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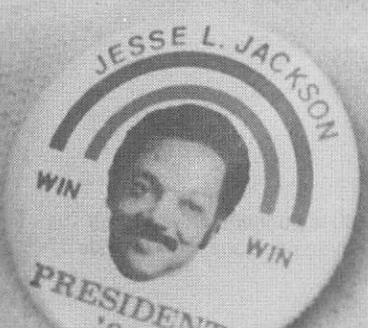
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J JESSE JACKSON FOR PRESIDENT

JESSE JACKSON

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The Jackson campaign helped build a Rainbow Coalition of different nationalities; here, Jackson speaks to Latinos in San Francisco's Mission District.

BEN FERRIS

Force the Democrats to Negotiate: The Need for a Rainbow Agenda

Put forward a revolutionary
democratic agenda!
Force the Democrats to
negotiate in San Francisco!!
Defeat Reagan!!!

The real test of the Jackson campaign must be in its practical *use* to Black people and the whole multinational working class. That use is not just feel-goodism and cheerleading consciousness raising. (Though for sho' we need both of those in a desperate way.)

The most important *use* to the U.S. masses must be not only in raising the issues, mobilizing the people, voter registration, hopefully creating structures and a progressive network to localize the Rainbow Coalition in states and cities across the country, to put progressive candidates into political races after the presidential campaign is over.

But now we must create an *agenda* for *negotiation* similar to the Black agenda that came out of the National Black Political Assembly in 1972, which was "sold out" by Black petty bourgeois electoral leadership at the 1972 Miami Democratic Convention.

Negotiations with the Democratic Party

The San Francisco Convention must first see changes now in the way delegates are selected. No matter who wins the popular vote,

delegates are selected by the old-boy system and corrupt political machine, not the people. (Thus Jesse Jackson received 22% of the popular vote, but only 7% of the delegates. By contrast, Walter Mondale won 39% of the popular vote, but received 51% of the delegates.)

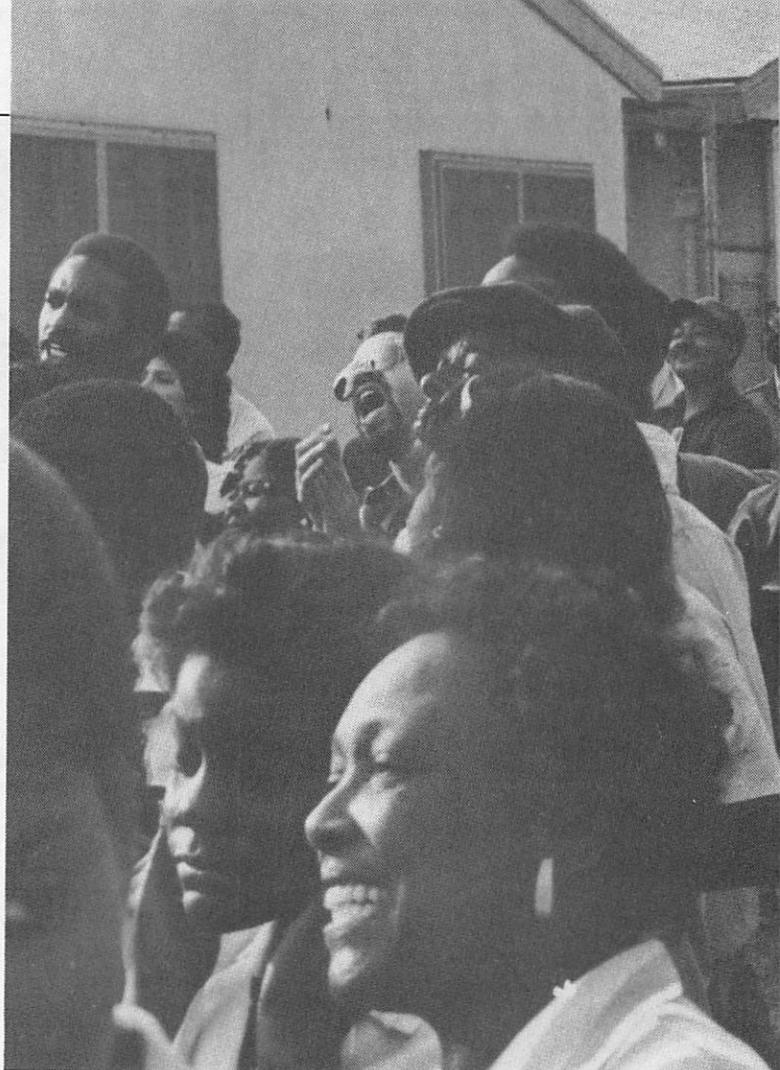
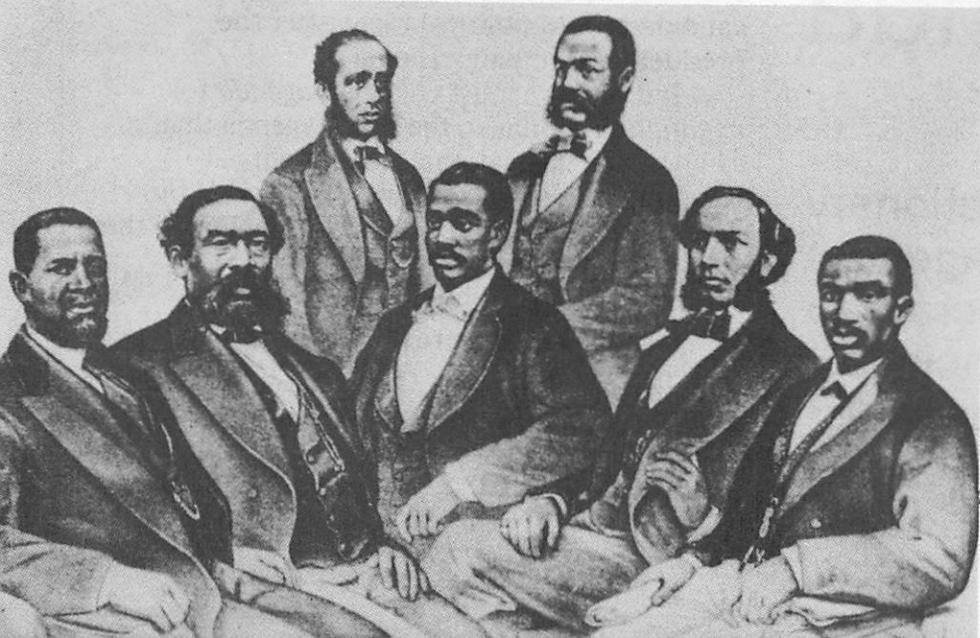
We must also question loud and clear the very method for electing the U.S. President. Simply because to speed the coming socialist revolution, we must constantly demand higher and higher levels of democracy. It is *Democracy* that threatens capitalism most directly!

For instance, most people do not understand the electoral system, that the American people do not elect the President. The electoral college *selected* by bourgeois-controlled state legislators actually elects the President. We should point out the insidious hidden denial of democracy this system is, that it is possible to become President of the United States *without* winning the popular vote, and that this has happened nine times. If we go further, we find the bottom line of this evasion of democracy by the bourgeoisie was to deny political power to the Afro American people in the 19th century. Specifically surrounding the Hayes-Tilden compromise, which ended the Reconstruction, and plunged Black people back into near slavery and "separate but equal."

The consistent truth that American history teaches is that the existence and influence of Black slavery, despite the revolutionary promise of the Civil War, the failure of Reconstruction, have always created a lie as American democracy. The truth is that such democracy has never existed vis-a-vis Blacks, and because of this *literally* has never existed for the *majority* of U.S. citizens!

This is, on one hand, the function of the Jackson campaign, to expose such consistent lies, and to show that the truth is the *absence* of democracy in the U.S. How could there ever have been democracy in a country based on slavery? A country growing rapidly senile, based on the material and psychological dependence on national oppression (and, of course, imperialism).

A group of Reconstruction congressmen. From 1891-1945, there was only one Black representative at anytime in Congress. From 1901-1929, there were no Blacks in Congress at all.



The Afro-American struggle for political power is at the heart of the

The agenda must be created in consultation with all the forces in the Rainbow. Such an agenda must go directly to the main issues at the source of the Afro American people's continuous struggle for democracy and self-determination. Issues like

political power, voting rights (voting should be mandatory for citizens — not the draft, just as taxes are mandatory now), employment, education, economic development, foreign policy (the official government *abandoning* of the South African fascists, economically and politically; withdrawal of U.S. troops from Grenada; abandonment of U.S. interventionist policies all over the world — Nicaragua, El Salvador, Lebanon), cabinet appointments, government posts, reinstatement of programs beneficial to the masses, tax restructuring.

An example of a revolutionary democratic agenda is the Minimum Program of Struggle of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-



Jackson campaign.

Leninist) excerpted this page.

These negotiations must be the real meat of the Jackson campaign. The majority of people must benefit from these negotiations between Jackson and the Democratic Party.

If such negotiations do not come about, then it is obvious that the amazing political dynamic created by the Jackson campaign will be dissipated and Reagan will win in November. Because there is *no way* that either Mondale or Hart, even with a white woman vice presidential candidate, can win without the *Rainbow* that Jesse represents, i.e., to mobilize the Black masses and progressives of all nationalities.

This is the reason why now is the time for all sectors of the *Rainbow* to put forward collectively a *Rainbow Agenda*. (A national meeting to put such an agenda together would be the best method.) But failing that, the masses themselves must put forward at the local and state levels, the main issues, practical reforms and concessions to be negotiated on at the San Francisco Convention, and to be struggled around in our local and regional communities after the Convention. Particularly, we must now see the national political agenda of those calling themselves Marxists.

A minimum program of struggle

The working class, oppressed nationalities and other peoples in the U.S. are struggling daily to improve their living conditions, defend and expand their democratic rights, and win peace and social progress. The League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) supports and raises the following as some of the main immediate demands against the monopoly capitalists and the government. The League understands that these demands are partially realizable under the present social system and that a radical transformation of society, socialism, will be necessary to realize them in a genuine and full way. The struggle for these demands is an integral part of the revolutionary process.

A. Some General Demands for the People

The right to a decent standard of living

- a guaranteed minimum income or jobs for all at standard wages
- comprehensive national health insurance and social security
- decent and affordable housing
 - eviction protection
 - rent control
 - no arbitrary discrimination based on nationality, age, children, marital status, sex, source or level of income, physical/mental disability or religion
 - an end to gentrification of minority and low-income areas
- public ownership of utilities
- low-cost mass transportation

Free high-quality public education at all levels

- equal access to education for all nationalities
- community control with parent and student input
- bilingual and multicultural education

Reform of the income tax system

- reduction of income taxes for working people
- a progressive income tax system for individuals
- no taxation without representation
- raising of corporate taxes

Full and equal political rights

- an end to the two-party monopoly
- full voting rights for oppressed nationalities — an end to gerrymandering and dual registration

End legal and extralegal political repression and violence

- an end to police brutality and harassment
- the immediate outlawing of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis
- the right to legal representation
- the dismantling of the FBI

Protection of the environment

- enforcement, protection and strengthening of environmental protection laws
- no nuclear power and no nuclear waste disposal, especially in Chicano and Native American lands, since capitalism cannot provide or ensure adequate safety
- safe disposal of chemical waste, no chemical dumping in residential areas

Public funds for the arts and for amateur athletics

B. For the Protection and Advancement of the Working Class

The working class has particular demands and needs in its struggle against the monopoly capitalist class and in strengthening the labor movement. These include both legislative and contractual demands.

Jobs

- a shorter workweek, 30 hours for 40 hours pay
- no job loss
 - no layoffs without full transfer and retraining rights for comparable positions
 - no replacement of full-time workers with part-time workers
 - no reduction of the work force through attrition (such as retirement)
- income and benefits maintenance

Many Chicanos support Jackson's campaign.



Full voting rights for oppressed nationalities!
(Above) Voter registration in Augusta, Georgia.

- job-to-job unemployment benefits, benefits to begin prior to first job when worker reaches age 18
- a moratorium on all debts for the unemployed
- no home foreclosures, evictions or utility shutoffs for the unemployed
- no new plants domestically or overseas by a company when existing capacity is underutilized or when workers are on layoff
- amendment of the National

Labor Relations Act to outlaw run-away shops and other means of avoiding union contracts by shifting capital or production

- protection from plant closings
 - national legislation to include two-year notification, penalty tax to the community, full retraining paid by the company for comparable employment at union wages
 - contractual agreements for severance, benefits and full payment of dislocation expenses, with ten-to-one penalties if broken

The right to organize

- prompt union representation elections within a specified time
- prompt resolution of unfair labor practice charges and stiff penalties for employers who violate the law
- abolition of Section 14-b (the "right-to-work" provision) of the Taft-Hartley Act
- legalization of secondary boycotts as an organizing tool
- repeal of all anti-labor legislation
- the full right to strike, including government employees
- establishment of amalgamated locals in all AFL-CIO unions to facilitate organizing drives on the local level

Full democratization of the trade unions

- right of membership to ratify all agreements
- direct election of officers
- contracts and union affairs conducted multilingually, based on nationality composition of work force

Decent and safe working conditions

- health and safety standards established independently by workers in each industry
- worker health and safety councils in each plant with the power to stop production when standards are not met
- the right to refuse all unsafe job assignments
- no forced overtime

- no rotating shifts

Equality for oppressed nationalities and women workers

- no discrimination in hiring, promotion, pay or job assignment, based on nationality or sex
- affirmative action in hiring and promotions
- job recall based on modified seniority to retain the percentage of oppressed nationalities and women based on figures at peak employment, or the percentage of oppressed nationalities in the surrounding population
- full maternity benefits and job security for women
- twenty-four hour child care

C. Demands for the Oppressed Nationalities

The oppressed nations and nationalities must have full democratic rights. The oppressed nations have the right to self-determination, which means the right to determine their political relationship to the United States. This includes the right to secede and form an independent state.

The oppressed national minorities have the right to political power in their areas of concentration. This may take the form of local or administrative autonomy, through which an oppressed nationality has the right to determine its own political, cultural, educational and other social affairs. These forms of autonomy will do away with the present practice where political districts are gerrymandered to prevent oppressed nationalities from holding office or exercising political power, even in areas where they constitute a majority.

Some general demands for democratic rights for the oppressed nations and minority nationalities in the U.S.:

- Recognition by the federal government that the U.S. is a multinational country, that is, made up of many different nationalities
- Equal political, voting, cultural, educational and social rights for all nationalities. All nationalities should be able to use their languages in all official dealings including voting, education and government services.
- An end to all racist violence and persecution
- Full redress and reparations for all grievances stemming from unjust acts committed by the federal government
- Unconditional residency for all undocumented immigrants

In addition, each of the oppressed nationalities has particular demands:

Afro-Americans: The Afro-American people constitute an oppressed nation in the Black-belt South and an oppressed national minority outside of this area. The Black-belt South is the historic homeland of the Afro-American people and they have a right to claim it. The Afro-American people in the South are a historically constituted nation. They have lived in this territory for over 400 years, and share a common language, culture and economic life. The development of the Afro-American Nation has been

marked by the experience of slavery, sharecropping, toil and the systematic denial of the people's political rights. Afro-Americans have developed a distinct class structure and culture. They comprise the majority of the population in this area today, and they should have the democratic right to fully determine the future of this region. The Afro-American Nation is a land of brutal oppression, enforced by racist violence and police repression, and this system is replicated in all areas where Afro-American people live. In their areas of concentration outside of the Afro-American Nation, the Afro-American people should have complete democratic rights and political power.

- reorganization of the county lines of the South to end gerrymandering of the Black population, and end all restrictions on Black voting rights
- redistribution of the land of the big landlords and agribusiness in the South to finally realize "40 acres and a mule" for Black people
- an end to racist violence and persecution by police and extralegal terrorists such as the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis
- the right to self-determination for the Afro-American Nation, the right to determine its relationship to the U.S. government, up to and including secession, if desired by the Black masses
- regional or local administrative autonomy in areas of concentration outside the Afro-American Nation

Chicanos: The Chicano people were forged into a distinct nation in the Southwest following the colonial annexation of the region by the U.S. in the Mexican-American War. Ever since that time the Chicano people have been brutally suppressed and discriminated against in all spheres of life, and have been subjugated as a people.

San Francisco Chinatown rally.

BEN FERRIS



Large corporations have driven Chicanos from their lands, and the capitalists have polluted and destroyed the environment as they plundered the mineral wealth of the Chicano Nation. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has helped enforce a reign of terror over the Chicano people and undocumented Mexican workers.

- the right to self-determination for the Chicano Nation in the Southwest
- the upholding of all land rights of the Chicano people under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
- equality for the Spanish language and Chicano culture
- full rights for immigrants:
 - unconditional residency for all undocumented Mexicans
 - equal jobs and pay for immigrant workers
 - the abolition of the fascist INS border patrol
 - an end to INS raids on communities and workplaces
- local or regional autonomy for Chicanos living in concentrated areas outside of the Chicano Nation

(The League's full Minimum Program of Struggle also includes sections and particular demands for Asian American and Pacific Island peoples; Caribbean peoples; the Hawaiian Nation; Native Alaskan people; Native American Indian peoples; Puerto Rican and other Latino peoples.)

(Section D. of the League's Minimum Program of Struggle includes sections and demands for the following sectors of the people: women; youth; veterans; seniors; cultural workers and intellectuals; farmers; disabled; prisoners; and homosexuals.)

E. Foreign Policy

The current foreign policy of the U.S. government is aimed at preserving U.S. domination over many parts of the world and at competing with the Soviet Union for world power. It is in the interests of the American working people and people in general that the danger of war be reduced in the world, that people and countries advance toward democracy, genuine independence and equality, and that superpower aggression in the world be opposed.

Colonial Possessions

The U.S. has colonized hundreds of islands around the world. The most prominent of these is Puerto Rico. Most of the others are in the Pacific. The people of these lands are colonial subjects with few rights. The U.S. con-

tinues to dominate these areas for its own imperialist economic, political and military reasons.

- sovereign rights and independence for all colonial possessions:
 - independence for Puerto Rico; independence for American Somoa, Belau (Palau), Guam, the Marshall Islands, the Midway Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands
 - no military use of these islands
 - observance of a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific; reparations and free health care to all islanders affected by U.S. nuclear testing
 - return the Panama Canal to Panama

Other Foreign Policy Demands

- major reductions in the military budget
- immediate negotiations with the Soviet Union on the freezing, reduction and abolition of all nuclear weapons
- the closing of all U.S. military bases in the third world; an end to U.S. unilateral domination of NATO; negotiations to demilitarize Europe with the abolition of NATO and the Warsaw Pact
- immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Grenada
- the cutting of economic and political ties to South Africa
- an end to U.S. military occupation of south Korea
- abrogation of the Taiwan Relations Act and an end to all U.S. government support for the Taiwan regime
- recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization and support for Palestinian self-determination; stopping aid to Israel
- an end to aid to right-wing military dictatorships
- non-intervention in the affairs of other countries; abolition of the CIA
- normalization of diplomatic relations with all sovereign countries, including Cuba, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (north Korea), Viet Nam, Albania
- no appeasement of the aggression of the Soviet Union
- beneficial and humanitarian aid to third world countries
- abolition of the third world debt; support of the demands for a new international economic order

Farrakhan and the Zionists

The Zionists are bourgeois nationalists and racists with the power to destroy, kill and take over other people's countries!

