of antagonisms or contradictions and difficulties within the society, not by fighting against external forces." No bureaucratic organization nor party direction generates societal growth. It is from the interaction of individuals who wake up the society itself that the society moves forward. For this self-movement of society to take place, each individual must be free. Each individual must realize that, as Rousseau's *Social Contract* stipulates, society has no rights over him. Each man must be his own master.

Yet, though individuality or personal freedom must always remain intact, individualism or the cult of self-isolation must be destroyed. When James looks at a Caribbean sportsman, Garfield Sobers, the Willie Mays of cricket, he writes: "I see Sobers always . . . as . . . the fine fruit of a great tradition." James sees Sobers as the embodiment of the whole history of the British West Indies: "he is one of us. We are some of him." So, too, when James looks at the Mighty Sparrow, the B. B. King of calypso, he writes: "It is not his unusual personal gifts . . . [for] he is so obviously a man of the people." Again, commenting this time on a West Indian intellectual, J. J. Thomas, James observes: "It was the Caribbean human condition which produced Jacob Thomas. To know him well is to know ourselves better." Always there is the dialectic between the individual and society. The individual obviously has to bring certain capacities, but the essence of his achievement is not the result of the work of his brilliant individual effort, but is due in reality to his historical past. But the knife cuts both ways. Degenerate men are substantially the bitter fruits that result from the situations in which their historical past has placed them. For example, James sees Ahab, not as a madman obsessed with a white whale because of his own malicious ways, but as the culmination of a certain type of man which Western society has been cultivating. It is the life that he lives that makes Ahab what he becomes. Ahab does not like the life he has to live. James explains: "Ahab's isolation from the men with whom he works [is] an isolation forced upon him by his position of command." So, too, in rejecting parliamentary democracy and political parties, James observes that these elected leaders, "Once you put them there . . . acquire, not through malice, not through vice . . . but from the objective circumstances — they acquire a life of their own which is separate from the life and interests that they are supposed to serve." Again, it is the historical circumstances, the law of historical development which shapes the individual.

I want to end on this observation concerning James's concept of the individual. To elevate him is to elevate the Caribbean. There is all the need to pay homage and acknowledge the great intellectual achievements of C. L. R. James, for he embodies in all of his work, the burning desires of the Caribbean people, nay, of all progressive people of the world, a desire which is so aptly couched in the West Indian's wishful thinking — "All ah we is one!"

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A meeting with Comrade James

by David Widgery

"People are treating me with far greater concern than before," C. L. R. James grimaces. "It's very tiring." James has his feet up in room 384 of the Mayfair Hotel. Beside him lies a John Berger paperback, a brown cardboard folder of manuscript, his wheelchair and a ham sandwich plastered with English mustard. "My feet are tired but my tongue is not. I do not intend to give in." He talks with a rare passion and erudition: of bolshevism, of Caribbean politics, of calypso, Sartre, cricket and his beloved Uffizi gallery. His speech is as fresh and pungent as his sandwich.

To the best of my ability, I have attempted not to hero-worship this man who, if Marxists believed in such things, would be the greatest living Marxist. And failed. For my generation, James is the essence of political legend: organizing the Africa Bureau with George Padmore, bearding Trotsky in Coyoacan, organizing sharecroppers in Missouri, hailing Nkrumah as the Black Lenin in Accra, wandering into a Havana revolutionary congress with a volume of Michelangelo plates. In his wiry, eight-decade-young frame is the historical eloquence of E. P. Thompson, the cricketing connoisseurship of John Arlott, the revolutionary ardor of Tony Cliff and the preciousness of John Berger, all mixed up with a wit and a way with paradox which is entirely West Indian.

The outlaw James had better be resigned to his eminence. The three volumes published this week by Al-

lison & Busby bring together a body of work previously passed from hand to hand as mimeos, photostats and battered American paperbacks. One volume" is a collection of "notes" on Hegel, Marx and Lenin; two more bring together stories and essays. (A final selection of essays is promised, and the headstone, a volume of autobiography, is on the way.) But the centerpiece of the present triptych of publications is *The Black Jacobins,* an account of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo revolution, which James wrote in Brighton in 1937. The extraordinary narrative power and analytic intensity of this well-known but widely unread book is famous. But James's motive for writing it is not. "I decided," he told me, "that I was going to write the story of some Blacks who were not persecuted and sat upon and oppressed, but who did something." The book is not only a pioneering exposition of Black pride but is also stamped with James's head-on collision with Marxism.

Cyril Lionel Robert James was born near Port of Spain in 1901. He was the son of a teacher, won a scholarship to Queen's Royal College school (30 years later, V. S. Naipaul went there, too), and then became a schoolteacher himself. He also began playing club cricket and writing stories. It was Learie Constantine, the Trinidadian cricketer, then playing in the Lancashire League, who suggested James should come over to England.

He arrived from Trinidad in 1932, equipped with an exceptional grounding in the European classics. But at Constantine's home in the small Pennine town of Nelson, he was presented with volume one of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and Spengler's *Decline of the West.* "It was then necessary to read the relevant volumes of Stalin. And, of course, I had to read Lenin in order to trace back the quarrel. And thereby I reached volume one of *Das Kapital* and *The 18th Brumaire* of Marx himself."

In a decade in which Stalinist mythology dominated the left, James came to his own conclusion: "I realized the Stalinists were the greatest liars and corrupters of history there ever were. No one convinced me of this. I convinced myself. But having come to this conclusion, I wanted to meet some Trotskyists."

He eventually tracked down this endangered species in Golders Green, noting with some amusement that "I was much more familiar with the political material than the people who ran the group."

As disaster overwhelmed the German left, and Stalin switched to the desperate alliance-mongering of the Popular Front, James — now the editor of the Revolutionary Socialist League's paper, *Fight* — made regular clandestine visits to the Paris exile grouping of revolutionaries around Trotsky. "They were very serious days," James admonishes, inflecting the adjective "serious" as only an old-time Trotskyist can. "There was a German boy very active in our movement. One day we found him at the bottom of Seine."

Trotskyism Repressed

James was, with D. D. Harber, the British delegation to the founding conference of the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1938. This tiny body was established with the hope that, in the holocaust to come, a clearsighted International might find a way through the chaos. But Trotsky and, effectively, Trotskyism succumbed to the terrible repression.