The bourgeoisie through their media or some right-wing Zionist organizations like the ADL (Anti-Defamation League — *ed.*), or using careerist compradors like Milton Coleman, try to paint Jesse Jackson as anti-Semitic. Particularly the bourgeoisie focuses on Louis Farrakhan, the head of the newly rejuvenated religious nationalist Nation of Islam. Certainly our own analysis of nationalism generally, has appeared in these pages many times.

We oppose nationalism, as chauvinist, exclusive, isolating and repressive, and opposed to the fundamental dynamic of class struggle inside its own nation, thereby dividing the working class along national lines, thereby allowing the multinational force of imperialism to rule us and the rest of the world. But we can support nationalists to the extent to which they oppose imperialism *e.g.*, in national liberation struggles. Farrakhan's mobilization of Blacks to vote is positive, his nationalism negative!

The bourgeois hypocrisy is this: Farrakhan is a religious nationalist — Islam and Black cultural nationalism. But aren't the Zionists and Israeli government religious nationalists — Judaism and White Jewish cultural nationalism?

The only significant difference is that Shamir and Begin or Sharon have more power than Farrakhan. Farrakhan can only make confused, media-distorted remarks about Hitler. Begin and the Jewish Nationalists, now imperialists, can invade foreign states, slaughter thousands of unarmed Palestinians in Lebanon, invade and *terrorize* the Middle East in the name of the embarrassing fig leaf of Israeli "democracy." In other words, they have enough money and power to actually *be* Hitler.

Will Reagan, or Mondale, or Gary Hart, disconnect themselves from the bloody colonialist Stern Gang rule of the Begin-Shamir-Sharon fascist murder mob?

Jackson's "anti-Semitism" is a hoax to the extent that he is merely reflecting bourgeois nationalist ideas! Still he remains the most progressive Democratic candidate!

But the international Jewish imperialist class, the Zionists principally, the economic base of Israel, are bourgeois nationalists and racists with the power to destroy, kill and take other people's countries!

The working class and revolutionary democrats, progressive people throughout society, should denounce nationalism, ethnic slurs (it would be good if Jesse Jackson would press the Democrats to make it a *crime* punishable by, say, 30 days, and a fine, to use ethnic slurs in social intercourse). American white supremacy is the most dangerous and powerful nationalism in the world. If we do not defeat it, it will most likely destroy the world!

FOCUS ON THE CARIBBEAN





AMIRI BARAKA

(delivered at Michael Smith Memorial, November 3, 1983, Brixton, London)

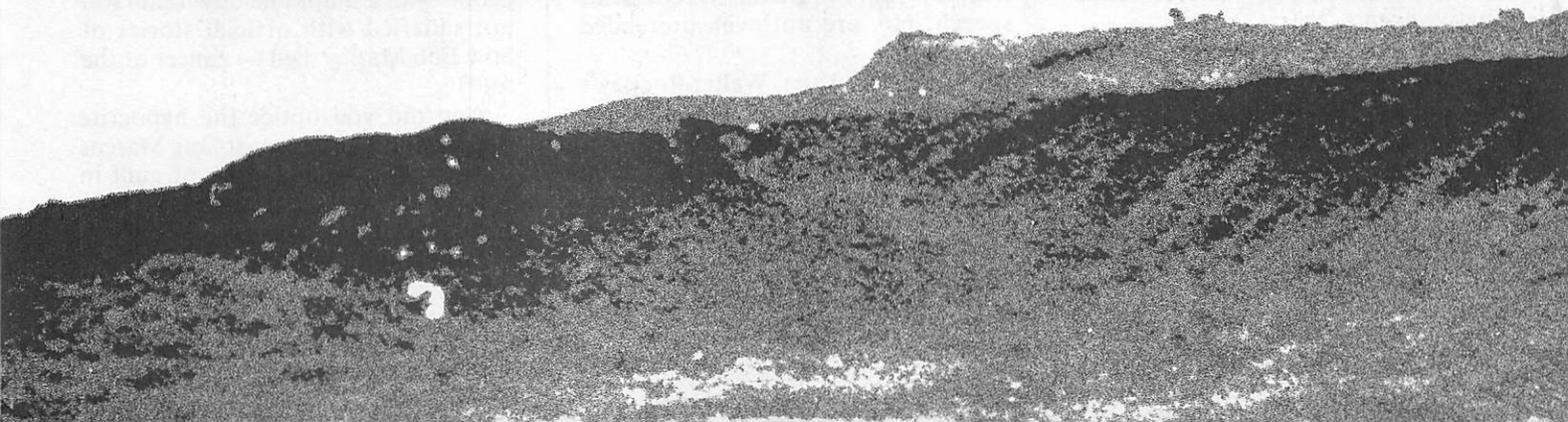
Bloody Neo-Colonialism
or
The Murder of Mikey Smith
or
The Murder of Walter Rodney
or
The Murder of Maurice Bishop

I want you to think about a world where it is impossible for black people, anywhere, to develop an intelligentsia, in the fullest and profoundest sense of that term, without them being assaulted, and in too many cases, murdered! Why? Because to be a black intellectual, since the slave trade began, is to be a consciousness that not only understands the historic oppression of the black race worldwide, but also has some clarity about what must be done



to end that oppression!

The poet, Michael Smith, was such a consciousness, and not idly, his poetry speaks directly to those two levels of our most developed minds — understanding the oppression and understanding what must be done about it. The most developed of such intellectuals also understands that such realization is sterile unless it is a blueprint for action!



Why was Michael Smith destroyed? Only because of our collective weakness. That we have developed this intelligentsia, not only in the Caribbean, but all over the black world, but have not organized sufficiently to protect them!!

In the last generation we could mention Lumumba, Cabral, Nkrumah, Sibeke in Africa. We could mention Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers, Fred Hampton in the U.S.

And now, very recently in a brutal sickening rapid succession Walter Rodney, Mikey Smith, Maurice Bishop in the Caribbean!

Revolutionary black intellectuals are dangerous to the status quo of super-power imperialist domination throughout the world, because all over the world, black people are at the bottom of these racist imperialist societies. Not only is imperialism a worldwide system, but since the primitive accumulation of capital needed to develop modern capitalism, including the industrial revolution, was based on the African slave trade, the social *order* of Imperialist societies is not only based on classes but *caste* as well. So that the darker one is, the more completely one is victimized by monopoly capitalism and imperialism. The sharper we are attacked by racism.

Particularly in the third world, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, since the revolutionary intellectuals, historically, *traditionally*, have tried to guide their people toward social transformation, material liberation, self-determination, scientific socialism, they have always come under sharp attack by the rulers.

For black people such attacks will always be more brutal and murderous because of our position at the bottom of these societies. But now imperialism has evolved to the stage of neo-colonialism, where no longer are we ruled directly by the hand of European colonialism, but now, in most cases, we are ruled by imperialism indirectly, through what Amilcar Cabral called "native agents."

Throughout the third world, imperialism rules now mostly through native agents. So that Neruda is murdered by Pinochet; Ngugi is imprisoned by Kenyatta, driven into exile by Arap Moi. Mikey Smith is murdered by *Ciaga*, Walter Rodney destroyed by Forbes Burnham.

In the U.S., where the African American people have never been in a colonial situation, but have existed since the 19th century as an oppressed nation within a nation, today in many of the 26 large cities we live in, there are black mayors who too often serve as messengers from Ronald Reagan and little else.

But in the Caribbean, particularly, we have seen for the last few years how thoroughly ruled by neo-colonialism that region is! Since the age of colonialism, i.e., open direct foreign domination, has mostly been past, in the Caribbean U.S. imperialism sees that its interests are served by spineless running dogs who resemble the oppressed people we selves!

And while we rejoiced at the passing of colonialism, though we must still kill it dead in the black world, in South Africa, Namibia and in the Caribbean, in Puerto Rico, its successor and higher stage, neo-colonialism, has proved to be even more dangerous, since all too often it dupes the oppressed people that are free and independent!

While those of us who try to take the lead toward real independence and self determination are brutally attacked by imperialism in a variety of ways and often totally eliminated!

Black oppression and submission are still key elements in the existing world order. Africa is a neo colonial travesty subordinated north and south by racist settler colonies, Israel and South Africa! The few progressive states are constantly in danger.

The third world is too poor to afford bourgeois democracy in the U.S. and European model, though they must give lip-service to it. So that most times there is not even the facade or illusion of representative democracy the way people are tricked it exists in the metropolises. In the third world, resistance to the neo-colonial order is met with swift violent death. The niceties and trappings of bourgeois democracy, trial by jury, appeals, freedom of speech, etc. are not even pretended toward.

So that in Guyana, Walter Rodney's militant leadership of the Working People's Association is stopped suddenly and permanently by the bloody neo colonial fiend, Forbes Burnham, Rodney's crime = working to build an authentic scientific socialism as op-

posed to the gibberish and nonsense spouted by Burnham to cover his exploitation of the Guyanese people.

The tragedy of this assassination has still not totally been absorbed by us. Rodney was one of our most brilliant leaders. How long before he is replaced? What vacuum and suffering exist because of this? Why were we not better *organized* to prevent this?

In Jamaica, Michael Manley's confused social democracy is overthrown by U.S. imperialism. That is another loss in the sense that even those slim gains represented by the Manley government must now be recovered. Manley's replacement, Seaga, is an open agent of U.S. imperialism and part of the new even more reactionary order set in motion by the rise to power of the right wing regime of Ronald Reagan in the U.S.

It is such a regime, in such a reactionary period, when Mikey Smith can be murdered. Reagan openly sanctions such attacks. His whole regime is based on the philosophy that the rising tide of revolution, seen throughout the world since WW2, must be stopped!

What must be done to a black revolutionary consciousness in openly neo colonial Jamaica when the television ads say to millions of Americans "*Come Back to Jamaica*; things are like they used to be — the niggers have been put back in their places — come to Jamaica. Sun and Fun — while the native niggers are made to eat even more shit than before!"

What must be done to a revolutionary consciousness that speaks directly of the people's suffering and the causes of that suffering? A revolutionary consciousness that even dares to openly criticize the rulers in front of the people and walk the streets nightly singing that criticism to whoever will listen!?

This is why the revolutionary consciousness in artists is especially dangerous, because they can put revolution into the hearts and minds of the people with a simple melody! (I am still not satisfied with official stories of how Bob Marley died — cancer of the toe?)

And did you notice the hypocrite Seaga babble about pardoning Marcus Garvey as a dumb gesture of guilt in connection with Mikey Smith's assassination by his Heathens!?

Mikey Smith's poetry was important

because it not only addressed itself, with its content, to the needs of the people, and opposed the people's enemies; its form was a revolutionary innovation in the way it sought to use the speech of the people. The poetry did not seek to imitate the rulers, as those negroes do who get the rulers' prizes. Mikey Smith's poetry spoke the truth in the rhythms and accents of the masses. This is why his poetry was so dangerous to imperialism. This is why the whole dub poetry movement is so important. This is why Reggae is so important. The artist can make truth irresistible!

But still we must ask, in these brutal dangerous times, how much longer will we go on largely unorganized and vulnerable to our enemies? Ronald Reagan, everyday, moves the whole world closer to WW3, how are we organized to stop it?

The murder of Maurice Bishop and his cabinet stinks of the U.S. CIA! Another brilliant young black revolutionary intellectual slaughtered by imperialism.

And no matter what internal struggles we may hear happened in Grenada, nothing can justify the U.S. invasion! But it is one more long stride by

Reagan and U.S. imperialism toward fascism domestically and nuclear war internationally!

Reagan, and the extreme right wing ideologues of the sector of the U.S. bourgeoisie he represents, seem determined to regain world domination, in constant contention with the other superpower, the U.S.S.R., or blow up the world trying!

U.S. intervention in El Salvador; attempts to destabilize and eventually overthrow the democratic Nicaraguan government; the occupation of Lebanon in support of an unrepresentative fascist government and now the invasion of Grenada — these events should make it clear that *the first shots of WW3 are already being fired!!!*

Reagan lies when he says U.S. marines invaded Grenada to save U.S. citizens. Those students were in no danger. It is an utterly transparent lie!

And to say that the U.S. has invaded to restore democratic institutions, while at the same time violating the U.S. Constitution by banning U.S. press coverage of the invasion should speak directly to how far to the right U.S. society is moving and how domestic fascism must accompany international imperialist war.

What Reagan wants is to make Grenada like its black ghettos of the U.S. with their 40% unemployment rate, and ubiquitous dope addicts. Are these democratic institutions? Since Reagan has not invaded S. Africa to restore democratic institutions in that racist settler colony, we can presume that he includes South Africa in his definition of "the Free World."

The invasion of Grenada was not only an example of naked imperialist aggression, it also reeks of racism and white supremacy. Since in all other cases in the last years U.S. imperialism has used stooges and surrogates to undermine, destabilize or overthrow progressive regimes in the third world. But in the case of small *black* Grenada, the effrontery of self determination was too much for the racists in the White House to stand. Bishop had to be killed! The marines had to invade, and now we find out that an appointee of Queen Elizabeth 2, Sir Paul Scoon, the so called Governor General, is nominally i.e. the *house* slave in charge. (Sir Paul Scoon? — well we've met his coon, now where is Sir Paul?)

And then as we look on in horror, that horror changes to utter shame when we witness the crew of *house* nig-



ALEX KING JR.

Ink drawing by Vincent D. Smith, "Dr. W. Rodney's Lecture, University of Dar es Salaam."

gers (Charles, Dominica; Adams, Barbados; Seaga, Jamaica; Cato, St. Vincent; Compton, St. Lucia; Byrd, Antigua) who jump up and down and applaud on cue, hoping to legitimize the invasion to black eyes. As imperialism grows more desperate and wild, so its apologists must also get wilder and more bizarre in defending it!

Yes, the tide of revolution has been blunted many places in the world by the counter attack of U.S. imperialism, and with this same motion, as one aspect of U.S.-U.S.S.R. international superpower contention, the danger of World War 3 is even more possible.

But how shall we survive and how shall we eventually prevail? Certainly we must understand that the only weapon we have is *organization!* It is not enough to have a revolutionary consciousness, a revolutionary idea, we must build truly revolutionary organizations wherever we are to overthrow and eliminate the rule of monopoly capitalism thereby smashing the material base of racism and national and sexual oppression. We must build organizations rooted in the masses with close ties with those masses. Revolutionary organizations that link theory with practice. Organizations which are capable of criticism and self-criticism. Organizations which can build as well as be a part of united fronts, wherein a majority of the people are focused on the destruction of our enemies. Organizations that can *fight* and help make revolution!

In the U.S., we need a multinational communist party which can lead the various popular movements and tie them together in order to struggle more intensely against our common enemy white racist monopoly capitalism!

We must also begin work in the very near future to maximize black voting strength and as part of some national progressive coalition of all nationalities get rid of Reagan in the next national elections!

But wherever we are, our movements can only be strengthened by strengthening our organizational capacity to resist and defeat imperialism. Black artists and intellectuals must organize themselves on a much higher level, according to the specific social context they exist in.

We must have organizations of revolutionary writers and painters as well as

historians. We must build international support groups to assist in the crushing of South African colonialism so that when the time comes we can turn whatever country we're in upside down to make it impossible for the western governments to help the South African racists stop the black revolution.

We must be able to counter attack against imperialism internationally and make hoodlums like Seaga and Baby Doc, or the neo colonial surrogates that assisted Reagan's invasion, tremble and denounce their collaboration with imperialism. But we cannot do this without organization!

The murders of Rodney, Mikey Smith and Bishop speak directly to our lack of strong national and international organization among black revolutionaries.



The entire black world should have been mobilized to speak out and condemn the monster, Burnham, for his assassination of Walter Rodney. The entire black world, and through its influence, the entire civilized world, must be mobilized to condemn Seaga for his duplicity in the slaying of Mikey Smith.

But this requires progressive organization and the abandonment of petty bourgeois individualism, addiction to atavism and metaphysics among the artists and intellectuals and a renewed commitment to struggle at the most scientific levels. And ultimately we must be always working to build the true organizational instruments of scientific socialism because unless monopoly capitalism is destroyed, conditions cannot exist in which racism and national oppression can be destroyed!

Unless we are willing to organize ourselves as revolutionary fighters, in command of the historic legacy of working class political analysis and led by the masses of people themselves, carrying our various national liberation and independence struggles through to the end, that is, all the way to *socialism*, we will always be tortured and weakened by the murders of our most brilliant brothers and sisters by our enemies.

Let us, in the name of Walter Rodney, organize in all the places we live, not only towards the liberation of ourselves, but as part of the whole population, where we live in multinational contexts, organize for the transformation of the whole society.

And let us, in the name of Maurice Bishop, fight imperialism and neo colonialism and finally make revolution so the majority can take power.

And finally let us, those of us who are intellectuals and artists, let us, in the name of Mikey Smith develop as truly revolutionary intellectuals and revolutionary artists, whose works issue from the collective mind, memory and feelings of the people. Whose creations move through the world with the power of unstoppable truth, so that they will be celebrated even in the future when finally there really is a Free World!

**DEATH TO IMPERIALISM AND
NEO COLONIALISM!
LONG LIVE MIKEY SMITH!**

Interview with New Jewel Movement leader Don Rojas

Grenada: What Went Wrong?

STEVE WATTENMAKER

Don Rojas is one of the last leaders of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) still living to have spoken with Grenada's slain Prime Minister Maurice Bishop less

than an hour before he was killed. Rojas was Bishop's press secretary, and prior to that editor of the island's main newspaper, the Free West Indian.

Rojas himself narrowly escaped death during the October 19 assassination of Bishop and other top leaders of the New Jewel Movement. Four days after the October 25 U.S. invasion of the island, Rojas and his family were rounded up by the occupation forces, interrogated, and then put on a U.S.

Air Force plane bound for Barbados.

Allowed only a few days in Barbados, Rojas went on to Trinidad and on his way to Canada.

Speaking in

Montreal at McGill University on December 1, Rojas recounted the events that led to the overthrow of Grenada's revolutionary workers' and farmers' government and described the subsequent criminal invasion by 6,000 U.S. Marines and Army Rangers.

After the meeting I had an opportunity to ask Rojas to go into more detail on some of the points he made during his talk.

Rojas told the Montreal meeting that the assassinations of Bishop and the other leaders "provided a very convenient excuse



Don Rojas (right) talks with slain Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop (left).

for the United States to seize the opportunity that they had long been waiting for, that they had long been preparing for, to invade Grenada and destroy the Grenada revolution — to remove the 'virus,' as President Reagan described Grenada, to remove this massive 'virus' from the Caribbean once and for all.

"And it is perhaps one of the most bitter ironies of this whole crisis," Rojas continued, "that the opportunity was provided for them — served up on a platter with all the trimmings — by a group of immature, unscientific, and, in many respects, opportunistic elements within the New Jewel Movement who proclaimed themselves to be the most militant and anti-imperialist faction of all."

Rojas described the massive scale of the U.S. invasion — one heavily armed Marine for every 18 Grenadian citizens — as being like "trying to crack a nut with a hammer." He also rebutted the Reagan Administration's justifications for the invasion, exposing each one as a total fabrication.

Nor, said Rojas, was there any truth to the claims that the Soviet Union or Cuba was responsible for the conflicts within the New Jewel Movement leadership. He stated that there was "absolutely no involvement by these two countries or the parties of these countries in the internal frictions of the New Jewel Movement."