In his last years, the Old Man blazed with political imagination, intrigue and epistles, as if beaming out his political SOS. James was duly summoned to Trotsky's fortress in Mexico City. I have read their transcribed discussions and they give a rare glimpse of the Great Exile debating with an intellectual equal. "Although we disagreed, I was tremendously impressed," James recalls. "Trotsky started with the analysis — international, political, philosophical. But the action, the activity, always followed. I got a glimpse of what bolshevism of the old school meant." James had been lured to North America by the Trotskyist, James P. Cannon — some say to remove a "troublesome" element in British Trotskyist politics. And in America, James soon found himself at odds with the orthodoxy, in the same way that Cliff in London and Cardan in Paris were to break with official Trotskyism.

James faced another crossroads. He had friends and, by now, a good job as a cricket correspondent in London. To remain in America and work through his disagreements with Trotskyism was a commitment to ten years of intellectual work. But James accepted the commitment and once again kept his rendezvous with history.

He helped to develop a theory of global state-capitalism. He rejected the bolshevik concept of a vanguard party and emphasized shopfloor organization as the seed of the new society. This meant rediscovering the Young Marx. It is this necessary reshaping of the Marxist ingredients which is presented in *Notes on Dialectics,* one of the reprinted volumes. James reckons it is "one of the most important pieces that I have done. I'm waiting to see what people are going to say about it."

The book was "written in Reno when I was seeing about a divorce." It represents the condensation of one of the remarkable political collaborations of modern times: James's political and intellectual prowess, Raya Dunayevskaya's understanding of the Russian material, and Grace Lee's German studies. It is written with a fearsome intensity, calling out names and ferociously bashing down the arguments. It is Marxist philosophy at red heat and ought to be read by those tepid academics who at present monopolize the science in Britain.

The making of C. L. R. James is also presented in the beautifully edited collection of essays which,

with Edward Thompson's recent writings, will do a great deal to revive the fortune of the genre. They demonstrate the sweep, drive and attack of James's Marxism. They move from early fiction, through polemic against racism, to the critical essays he wrote under so many Trotskyist pseudonyms on the literature of Shakespeare, Melville and Mailer. (In the early years of *New Society,* he wrote on both West Indians and cricket; but those articles are not collected here.)

And James has as good an ear as his eye. He writes beautifully in these essays about the Mighty Sparrow, Trinidad's most famous calypsoan, whom he describes "as the most intelligent and alert person I met in the Caribbean," and with great feeling about the young Paul Robeson, with whose Moscow-line politics he so fundamentally differed (though he and Robeson appeared together in the 1930's, at the Westminster Theatre, in a dramatized version of Toussaint's story). We agreed to disagree about reggae but James pays tribute to the tremendous effectiveness of Rasta music: "The Rastafari are leftists, with no particular programme. But their critique of everything the British left behind, and those Blacks who follow it, is very sophisticated."

James came back to England after the second world war, and remarried. He now divides his time between London and the West Indies, with interludes as, for example, a visiting professor at United States universities or colleges.

When I saw him, he was just back from Kingston, Jamaica, where "naturally, I had talks with Manley. But the crisis in the Caribbean is not the problem of the capacity of the individual leaders: it's the tremendous mess the imperialists left them in. What is happening in Kingston today is precisely what happened in Chile under Allende. The same procedures are being carried out: de-stabilization, economic manipulation, sabotage, the strategy of tension. And Seaga [the Jamaican opposition leader] promises everything but will bring nothing."

James now plans to return to Trinidad as a guest of the oilfield workers' union. "This organization is the most powerful political creation of the people of Trinidad and Tobago since the abolition of slavery. It is not that some intellectuals have got hold of it. It has been made by the people themselves." James, the Black Cassandra, had sent a public telegram of warning to the young left-winger, Walter Rodney, two months before his assassination in Guyana last month. There is pain, but not disbelief, in his face as he remembers his young friend. One is reminded just how many political deaths James has had to witness, grieve and endure.

I retain important reservations about James's Leninist libertarianism. He has been insufficiently consistent in applying his own criteria for socialist self-emancipation to Nkrumah, Castro and other revolutionary nationalists. His devastating critique of "vanguard" parties — those toy bolsheviks who ape and misunderstand Lenin's politics — is in danger of writing off altogether the need for the sinews of socialist organization. But this is very small beer beside one's respect, admiration and affection for a revolutionary intransigent who inhabits both classical and Marxist culture like a familiar home. He moves from ancient Greece, to the Detroit auto plants, and then to Florence, in as many sentences.

Hitler, Stalin, Vietnam

Liberal reviewers of his earlier collections of essays, *The Future in the Present* (published in 1977), found it hard to conceal a certain surprise that such intelligence and such compassion could issue from such a committed Marxist. But this is not remarkable at all. James's excellence is because of his political vantage point, not despite it. "I have seen nothing," James states firmly, "to shift me from the Marxist view of the world I adopted in 1934. I have watched nothing but the decline of this capitalist society. I have seen the first war, Hitler, Stalin, the Gulag, Vietnam. And now do I think Carter and Ronald Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher are going to fix anything?" He waves contempt softly about the bedroom. "And it would seem to me that all this frantic maneuvering in the Labor Party and the trade unions is once again to keep the workers in order."

Then his voice lowers again, and hangs suspended, as if addressing an auditorium. "More and more people, especially Black people, are alert. They reject the political choices offered them and are looking for a new way out of the mess. They are the ones who are now turning to Marx and Lenin to see if they have something to say."

They should also be turning to C. L. R. James, who has already answered some of the questions events have yet to pose.

David Widgery is a frequent contributor to New Society, *from the June 26, 1980 issue of which this article is reprinted.*

A unique Marxist thinker

by Wilson Harris

C. L. R. James is, I believe, a great West Indian of complex spirit. I recall a conversation with him on the plane that was taking us from Madrid to Havana, Cuba, some years ago to attend a UNESCO conference on Caribbean literature. We became immersed in the problem of "light" in the paintings of such artists as El Greco, Titian, Piero della Francesco, Van Gogh, Turner and Rembrandt. Through the window of the plane — far above the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea — we could see a huge otherworldly continent saturated by an enormity of sun, and we could not but pause and wonder at the quality of obsession with both darkness and light in some Caribbean poetries and fictions. What is light, we asked ourselves, in imageries of plastic word as this borders on a sensation of paint, sculpture, and organic metaphors of music as *tone* of verbal narrative beyond mimicry of sound?

"Light" is as much a naked tone or quality as a dazzling mirror; these run sometimes concurrently since the genius of art lies, in part, in a "shock of tone, a shock of beauty, a shock of perception" that helps us to unravel biased habit built into the ways one may have been conditioned to perceive the world.

C. L. R. James's preoccupation with such issues makes him a unique Marxist thinker whose dialectic is attuned, it seems to me, to necessity for individual originality as much as it is involved in analyses of historical process in the life of the people or the body-politic. The significance of this may not be immediately self-evident in an age such as ours in which ideologies have little or no independence in themselves and are virtually delegates of robot genetics and undifferentiated mechanics of thought.

The Black Jacobins, which James wrote in the 1930's, was a daring work of individual scholarship in assessing the universality of Toussaint L'Ouverture within the fractured limits of his age that possessed its roots not only in the Middle Passage but in pre- and post-revolutionary France and the tragedies of the age of Napoleon.

At the other extreme, James's *Beyond A Boundary,* which appeared in the early 1960's, witnesses to the English legacy of cricket as an extension of the ideal and subtle physicality of the Greek pantheon that casts its shadow upon practitioners of the game in the West Indies and around the globe.

C. L. R. James has written a great deal, many articles and important books — as his critics have attested — and I wonder in what degree the body of his work may lie within two extremities, namely, *The Black Jacobins,* on one hand, within which the freed slave of genius Toussaint confronts the fascinations of Napoleonic tyranny, and *Beyond A Boundary,* on the other, in which body-epic becomes a variable of the mind of theatre.

Wilson Harris, a West Indian novelist living in Britain, is the author of Palace of the Peacock *and other works.*

Personal notes

by George Rawick

The most important lesson to learn from the life of C. L. R. James is something that he has told virtually everyone around him: "Do your own work, do it well, and if it is right it will make its way." This old-fashioned adage is basically a statement of revolutionary patience and revolutionary determination.

In the nineteen-twenties and the early thirties, James was a teacher and literary figure in Trinidad, dedicated to the politics of West Indian nationalism. He wrote what was one of the first West Indian novels, *Minty Alley,* founded the first West Indian literary journal, and intervened in the struggle for independence primarily with several important pamphlets.

In the early nineteen-thirties, in England, James and a few others, starting with nothing but their ideas and their commitments, gathered around them figures who were to become major leaders of the struggle for African independence: George Padmore, James's boyhood friend from Trinidad, whose struggle for Pan-African solidarity and African freedom were to lead to the Gold Coast rebellion and the creation of modern Ghana, the first step in the liberation of Africa; Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the struggle for Gold Coast independence and the first head of state of an independent Ghana; Jomo Kenyatta, head of the struggle for Kenya's freedom and the first Kenyan chief of state.

Also in the same period, James found time to write a play about the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture. The play was produced in London with Paul Robeson playing the lead role!

And as has been true all his life, James moved around the British Isles and elsewhere, giving talks to large and small groups, writing articles for prominent and obscure

journals, having conversations with an endless stream of people who sought him out, and, ultimately most significantly, probing for that relationship with the mass of the population that would release in himself his own, most focused and valuable energies.

In 1938, James argued with Trotsky in Mexico about Black nationalism, pushing Trotsky to an understanding that the revolutionary must support American Blacks choosing national self-determination and independent struggle, if those would be the choices they would make. In this, James moved Trotsky from the narrowness and elitism of his organization which was fixated upon hammering out for each and every sector of struggling humanity a complete revolutionary program and back towards coming to understand and to be linked with those "molecular forces of history" which Trotsky had so brilliantly portrayed in his great history of the Russian Revolution. James has never swerved from this faith in the self-activity of ordinary people making their own history.

At the moment in the nineteen-thirties when the Third International would come up with the pitiful shot-gun wedding between the slogan "self-determination for the Negro people in the black belt" and "Black and white unite and fight," James understood and developed the idea of the autonomous struggle of Black people, an autonomy strong enough not to be submerged in or subordinated to the struggle of the white, male working class of the metropolitan center of capital. This notion of autonomy of struggle was carried through by James and those who worked most closely with him to include not only Blacks but all other national groups, women, youth, even artists and writers.

I think that James's ability to understand the entire question of the Black struggle came from the fact that he personally shared in this struggle and that other West Indians, most notably Marcus Garvey, had put forward a nationalist position. But James's achievement was that he united this current of Black thought and struggle with Marxism, and in so doing, transformed some part of the central Marxist heritage. Neither Garvey nor James made this idea grab hold of the minds of numberless Black men and women — they merely created channels through which the idea could flow and be expressed.

In 1939 James came to the United States and stayed until deported in 1953. In 1940 he went into the bootheel of southern Missouri, along the Mississippi River, to organize Black and white tenant farmers and sharecroppers. He carried with him a copy of Hegel's *Logic,* which he studied on the side of backcountry dirt roads while waiting to speak to those he had come to organize. If one reads James's *Notes on Dialectics,* which was originally produced in 1948 as a series of letters, there is a blending of the ideas of Hegel and Marx *and* those of the most submerged sector of the proletariat. These workers understood through the text of their own lives the concreteness of the struggle between Master and Slave. Philosophy becomes proletarian in James's writing not only because he understood Hegel and Marx but because James's life has combined an incredibly rich study of the full range of Western thought with the most concrete study of the lives of ordinary men and women, and participation in their struggles. Read James's novel of the nineteen-twenties, *Minty Alley,* and you will find the daily details of working class life in Trinidad become a vibrant political document and a very good novel.

One of the keys to James's thought is his very intense concern for questions of human psychology, the psychology of the individual as a person of his or her own times. Not only do these concerns permeate *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways,* they appear again and again in the essays published as *The Future in the Present,* 1977, and in *Spheres of Existence,* 1980, and of course in that monumental biography, *The Black Jacobins.* It is characteristic that James begins his magnificent essay "The Olympia Statues, Picasso's Guernica and the Frescoes of Michelangelo in the Capella Paolina" with a discussion of *himself, his* own early relationship to horses (horses dominate the Guernica, one must remember) and *his* own early memories of Michelangelo and Raphael.

Not only has James written on Toussaint, Picasso, Michelangelo, and Raphael, he has written on cricket players, including such great West Indian cricket players as Garfield Sobers and Learie Constantine, on the great calypso singer The Mighty Sparrow, and on W. E. B. DuBois, George Jackson, and Paul Robeson. It is not surprising that James's early work on West Indian nationalism was written as a biographical essay: *The Life of Captain Cipriani.*

But above all, James has been concerned with the activities and potentialities of the ordinary man and woman at all times. In such writings as *Every Cook Can Govern* and James's great essay on human history, *Modern Politics,* this focus on the ability of ordinary people to transcend the present is the dominant theme.