"If there was any outside interference

it would have come certainly, in my view, from the Central Intelligence Agency using an opportunity of friction inside the party to manipulate, to divide, and ultimately to destroy the party and the revolution. But history alone will provide those answers."

If Bishop and the other leaders had not been assassinated October 19, Rojas explained to the McGill audience, "the Americans would not have been able to invade and overcome Grenada in five or six days. Because they would have met with the resistance of a united people, a people determined to defend their sovereignty, their dignity, and their independence."

Instead, he noted, "what they met on October 25 was a traumatized people, a demoralized people.

"Nonetheless, the young soldiers of the People's Revolutionary Army — many of whom themselves were misled and manipulated by the opportunist elements posing as ultrarevolutionaries — fought courageously, were wounded, or lost their lives."

The U.S. military, diplomatic, and political presence will dominate Grenada "for quite some time to come," Rojas said. Right now, "the groundwork is being prepared for the return of Eric Matthew Gairy — the infamous pirate, the bloody dictator who ruled Grenada for 25 years."

Rojas commented during his Montreal talk that while he is not "simplis-

tically optimistic" about what the future holds for Grenada and the New Jewel Movement, he does not believe "the revolution had been destroyed — set back, seriously set back, yes.

"My optimism rests in the belief that the impact of four-and-a-half years of this revolutionary experiment in a new form of socio-economic development for the Caribbean — an experiment that brought pride, a new sense of patriotism and dignity to the Grenadian people — the impact on the collective consciousness of the Grenadian people, in my view, is not going to be very easily wiped out.

In fact, he said, "there are already signs of growing discontent among the Grenadian people. They are now realizing, very painfully, that the so-called rescue mission turned out to be more than that. It turned out to be an occupation. It turned out to be a denial of Grenada's right to independence and self-determination."

Rojas concluded his talk by declaring that "in spite of all the pain," the invasion of Grenada is providing an impetus to the national liberation struggles around the world. "In that positive development I find hope, I find optimism. The struggle will continue, and I am convinced that victory is certain."

Later, I was able to ask Rojas a number of questions:

Question: You said in a recent interview that the events that led to the overthrow of the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada represented a fundamental error of judgment and personal ambition. Can you go into the political evolution that led to the events of October 19?

Answer: I think that the roots of the crisis that overcame the party and the revolution can be traced as far back as July 1982. At that time, Bernard Coard resigned from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the New Jewel Movement. While resigning his party positions, he retained his state posts of finance minister and deputy prime minister. He resigned, according to him, because he was not satisfied with the style of work and the priorities the Central Committee was addressing itself to. He was not more concrete than that.

U.S. troops harass and search a Grenadian during the November 1983 invasion.



ALEX WEBB

Then he was requested by the Central Committee to come up with a concrete and adequate explanation for his resignation. Apparently, he refused to do that.

This led some people on the Central Committee at that time to take the position that Bernard Coard could not be allowed simply to refuse arrogantly to address or to elaborate on his resignation. Others on the Central Committee took a more soft-line approach on how to deal with Bernard's refusal to explain his position to the Central Committee.

You might say they even took a sentimentalist approach. It's ironic that these same elements accused people who were seen as supporting Maurice Bishop of taking a sentimentalist approach. Some of them even went so far as to say that Comrade Fidel took a sentimentalist approach in his response to the house arrest and murder of Maurice Bishop.

A number of those who took a more soft-line approach to Coard's resignation came out of the OREL, the Organization of Revolutionary Education and Liberation. They had in a sense been weaned by Bernard and saw him as a mentor of sorts.

OREL described itself as a revolutionary Marxist organization. I don't think they characterized themselves as a party as such.

When the New Jewel Movement was formed in 1973, OREL merged with MAP and JEWEL and became an integral part of the New Jewel Movement.¹ But they always maintained a kind of clique, an OREL clique, within the New Jewel Movement during the 1970's and even after the 1979 revolution.

Between October 1982 and September 1983, Bernard used the opportunity to consolidate his influence and his authority within the party and to advance the OREL people within the Central Committee to very influential positions. Three of them were elevated to the Political Bureau.

In retrospect I think that Bernard very cleverly used that period to use his prestige and influence within the party to develop and line up forces behind him.

He did this in a very systematic way. So when he decided to make his move for leadership of the party, he had already consolidated quite a power base within the Central Committee and

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within the full membership of the party.

Although this problem had its roots as far back as July 1982, the catalyst that triggered this crisis was a proposal presented by the OREL people in the party for joint leadership of the party between Bernard and Maurice. This was proposed at a special meeting of the Central Committee in mid-September 1983.

There was absolutely no indication prior to this meeting that this proposal was in the works. None at all. Certainly the rank-and-file party membership did not know about it, nor did Maurice himself. There had not been the slightest hint that this proposal would be made.

And looking at it in retrospect, it had to do with the kind of game plan that had been worked out by Bernard and his people. When Liam James introduced the resolution, it came as a complete surprise. The resolution called for Bernard to be invited to return to the Central Committee and the Political Bureau and to be part of the joint leadership.

At the Central Committee meeting of September 16 when the sudden proposal for joint leadership of the party was introduced by Liam James and supported by other of Coard's people on the CC, it was stated by them that the "crisis" within the revolution was caused primarily by Maurice's so-

called weak leadership of the Central Committee. It is noteworthy that (Foreign Minister Unison) Whiteman and (Agriculture Minister George) Louison argued that collective leadership implied collective responsibility and that the blame should be shared by all and not be heaped on Maurice alone or on any other single comrade.

Furthermore, they correctly pointed out, along with Maurice, that an analysis of the problems in the revolution, in the party, and in the country in general must also take into account objective material conditions and the state of relations between the party and the masses. How much the problems in the material sphere had to do with weak management and planning of the economy, low levels of productivity and inefficiencies within the state sector, difficulties with the capital projects, etc. — aspects of the process that Coard was directly responsible for — was conveniently overlooked.

Then, after Maurice was put under house arrest, less than four weeks after the Central Committee meeting, they accused him of "one-manism" and "personality cultism," a charge diametrically opposed to the earlier one of vacillation, indecision, and weak



Sign in St. George's, Grenada, urging people to join the militia, before the U.S. invasion.



Grenadian militia woman.

leadership. This inconsistency can only be interpreted as opportunism.

This joint leadership proposal, as originally presented in the Central Committee, would not have worked. Maurice saw that very clearly. His position to the Central Committee and to the party was that he did not have any problems with the proposal in principle — that if it was a majority decision of the party, he would abide by the principle of democratic centralism and majority vote on this issue.

But he would have liked more discussion of the practical application of this joint leadership proposal. He had difficulty understanding exactly how it was going to work, as did many members of the party. It certainly had no precedent in Grenada in our party or, as far as we knew, in any left party we had relations with.

And he felt, quite frankly, that the way it had been proposed would have effectively removed him from influence in the top decision-making organs of the party.

In my view, if the proposal had been implemented as originally outlined, it would not have meant sharing power or equal distribution of power between the two. It would, in fact, have meant that Bernard would have become the de facto leader of the party.

Under their second proposal, Maurice would remain as prime minister and Bernard would become leader of the party. But in our context the party

is the instrumentality that leads public policy. The party is the force that charts the direction for the revolution. If the proposal had been put into effect, the real power in the country would be transferred from Bishop to Coard.

The office of prime minister would have assumed the kind of symbolic and ceremonial character that the office of governor-general (Paul Scoon) had on Grenada until the Americans appointed him the new petty dictator.

The joint leadership proposal was also impractical because the Grenadian people would not have accepted it, due to Bernard Coard's lack of popularity among the Grenadian masses. A lot of the image that the masses of workers and farmers had of Coard was in fact distorted, but some was also accurate; and Coard's image was a reality you had to deal with. It was something that could not have been changed very easily or quickly.

Bernard had an image as a very bright man, ruthless and not particularly compassionate, and not really the kind of political leader who had struggled for the masses and made sacrifices for them the way Bishop and Unison Whiteman and the rest had. In 1973, for example, Bishop and the others were brutally beaten by Gairy's Mon-goose Gang, almost to the point of death. During the 1970's there were numerous acts of violence and harassment against them. Bernard was teach-

ing at the University of the West Indies off the island and thus was not subjected to that, was not a victim of Gairy's terrorism in the way that Maurice and the others were.

During this period many Coard supporters in the party said that this new proposal would be strictly an internal party matter, that it would not necessarily be carried out to the streets.

Now, in my view, an issue as fundamental as who was to lead the New Jewel Movement could not conceivably be kept a strictly internal party matter. That would be a naive deception, and the Grenadian people would not have accepted such a proposal under any circumstances.

After that Central Committee meeting, in late September, Maurice, George Louison, Unison, and the other comrades on the official delegation left for the trip to Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Until Maurice returned from this trip I don't think he perceived the extent of the plot that was being prepared by people very close to him.

When we got back, indications were clear that the situation had deteriorated considerably and was perhaps out of Maurice's control by that point.

In Maurice's absence, Bernard Coard had been acting prime minister. He was running the state, running the

country, running the party. When Maurice returned to Grenada, contrary to tradition, members of the Central Committee failed to show up at the airport to welcome him back. On this occasion Maurice was met only by (Minister of National Mobilization) Selwyn Strachan.

We arrived back on a Saturday. Yet all day Sunday and all day Monday none of these comrades came to brief Maurice. Bernard Coard, as acting prime minister, had a responsibility to give Maurice a report on what had taken place during his absence. Liam James, as head of security, also had a responsibility to report in. But none of these people checked with Maurice.

Question: Could you comment on reports that what lay behind the differences in the Central Committee were deep ideological differences between Bernard Coard and Prime Minister Bishop?

Answer: I will try to clear the air on this question of ideological differences between Coard and Bishop and between those who supported Coard or were loyal to Coard and those who supported Bishop or were loyal to Bishop.

I am dismayed that there has been so much filth, so much simplistic interpretation on this question, mostly in the bourgeois press. It is not surprising that they would try to paint Maurice Bishop as the "moderate" and Bernard Coard as a so-called hard-line Marxist, pro-Soviet, and so forth.

This is clearly an attempt to use the overthrow of the Grenada revolution and the death of Maurice Bishop to taint the image of socialism, the image of revolutionary movements around the world.

These same elements who were describing Maurice as a moderate were a few months ago describing him as a dangerous Marxist, a totalitarian, a dictator. There's a lot of hypocrisy in that.

In my view, there was no fundamental ideological difference between Bernard Coard and Maurice Bishop. No fundamental difference on ideological principles, no difference whatsoever on the ultimate objectives of the revolutionary process — that is, to create a socialist state in Grenada.

There were, probably, some nuances or minor differences on approach and

questions of methodology or tactics and maybe on leadership style. But there were no differences on fundamental issues.

In my view, the contradictions that existed within the party at the time were secondary contradictions, which could have been settled peacefully.

But somehow, in all of the obfuscation that took place, they became elevated to the point that the focus on the primary contradiction — which is the contradiction between the revolution and imperialism itself — was lost. And because the focus was lost, the dangerous consequences to the revolution itself of the approach that Bernard and his people were taking were either overlooked, ignored, or misunderstood. I'm not sure which of the three is the most accurate.

Bernard and his people said they were calling for a more Leninist orientation for the party. But there was no attempt to arrive at a consensus as to exactly what this meant. What did putting the party on a more Leninist footing mean in reality?

Maurice and the rest of the comrades had absolutely no difficulty in accepting the concept if it meant a more disciplined and a more organized approach to party work; to the norms of party life; to study; to the application of the fundamental principles on which the party was built; to an understanding of democratic centralism; to an adherence to the principle of criticism and self-criticism.

If that is what it meant, then I don't think it would have met with any resistance, certainly not from the rank-and-file party membership.

But I think Lenin was being used as a cover. It appears that the call for a more Leninist orientation was misused to cover up what was in its essence a bid for power.

Bernard and his people also said they were dissatisfied with the pace at which the process was evolving. That again was a debatable question. I don't think they were taking a dialectical, scientific approach to how the pace of a revolutionary process is determined. It is not determined only by the subjective factor. It is determined by a balance between the subjective and the objective, determined by that dynamic that plays out over time.

In my view, the pace of the revolu-

tionary process was the correct one. There were numerous considerations that needed to be part of a serious and mature analysis of the present stage of the revolution, the pace at which the revolution was evolving, and so on.

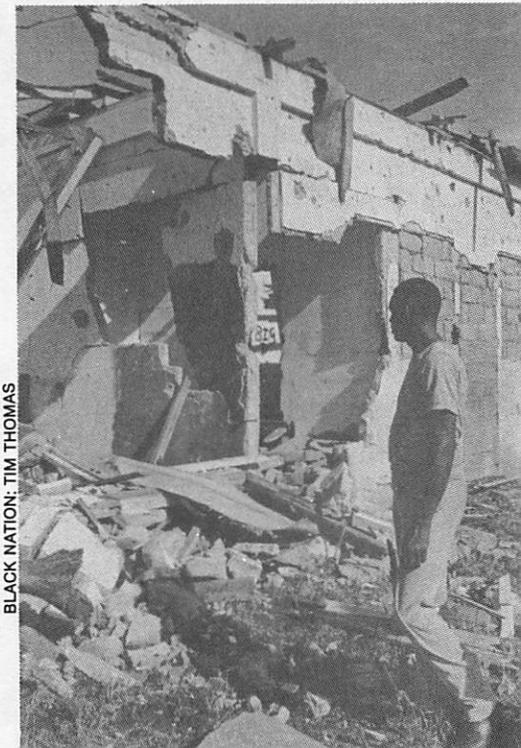
We had to consider the question in the context of a phased approach to the construction of socialism — particularly in a country like ours with its legacy of colonialism, neocolonialism, and Gairyism.

We had to take into account that we were surrounded by hostile, proimperialist forces. We had to consider the geopolitics of a region that U.S. imperialism considers its backyard.

I believe that the revolution was still in its national democratic, anti-imperialist stage, and was moving into a socialist-oriented stage of development. With the party controlling state power in the interests of the working people, the process of transforming the property relations and production relations from capitalist to socialist had begun.

This was a process that was going to be protracted — just like the struggle against imperialism itself, just like the struggle for national liberation, just like the anti-Gairy struggle was a protracted struggle. So, too, the struggle to build socialism in Grenada would have to be a protracted struggle.

A Grenadian observes the complete destruction of Camp Calivigny caused by U.S. helicopters.



BLACK NATION: TIM THOMAS

It would have to take into consideration such factors as the balance and correlation of forces within the region, the balance and correlation of forces in the world. The Grenada revolution could not be developed in isolation from what was going on around us, from what was going on in the world.

But somehow the notion that this process was not going fast enough entered into the ideological discussion in the party and led to a kind of cleavage. Some people said we needed to push it forward more rapidly. Others argued for a more rational, scientific, and less idealistic assessment of this question.

It is ironic that up to about a year ago, Bernard himself used to caution against the dangers of ultraleftism. We had a saying in the party that ultraleftism is the right hand of imperialism. He also used to point out — quite correctly — that ultraleftism serves more to raise the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie than that of the working class.

In my opinion, ultraleftism also

transfers the initiative for advancing the class struggle away from the working class to the forces of reaction. It allows them an opportunity to become more overtly aggressive and place the working class on the defensive.

For example, in 1980 Coard correctly accused the Budhlall grouping of ultraleftism.² (Those Budhlalls, by the way, are now rabid anti-communists. The two brothers are now walking the streets of Grenada spouting anti-communist and anti-progressive tripe.)

Bernard also used to champion the necessity at this particular stage in the revolutionary process of forming tactical alliances between the working class and certain patriotic elements within the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. This was necessary because the fundamental class character of our society is petty bourgeois. Even the class composition of the party itself was petty bourgeois basically — radical petty bourgeois people who had evolved beyond their own class and became proletarianized.

Bernard himself used to push the position of the necessity to build these tactical alliances. This was, in fact, one of the five priorities in the line of march of the party for this period.

Then a few months later, we hear Maurice Bishop accused of being petty bourgeois. We hear Unison Whiteman accused of being social democratic, of representing the right wing within the party. This was the first time we heard that there was a right wing within the party. We never knew there was any sort of right wing within the party.

All these charges, none of which was substantiated with a shred of evidence, were being used in a kind of convenient, opportunistic, Machiavellian way to achieve Bernard's objective of becoming leader of the party.

They also accused Maurice of cultism, of one-manism, again without substantiating those charges. That was perhaps the weakest charge of all. The people who knew Maurice Bishop knew him to be perhaps the most modest and least arrogant of all the top leaders of the party. He was the most accommodating and probably the number one adherent to the principle of collective leadership.

On countless occasions, when proposals were brought to Maurice, he would say that before a decision was made he had to get the collective wisdom of the Political Bureau or the Central Committee. Or he would say, "Why don't you bounce the idea off of Bernard and the other comrades," Unison and Strachan and so on. So this charge of one-manism was ludicrous. Party members just could not accept it. It didn't hold any weight at all.

The charge that he was becoming dictatorial was also totally false.

Question: Were these charges against Maurice Bishop ever presented to the party during this whole period?

Answer: The day after Maurice was put under house arrest a meeting of the entire party was called, presumably to discuss it. We all thought certainly the point of the meeting was to vote on the question and come up with some consensus within the party, some line of march to explain to the masses why Maurice Bishop was being placed under house arrest.

That was a very long meeting — five and a half or six hours. But unfortu-

Workers and small farmers benefited the most from Grenada's 1979 revolution.



FREE WEST INDIAN

nately the meeting ended without a vote being taken on the proposals. And there were not only the proposals on joint leadership, but further proposals to expel Maurice Bishop from the party altogether, to court-martial him. Very serious charges were leveled against Maurice that were not substantiated by one shred of evidence during that meeting.

Also, the party was told that Maurice was put under house arrest because he had authorized the spreading of a rumor that Bernard was trying to kill him. He was not under arrest, they said, for violating a principle of democratic centralism by supposedly refusing to abide by a majority decision of the Central Committee, but rather because he had allegedly spread this rumor.

Maurice spoke in his own defense at that meeting for over 40 minutes. He accepted criticism, as he had on previous occasions, for a number of weaknesses within the party and within the process. I don't think I ever heard any of those other leaders — and I certainly never heard Bernard Coard — criticize themselves at a party forum. And this was in front of the whole party.

But Maurice said, to use his own words, "With every ounce of honesty that I can muster, I will not accept responsibility for spreading this rumor that you are alleging."

He said, "If I really wanted to cause dissension and confusion within the party, I could have chosen much more creative ways to do it than to spread such a vulgar rumor."

But no vote was taken, and there was no guidance given as to what the line should be.

We asked, "Even if we accept those charges to be correct — and there was a lot of evidence that pointed the other way — what should be the unified party line when we go out there tomorrow to explain to the Grenadian masses that their leader is under house arrest?"

The next day, when party members themselves took to the streets — there had been no official announcement that Maurice was under house arrest — they found it exceedingly difficult to explain the situation to the masses.

The people's spontaneous reaction was general confusion, a state of dismay, a state of anger. That Friday morning, hundreds of people gathered

around the *Free West Indian* office. They were in an agitated mood. It proved very difficult to convince the masses that Maurice had violated a Central Committee decision and so on.

The response from the masses was, "Now look, man, don't give us all this crap. You lock up the man, why do you have him locked up? If you charge him with all these so-called crimes, then give him a chance to talk to us. We want to see him and hear from him. We know the man from a long time ago. He struggled with us. He struggled for our cause. He was beaten up to the point of death by Gairy's Mongoose Gang in 1973. Where was Bernard Coard when Maurice was being beaten up in the streets? Or when Maurice's father was shot in 1974? If Maurice did anything wrong the masses will deal with it."

Selwyn Strachan went down there to try to talk to them and made the huge error — Selwyn has made many errors in the past — of announcing that Bernard was now prime minister of the country. Selwyn was literally chased out of town by the people. They were so angry.

He went the same day to the international airport to try to talk to the workers there. Their response was, "No, we don't accept what you say. We want to see and hear from Maurice Bishop himself, and don't come back unless you bring Bishop with you."

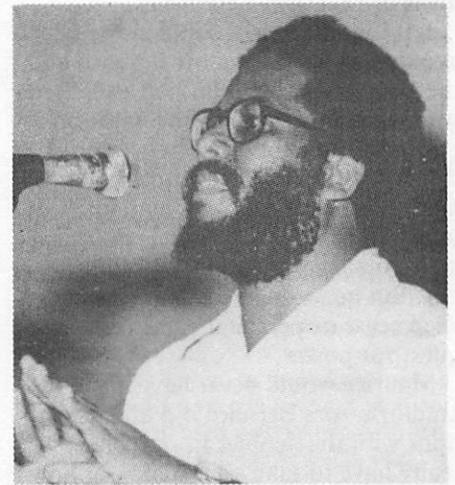
When they talked to the workers at the electricity plant they got a similar response.

Question: Do you think there were opportunities to avoid the ultimate outcome as these events you describe were unfolding?

Answer: What happened in the weeks before, during, and after Maurice's house arrest was that leftism ran amok. By that I mean that these comrades had completely lost any sense of connection between what they were doing, what they were saying, and objective reality.

Bernard could have put checks on this avalanche if he had acted in a responsible and mature Marxist manner. He could have cautioned that what was happening was threatening the very survival of the revolutionary process.

I think things deteriorated very rapidly in that two-week period. The party lost virtually all support among the masses. Many rank-and-file members



Coup leader Bernard Coard.

of the party also became alienated and disillusioned. Many were bullied into silence by Bernard's demagoguery. It was a very tragic development in that respect.

It had become so mad that when Louison and Whiteman were trying to negotiate with Coard and Strachan for a peaceful solution to the impasse, Bernard went so far as to tell Louison that they were prepared to lose five years of the revolutionary process because they were convinced that losing five years now would gain them ten years somewhere down the line. I can't understand that kind of logic, but this was the line that was taken.

Louison said to Coard, "The people are going to continue to manifest their disapproval of this. What are you going to do? How will you respond?"

Coard answered, "Well, the people can march, they can demonstrate, and we won't stop them. But they'll get tired. Gairy let them march and demonstrate almost daily for two months in 1973 and 1974. The same happened in Trinidad in 1970. The masses will get tired, and life will return to normal. And we will continue the revolutionary process on a more Marxist, more Leninist footing."

This was the kind of madness to which the situation had deteriorated.

Look, without the people there could be no revolution. If you don't have sections of the party and sections of the armed forces with you, and you don't have the working people with you, how will you conceivably continue to build the revolution? It defies logic. It defies history. And it defies the

ideas of Marxism-Leninism.

I think the crisis could have been avoided to some extent if Bernard and the people close to him had exercised some common sense, some wisdom.

Coard had a lot of influence and authority within the New Jewel Movement. He was a very able man intellectually, very bright, an excellent organizer, a man in possession of good qualities. But he was also a man driven by a deep sense of personal ambition and a quest for power.

Maurice would never have made the kind of errors Bernard did about relations with the people. In retrospect we really have to take a hard look at how ideologically developed Coard was. If he was really the kind of mature Marxist-Leninist he was purported to be, then I don't think he could have made such a fundamental error as to miscalculate the response or the mood of the Grenadian masses and take a position of contempt towards them.

Unfortunately Coard and his people did make these errors. They let their own ambitions, I suppose, and their egos get the better of rational analysis on this question. Bernard in particular allowed an avalanche of rampaging ultraleftism within the party to grow out of control.

And it grew to the point where, objectively at least, it created the conditions for imperialism to find a convenient excuse to move in and crush the Grenadian revolution. Comrade Fidel correctly warned Coard, Strachan, (Gen. Hudson) Austin, and the others of this likelihood in his statement condemning the killings the very day after they occurred.

In my view, the massacre at Fort Rupert and the draconian curfew that followed were not acts of class warfare, justifiable on the grounds of principle or historical necessity. Instead, like the invasion itself, they were crimes against the Grenadian people and the Grenada revolution. But only the Grenadian people and not the occupation forces or their puppet have the right to dispense revolutionary justice to the perpetrators of those monstrous crimes.

Question: You said earlier that in your view the revolutionary process in general was developing at the proper pace. Do you think that was also true with respect to the development of the mass

organizations, the parish councils, and so on?

Answer: As one of the central leaders of the party, Maurice himself was very strong on the question of creating institutions in the party, in the mass organizations, in the zonal and parish councils through which the rank-and-file workers and farmers, the women, the youth, the students would have an opportunity not only to express their views, but to contribute to the making of policy.

The system of councils, despite problems and difficulties, was working quite well up until the invasion. It was, of course, an experimental system. In the history of Grenada and the Caribbean there were no precedents. It was a system being closely monitored and subject to modification depending on how it was developing.

It was certainly Maurice's hope that this system of councils at the local level, the village level, the parish level would become institutionalized as organs of people's power. It was our hope to have it become part of the ultimate legal framework of the revolution as part of the new people's constitution we were preparing.

Organizationally there were still weaknesses in the organs of popular democracy such as the zonal and parish councils. Weaknesses not so much in terms of the willingness of people to participate in these organs, but more in the way they were structured. For example, in some cases there would be meetings without agendas. In some cases there would be meetings that were not chaired.

The people's reaction was, "Why should we come to this meeting, sit here, and do a whole lot of rambling? We can identify the problems in our community. Let's look for the solution in a structured way."

So these pressures were coming from the people themselves. It was very good, a very healthy development.

Looking at it in hindsight, the process of decentralizing power inside the community was moving faster than the process of decentralizing power inside the party itself. For example, as I said before, the proposals for joint leadership were never in fact voted on by all the rank-and-file party members.

Some of the problems in the party were discussed at the Central Commit-

tee meeting in mid-September of this year. The meeting analyzed a breakdown in the internal functioning and structure of the party, a breakdown in internal discipline inside the party.

There were feelings that comrades in the party were being overworked. Comrades were feeling that there were double standards operating in the party, that some comrades who deserved to be disciplined for not pulling their weight were not being disciplined because of who they knew in the party leadership.

These were all problems that did exist within the party. But I don't think the problems were insurmountable. I think a more rational approach to organization, to the distribution of tasks, to strengthening the key organs within the party — these kinds of measures could have been taken to eliminate many of the problems.

What ended up making that Central Committee meeting so extraordinary was not this examination of the state of affairs in the party, but the proposal for joint leadership that came out of the blue near the end of the meeting.

Question: How could the Coard faction even hope to continue to hold power after Bishop's house arrest and subsequent assassination?

Answer: I think that even if the invasion did not take place, Bernard Coard, General Austin, Strachan, (Ewart) Layne, James, and other members of the Central Committee who comprised that faction would not have been able to continue to develop the revolutionary process as we knew it.

The party by itself, as a numerically small party, could not have continued to build the revolution even if it had the support of the military. And even that was questionable after the events of October 19. There was such serious demoralization within the armed forces that a mutiny would have broken out in a matter of days.

They would not have been able to rule the country, because they would have had a country without people, without the revolution. A situation would have developed in Grenada where the working people abandoned all of the enthusiasm, the energy, the effort, and the voluntary labor they put out over four and a half years to build the revolution.

The Revolutionary Military Council



What will happen to this Grenadian government-subsidized child care center now that the U.S. controls the island?

BLACK NATION: TIM THOMAS

could not have mustered more than two percent support after the events of October 19 and the curfew. The economy would have ground to a halt. Grenada would have been totally and completely isolated from the region. The sanctions that had been announced by CARICOM (Caribbean Community) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States surrounding Grenada would quickly have begun to have an effect in a small country like Grenada. All sea and air commercial traffic had been cut off. Grenada was isolated from the world.

There would have been more demonstrations, I believe, despite the threats. Working people would have gone to their work places. But I doubt very much if they would have produced. There would have been all kinds of passive resistance. There would have been

no school. Perhaps students would have gone to school at the point of a gun, but certainly they would not have functioned in school.

So economically, socially, politically, and diplomatically the regime could not have survived. They certainly could not turn to Cuba for any assistance, because the Cuban Communist Party and Fidel had made it clear in the strongest possible terms that they disapproved of what took place on October 12 when Maurice was put under house arrest and when he was assassinated on October 19.

The regime would have been left without friends, without neighbors, and most fundamentally without a people.

It is noteworthy that the 15 members of the RMC and Coard, Strachan, and Austin all either surrendered to the

Yankee invaders or were captured without resistance. This was the same group who, in a last futile attempt to rally the masses to resist the invasion on the morning of October 25, called on the Grenadian people to fight "to the last man, woman, and child."

Question: How would you summarize some of the most important lessons to be learned from the overthrow of the workers and farmers government in Grenada?

Answer: In my view the faction led by Bernard Coard made a number of fundamental miscalculations.

One of them was that they failed to correctly assess the mood and consciousness of the Grenadian people at that particular time. That is a cardinal error.

They fell victim to subjectivism in

their approach to dealing with the people. One of the lessons we have to learn from this is that the class struggle cannot be carried out by a party or an army that — by its own actions — has alienated itself from the people.

Their unchecked, unscientific, infantile ultraleftism also opened the doors to counterrevolution inside and outside the country. The right-wing forces inside the country had begun to manifest a certain boldness even before Maurice was killed.

This was made evident by the demonstration of students, for example, who went to the airport site on Tuesday, October 18, and shut it down for a brief period. Among the placards were slogans such as "C for Coard, C for Communism, C for Corruption."

This was a very dangerous indication that the right had begun to move and to seize the opportunity of Maurice's house arrest to stir up anti-Cuban, anti-socialist, anti-communist, and counterrevolutionary sentiments among certain sections of the masses.

In the spontaneous demonstration of Wednesday morning itself, when the people went to Maurice Bishop's house and liberated him, some of these right-wing provocateur elements were very active inside the crowd, trying to whip up anti-Cuban and anti-communist sentiments.

(Trade union leader) Vincent Noel, myself, and some other comrades picked this up very quickly and brought it to Maurice's notice as we were moving down Lucas Street to the fort. He was very concerned about this. This was less than two hours before he was killed.

Maurice told me that I should try to go to the telephone company and make some calls to the outside world. He wanted the point made very clearly that President Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party had absolutely no involvement in this crisis and that the Grenadian people could solve these problems by themselves, without outside interference or intervention.

So it was clear that right-wing elements had in fact begun to mobilize

very actively inside of Grenada from the day Maurice was put under house arrest. This is just to give some evidence of the theoretical point that Bernard's actions objectively provided the condition for rightist opportunists to misguide and mislead the Grenadian people.

There is just one thing I want to read for you. This is a quote from a speech Maurice Bishop made on Budget Day in 1982. I want this quote to be understood in the context of the charges of one-manism, cultism, and arrogance that were leveled against Maurice. And we can contrast it with the lack of public statements by Bernard Coard complimentary to Maurice Bishop over the years.

Here is what Maurice Bishop said:

"But I also want to say that it would not have been possible, certainly not in the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Trade, to have got this incredible amount of work, to have had these comrades come up with these tremendous amounts of energy, to have had them display all the creativity and initiative that they have had; none of that would have been possible if they did not have a really first class, a really extraordinary leader, a comrade there to guide them at all times, to help them with their conceptions at all times, to help ensure that they are staying within the broad framework of the policies and guidelines and programs elaborated by our party and government, a comrade there to ensure that when they were about to collapse that he could himself help to take up the slack because nothing that they were engaged in doing was strange to him. He, himself, was the greatest worker of all of them, a comrade who sleeps regularly two or three hours a night, and for that reason a lot of us in the party and government try to put little handcuffs on him, to restrain him without success, because of his total obsession with the economy, with the country, with building this country as rapidly as possible; and comrades now again I ask you to recognize the tremendous, outstanding work of Comrade Bernard Coard, our

minister of finance."

Finally, allow me to express some personal thoughts on the priorities, tasks, and challenges that now confront Caribbean revolutionaries and progressives.

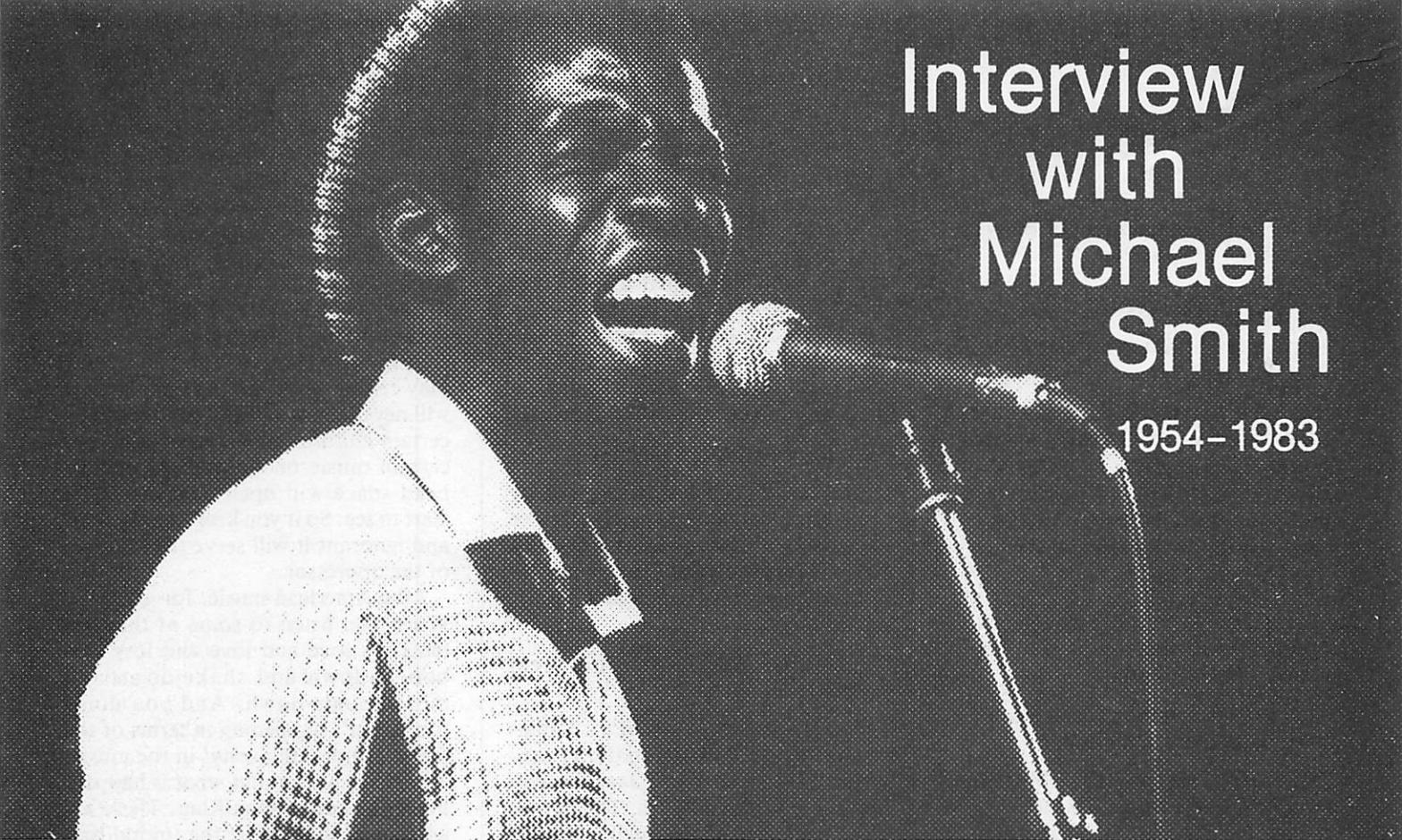
First, it is imperative that we begin a process of scientific and dispassionate analysis that would identify and explain the serious errors made by the NJM, separate the subjective and objective factors responsible for these mistakes, draw and extract lessons and conclusions from that analysis, and incorporate them into the ongoing refinement of revolutionary theory and its creative application to revolutionary practice.

We must let the positive symbols, achievements, and example of the Grenada revolution continue to guide and inspire us as we press on with the struggle against imperialism and its handmaidens — racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and fascism.

We must not be demoralized by the tragic setbacks of October 19 and October 25. Rather, we must strengthen our resolve, our optimism, and our confidence as we continue to call vigorously for immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Grenada and for an end to the U.S. colonization of the country. We must demand an end to the campaign of harassment, intimidation, and victimization against the NJM and supporters and sympathizers of the revolution. We should also condemn the reactionary campaign throughout the entire Caribbean to exploit the Grenada events to crack down on every progressive force in the anti-imperialist and labor movements.

At the moment, we should put a lot of our energy into support work for our comrades in Nicaragua who face an imminent U.S.-backed invasion, perhaps even involving direct U.S. forces. Now is the time for unity of all revolutionary and progressive people around the world. It is a time to rise above factionalism and sectarianism and come together in a broad anti-imperialist united front for peace, justice, and social progress.

Reprinted from Intercontinental Press, (New York), December 26, 1983.



Interview with Michael Smith

1954–1983

The following interview with Michael Smith was held in the Spring of 1982 shortly after his first British appearance at the Radical Black and Third World Book Fair. On a chilly park bench in Brixton he talked about his motivation, ideals, commitment and direction. Reprinted from London's Grassroots newspaper.

Michael, you have been writing since you were thirteen, what was your first poem about?

Zimbabwe, at that time it was Rhodesia. It was a poem hitting out at Ian Smith and saying Black Majority rule is a must!

What gave you that kind of political awareness at thirteen?

I was brought up by Rastafari . . . A brethren who was a shoemaker, he used to go to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jonestown and we used to talk a lot about African history . . . He used to carry me to different meetings — we went to Walter Rodney, and that's how the whole consciousness start to grow.

How would you describe the role of the conscious black poet?

A greater sense of awareness for his people to point them in a direction — a way forward for their ultimate liberation. It must not be to give an opinion that is catering to an elite. It must be for the black majority.

Your poem "Me Cyaan Believe It" was enthusiastically received at the Book Fair, what was it about?

There is a number of different segments, you know. The poem is saying that rooms is renting and people is applying for a room, but they are facing dilapidated housing — and that is what poor people face in Jamaica and in ghettos and other areas. It is hitting at man and woman relationship in which the man check a daughter, get her pregnant and gone again. It hitting out at police harassment and police brutality. It is hitting out at the relationship of domestic helpers with their boss, in which there is exploitation carried on because she's in the same house as him — and his wife gone to work — and him think him can sexually abuse and

use her. It's all about Orange Street fire — that dread fire where a lot of people were killed in Jamaica. All these things you believe it or you blind your eye to it.

AWARENESS

As a poet with a lot of awareness and sensitivity, what is your message to Black people here?

There's two messages, right. There are black people who have contributed a lot to British society while British society has ripped off black people in relationship to colonialism. Black people were brought here to build Britain so a lot of black people feel that they have a right to be here. So if they want to live here the most I can say is that conditions and provisions must be made for them and not be treated as people who don't have any say. And there are those who want to leave, right, so they should leave. Our jobs is to create an awareness and enlightenment so that we don't have a narrow perspective to our struggle but an international perspective and goal.