Even James's very conception of the process of the transformation of society is based on a revolutionary view of the human personality. The Hungarian Revolution, for example, was made by modern men and women, transformed by the modern world and transforming it, modern men and women who instinctively knew, for example, that in the modern world the first thing one does in a revolution is to capture the television station. James makes quite clear what his view of revolutionary activity is all about. "New" men and women make, in the bowels of the old society, a new society. This new society and these new people make the revolution in order to defend their new lives and their new society.

James's concern with the human personality permeates his everyday conversation. There is -something about the method which is that of the novelist, the playwright, the literary essayist, all of which of course James is, in addition to being a political figure and a Marxist revolutionary. Whether he is talking with a famous novelist from Barbados, an infamous American trade-union hack, a seventeen-year-old American working class young woman, a young unemployed "printer's devil" from Trinidad, a working journalist who had been a dairy farmer, a Pakistani auto worker in London, the Polish woman cleaning the hotel room in Windsor, Ontario, or an American university professor, James constantly asks question: "Where are you from?" "What did your mother and father do?" "You lived on a farm? How did you milk the cows, by hand or machinery? How many cows a day? What else did you do on the farm? Did your family make much money? Your father had to work at a gas station in order to make ends meet? What does he do today?" "You work in an automobile factory? What exactly do you do? What are the working conditions like? Are the toilets clean? How many breaks do you get during the day?" James in his life has followed the example of Kari Marx, who even went so far as to have a questionnaire about working conditions passed out to workers.

In the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, James did some of his finest writing — on the game of cricket. From the time in the early nineteen-thirties when James first came to England, he wrote on cricket, the sport which is middle-class in England and in the West Indies is the game of the broad, popular masses. James has both made part of his living and found release for his passion for the game by writing on cricket for such English journals as the Manchester *Guardian.* He played cricket as a young man both in Trinidad and England as a semi-professional and has been for the past forty years universally acknowledged among those deeply interested in cricket as the finest cricket reporter in the world. His writing on cricket reached its highest point in his magnificent *Beyond a Boundary,* half personal memoir, half profound work on cricket, published in the sixties. John Arlott, known as England's outstanding native-born cricket reporter, referred to this book as the finest volume ever written on cricket.

For many years James co-edited the most serious, scholarly journal about cricket, *The Cricketer's Journal.* It was a cross between *The Sporting News* and *The Journal of Sports History,* exclusively devoted to cricket. His co-editor of this journal was a Major in the British army, a War Office stalwart, a Tory, and an old-India hand, who spoke with that peculiar accent that sounds as if one had a mouthful of marbles. They deeply respected each other's dedication to and knowledge of cricket even though they were of course political enemies.

And yet cricket for James was neither simply a way of making a living nor a private indulgence. For James, cricket is essential to the West Indian struggle for freedom, for his development of his views on the human personality, and a mark of his respect for an important aspect of the life of the West Indian masses. James has always thought that public sports were central to the life of the working class and the popular masses throughout the world, that through sports they expressed crucial aspects of their personalities. For example, *Correspondence,* the newspaper of James's organization in the United States in the late fifties and early sixties, had a regular, lively column on professional sports. The baseball reporting was, in my opinion, particularly fine and laced with comments of much historical and sociological insight.

Thinking of James on cricket, I remember sitting with him in the bleachers at the Oval, one of the great London cricket pitches, among a West Indian crowd, being taught the game by him and being infected with his enthusiasm. In many other ways, I had the privilege of sharing with James the details of everyday life for several years in London. Buying salt-cod and salt-beef in a London West Indian market, joking with the vendors. Playing the slot machines in London pubs. Betting a few shillings on the horse races. Watching him take out one of the dozen postcard prints of Picasso's Guernica which he had around so that he could study it at every spare moment. Buying two and three copies of every newspaper and journal so that he could tear out the clippings and give them to others. Buying several copies of books he is interested in so that he can always have one around. Drinking scotch before dinner. Listening to James tell the many sly jokes he is fond of and repeating the punch line. Trying to follow his meticulous sense of time, listening to him begin a lecture with "It is now 8:14. I will lecture until 8:44." Going with James to see the film "Dr. Zhivago," which certainly is not particularly sympathetic to the Bolshevik Revolution in the midst of which it is set, and hearing him tell me that every would-be revolutionary ought to see it — not, of course, to persuade them to oppose the revolution but, I believe, because it shows that revolutions are not games to be played at but serious, wrenching affairs, filled with death and destruction.

But more than that. Partially, I believe, James liked "Dr. Zhivago" because it deals with the struggles of a literary man to continue *his* life and poetry writing in the midst of the revolution. James was never enthusiastic about the artist or writer becoming political. He has always seen them as having a particular, unique function. In *Mariners* he tells us that the real business of an artist is "the study of human

personality and human relations." James tells us that "Melville is not an agitator. He is a creative artist who is moving steadily towards that rarest of achievements — the creation of a character which will sum up a whole epoch of human history." Writing on the West Indian writer Wilson Harris, James suggests that the artist lifts us from the "everyday" to the peak, to the transcendent, the boundary limit situation.

Not that the artist need be "right," but he must be heard. Or so I understand James. For James all of this is important, for the communist revolution comes not to destroy Western Civilization but to fulfill it. We cannot create a desert and find in it the new society. With all of its limitations, panderings to reactionary ideas, and sheer romanticism, "Dr. Zhivago," I think James was telling me, is a film that has a germ of truthfulness because it treats the writer with this particular care and has, ultimately, this concern with Western Civilization. James can usually take the artifacts of everyday life and culture and find within them something of value, of significance, of importance. That is no mean achievement.

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Black Scholar

by Richard W. Thomas

I first became aware of the significance of C. L. R. James's works in the history education of Black students in predominantly white "universities during a European History Survey class in the mid-1960's. Luckily for me and the few Black students in the course, I had already read with great interest and pride James's book, *The Black Jacobins,* which vividly described the story of Black revolt in French San Domingo (known today as Haiti). The historical evidence of the connection between this Black revolt and the French Revolution enabled me and the other Black students to do battle with an arrogant white professor who was determined to relegate the significance of this Black revolt to little more than a localized slave riot. Under my constant questioning, the professor was forced to acknowledge the international significance of this Black revolt (the only successful slave revolt in modern history), as well as its impact upon the course of European and American history. It was not easy for a white American professor teaching a European survey course to acknowledge the contribution of a Black slave, Toussaint L'Ouverture, to the success of the French Revolution.