If you're here to just cool out, it

can't be that. You can't just sit down on the sidewalk with a vacant feeling like you want something to believe in. You have to believe in something and define yourself in this here Babylon and know your position.

INTERNATIONALISM

Why is it important to have an international perspective?

People live all over the place and different people are feeling different hardship and you suppose to be aware of that so the system does not have you in total ignorance; because then you become passive and reserved and you won't take no action.

So you have to know how to define yourself in this here Babylon. For the final confrontation you have to know who your enemies are.

What are the common issues that face Black people internationally?

Cultural imperialism and political imperialism, that's what face them internationally. Stagnation of our young people so we are reduced to a state of powerlessness. What we must be determined to say is that they not going to destroy I, make I give up, for our life got a sense of purpose.

What path can a black youth embark on who is confused but wants to find their sense of purpose?

Check for history and check for your culture. You have to know where you are coming from to know where you are going, and until you find out that you will always be confused.

Spiritually, what is our greatest dilemma as a people?

Spiritually, the system have we morally bankrupt. We have to redefine ourselves and we can't allow ourselves to be governed from their perspective of things. We have to define ourselves and our sense of purpose from our own cultural, political and historical perspective. Not by the perspective they hand down because their history is bias. They are liars, they are thieves. They tell us that Christopher Columbus was a great, great man and Burning Spear say Christopher Columbus is a damn blasted liar. So if we continue to read the history books that they write with their biases and continually

believe that what them say is so — well we goin' to get fucked!

Poetry book is not the ultimate success of any artist. What the artist should be striving for is to try and create work that is of substantial value to his community. Then, if him find out as he go along to put it down in book form, then it is so. I never particularly think about putting it down in book form because I always think that it's better to hear me than to read me.

Who inspires you as a poet?

My mother. Then I was inspired by some Black American writers like Langston Hughes. Marcus Garvey played a very important part in my life and Rastafari. Marxism had some effect on me too.

Do you use patois as a political weapon?

No man, is not no patois. It's a Jamaican language. It is the majority language. When you go to Jamaica you don't go and talk English. The people in the street don't talk English but the dominant language that is pushed in the schools is the English language, which is the language of the status quo. The national language is not patois, that sounds derogatory.

What are your plans as a poet/artist?

I am going to put out an LP which I've been dodging for a long time, and a book . . . When I first started to 'read' my primary objective was to try and spread the message as far as possible in Jamaica . . . the next is documentation stage and reach a wider international community on issues that affect the oppressed and dispossessed whether they be in London, New York or JamDown.

Is there anything I haven't asked you that you think people should be aware of?

Right now, Rasta man in Jamaica facing a cultural threat. But them (the oppressor) can't win, they can't get us out. The Americans are coming into the country and they want their culture to dominate the indigenous culture. When you listen to the radio station you hear more disco music that reggae music, and that if is fuckry . . . you can't have that. But when you come to London you hear a whole heap of Rockers . . . you can't hear that in

JamDown, something wrong. So it show you that the establishment have not fully understood . . . or they have understood but are afraid of the consequences that the music can have.

The music will build up people's consciousness because it is talking about the particular social and political happenings in the country and its relationship to black people. So if you don't play certain music on the radio people will never know and will be locked in a certain cultural bind. Now if you put certain music on the radio, people's head-space will open up and they'll start to see. So if you keep people blind and ignorant it will serve the interests of the oppressor.

Like American music, for example. When you listen to some of the contents it's love and love and love and boogie-down and shake-down and more boogie-down. And you don't hear what's happening in terms of the (racist) 'moral majority' in the music. You never hear about what is happening with the Ku Klux Klan. There are artist who talk about the 'moral majority' and the Ku Klux Klan but you don't hear them on the airwave. So it can be used a divisive method so that people just think that it's pure party and shake-down and boogie-down, and everything's all right and everything's great and have a senselessness as such that reduce people to nothing, naught, zero.

What do you see in the future for Black people in Jamaica?

There is a new movement happening right now in Black people. In the sixties black people have taken a beating and there was a retreat. But the oppressor has confused the retreat and think it was a defeat. Now black people voices are coming back. Black people are getting their energies back together, and they are talking and saying this thing can't go on no longer (this is happening in Jamaica now) . . . and very soon there you are going to hear a tremendous shout. And it is not going to be just one person but thousands and millions of people all over the world who will shout out, "Yea, we want to be free . . ." from your political slogans and all kind of rhetoric, and your mock ritual of poverty that the politicians issue out at appropriate times.

Michael Smith:

“Mi
C-YaāN
beLiēVe
iT”

and other poems

Mi Cyaan Believe It

*Mi sey mi cyaan believe it
mi sey mi cyaan believe it*

*room dem a rent
mi apply widin
but as mi go in
cockroach rat an scarpian also come in*

*wan good nose hafi run
but mi na go
sidung pan 'igh wall like humty dumty
mi a face mi reality*

*one likkle bwoy come blow im 'orn
an mi look pan im wid scorn
an mi realize 'ow mi fine bwoy pickney
was a victim of de trix
dem call partisan pally-trix*

*an mi ban mi belly
an mi bawl
an mi ban mi belly
an mi bawl
lawd
mi cyaan believe it*

mi sey mi cyaan believe it

*Mi dawta bwoyfren name is sailor
an im pass through de port like a ship
more gran pickney fi feed
but de whole a wi need
wat a night wat a plight
an we cyaan get a bite/mi life is a stiff fite
an mi cyaan believe it*

mi sey me cyaan believe it

*Sittin on de corner wid mi fren
talkin bout tings an time
mi a hear one voice say
'Who dat?'
mi sey 'a who dat?'
'A who a sey who dat
wen mi a sey who dat!'*

*When yu tek a stock
dem lick wi dung flat
teet start fly/an big man start cry
an mi cyaan believe it*

mi sey mi cyaan believe it

*De oder day mi pass one yard/pan de hill
when mi tek a stock
mi hear*

*Hi bwoy
yes mam*

*Hi bwoy
yes mam*

*Yu clean up de dwag shit?
yes mam*

an mi cyaan believe it

mi sey mi cyaan believe it

*Doris a moder a four
get a wuk as a domestic
boss man move in
an baps si sicai she pregnant again
baps si sicai she pregnant again
an mi cyaan believe it*

mi sey mi cyaan believe it

*Dah yard de oder nite when mi hear
fiah fiah to plate claat
Who dead?*

You dead?

Who dead?

Mi dead?

Who dead?

Harry dead?

Who dead?

Eleven dead

Woeeeeeeee

*Orange Street fire dey pan mi head
an mi cyaan believe it*

mi sey mi cyaan believe it

*Lawd mi see some black bud livin ina one buildin
but nuh rent nuh pay/so dem cyaan stay
Lawd de oppress and de dispossess/cyaan get no rest
what next*

*tek a trip from Kingston
to Jamaica*

*tek twelve from a dozen
an mi see mi muma in heaven
. . . MAD OUSE . . .*

*mi sey mi cyaan believe it
mi sey mi cyaan believe it*

*Yu believe it?
How yu fi believe it
when yu blind yu eye to it*

*But mi know yu believe it
Lawwwwwd
mi know yu believe it . . .*

Picture or No Picture

*It was seven past nine
daylight saving time
when I decide fe step
pon a corner
smoke a splif
for de times a run stiff
when I sight some man
pon de corner like
dem just a exist
it just grab me ina
me guts dat sooner or later
dis silence
goin bust
an dem going badder
dan dem blacks ina
Brixton
dat went over pon
banana boat
an tek fe joke
when de pickney bawl
dat justice out
ina Britout
An dem going badder
than dem blacks ina
Boo York
dat seat in pon side walk
wid dis vacant feeling
like dem want something
fe believe in*

*And dem going badder
than dem intellectual
dat a seek companion
with dem pen dragon*

*And dem going badder
dan dem gun man
dat a put feat in wi
fe cripple
I man*

*Picture or no Picture
tell me teacher*

Natty Natty

Say Natty natty

Noh badda dash
whe yuh culture
For de teacher man know it
But im naw tell di sheep
Dat rata rata naw bring
Back new teeth.

When yuh dash wey de spliff
An tek up di sniff
Say natty natty
Noh badda dash
Whe yuh culture

Remember yard is Mumma
Pon ground yuh sleep
Tek yuh pickney

When yuh tiad fi breed
An if yuh naw sleep
Yuh mumma naw sleep
An if yuh a go die
She a goh beg God
Mek she die too
So say natty natty
Nuh badda dash
Whe yuh culture.

Yuh noh country
Come to town
Yuh born a Jam-down
So no figet yuh gal a yard
An tek one from abroad
An lie out pon de beach
An ejaculate between
A time magazine
Dem will spread it
pon a Boo York scene
dat yuh is a dallah-a-day-dread
A betta yuh bald yuh head
Say natty natty
Noh badda dash
Whe yuh culture.

Say natty natty
Noh badda dash
Whe yuh culture.

A know yuh disillusion
When yuh see de politician
Tek out yuh dawta
An buy her suppa
Den get her fat
An call it culture
But say natty natty
Be aware of de culture smuggler
Noh badda tek wi revolution
So tun touris attraction

Man.

Sunday

I sit
Sunday
not meditating on
people clapping
shouting
meek
shall inherit earth
but meditating
freedom
I
shall not die
a natural death
but
fighting.



It A Come

*It A Come
blood a guh run
fire a guh bun
nuh care how
yuh tek it
some haafi regret it
it must come
yuh could vex
till yuh blue
I
a reveal it to yuh
dat cut yeye cut yeye
can't cut dis yah reality
in two
it a come
it bound fi come
it goen guh tek yuh
So Maggie Thatcher
Yuh better watch yah
yuh goin meet yuh
Waterloo/so yuh can stay
deh a screw
I sub poena yuh
from de little fella
Called Nelson Mandella
Who goen tun a
fi yuh stop support
de blood sucking I
call apartheid
for it a come
it must come
an much ready done
it bound fi come
it a come
an if yuh ina yuh mansion
a get some passion
it gown bust out in deh
like a fusion bomb
It a swell-up ina de ground
An yuh can't hold it back
yuh haf guh deal with de fact*

*An nah bodder run to nah politician
for im can't bribe it
im hafi subscribe to it
An nuh tek it fi joke
yuh nuh si what happ'n
to de Pope.
it a come
it must come
it bound to come.
Some a guh call it awareness
An wi a guh celebrate it
with firmness while others
a guh call it Revolution
but I prefer liberation
fi de disposess
it a come
it bound fi come
not only fi I but fi yuh to*

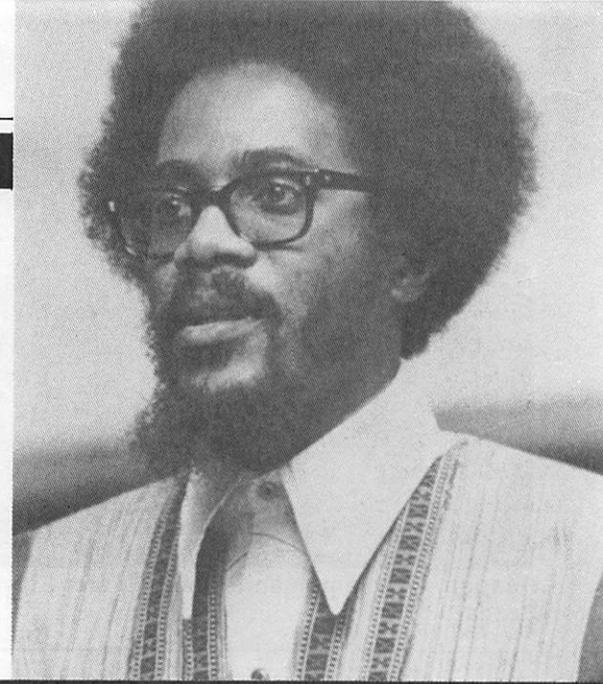


Mi Feel It

*Mi feel it yuh si
Fi si so much youth out deh
Under such a hellava strain
Till dem don't even know
Dem name
Dem out deh
Nuff a dat cigarrett butt
Out a luck a look fi wuk
Thinking dat freedom
Is a senseless dream
An grip with such feeling
Of hostility dem would a
Strangle a dowg
Fi get a bone an devalue
Dem dignity
Mi feel it yuh si
Dat ina dis concrete jungle
De youth nuh got nothing
Fi relate to
Some trying fi get close to Babylon
Fi pay dem rent
But de system
Hand down a crucial kinda judgement
An tears will not staisfy I
To preserve a Demockicy
Whereby youthfull life
Pay de penalty for politician
Irresponsibility
While dem interlectual pen dragon
A justify de duty curry duntion
Dat I live pon
Like dem little mompala man
Mi feel it yuh si
Dat dem twist justice an equality
Til it nuh address I and I reality
Dat when yuh tek a stock
Big man hafi a run back
Fi henka pon im old lady frock
Fi fetch up him stomach
Dat stretch out like a hammock
Mi feel it yuh si
But anytime yuh see de youth
Dem stumble
Don't think them fall
Watch out
Dem a plan
Fi mek yuh bawl*

All Michael Smith's poetry is reprinted from London's Race Today magazine.

Walter Rodney and the Caribbean Revolution



Walter Rodney (1942–1980).

CLIVE Y. THOMAS

From: *Walter Rodney —
Revolutionary and Scholar:
A Tribute*

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Pierre-Michel Fontaine

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Introduction

Although I am somewhat fortunate in that the earlier contributions to this symposium have dealt with Rodney as scholar, as fighter for African emancipation, as Third World revolutionary, and as Marxist theoretician and practitioner, I cannot pretend to trace, let alone analyze with the seriousness it deserves, the full range and profundity of the impact of Walter Rodney on Caribbean politics. I shall, therefore, after a very brief introduction, proceed to discuss Walter Rodney in the context of three fundamental issues in Caribbean politics, namely:

1. the relationship between pseudo-socialism and working class politics;
2. the relationship between democracy and dictatorship; and
3. the relationship between violence and social change.

Before I proceed any further, I should also state that my analysis is

based as much on Walter's writings and speeches as on his practice of politics, particularly as revealed in the politics of the Working People's Alliance (WPA), a party in which until his assassination he was a leading member. In doing this I am also stating at the outset that it is impossible to view Walter Rodney as separate from that political party, or indeed, separate from the political and social processes within the Caribbean — or indeed of Africa and the Third World. With that in mind, then, you come to understand that much of what I say about Walter might not in fact even be represented in things that Walter actually said, but certainly reflects the corpus of practice and discussion of which Walter was a vital part as it unfolded in the Caribbean.

As is commonly known, Walter graduated in history from the University of the West Indies in 1963, proceeded to London to complete his doctorate in history, then went to Africa to teach at the University of Dar es Salaam, returning to Jamaica to teach history in 1968. There he spent less than a year, because after attending a Congress of Black Writers held in Canada during October 1968, where he presented a paper on "African History in the Service of Black Revolution," he was banned from reentering Jamaica. This led to social disturbances, to rioting and other such insurrectionary

acts, reflecting — at least in part — the deep roots he had held among the Jamaican masses, although he himself was not Jamaican.

The banning was, of course, based on his political activity in Jamaica; the nature of this activity perhaps is best recorded in the collection of his speeches entitled *The Groundings with My Brothers*. This activity reveals three fundamental views that he held and represented in his life's practice, and which provide the continuing theme for understanding the later issues that I raise. First, he saw history as the science of social development and as such — as a science — he felt it must be used as an instrument to promote the development of humanity. I make the point about the development of humanity to emphasize the human dimensions, the underlying humanity that Walter Rodney considered as the basis of his life's existence. He also recognized, second, that as a social scientist and academic one cannot exist either creatively or purposefully in isolation from the mass of humanity in which and among which we must all necessarily function. He went on, I believe, in his practice to demonstrate a third truth, namely, that it is even worse to live and function in any such pretended isolation, as this leads to the reinforcement of that inertia which exists in all human society and which because of its



Reagan with Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga.



Guyana's President Forbes Burnham.



Haiti's "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

very nature favors the status quo. By that I mean reinforcing the existing constellation of class power within the Caribbean. Preserving the existing constellation of class power and forces meant the perpetuation of the domination of the vast majority of people by a minority who held political, economic, and social power in the Caribbean. It was therefore, for Walter, the social duty of those who understand the causes of such domination to develop a practice that could remove it.

Now Rodney recognized the real difficulties represented in pursuing a life based on these three principles. He knew that "establishment" views or, better yet, what he would term as ruling class ideology — particularly in the Caribbean, given its lack of self-confidence at that point in time, the underdevelopment of indigenous roots in scholarship, and so forth — would always question the "scholarship" in any social science that was radical and people or mass oriented. But he had very scant regard for "academic reputation" or "scholarship" in this sense. His interest was to serve humanity by contributing as he saw it to the struggle of the dispossessed to change what was represented by the ruling classes as the "natural order of things."

The period that he spent in Jamaica, although brief, was one of a great reassertion of populist politics in the Caribbean, particularly in Trinidad and Tobago and in Jamaica itself. This populist upsurge was integrated into the worldwide advance of the liberation struggles of Third World peoples, and in particular, in political and ideo-

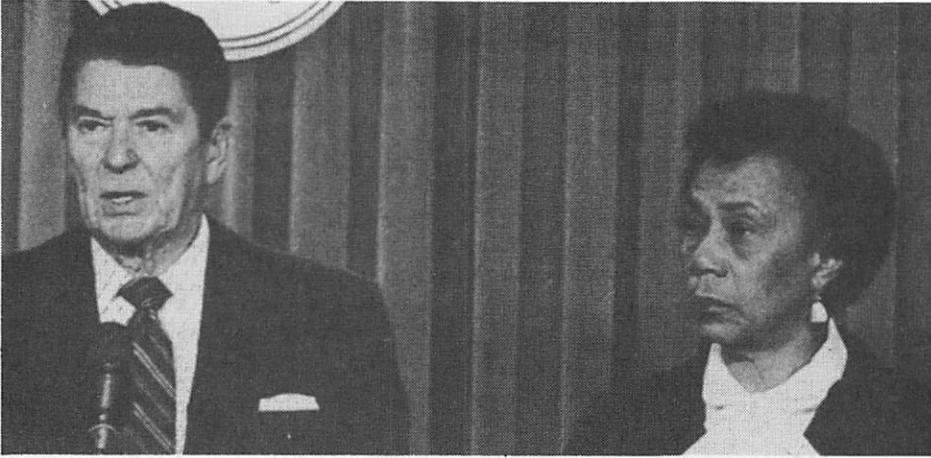
logical terms, the resurgence of African consciousness, cultural nationalism, and Black Power movements of that time. This resurgence was a complex phenomenon and cannot be reduced to simple racial terms of black and white. Rodney recognized this without a doubt and was always careful in trying to show his recognition of this to point out two things about the Caribbean. First, any assertion of the ideas of cultural nationalism, Black Power, and African consciousness would find that its immediate enemy, if not necessarily the fundamental enemy, was the local "black" political ruling class in Jamaica. That is why he found, for example, and stated that there is no contradiction in a so-called "black government" banning him from Jamaica (even though he was a leading exponent of the cause of black liberation), while at the same time welcoming "white" capitalists and inheritors of the plunders of slavery with open arms. Second, he also recognized that in the Caribbean after the defeat of the slave system in the 1830s the ruling class pursued a system of modified slavery based on indentured immigration, particularly into Guyana, from all parts of the Third World, especially from India. European subjugation, therefore, was not only of Africans in the Caribbean but also of Indian peoples who formed a substantial section of the community subjected to European racial, cultural, and economic domination. In both these senses, therefore, Rodney's advocacy of cultural nationalism, Black Power, and African consciousness was at that time,

at the very least, anti-imperialist at its core, democratic, and oriented towards the class interests of the exploited workers and peasants.

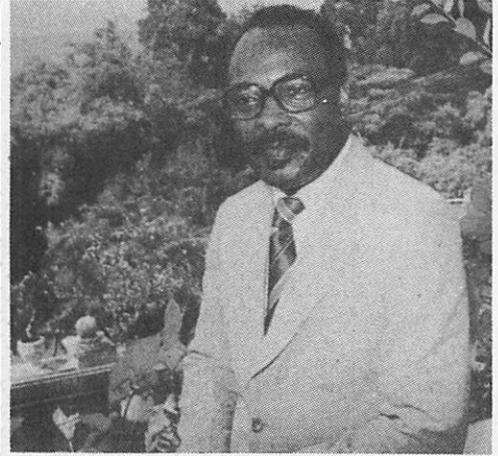
In this context it is significant, I think, that immediately after his banning, Walter proceeded to Cuba, where he spent several months before returning to Tanzania, an episode that is perhaps not as widely known as some of the others in his life.

In 1974, he returned to Guyana after the competent authority at the university had offered him the professorship in history. On his arrival there the government refused to permit this appointment to go through. Ironically, this same history department at the University of Guyana has stated in a published tribute, which I feel compelled to quote at length because it reflects a dimension of his life that we must also keep at the forefront, that Walter Rodney:

never stopped being an academic and a scholar, both in and out of Guyana where he gave lectures in African and Caribbean History. In 1970 he had given a series of lectures for the Department of History on "An Examination of the Confrontation of West Africans and Europeans from the Beginning to the Present." In 1975, through the sponsorship of the University's Students' Society he gave a series of ten lectures on the French, Industrial, American, Russian, Chinese, and Cuban Revolutions. For many years he has served as External Examiner for the Department's course in History of West Africa. He is named



Reagan with Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica.



Grenada's Governor-General Paul Scoon.

External Examiner for the M.A. History theses and (was) named External Examiner for the recently launched course in "The Comparative Study of Revolutions." Dr. Rodney, a member of the Association of Caribbean Historians, attended its Annual Conferences whenever possible and at the 1977 Conference in Barbados presented a paper on "Barbadian Immigration into British Guyana, 1863-1924." It is impossible even to list much less note all that Dr. Rodney has written over the years. Those who felt that the historian had turned politician never saw him working away at the National Archives and the Caribbean Research Library at U.G. The last time I saw him was in the Caribbean Research Library pouring over books and manuscripts. The fruits of this research were a text on *Guyanese Sugar Plantations in the Late Nineteenth Century* published last year in Guyana by Release, and *The History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905*, soon to be published by Johns Hopkins University Press, U.S.A.¹

Now it is important to recognize that throughout this period, Walter was also intensively engaged in study as an academic, engaged in the practice of bringing the science of history to the struggle in which he was actively engaged. Furthermore, it was during this period spent in Guyana since 1974 and until his death, that his main contributions to the three issues that I have singled out for discussion here have been most fully and clearly developed.

Pseudosocialism and Working Class Politics

Just as Rodney recognized that black consciousness did not necessarily follow automatically from being racially black, similarly he recognized that self-advanced descriptions of being socialist did not make one, and least of all a government, socialist, by that fact alone. In the Caribbean, there has been a long tradition of populist politics whose intensity has grown because of the small size of the societies. Everywhere the ruling class, no matter how anti-working-class their objectives and practice, have had to advance themselves as "pro-working-class," "popularly based," and "democratic." Someone once said that the most reactionary political parties in the world are some of the political parties in the Caribbean which have within their descriptive label the word "labour," like the Jamaica Labour party. In Guyana, where since 1953 the mass movement had generated a Marxist-led political party, the People's Progressive party (PPP) (which was unfortunately defeated by the British after winning the elections and holding office for only 133 days), the propagandizing of the ruling political elite — even including the Colonial Office — has always had to take on the guise of populism, of a democratic orientation, of a pro-working-class stance, and even later the guise of socialism. It is for this reason that the People's National Congress (PNC), the government in power in Guyana, has had to project itself as a "coopera-

tive socialist" party and government, and display proudly its nationalization of the two major transnational complexes in Guyana (sugar and bauxite).

Rodney understood clearly the dangerous character of this pseudosocialism. He felt that this type of posturing was in every way more dangerous than the more accurate description of the party as anti-working-class, proimperialist, and procapitalist. He therefore felt it was the duty of those who understood to expose this type of pretense because it constituted a serious trap to ensnare, with demagoguery, the masses of Guyanese. In pursuit of this objective, he developed the following points.

First, the PNC did not come to power on the basis of either a social revolution or popular consent. Indeed, it has been clearly revealed by Arthur Schlesinger and others that Burnham and the PNC were participants in an Anglo-United States and CIA-backed maneuver to exclude not only the PPP but more generally the masses from any real power at the time of the "independence" settlement in 1966.²

Second, having seized power in this way, Rodney argued that the PNC would use the state and could only use the state to build up the material-economic basis of the class that it represented. This class, he recognized early — at a time when it was not popular to do so, when many people in North America were going down to Guyana in pursuit of a radicalism described as "cooperative socialism" — despite transitory disagreements, was and continues to be in fundamental alliance



Guyanese bauxite workers leaving Mackenzie plant.

with imperialism. He recognized that while the classic class formations of Europe did not exist in Guyana, the present period is one in which a rapid formation of the main classes of the society is taking place.

Third, he debunked the nationalization as being what had already been termed by Eusi Kwayana and the WPA as "of the mortgage finance type." That is, he argued that behind the propaganda it was essentially a commercial purchase of the type imperialism had long accepted. Such a purchase burdens the national economy because it has converted a "national asset" into a "national debt."³ Moreover, the conditions of sale had enough built into them by way of management, marketing, and technological contracts to keep the previous owners satisfied.

Fourth, while such nationalization was therefore a burden on the masses, it nevertheless strengthened the state and its domination over the economy under the control of the PNC. This is a vital point and one that Walter and the WPA were careful to develop. Combined with the spread of the bureaucracy and increasing militarization, state control over the economy promoted certain aspects of this neocolonial rule. The ones that Walter particularly stressed are

1. the concentration of power in the hand of a petty bourgeoisie;
2. the destruction of popular political expression and participation;
3. the manipulation of race and other divisions among the people;
4. the institutionalization of corrup-

tion;

5. the extension of political repression and victimization;

6. the vulgarization of "national culture" as a tool for class rule; and, finally,

7. the deliberate distortion of revolutionary concepts.

"Various combinations of the above elements," said Rodney, "aid the implementation of policies which allow the reproduction of the petty bourgeoisie as a class in the midst of declining material standards for the vast majority and simultaneous with the accelerated expatriation of surplus by the multi-national corporations."⁴

Against these views Rodney articulated and represented the practice of a politics of self-organization and for the emancipation of the Guyanese and Caribbean masses. He pointed out that only the people through their activity could reverse this process. He recognized that the people were unarmed, that they were culturally and ideologically bombarded daily by the PNC through state control of the media, but that they had the fact of being in the majority on their side. If they could unify to overcome historically created racial divisions and assert that majority position, then neocolonial rule would fall. In fact, he felt that this was the only real condition for bringing about a fall in neocolonial rule. This required their own efforts, particularly where possible through their organizations. In this sense, he helped to develop a practice that had come into existence

through the formation of the WPA, and saw the WPA unfolding as one of these organizations at the service of the people. Rodney did not believe that spontaneous action of the masses could defeat neocolonial rule. For that they had to be organized and disciplined, so that acts of spontaneity served the purpose of their liberation and did not merely open up to more effective repression.

In all this, a view of what was meant by alternative development to pseudo-socialism prevailed. No attempt has yet been made to specify this in full detail by either Rodney or the WPA.⁵ And they could not, since in the nature of these things the conception of an alternative society grows out of the process of struggle. But if I may be permitted to sketch such an outline as being constitutive of the thought and practice of Walter Rodney and the WPA, I would argue that as against pseudosocialist development, socialist development, as he spoke of it and as the party of which he was a member speaks of it, means the following things.

First, production to satisfy the basic needs of the masses at large. This implies certain things about the way in which the society is organized. It implies, for example, that in the context of poor societies a systematic attack on poverty as a conscious, deliberate, and planned activity must be engaged upon, rather than sweeping poverty under the carpet, as is the practice in the Caribbean today. And when you asked him the question "Who are the masses?" the obvious answer would be those "who do not have power in society derived from property, wealth, religion, caste, expertise, or such other sources not widely shared." He recognized that these needs, when we spoke about them, were both personal (food, clothing, housing) and public or collective (health, sanitation, education, water supply, electricity, culture, recreation, etc.) as well as material and nonmaterial. Now the point about this is that the satisfaction of these needs through socialist development had to be generated through the effective right to work. That is, it is not a donation given by the state, but it had to be generated through the effective exercise within the community of the right to work. This meant the right to a job without coercion as to place or type of

job, given a person's skills. It also meant that the framework of industrial relations had to permit free collective bargaining and effective representation of workers' interests. The work process, also, had to ensure that effective worker involvement and control was possible, as was protection of health, guarantee of education, and so on, in the context of their work. In other words, what is implied in this concept of alternative development is that work is situated in a self-realization process, so that Rodney came to see work as both an end and a means of development. Indeed, this concept marked a fundamental shift in what was meant by development within the region.

Such development, he also recognized, had to be essentially self-reliant, it had to depend upon internal forces within the society. This is the only sustainable form, not just in a technical sense, but even more important, it is the only form that expresses man's "belief in his capabilities to develop himself." In that sense, therefore, Rodney's history was at the service of humanity, because he saw, even in the context of speaking about work and alternative possibilities of development within the region, that what we are talking about is a reference to a fundamental premise of humanity, that is, the capability of man and his belief in that capability to develop himself. This development he saw as also requiring the democratization of power and effective exercise of fundamental rights such as expression, organization, the abolition of repression and torture, the democratization of decision making, the equitable distribution of income and wealth, and equitable access to the use and management of resources. To him the state control of resources was not enough if it did not lead to equitable access to their utilization and management, which the state might claim it was doing on behalf of the people. Even the state that came into existence after a popular social revolution, or as a result of popular consent, would still be subject to these determining conditions in order to make the state socialist.

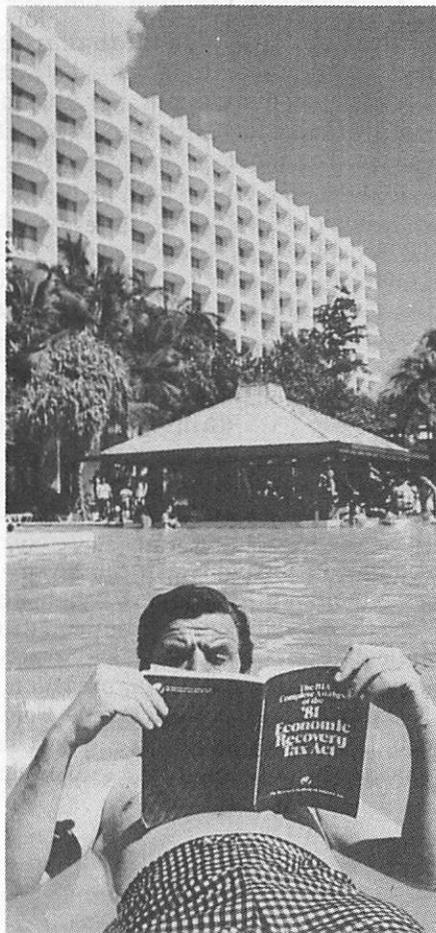
He also felt it was necessary to see that there was equitable access to information, because without this effective decisions cannot be made by the work-

ing class. The communications that he was making about history, about understanding the development of society, were part and parcel of his fundamental recognition that to be effective within society one has to be informed about the nature and processes of the development of the society in which we live.

He was also a globalist and felt responsibility to ensure that in whatever development we spoke about we accepted the global and universal meaning of it and shed all sense of parochialism.

In all of these things it is important to note Rodney's recognition of the interaction of material and other needs and their self-reinforcement; the recognition that these things are to be seen dynamically. People's needs grow and develop as people grow and develop a society. He also understood that there was no single "royal road" towards such a development which can be predetermined at the outset. This road, he came to appreciate, is always socially determined; it did not lie in the heads of any scholars or even the leaders of any political party. Rather, the political party and its leadership were an inte-

Businessman studies how to avoid paying taxes by investing in the Caribbean.



gral part of an unfolding process that was trying to make the particular road chosen one that was effectively socially determined. In a word, the needs and the methods of determining these within a society were by their very nature culturally specific. Above all, he came to see in all this that the "alienation of man from the process of social reproduction — of the so-called development which is being practiced everywhere," would be brought to an end.

Democracy and Dictatorship

It is important to bear in mind, from the way in which Rodney saw working class politics as distinct from the pseudosocialist politics of the region, the sharp division that it creates in the world view, in the possibilities of where Caribbean society, and in particular the Guyanese people, could go. On the question of democracy and dictatorship, the same set of relationships is well developed.

Rodney foresaw early that the new neocolonial states of the Caribbean, particularly as exemplified in Guyana, could only degenerate into dictatorial forms. In Guyana, as the WPA has stated, the mode of operation of this dictatorship includes certain features. One is the abuse of its control over the economy. Another is the massive militarization of the society. In fact, in Guyana it is said that one in every thirty-five persons has at some point in time worn a uniform or is actually working for one of the military or security services. Another mode of operation is the abuse of its control over the instruments of consciousness forming, such as the press, radio, and schools. For example, I remember May Day 1979 when I was asked to speak on behalf of the university union at a rally that the PPP held in the countryside to counter the government-organized TUC (Trade Unions Congress) rally in Georgetown. On that very day, the banner headline in the national media for May Day was "The Government has banned milk in the interests of the people." I made the point in my speech, and Walter came up afterwards and reemphasized to me that this was the level of degeneracy to which our society had fallen.

Rodney also saw that another method of dictatorial rule was the assertion of the paramountcy of a minor-

ity party over all state institutions and over the organized trade unions and farmers' organizations. And finally he saw in this the undermining through Parliament of the laws guaranteeing free and fair elections.

Against this practice of politics Rodney advanced the ideas behind the popular slogan in Guyana of "bread and justice." These ideas sought to emphasize (1) that all democratic rights held within the society are the products of mass struggles and are not a gift from the colonial masters to be taken away at the behest of their inheritors; (2) that the task of socialism is to expand these rights and to give them socioeconomic content; (3) that bread (i.e., development) cannot be traded for justice (i.e., social equality) since in the context of underdevelopment and neocolonialism there can be no development that is not based on justice; and (4) that, therefore, political democracy and socialism are not counterposed as far as working class interests are concerned. In fact, he would go further and say that political democracy and socialism are counterposed by ruling class propagandists because such a trade-off would bolster PNC claims to hegemony. It is important to note that these ideas were being advanced by Walter and the WPA well before Jimmy Carter made "human rights" a popular topic of discussion in the United States, and that also their main content is distinctively different from the debates about "Euro-communism."

In the context of a developed dictatorship, as in Guyana, Rodney saw that the revolution had to go through a democratic phase. The task necessary to achieve this, he argued, was to build a broad front of all social groups and classes directly or indirectly affected by the dictatorship. This notion of a united front is, of course, not new. What was new was the creative application of the strategy to a country at a time when the dictatorship was still rapidly consolidating itself. Rodney had seen in historical experience that the movement to form such fronts has often come very late — often indeed at a time when all political organizations, excepting those of the dictator, are in exile, underground, or in some other way delegalized. He knew that at some stage the dictatorship in Guyana would move to possible delegalization or exit-

ing of the WPA. And he felt it was incumbent upon us — which is accepted fully within the WPA — to seek to build the conditions for such a broad-based unity while the possibility of political activity, no matter how brutalized and repressed, still barely survived at the above ground level within the society. Recognizing this, Rodney and the WPA worked tirelessly to create such a broad front in Guyana. Rodney also recognized that the task would not be easy, largely because of the historical experiences of division and social manipulation in Guyana. In addition, I must stress, he feared that a sterile and dogmatic adherence to socialism, without a creative understanding of the social reality in Guyana, could mislead so-called well meaning "left" opinion in Guyana to misjudge the extent to which the Burnham regime had already consolidated a dictatorship. In other words, he argued that the necessity for a united front should be borne in mind, and that the important thing was to establish the front when the possibilities for doing so publicly still existed; that one had to come to understand when a dictatorship had already consolidated itself, and that in Guyana a one-party dictatorship already had been consolidated.

Violence and Political Change

This leads directly to the third issue and to the impact Rodney has had on Caribbean politics, that is, the issue of violence and political change, or social change. The manner of his death alone, if nothing else, must force us to contemplate the relation of violence to social change as Rodney saw it and practiced it. Rodney recognized that the neocolonial regime in Guyana would begin by attacking and repressing the opposition through "legal" means, but that as this very repression intensified its unpopularity and strengthened the resolve of the people, state violence, that is, political murder, assassination, and openly terroristic rule, would become more and more routine. In his political work he tirelessly pointed this out and sought to raise the consciousness of the people to anticipate this development and so perhaps to act early enough to prevent it. He knew that a regime such as the PNC could only move in the direction of the physical elimination of the leadership

of the WPA, indeed, of all of the opposition to attacks on the masses, in general. Rodney knew that open terrorist violence against the masses will stop only when the masses are ready and capable of resisting it. In this sense, therefore, it is important to recognize that Walter was no adventurer. He did not believe that individual acts, no matter how great the courage and heroism that accompanied them, could remove the system of neocolonialism as it existed in Guyana.

Rodney was no martyr, however, and in fact recognized that whatever else it represented martyrdom is a self-defeating political act. He therefore did not court his death, despite the propaganda being put out by the ruling party. He prized being alive as necessary to continuing political struggle. He would be the first to point out that it is of more than passing significance that all the acts of political murder and personal violence have been directed against opponents of the PNC regime. Father Bernard Darke and the other WPA victims — Ohene Koama, Edward Dublin, and Walter himself — testify to this.⁶ Rodney knew that a regime that had so militarized the society that one in every thirty-five persons was a member of one or another security service, not to mention the long list of private groups armed by the state, was in fact preparing itself for violence against the masses. He did not believe it was a bluff; he did not believe it was a sham. He felt that the inevitable degeneration of the regime to this point was a political and social process that only the masses could stop. And this underlies, I think, the urgency with which he engaged in the struggle to try to bring a stop to this process within Guyana. In this context, for example, he did not find it strange that in a society such as ours violence on the scale and with the bizarreness of Jonestown did occur. Indeed, the whole social situation that had developed had created the preconditions for a state, as Jonestown was, to exist within the state of Guyana. And in that sense, therefore, he saw the violence as symptomatic of the final degeneration of reaction.