This white professor was not atypical in his assumptions about Black history. Most white history professors in predominantly white universities considered Black history as outside of the purview of mainstream American and European history. Most certainly, Black history could not shed any light upon such monumental "white" historical events as the French Revolution! In short, James's *Black Jacobins* helped us to challenge this view of white history. We were able to show the historical connections between European economic and political developments and the slave trade, and more importantly for us as Black students, the intimate connection between the French Revolution and the Black revolt in San Domingo. For Black students in a lily-white "European" survey course, such historical connections helped to foster an understanding of the role and nature of Black events in modern history.

Another book by James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt,* contributed even more to our historical education as Black students. Even if predominantly white universities managed to come up with a few token courses in Black history (usually taught by someone trained in another field and "drafted" to teach a Black course as a sop to radical Black students), these courses were very seldom devoted to a systematic "comparative" perspective. Realizing that Black experiences in the Caribbean, United States, and Africa were all linked by survival and struggle, we were drawn toward James's *A History of Pan-African Revolt.* This "Pan-African" perspective was particularly helpful for those of us involved in Black radical student organizations composed of West Indian, African and Afro-American students; it provided us with a common historical legacy bound up in capitalism, racism and imperialism, and made ever clearer to us our common and interrelated historic struggles against these forces. The book proved indispensable for those of us who were en route to careers as professional historians. *A History of Pan-African Revolt* greatly aided us in comprehending the interconnections among Black struggles in San Domingo, Africa and the United States. This Pan-African perspective laid the foundation for many of us who years later would become interested in working in the field of the African Diaspora.

By far the most dramatic impression made on me by C. L. R. James was his appearance on the campus of Michigan State University in the late 1960's. He had been invited by the late James Hooker, a specialist in African history, who had just completed a book on George Padmore entitled *Black Revolutionary.*

James's physical appearance made an immediate imprint on my mind. He was dark during a time when the Black revolution in America was still wrestling with color prejudice *within* the Black community; dark-skinned Afro-Americans on white college campuses were waging a struggle against white racism and fighting against the overt and covert "color-struck" syndrome of fellow Afro-Americans. As trite as it might seem today, I was doubly proud of that grand old man: he was not only a Black man but also a "dark" Black man. (By this time I was still recovering from having read DuBois' references to Garvey as "Black and ugly.") During the latter part of his lecture, James would confirm my "need" for a "dark" model. James had just finished a splendid discussion about his experience with Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore when he asked those of us with tape recorders to turn them off. He then mentioned one of the reasons why Pad-more and he had left the West Indies: "dark" Blacks could not succeed very well at home. This struck me deeply. Other dark Afro-Americans and I were not alone in this double battle; even the great C. L. R. James had felt his own people's color bias!

James discussed other things that evening, among them DuBois' *Black Reconstruction.* After the talk, I had a brief chat with him. Perhaps to him I was just another faceless Black undergraduate history student in search of some meaning in the Black struggle, but to me James was one of my first "dark" intellectual models in a white world which emphasized pride of white skin and in a "Black" world which was still struggling with the question of whether Black was *really* beautiful.

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Conversation

Mississippi activist Ken Lawrence interviewed Vincent Harding in March at Tougaloo College while Harding was Tougaloo's humanist-in-residence.

KL: I recall a number of years ago seeing a list of materials made available by the Institute of the Black World, a significant portion of which were tapes of talks given by C. L. R. James and articles by him, and so forth. So I know that his work and his thought significantly shaped what you were trying to do then.

VH: I think that for me, I have a two-part debt to C. L. R. One is organizationally, primarily through his relationship to the Institute. The other is personally. I think I should say something about the personal level first.

I think that the most direct contribution by C. L. R. has been that he was one of the persons who initially read the first version of the manuscript that I've been working on for a long time on the history of the Black struggle for freedom in this country. He read it when it was in a different shape and form, but he was his usual very disciplined and very caring self, and he read it carefully, and expressed great appreciation for it, and raised some crucial questions about what I was doing and how. And I think that both the sense of appreciation and encouragement, and the critical questions were of tremendous value to me in my thinking about what I was doing, and how I should be doing it. So C. L. R. is someone whom I appreciate very, very much, from that perspective of his very open response to my own initial struggle to develop the work that's now begun to be published as *There Is A River.*

The other thing on a personal level is that C. L. R. was always a kind of inspiration to me as one of the persons who was in very many deep senses a truly revolutionary scholar — a revolutionary scholar who was based, for a long time, outside the traditional institutions of scholarship. And that is another important personal model for me, and I have great appreciation for that.

I also felt that he has a role in the history of our struggle in this country that has not been sufficiently appreciated, and which I am trying to clarify in the second volume of my history of our struggle, because I'm trying to talk about the way in which, in very different senses, he and DuBois and Robeson were a kind of bridge from one period of our struggle to another — in a sense from the pre-World War Two period to the post-World War Two period. I think that C. L. R. deserves careful thought, in his work, in his energy, in his insight into the particular and special role of Black people in the transformation of American society. He was of great importance to me and I've been trying to present that as a part of the history of our struggle.

So, on a number of levels I feel this personal debt, and of course have always seen his work, especially *Black Jacobins,* as a kind of exemplary model of the historical development of a history of a people's struggle. And reading that, and thinking about it, and reflecting on it and hearing him talk about it has been quite helpful to me.

And I guess the other thing about C. L. R. that is related to the point at which I began, is that he

has always been the warmest and most encouraging kind of, in a sense, father in the work, and has made every effort whenever he could, certainly to encourage me — both in my own individual work and in the development that we were engaged in when we were founding and developing the Institute of the Black World. So that's a second area, the relationship of C. L. R. to the development of our institute, because he was certainly one of the earliest supporters of what we were trying to do in developing an institution for which there were very few models, that would try to take a radical perspective on the history of Black people in America and try to develop a radical perspective on the future of Black people in America, and try to share that perspective with as broad a grouping of people as possible.

C. L. R. was not only supportive in terms of encouraging us to do this work — those of us who were working at the organizing of it — but he made himself available to come to some of our early seminars when we were establishing the legitimacy of the institution. And his work, especially his presentations having to do with how he developed *Black Jacobins,* and some of the other things that he presented as a part of his time with us, were all important contributions to the life and work at the early stages of the institute's development. He also was a faithful financial contributor to the institute, and one of those nurturers and encouragers who constantly need to come from one generation to the aid of another generation.