The dictatorship that has developed in Guyana has blocked all legal and constitutional means to power. Before his death Walter widely predicted that this would be revealed again in that the

regime would rig the elections, if and when they were held. As is now well known, this did in fact occur. After postponing constitutionally due elections twice for a period of twenty-seven months, a so-called election was staged in December 1980 which has been condemned by a team of international observers as rigged.⁷ In making this correct prediction, Walter was aware that in all societies the ruling class ultimately maintained power, and guaranteed its rule, through its monopoly of noneconomic force. But in addition to this, and here is where I think he added an important dimension to the understanding of politics, what he wanted to say is that the *form* of such class rule also varied. A dictatorship uses violence in any open way to maintain its class when it has also openly excluded any possibility of legal or constitutional change of the government. In keeping with the pressures created in the Caribbean by a tradition of populist politics, the government of Guyana has had to do this while talking of "peace," "democracy," and "socialism," even as it waged war against the people. Walter knew and pointed out that the reliance of the government on a pseudoconstitutional presentation of itself is designed to mask the pervasive psychological and physical violence that it directs against the people as a whole, in an effort to maintain the power that it seized at the time of independence. And that is why, even before the elections were announced, the WPA had unequivocally committed itself, well before Walter had died, not to participate in any such elections. Because it believed, and Walter fully shared the belief, that any such participation would help to legitimize a regime that because of the populist tradition of politics within the Caribbean



Many Caribbean neo-colonialists talk about "the masses." Burnham's government even tried to claim that banning milk was in the people's interests.

had to present itself as being in some sense democratic.

In the issues raised here we can easily see the creativity and genius that Walter Rodney brought to the tasks of human liberation. But it is important for me to stress, in conclusion, that the

cause for which he died still remains to be pursued. So long as exploitation continues, humanity is diminished and Walter's view of the world and our practice in it should call us to act out our historical responsibility of helping to end it.

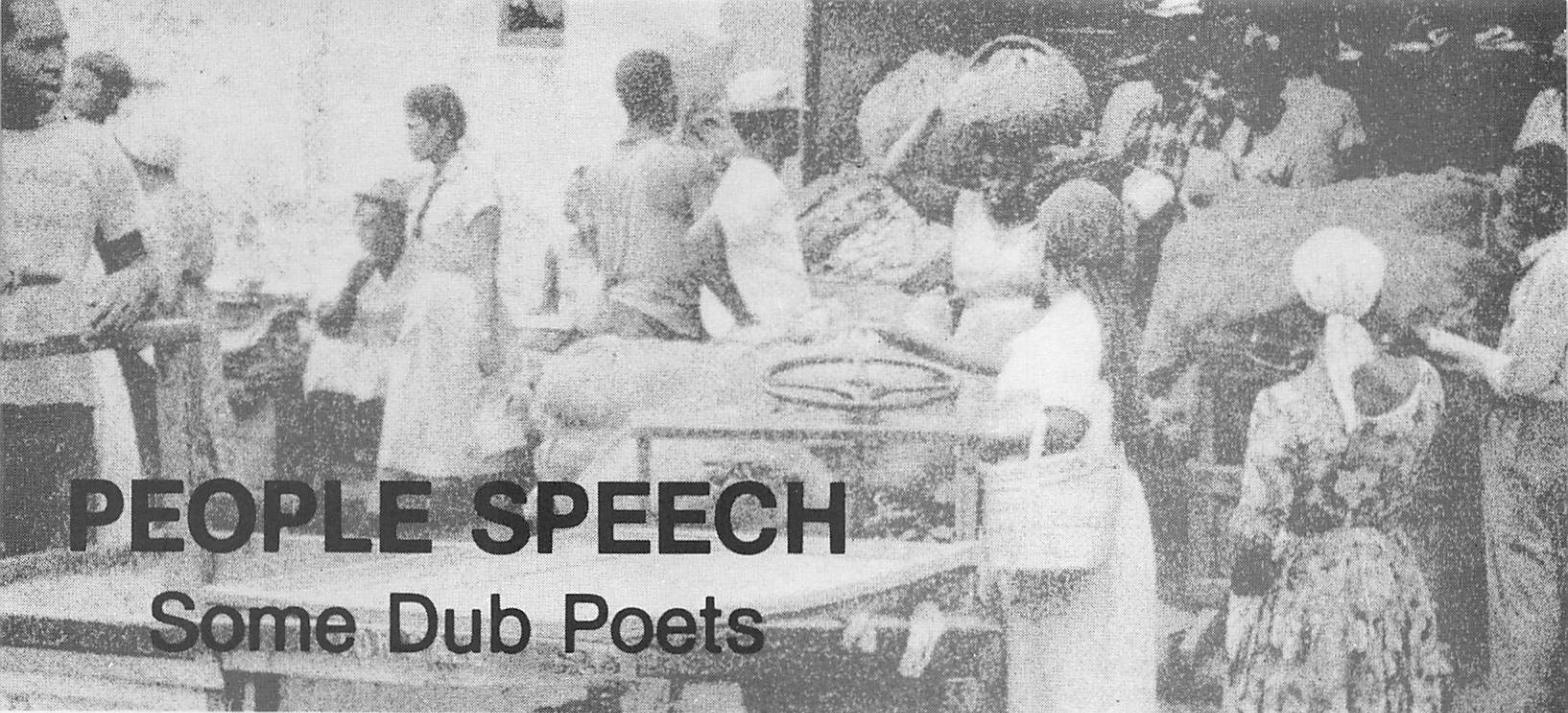
NOTES

1. "History Mourns the Loss of Brilliant Scholar," *U.G. History Department Newsletter* (University of Guyana), no. 7, Special Issue (June 1980), pp. 3-4. As this tribute is anonymous, the identity of "I" in the quotation is unknown.
2. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days* (Boston, 1965), pp. 774-779; Philip Reno, "The Ordeal of British Guiana," *Monthly Review* 16, nos. 3 and 4 (1964): pt. 1, esp. pp. 50-59; Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy* (New York, 1969), pp. 393-405.

3. For more detail on this situation, see C. Y. Thomas, "The Current Crisis in Guyana," in *Ufahamu* 12, no. 1 (Summer-Fall 1982).
4. It has not been practical to locate the sources from which Dr. Thomas quotes Walter Rodney, so these remain unattributed.
5. But see *Toward a Revolutionary Socialist Guyana: Principals and Programme of the Working People's Alliance* (1979), pt. 2, pp. 11-28.
6. For details, see Edward A. Alpers and Pierre-Michel Fontaine, eds., *Walter Rodney — Revolutionary and Scholar: A Tribute* (Los Angeles, 1982), ch. 1, pp. 29-32.

7. *Something to Remember. The Report of the International Team of Observers at the Elections in Guyana, December 1980*, British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, House of Commons (London, 1980); see also the initial press statement of the team as reported in *Caribbean Contact* 8, no. 9 (January 1981): 16. See U.S. Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and House Foreign Affairs Committee, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 97th Cong., 1st Sess., 2 February 1981, p. 456, for confirmation of the report of the Avebury Committee.

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PEOPLE SPEECH

Some Dub Poets

MERVYN MORRIS

The term “dub poetry” was promoted early in 1979 by Oku Onuora (the former Orlando Wong) to identify work then being presented — often at the Jamaica School of Drama — by Oku himself, Mikey Smith and Noel Walcott. The dub poem, Oku has said, “is not merely putting a piece of poem pon a reggae rhythm; it is a poem that has a built-in reggae rhythm — hence when the poem is read without any reggae rhythm (so to speak) backing, one can distinctly hear the reggae rhythm coming out of the poem”¹

Oku has, however, recently been arguing that any verse which refers to or incorporates music rhythms belongs in the family; poetry into which music rhythms have been dubbed, so to speak; dub poetry. He has begun to see Louise Bennett not only as a pathfinder in exploring Jamaican Creole, but as herself a dub poet behind whose verses we may hear Jamaican mento music and particular folksongs. He would claim Edward Kamau Brathwaite, who draws on jazz, Akan drumming, Caribbean rhythms; he would capture Langston Hughes, Sonia Sanchez and many other Black American poets influenced by Black American music. Fully extended, the Oku tendency would rope in writers such as Lorca, Nicolas Guillen and Edith Sitwell.

While much may be learnt, no doubt, from a comparison of the ways in which diverse poets dub music into their verse, it is probably more helpful to use the term more narrowly — as Oku originally did.

The “dub poets” of this article are often in tune with Jamaican popular music; some of their work — but not all — can, in one way or another, be heard to connect with reggae. They tend to acknowledge the influence of d.j. artists such as U-Roy, I-Roy and Big Youth, reggae lyricists such as Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer. Dub poets often speak in a language, and articulate concerns, shared with reggae masters; they seek to communicate with that enormous audience touched by the reggae performers. Predominantly they write for the ear, and they crave opportunities to perform before vast audiences and to market their work on record. There are now more than a few people referred to as dub poets. The five to whom this article directs particular attention have seemed to me some of the most talented: Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mutabaruka and Oku Onuora (all born in 1952), Brian Meeks (born 1953), and Mikey Smith (born 1954).

Sometimes the reggae connection is diffuse. But sometimes we can distinctly hear reggae rhythms in or under the verse, as in:

night number one was in

BRIXTON
SOFRANO B sound system
was a beating out a
rhythm with a fire,
coming down his reggae-
reggae-wire . . .

(Linton Kwesi Johnson, “Five
Nights of Bleeding”)

an de beat wel red
and de scene wel read
an de man dem a loot
an shoot
an de fia a bun
an de blud a run
an some people
doa kno
weh fi tun . . .

(Oku Onuora,
“Reflections in Red”)

The “dub poets” are not totally preoccupied with the reggae rhythm. They are, of course, very much interested in Jamaican speech. They give thanks for Louise Bennett, the poet who from the 1940’s has been demonstrating that Jamaican Creole, the unofficial language of the people, can be the medium of a subtle verbal art. “The mother of it all is Louise Bennett,” says Mikey Smith. “I like to hear people talk, and listen to people speech,”² he says, and he tells of his fascination with the sounds of Jamaican language. He vividly remembers the impact on him of the oral advertising he first heard long ago outside a store on Orange Street in

Kingston: "Come een, come een, come buy-up, buy-up; but no come een, come een, come tief-up, tief-up, for me wi beat-up, beat-up."³ Like the d.j. artists, the dub poets — Mutabaruka and Mikey Smith, for example — draw on patterned speech of that sort; on the routines of street peddlers; on the rhetoric of preachers and politicians; on proverbs, nursery rhymes, riddles, children's games; as in these lines by Mikey Smith:

waan good
nose haffi run
but me naw go sidung pan igh wall
like Humpty Dumpty
me a face me reality

one lickle bwoy come blow im orn
an me look pan im wid scorn . . .

or

bapsi kaisico she pregnant again
bapsi kaisico she pregnant
again . . .⁴

which alludes to a traditional rhythm sequence in a children's clapping game.

Dub poetry on the page is often little more than the script for a performer already familiar with his own material. Since the arrangement of lines does not often guide us into the rhythms, it is often difficult to receive the poem before one has heard it well delivered. In addition, some of the poets — no doubt constructing "eye Creole" to



Oku Onuora

keep us constantly aware that what is being offered is not Standard English — write unfamiliar spelling such as "wel", "dred", "kno" in the Oku Onuora extract above, where the sounds represented are identical to standard pronunciation of "well" "dread", "blood"; "fia" (for "fire") does direct the reader towards one particular pronunciation of that word. In some cases — Linton Johnson's, for example — the spelling is approximately phonetic:

soh mek wi leggo mitalagy
dis is di age of science an'
teknalagy . . .⁵

The poems are meant to be *heard*; many lines yield little meaning until sounded.

Some of the poets write in Standard English some of the time. Linton Johnson and Mutabaruka, for example. One of the best of Oku Onuora's poems is in Standard English and hints no rhythmic connection with reggae:

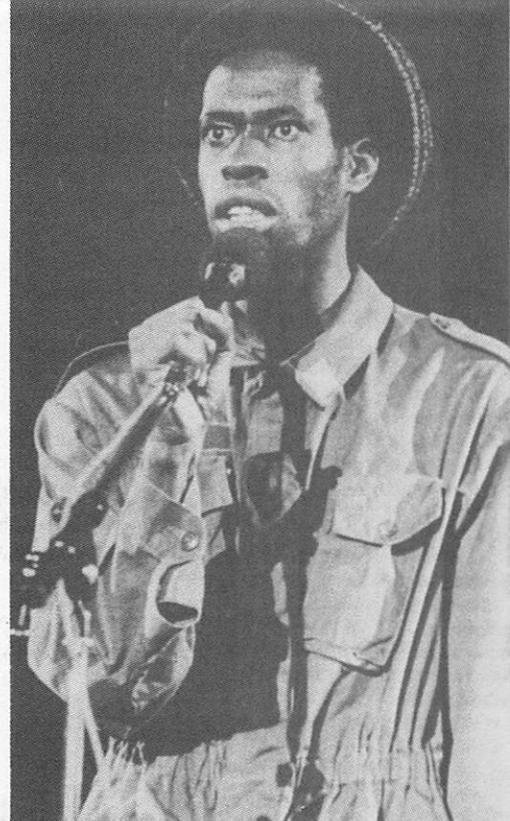
You ask: Why do you write
so much about blood, sweat and
tears?
Don't you write about trees,
flowers,
birds, love?
Yes
I write about trees —
trees with withered branches
and severed roots

I write about flowers —
flowers on graves

I write about birds —
caged birds struggling

I write about love —
love for destruction
of oppression.⁶

The need for an active response to oppression is a recurring theme in work by the "dub poets" as in reggae lyrics; though the degree and details of commitment vary from artist to artist. Though he believes his work may help make people more aware and may give them hope, "Poetry can't win revolution," says Mikey Smith, "people win revolution."⁷ Mutabaruka, for all his outcry against poverty and alienation, also remarks: "Me don't really feel seh de poetry gwine change de worl."⁸



Mikey Smith

Whatever their reservations about the actual power of the word, the poets are critical of what Peter Tosh has called "the colonial shitstem"⁹ and its legacies. They vividly describe underprivilege, neglect, police brutality, political warfare; the ghetto as a breeding ground of crime and violence. They expose cultural imperialism, the alien values of the schools; they re-enact the horrors of slavery and trace them into the present; they yearn to recover Africa. They distrust politicians and sometimes the present constitutional arrangements. Their critical attitudes are not often aligned to any political party that has actually won electoral power. They tend to argue for "people power" with very general ideas on how this might ever be achieved. On foreign issues — Angola, Zimbabwe, apartheid — their positions are often more sharply defined.

Mutabaruka, a declared Rastafarian, is most often concerned about the inner life; and ultimately he seems to direct attention away from the material conditions noted in some of his work. "The man spiritual is above all"; in the end "all worldly/things/must go."¹⁰ Oku Onuora and Mikey Smith are steadily critical of what Edward Brathwaite has called the *status crow*,¹¹ but — as to



Louise Bennett

Jamaica, at least — in a manner largely consistent with liberal humanist responses.

Now I tun man
I sight up a revolutionary vision —
if we waan seh roots any at all
we haffi stop we muma from
movin
from yard to yard¹²

says Mikey Smith in a characteristic poem. Linton Johnson's are often militant contributions to political struggle, linked to specific events and naming names. The reality *there* is confrontation:

fashist an di attack
den we drive dem back

we gonna smash their brains in
cause they ain't got nofink in
'em . . .¹³

Brian Meeks' published poems say yes to Marti, Angola, Garvey, Marx, Lenin, Bob Marley and the Wailers; no to Batista, Miami and the CIA. In "March 9 1976," for example, it is implied that a youth at a (socialist) dance has been murdered by agents of the

USA;

down Duke St.'s
closed bound —
aries crew cut
accountant
ticks off a
number/closes
the doors
on a stars and
stripes file.¹⁴

Asserting their own commitment, the poets are, on the whole, alert for political fraud. Fashion-mongers of commitment are ridiculed in Oku Onuora's "Yesterday/Today/Tomorrow."¹⁵ Linton Kwesi Johnson directly attacks the black *petit bourgeois*:

dem a seek posishan
aaf di backs af blacks
seek promoshan
aaf di backs af blacks
dem a black petty-booshwah
dem full a flaw
an' dem a black petty-booshwah
dem full a flaw . . .¹⁶

Mutabaruka it is who turns a critical eye on the political pretensions of the poets themselves, "revolutionary poets/'ave become entertainers . . ."¹⁷

Many of the "dub poets" rhetorically insist that they, somehow, are closer to "reality" than the sort of person previously called poet: "call me no poet/or nothin like that . . ." says a Mutabaruka item.¹⁸ Oku Onuora's persona declares:

I am no poet
no poet
I am just a voice
I echo the people's
thought
laughter
cry
sigh . . .
I am no poet
no poet
I am just a voice . . .¹⁹

A voice that performs. The stage and the recording studio are, increasingly, essential contexts of the dub poet. Some of the poets are electrifying on stage: Mikey Smith, Oku Onuora, Mutabaruka use voice and movement with practised care to hold their audiences and to point meaning. In con-

trast, the comparative stillness of Linton Johnson serves to focus attention on the word itself and the music in it or behind. Brian Meeks, when he performs in public, sometimes plays the flute and is nearer in style to Linton than to the more mobile three.

When they are making records, and sometimes on tour, the poets tend to include music. The combination is not always happy. The danger always is that the music will dominate, at some loss to our interest in the voice. The combination works best when the music complements or counterpoints the natural rhythms of the speaking voice, as in "Sonny's Lettah," "The Black Petty Booshwah" (Linton Johnson), "Reflection in Red" (Oku Onuora), or Mutabaruka's "Everytime A Ear De Soun." It is good if, without dominating, the music can be of interest in itself; on Linton Johnson's records, the music is usually a pleasure, even when the combination hasn't worked. In performing some of his poems unaccompanied, Mikey Smith makes us hear the music by his alteration of the natural rhythms of speech. In performance the lines

say, Natty-Natty,
no bodder dash weh
yuh culture . . .²⁰,

for example, become a heavily accented chant.

In some of the Jamaican '45s — Oku's "Reflection in Red," for example, and Muta's "Everytime A Ear De Soun" — studio reverb is introduced. Sometimes the technical effect has actually been written into the poem itself, so that when the poem is performed without music the reverb is nevertheless suggested: as in Oku's

dere can be
no peace
no peace
until/until
dere's equal rites
equal rites an
justice . . . tice . . . tice . . .
tice . . .²¹

Dub poets, like reggae composers and other artists, come out of varying experiences and with varying personalities. Four of the five highlighted here could fairly have been described as

underprivileged, as "sufferers." The exception, in socio-economic background, is Brian Meeks. That his work feels equally authentic may be partly due to his political identification with the oppressed and his profound engagement with Jamaican popular music.

Biographies

Linton Kwesi Johnson was born in 1952 in Chapleton, in the rural parish of Clarendon. He left Jamaica in November 1963 to join his mother who had migrated to England in 1961. There he attended Tulse Hill Comprehensive School in Brixton until 1970. He entered Goldsmith's College, University of London, in 1973, graduating in Sociology. Awarded a Cecil Day Lewis Fellowship in 1977, he has been a writer in residence in the Borough of Lambeth, and Library Resources and Education Officer at the Keskidee Arts Centre.

He has been very active politically. After school he joined the Black Panthers Movement "to pursue the liberation of Blacks from colonial oppression." He used to write for *Melody Maker*, mostly on Jamaican popular music; he is now mainly associated with *Race Today*. As a poet performing his work he has been acclaimed in Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Caribbean. He now has a record label of his own (LKJ).