One of the things I might say about C. L. R. is that he had a very warm spot for my family as well. He stayed in our home on a couple of occasions and we just considered him to be a very special human being. I have a lot of memories, good memories.

KL: I share many of the same personal attachments and feelings for him. He stayed with my family several times. I think that from my own experience I would have to say that it parallels much of what you've said. You were more careful, either in your choice of words, or else perhaps you were more self-motivated in your response than I'd have been. I know from my standpoint it's fair to say that some of the most important work that I've done, both on my own and with other people, was like that. But I think, for example, the largest project of my career was certainly the collecting and editing and publishing the slave narratives, and that was entirely his conception.

It was his urging, that this was one of the most important tasks that could be undertaken, and his insistence — that's what I was getting at — his firmness, he wouldn't let us lose sight of the importance of it to the more day-to-day work of being a revolutionary, which is always something that's standing there ready to consume you. You can always get drowned in all of the emergencies that arise. And nevertheless it was his insistence — and tyranny almost — driving us, that these tasks need to be done, you have to find time for them whatever else you have to do, you have to do this too, that is the reason why those jobs got done. And I think without that, which certainly qualifies as encouragement, but a great deal more than that — a firm guiding hand — without that, I know it never would have gotten done.

VH: That's right — very powerful encouragement.

KL: And I would say the same kind of thing about his criticism too. He was always very forceful, but by the same token he never talked down to or up to anybody, that I saw in my life. He would always take the issues for what they were, and if he was wrong you'd have to convince him, and if he wasn't, you were going to be convinced, no matter how much argument and discussion it took. But he was one of the most persuasive people I ever encountered.

VH: The other side of that, though, is that C. L. R. has not been able to — at least the last time I heard about it — has not been able to be pressed in the same way by others about doing some of the tasks that he must do. That whole question of his autobiography, and the priority that has to be given to it for the sake of us all. It's been very very hard for some of us who love him to know how to deal with him on the many things he's allowed to get in the way of that critical task in his own life. I don't know where he is on it now, and I hope that I'll be very surprised to be told that he's making great progress on it, but I'm very worried about that and I wish that there was somebody who could push C. L. R. in the same way that he has pushed many of us.

KL: I feel some of the same frustration. In that particular respect I'm almost amused to recall that the last time I asked him where he was on the project, he said, "I'm writing volume one." I bet he still is.

Let me ask you something on a different level. I've learned over the years from talking to a lot of people who have been influenced by him enormously that he's intervened in the world he's lived in in more ways than most people would be able to in several lifetimes, and he's had one kind of meaning to West Indian nationalists, and another kind of meaning to American and British Marxists, and another kind of meaning to younger Black freedom fighters in the civil rights and Black Power and revolutionary workers' movements. And yet the diversity of those movements is as great as ever; there's not an awful lot of coming together. But certainly he sees a unity of purpose and vision of all those movements. What do you think about that?

VH: It's an example of the fact that on certain political levels we can't necessarily use the' geometric theorem that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. The other side of that is, it may well be that because of his sense of overview, C. L. R. has seen a fundamental unity that people who are much too engaged in the day-to-day struggles, both for their goals and for the particular life of their particular organizations, may not be able to see or may not want to see. But I'm not surprised by the fact that people don't see the same kind of overview, or sense of oneness, that C. L. R. has, partly because he's had the benefit of a tremendous amount of experience and a reach of organizational contacts — that in its very self, the fact that he has been able to encompass experience and people within this whole organizational gamut, gives him a kind of perspective that is not available to many of the kinds of people who are working at these particular sorts of tasks. So I think it's pretty understandable that it's quite possible for him to have a sense of overarching vision that is not shared by many of the particular people in the particular fields.

One of the things that is simply in passing that I'd just like to throw in is that one of my best memories of C. L. R. is the style of his lecturing when he was with us at IBW, and of course I've seen him do it elsewhere — this wonderfully disciplined way of sitting down and taking out his watch and scattering his notes in front of him and saying: "It is now 7:45, and I will speak until 8:45 and then I will answer questions," and going on to do precisely that.

KL: Yes. A lot of times that was a very deceptive thing, in fact. Many times when he was in Chicago, right after he had been allowed to return to the United States, he was lecturing in a variety of places to all different kinds of audiences, ranging from activists who lived and worked in the deepest parts of the South Side ghetto to university audiences. I remember listening to what was ostensibly the same speech given on several occasions. The title of it was "The Contribution of West Indian Blacks to Western Civilization." The version that he gave at the University of Chicago left everyone in the room breathless, just breathless. And I asked him afterward why that had been so different from the previous couple of times I had heard the talk of that title — because it was from the same lecture notes, took the same amount of time, and so forth. He said, "You've got to read your audience. You've got to know at every point how far you can push them, and I knew that I could take them all the way, and it was the first chance I'd had." I think I learned something from that, at least I tried to.

When C. L. R. spoke here at Tougaloo College in 1972, it was the only time I've ever seen a speaker here, at whose speech attendance was not required, first of all pack the hall, and secondly, by the time he'd been speaking about five minutes, everyone in the room was taking notes. They knew that this was something they didn't want to get away from them. That too was a marvel to behold; not many people have those abilities. A few hours earlier he had astonished the faculty members who were having cocktails with him by giving an impromptu lecture on the fact that Mississippi had produced only two important writers — Richard Wright and William Faulkner — and what that meant to him.

VH: In the early seventies, C. L. R. was very well known and highly respected in the circles that I was a part of. One of the major problems that I recall us having in that '70 to '75 period was to get C. L. R. to stop taking speaking engagements all over the country, because if he had wanted to he could be going practically every day to speak somewhere, especially on campuses.

One of the things I remember with a combination of sadness and humor was a long conversation that C. L. R. and Harry Haywood had in our house in Atlanta. It was focused to a large degree — and I just found it somewhat ironic and, as I said, somewhat sad, even though a lot of the development of the conversation also had its humor to it — to see these two really experienced and gifted Black men literally arguing about which expression of Marxist ideology and organization was really best. I think with that experience it took both of them out of the mainstream of so much of Black life, and took their strengths away from that mainstream. I just have the feeling it would have been so much healthier if both of these men might have found some common ground and might have found ways of using their energy beyond those kinds of arguments that grew out of the experiences of the late twenties and thirties, that for them were very fresh wounds and very hard experiences. It's just amazing to me how alive they still were to them. I guess having approached maturity myself in the sixties, it was just very hard to feel the real significance of some of those ideological arguments that they were carrying on at that time, that had grown out of a period of 25 or 30 years before. It was quite an encounter; I don't know if they've ever had a public exchange of all those lines, but the private one was very powerful.

KL: If not they, he's certainly had similar exchanges with similar people over the years that I've witnessed. I had, I think, much the same feeling that you're expressing in a different context. It wasn't even in his presence, or with him confronting anybody. It was when I read for the first time *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways,* which is probably one of the most brilliant things he's written in his life. Particularly when we don't have such an urgent need for his political contributions, it will stand as a mile-

stone to what we are and where we've been and where we're going, I think, in the most universal kind of way.

But the last chapter of *Mariners,* which is a polemic against Communist Party people, was so dissonant that it shocked me, and I've never been able to reconcile the two parts of that book. And yet there's no doubt that it was burning him deeply while he was there waiting to be deported as he wrote the rest of the book. From his standpoint it's probably a vital statement of something important, but I could never see it that way. On the other hand that book has certainly inspired me, particularly as somebody who got involved in things a little bit before the sixties, so I still had many of the diseases that were imposed by what we called the Old Left once we got into the sixties — particularly a certain attitude toward culture and intellectual pursuits generally, that it was sort of forbidden, not proletarian enough, or something like that. He certainly rescued me from that; not only were my interests, in literature or music or whatever, legitimate, but they were essential to the world we're trying to create.

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Nello

by John Bracey

It is a most pleasant task to be able to offer a word or two on the importance of the life and work of C. L. R. James (Nello).

I learned of C. L. R.'s existence when I read *The Black Jacobins* in an undergraduate course on Negro History at Roosevelt University. The book had a tremendous impact on my understanding of the revolutionary process and of revolutionary personalities. It remains after forty years one of the finest works of historical and Marxist scholarship that I have read.

I first met C. L. R. in Fall, 1969, when as one of a number of demands of Black student activists at Northwestern University in the wake of a building takeover in the Spring, 1968, he was asked to teach West Indian history and politics as one of our new offerings in Black Studies. He was simply beautiful. He taught a course based on a close reading of *The Black Jacobins* and gave a series of lectures that began with the ancient Greeks — Aristotle's Politics, Aeschylus, Sophocles — and ranged far and wide in world history ending in this century with the social and political writings of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. The series of lectures published as *Modern Politics* and the essay "Peasants and Workers" in *Radical America* (Nov.-Dec. 1971) convey the sweep of C. L. R.'s analysis.

As often as possible C. L. R. would come to dinner with my wife and a few friends on Thursday evenings. He was quite explicit as to when he should be picked up from his apartment, and when he should be returned. We did our best to provide the fare that he suggested, and were even fortunate enough on one occasion to obtain some Red Snapper which really made the evening. Those dinners-discussions were among the most interesting and intellectually stimulating experiences that I have ever had in or out of academia. What C. L. R. accomplished in his firm, but subtle, way was to help smooth over some of the rougher edges and to loosen up some of the more rigid dogmatism of the views of myself and other young Black radicals. C. L. R., now that I think about it, was one of those "soft" Marxists (for lack of a more precise term) very much in the tradition of Raymond Williams, John Berger, and E. P. Thompson in England, and say William A. Williams in the U.S. No base, superstructure, conjunctures and over-determinations for him. Marxism was a method and a critique: a method to study people and the things that people have done and can do to make their way in the world. The lived experience was the proper focus of attention.

C. L. R. also helped to open up and legitimatize our curiosity that ranged far and wide in the general areas of history, politics, philosophy and culture. He was quite skillful at pointing out the linkages between the experience of Blacks and that of the rest of the world. I can recall a discussion where several comrades and I were railing against Europe and its evils. C. L. R. intervened with "But my dear Bracey, I am a Black European, that is my training and my outlook." C. L. R. said this without apology, and without seeking our acceptance. He was merely (merely?) saying that to blindly reject all things originating in or influenced by Europe would mean rejecting not only people like himself, but rejecting a significant part of our own cultural and intellectual baggage. The clear implication was that we were much too intelligent to do that. C. L. R., as a *good* Marxist, upheld the best of what earlier societies produced in terms of literature, art, philosophy, and values.

Two additional incidents stick in my mind on C. L. R.'s outlook. First, C. L. R. cut short a discussion of Marxist-Humanism by saying that the phrase was redundant. To be a humanist in the twentieth century was to be a Marxist. Finally, shortly after C. L. R. arrived to teach at Northwestern University, we informed him that the library had a copy of his *World Revolu-*

tion. At the same time a publisher was reprinting it without his knowledge and charging some ridiculously high price. C. L. R. had no copy of this major work of his and expressed a desire to obtain a copy. We offered to "liberate" the copy from the library and give it to him. Our rationale — C. L. R. created it; it was a product of his labor and if anyone was entitled to a copy, it was C. L. R. He was horrified at our suggestion. He said that the bourgeoisie could accuse him of working for socialist revolution, but he would never let them accuse him of stealing. C. L. R. James is a gentleman and a scholar in the fullest meaning of those terms.

C. L. R. went on to teach at Federal City College and to participate in the Sixth Pan-African Conference. We have met infrequently these past ten years. I remember our talks, and our agreements (and our disagreements) on the relative merits of various individuals and groups active during the late 1960's. I still teach *The Black Jacobins* in a course on "Revolution in the Third World." I consider myself privileged to know him as my teacher, colleague and friend.

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Meeting in Chicago

by Noel Ignatin

I first encountered C. L. R. James and his ideas in 1968, when I attended, on the invitation of my friend Ken Lawrence, a public meeting on the south side of Chicago at which James was the principal speaker. It was his first speaking tour following his readmission to the country after fourteen years away, and his comrades were happy and proud to be able to introduce him to the public. I myself was a Stalinist at the time, with several important reservations.

The first thing that impressed me about James, and made me want to listen carefully and find out more about him, was his style, which showed a mastery of his subject matter and a conviction that the ideas he was expressing were fresh and important. His topic that night was the self-activity of the working class, and he took for his text the next to last chapter of volume I of *Capital,* with its familiar words about the new mode of production, which has "sprung up and flourished along with, and under" the old. Familiar, yes, but how new was the reading he gave to them! Out of this chapter he drew a vision of the working class striving inexorably toward the socialist society, not out of loyalty to this or that political program but out of its position in capitalist society. In the question period, someone challenged James's notion of the inevitability of socialism, and asked about state repression, "like the case of the tsar, who jailed the revolutionaries and used military force to suppress the movement." It was not a set-up question, although it might as well have been.

"You could hardly have picked a better example for my point," James said, with a chuckle. "The tsar had a large army, the tsar had a huge police force and a lot of prisons and (here James's accent grew stronger — that West Indian speech, most pleasing to the ear of all the tongues spoken on this green earth) . . . and wh' hoppened to de tsar?"

The second thing that impressed me about James was the complete absence of condescension on his part, his total unwillingness to play down to his audience. This was important to me, who came from a tradition that had produced more than a few "popularizers" whose translations were far inferior to the originals. James's talk was, as anyone who has ever read him knows, filled with concrete references, made to illustrate his point: clarify, yes; simplify, he would not do. He was dealing with difficult ideas (not so difficult, perhaps, but obscured by generations of "simplifiers") and he seemed to be saying, I will explain this as clearly as I can, but you must make some effort too. It revealed an attitude toward people that I admired.

I had always been uneasy with the vague anti-intellectualism that prevailed among the Stalinists. Certain things I knew, for instance, that many of Shakespeare's characters were more real to me than people I passed daily in the street. What could be the role of culture in a movement which seemed to welcome intellectuals so long as they confined themselves to grinding out defenses of the party line (in the manner of Herbert Aptheker) but which placed them under immediate suspicion for their "doubtful" class background should they dare to advance a new idea? Was "culture" to be merely a private indulgence, tolerable if it didn't detract too much from the "real" movement? James, without sinking for a moment into academicism, exemplified a different view, which I sensed when I first heard him speak and which later became manifest to me when I read his book on Herman Melville. Here was a man, James, an extremely close observer of the details of working class life, who argued straightforwardly that the struggle for the new society was a struggle between different philosophies as *they are lived out.* The role of the "thinker" was to make the ordinary citizen conscious of the process of which he or she was a part. And in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways,* an essay which will

live as long as *Moby Dick* itself, James shows how one great artist was able to present, in personified form, the central conflicts of his age. Taken purely as literary criticism, *Mariners'* is a masterpiece worthy of the novel it examines; it contains the most lucid explanation of the creative process to be found in the entire body of writing about literature. But it is more than that; it is a devastating blow to both academicism and anti-intellectualism, the presentation of a world view that links thought and action. To me it meant a great deal.

What was to be my attitude toward my own country? Like many U.S. revolutionaries I faced a conflict, between my feelings of shame at the crimes committed by U.S. imperialism and allowed by the American people, and my own ties to this country, to its people, land, history, and traditions. (It is a conflict peculiar to revolutionaries; by no means all socialists suffer from it.) In *Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity,* James wrote of "the unending murders, the destruction of peoples, the bestial passions, the sadism, the cruelties and the lusts, all the manifestations of barbarism." And then he added, "But this barbarism exists only because nothing else can suppress the readiness for sacrifice, the democratic instincts and creative power of the great masses of people." It was as if the writer had reached out, placed his hand on my shoulder and spoken those words directly to me. Of course they did not make the conflict go away; that would not have been proper. But they opened the door to a new concept of citizenship, one that allowed room for neither facile apologetics nor masochistic self-hatred. Curious that this gift should come from one who was himself not a native of the U.S. and who was officially denied the citizenship which he at one point sought. It is testimony to the universality of James's Marxism, that is to say, Marxism.

I come from a family of intellectuals. When I left the university to work in industry, I was driven not by the whip of hunger but by the desire to associate myself as closely as possible with the revolutionary class of our age. I am acutely aware of the distinction and it is my conviction, after twenty years, that no individual who joins the proletariat for any reason but externally imposed necessity can ever acquire the instinctive responses of a worker (an outcome not necessarily desirable), although some may approach fairly close. I felt from the beginning that I had something to learn from the workers. That is a fairly commonplace notion on the Left, particularly among those who have been influenced by the Chinese Communist Party. But what to learn? The response of most Left groups to that question was that intellectuals should become "steeled" by contact with the oppressed. Upon further inquiry, "getting steeled" was soon revealed to mean learning how to suffer stoically. Now, that was one thing I didn't want to learn. It was James who provided an answer that met the needs both of my intuitive strivings and of reason. By repeatedly explaining and *demonstrating* the proposition (found in Marx but later obliterated by those who did such general violence to his, and Lenin's, teachings) that the new society comes into existence underneath and alongside the old, that the working class is not a "mass," open to socialist ideas, but is instead the revolutionary class in the literal meaning of the word, that its autonomous activities constitute socialism and that there is no other socialism, James gave me a point on which to keep my eyes fixed and transformed the hours I spent at work from a time of "misery, agony of toil, slavery," etc. into something . . . far more interesting. (I should mention that James was able to get my ear on this point in large part because of Marty Glaberman's old pamphlet *Punching Out,* which was of course a product of James's group. People with whom I worked and to whom I showed the pamphlet invariably responded in a way that showed it had touched them more deeply than the average Left tract, a fact which made no small impression on me. I figured that a group that could produce such a pamphlet — there are perhaps only a handful that compare with it today, thirty years later — deserved a serious hearing. I should also like to add that it was only several years later that I came across similar ideas in reading Gramsci, who writes, "The socialist State already exists potentially in the institutions of social life characteristic of the exploited working class.")

"Humble" is not a word one would apply to C. L. R. James; not for him the modest cough and lowered eyes. Yet when I finally met him for a face-to-face talk several years ago, his reaction, on learning what I did for -a living, was to express regret that he had never had the opportunity to work in large-scale industry. I naturally replied that his writings had been extremely helpful to me in interpreting my own experiences there. He said, "Yes, people have told me that, but I am still sorry I never had the chance to experience it directly." All in all, one of the two most remarkable people it has ever been my privilege to see up close. (The other was Willie Mays, also the best in the world at his chosen occupation.)

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C. L. R. JAMES AT 80

by E. P. Thompson

Tom Mann and C. L. R. James have one thing in common. On his eightieth birthday, Tom said, "I hope to grow *more* dangerous as I grow older." C. L. R. has already shown that he intends to do the same. What an extraordinary man he is! It is not a question of whether one agrees with everything he has said or done: but everything has had the mark of originality, of his own flexible, sensitive and deeply cultured intelligence. That intelligence has always been matched by a warm and outgoing personality. He has always conveyed, not a rigid doctrine, but a delight and curiosity in all the manifestations of life. I'm afraid that American theorists will not understand this, but the clue to everything lies in his proper appreciation of the game of cricket.