Records:

Poet and the Roots (London: Virgin Records, 1977) VS 19012 (Disco 45)

Poet and the Roots (London: Virgin Records, 1978) FL 1017 (LP)

Forces of Victory (London: Island Records, 1979) ILPS 9566 (LP)

Bass Culture (London: Island Records, 1980) ILPS 9605 (LP)

Mutabaruka (formerly Allan Hope) was born in Kingston in 1952. He did Electronics at Kingston Technical High School. Brought up a Roman Catholic, he became Rastafarian in late teenage. He and his family now live in the parish of St. James.

Muta had poems published in *Swing Magazine* in the early 1970s. He was

widely applauded at poetry readings some years before the emergence of Oku Onuora and Mikey Smith. He resists the label of "dub poet" because it refers to only one aspect of his work; and he had been a poet and performer for many years before people started talking about "dub poetry" — of which, however, his "Everytime A Ear De Sou'n" is a prime example.

With his resonant baritone voice and his Rastafarian locks, Muta is vivid on stage. He was well received at Reggae Sunsplash 1981.

Records:

Everytime A Ear De Sou'n (Kingston: High Times, 1980) (45)

Naw Give Up (Kingston: High Times, 1981) (45)

Hard Times Love (Kingston: High Times, 1982) (45)

Check It (Kingston: High Times, 1982 forthcoming) (LP)

Oku Onuora (formerly Orlando Wong — his father was half-Chinese) was born in Kingston in 1952. He attended various schools, including Camperdown High from which he was expelled. He was associated with Walter Rodney, the Guyanese historian, who, in the late '60s, used to reason with Oku and others in Rollington Town. Oku helped to found a community school in the area. He helped distribute the Black revolutionary paper *Abeng*, in spite of police harassment. He was arrested in March 1971, one week after his nineteenth birthday, and charged with robbery of the Rollington Town Post Office. He was convicted.

Linton Kwesi Johnson



Mutabaruka

In spite of the obstructive conditions, Oku started writing in prison. Poems by him were read on the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation; and, under a liberalizing regime, he was allowed out of jail to take part in a few poetry readings, including one arranged by the Jamaica Centre of P.E.N. International. *Echo*, his first collection of poems, was published in 1977. Released on parole a few months later, Oku was admitted to the Jamaica School of Drama. He dropped out after a year.

An intense and compelling performer, Oku went to the 11th World Festival of Youth in Cuba in 1978. With the help of Linton Johnson, he has been on tour in the U.K. and Europe in 1980-81.

Records:

Reflection in Red (Kingston: Prugresiv Aatis Muvmant, n.d.) (45)

Wat A Situashan (Kingston: Kuya, 1981) (45)

Brian Meeks (born 1953 in Montreal to a Trinidadian mother and a Jamaican father) came to Jamaica in 1956. He was educated at Jamaica College and on the Trinidad campus of the University of the West Indies: B.Sc. (Econ.) 1974. At the Jamaican campus of the U.W.I. he did an M.Sc. in Government (1974-76) on "the development of the 1970 revolution in Trinidad and Tobago."

Brian worked in the Public Affairs Department of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation until early in 1981. Presenter of a television programme

called Sunday Report, he was (from a position widely interpreted as left of it) generally supportive of the People's National Party government, voted out of office in October 1980.

Michael Smith ("Mikey") was born in Kingston in 1954. He has been educated "in the street"²² and at various schools including Kingston College Extension and St. George's College Extension. His first big success was at a youth show in Golden Spring where he read a poem provoked by Ian Smith's

rejection of black majority rule for Rhodesia. From a Social Development Commission workshop in Jones Town, Mikey was selected for the Jamaica School of Drama. His early years were part-time. He graduated in 1980.

While at the Drama School, he became well known in Jamaica for his rendition of "Me Cyaan Believe It." Like Oku Onuora, he performed at the 11th World Festival of Youth in Cuba in 1978.

Mikey is an exciting performer. He puts his Drama School training to sub-

tle use, flexibly varying his effects. His distinctive limp is the legacy of an accident when, in his early teens, he fell from a mango tree, breaking arms and legs.

He is the most oral of our "dub poets." Characteristically, a Mikey Smith poem has a structure much easier to hear than to see.

Records:

Word (Kingston: Light of Saba 1978/002) (Disco 45)

Me Cyaan Believe It and *Roots* (London: LKJ, 1980) (Disco 45)

RACE TODAY PUBLICATIONS



AVAILABLE NOW

Inglan Is a Bitch by Linton Kwesi Johnson (2nd Edition)

LKJ's third collection of poems. It features the popular anti-sus poem 'Sonny's Lettah'

The Black Explosion in British Schools by Farrukh Dhondy, Barbara Beese and Leila Hassan

Three members of the Race Today Collective identify the revolt of black students and parents as one of the major agencies for radical change in the schooling system.

The Road Make to Walk on Carnival Day by Darcus Howe

A collection of articles on Carnival in Notting Hill, from 1974 to 1977. This Collection documents the key moments in the struggles to keep the West Indian Carnival on the streets of Notting Hill.

Voices of the Living and the Dead by Linton Kwesi Johnson

Some of Linton's earlier writings. First published in 1974 by Race Today and long out of print.

New Perspectives on the Asian Struggle in Britain by Farrukh Dhondy

Historical analysis of Asian strikes between 1959-1979 together with interviews with the Asian participants in that strike movement.

From Bobby to Babylon: Blacks and the British Police by Darcus Howe

An analysis of 25 years of struggles waged by the West Indian community against the excessive use of police power against them.

80th Birthday Lectures by CLR James

James celebrated his 80th birthday in three public lectures organised by the Race Today Collective.

Race Today Publications, 165 Railton Road, London SE 24 OLU, United Kingdom

1. Oku Onuora interviewed by Mervyn Morris, Wednesday September 16, 1981.
2. Mikey Smith at Mary Seacole Hall, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica, Sunday November 22, 1981.
3. Mikey Smith interviewed by Mervyn Morris, Wednesday May 27, 1981.
4. "Me Cyaan Believe It," as on the record. (Cf. Savacou 14/15, pp. 84-85.)
5. "Reality Poem," *Inglan Is A Bitch* p. 24.
6. "I Write About," *Echo* p. 44.
7. Mikey Smith interviewed by Mervyn Morris, Wednesday May 27, 1981.
8. Mutabaruka at a Jamaica Cultural Development Commission Seminar, September 1981.
9. At, for example, the Peace Concert, Kingston, April 1978. See Sebastian Clarke, *Jah Music: The Evolution of Popular Jamaican Song* (London: Heinemann, 1980), p. 112.
10. "Never Stoppin To Know," *Mutabaruka: The First Poems* p. 44.
11. In, for example, his address at the Norman Manley Award for Excellence ceremony, Creative Arts Centre, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica, Saturday July 4, 1981.
12. Unpublished.
13. "Fite Dem Back," *Inglan Is A Bitch* p. 20
14. *Savacou* 14/15, p. 65.
15. *Echo*, pp. 38-40.
16. "Di Black Petty-Booshwah," *Inglan Is A Bitch* p. 30.
17. "Revolutionary Poets," *Mutabaruka: The First Poems* p. 64.
18. *Ibid.* p. 16.
19. "No Poet," *Echo*, p. 43.
20. See this issue, p. 29.
21. "Reflection in Red" (text published on record jacket).
22. Mikey Smith interviewed by Mervyn Morris, Wednesday May 27, 1981.

The above essay is excerpted from *Reggae International*, which will be published in England by Thames & Hudson, and in America by Random House. Other authors include Michael Manley, Garth White, Carl Gayle, LKJ, Dick Hebdige, Chris May. (Reprinted from *The Race Today Review*, 1983, Vol. 14 No. 5.)

International Book Fair of Radical Black & World Books

AMIRI BARAKA

The Third International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books held April 1-8 in London, England, was a very important event in terms of the continuing attempt to build an international activist consciousness around a "radical black and third world" agenda.

The leading force behind the book fair and indeed in consolidating this consciousness is based in London's growing and militant West Indian, African and Asian communities, but rooted dynamically in Black Brixton, the scene of the great rebellion four years ago which shocked the stiff upper lipped British bourgeoisie and sent a message to the world that a new consciousness had come to exist on the Britannia's shores.

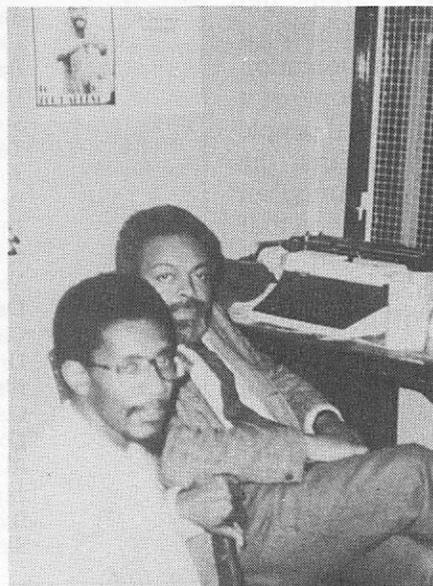
It is this factor that is the most important to the recent development of higher political consciousness and the consequent artistic upsurge which always follows and reflects or accompanies the political upheaval. *Race Today* is the battle flag of this political and artistic renaissance in England. *Race Today* is a magazine edited very skillfully by Darcus Howe, a Trinidadian by birth but like so many other "Black Britons" struggling to make the urban twists of the white racist "mother country" his home. Howe, along with poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson, is the

heart of the publication and the publication is the organ of the political collective also called Race Today. It is Race Today which was the catalyst for the book fair and indeed the soul of the Black movement in England today!

The theme this year was "1984 and after," a critically relevant theme in light of the Reagan-led imperialist surge to the right, fascism and world war. This theme came out of the second book fair and a pioneering seminar "Resurgence or Barbarism." The second book fair attracted 150 publishers from Africa, the Caribbean, North America, Asia and Europe. Bogle L'Overture publications, New Beacon Books and *Race Today* are the pioneers in radical Black book and magazine publishing.

New Beacon's John LaRose, who was once general secretary of the West Indian Independence Party in Trinidad was another member of the organizing committee. LaRose is one of the definitive "movers and shakers" behind the whole Radical Black, Third World and Progressive political cultural movement in England. He is a well-known poet and essayist. Jessica and Eric Huntley, co-founders of Bogle L'Overture were also important members of the organizing committee along with Sara White, co-founder of New Beacon and Leila Hassan, assistant editor of *Race Today*.

Linton Kwesi Johnson (left) with Amiri Baraka at the Race Today headquarters, London.



The program held during the book fair demonstrates the high political consciousness and militant organizational direction of the conference's founders. A few of the events that stood out among an impressive and activist oriented program were an international poetry reading called "Three Voices of Our Times" featuring Amiri Baraka (USA), Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Jamaica) and Linton Kwesi Johnson (Jamaica and Great Britain). Mutabaruka, the rasta dub poet spontaneously sat in as well.

A forum entitled "Radical Black and Third World Theatre" with Kenya's revolutionary Marxist writer Ngugi' wa Thiong'o and *Race Today* artistic editor Akua Rugg, raised sharp controversy. "1984 and after" which had Howe as moderator and Baraka as one of the panelists brought the realities of class struggle sharply into the light. C.L.R. James was supposed to be one participant but sent regrets (he is Howe's uncle and was featured with E.P. Thompson in a film shown called *Talking History*).

Black and Third World Independent Publishing was another important forum. The Women's Struggle: The Way Forward, with Leila Hassan and U.S. feminist Barbara Smith plus Julia Lynn Walker of Chicago's Peoples College, and Current Struggles in the Caribbean and the Way Forward were two other important forums.

Tim Hector, chairman of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement could not attend but David Abdullah, treasurer, education and research officer of the powerful Trinidadian Oilfield Workers trade union was present and made a series of deeply incisive analyses of Trinidadian and Caribbean society and the ongoing and intensifying upheaval around neocolonialism and imperialism. Don Rojas, Maurice Bishop's press secretary presently living in Canada, helped heighten the outrage around the U.S. invasion of Grenada.

One of the most conscious of African American musicians, pianist, Randy Weston, provided a thrilling, artistically powerful and politically revolutionary benediction for the session.

These kinds of international events are exactly what the advanced political community in the U.S. needs, particularly from a more active revolutionary cultural perspective.

U.S. Out of Grenada!

Statement by the Committee of Artists and Intellectuals in Opposition to the U.S. Invasion of Grenada

We, a group of progressive American artists and intellectuals, oppose the U.S. imperialist invasion of Grenada. We support the Grenadian people's right to self-determination and see this bloody U.S. intervention into the Grenadian people's internal affairs as completely criminal!

We call upon not only other artists and intellectuals to join us in this condemnation of Reagan's "invasion diplomacy," but the majority of the American people whom we hope will see the terrible danger to their own future that Reagan's openly imperialist policies are leading to.

With the Grenada invasion, it becomes more and more obvious that World War 3 is no longer just a grim possibility but that the 1st shots of that war are already being fired.

It is clear that the right-wing ideologues of the Reagan regime will stop at nothing until the whole world is in flames. Their intervention in El Salvador and attempted subversion of the democratic government of Nicaragua, as well as their occupation of Lebanon in support of an unrepresentative fascist government, show they are also hell bent on making the Third World submit to racist imperialism. This is why Reagan thinks South Africa is part of the "Free World"!

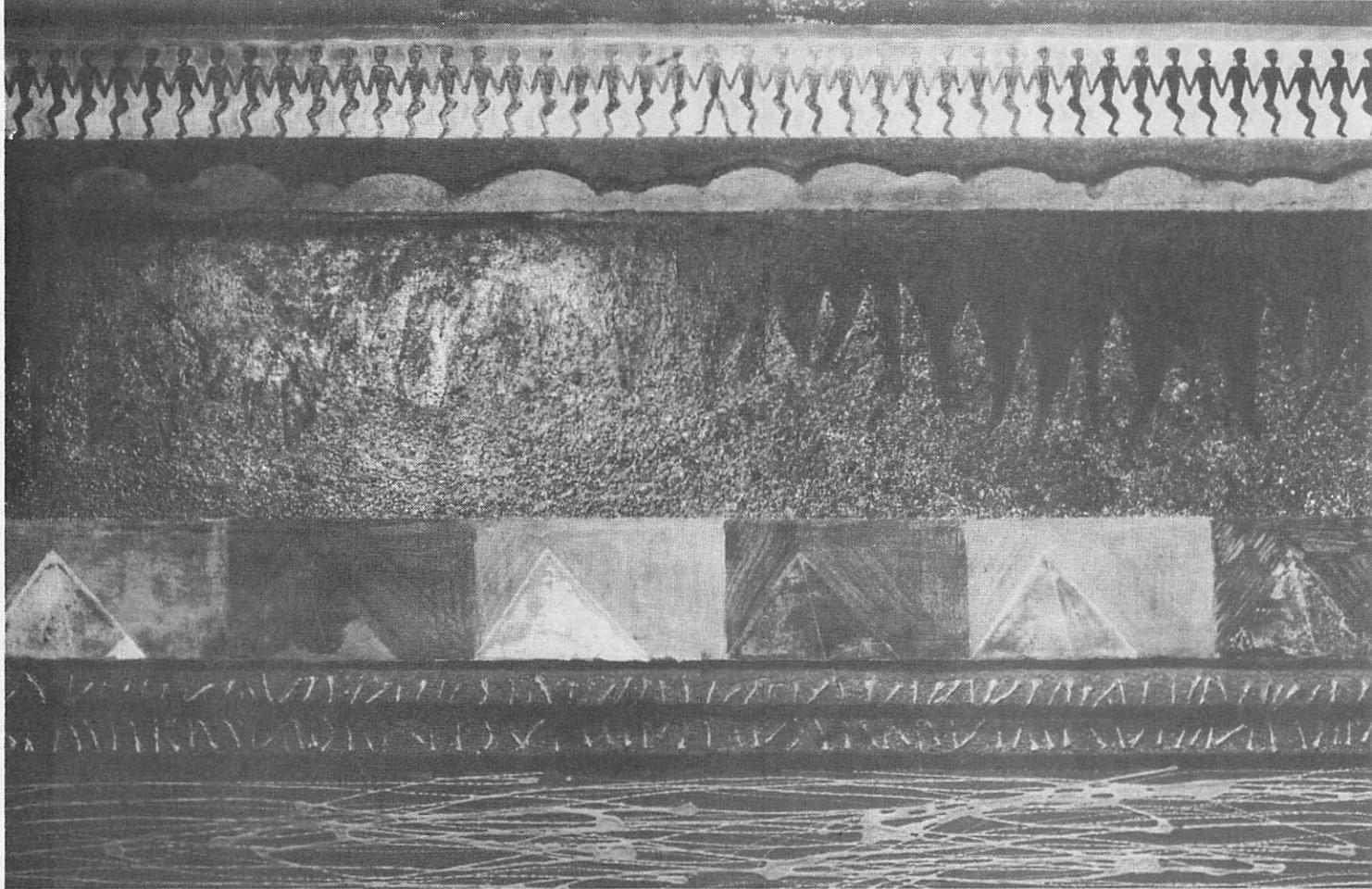
Not only are we opposed to the invasion of Grenada, we will work tirelessly so that U.S. troops and their Caribbean or other surrogates are withdrawn from the island and that Grenadian self-determination is restored. What kind of government the people of a sovereign country choose is not the business of people outside that country. Reagan's contention that the U.S. invasion was to secure the safety of American medical students is a transparent lie. His assertion that the invasion was to "restore democratic institutions," at the same moment he is exercising censorship of the American press, is the conception of a childish, bizarre, dangerous and repressive sensibility, as well as the contradictory babbling of imperialism attempting to justify its military aggression.

We demand a halt now to Reagan's international war mongering before we are all engulfed in a nuclear holocaust from which would emerge no winners at all! We call upon the American people to mobilize to

get rid of Reagan in next year's election and by so doing take a strong step against U.S. imperialism and the politics of war!

Committee of Artists and
Intellectuals in Opposition
to the U.S. Invasion of Grenada

Amiri Baraka
Amina Baraka
Jean Carey Bond
Baron James Ashanti
Yvone W. Easton
Shirley Campbell
Modibo
Judy Simmons
A.R. Flowers
John Killens
Louis Reyes Rivera
Barbara Rivera
K.S. Diallobe
Emmett W. Porscello
Steve Robinson
Brenda Connor-Bey
Dr. Les Owens
Halim Suliman
Europe Harmon
Kwasi Akyeampong
Barbara Jones
Evelyn Neal
Ted Wilson
Leola Wilson
Bakara Jones
Ben Caldwell
Steve Cannon
Tom Mitchelson
Joe Overstreet
Betty Blayton-Taylor
Dr. Bill McAdoo
Carolyn Brown
Merwyn Taylor
Dawad Phillip
Clebert Ford
Dr. E.F. Dube
Playthell Benjamin
George Ferncz
Louise Merriweather
Richard Cammarieri
Jayne Cortez
Black Nation Magazine
Safiya Henderson



Oil, sand, rope and dry pigment by Vincent D. Smith, from the Dry Bones Series, Drums — Pyramids — Shadows and Slave Castles.

ART

Vincent Smith: The Original Hipster as Artist



Vincent D. Smith

AMIRI BARAKA

An anonymous building, is it painted some color?, junk stores on the first floor, that when you go in the center door between the storefronts you enter part of the world of painter, Vincent Smith!

The building houses Vincent's studios and working space since 1970. He

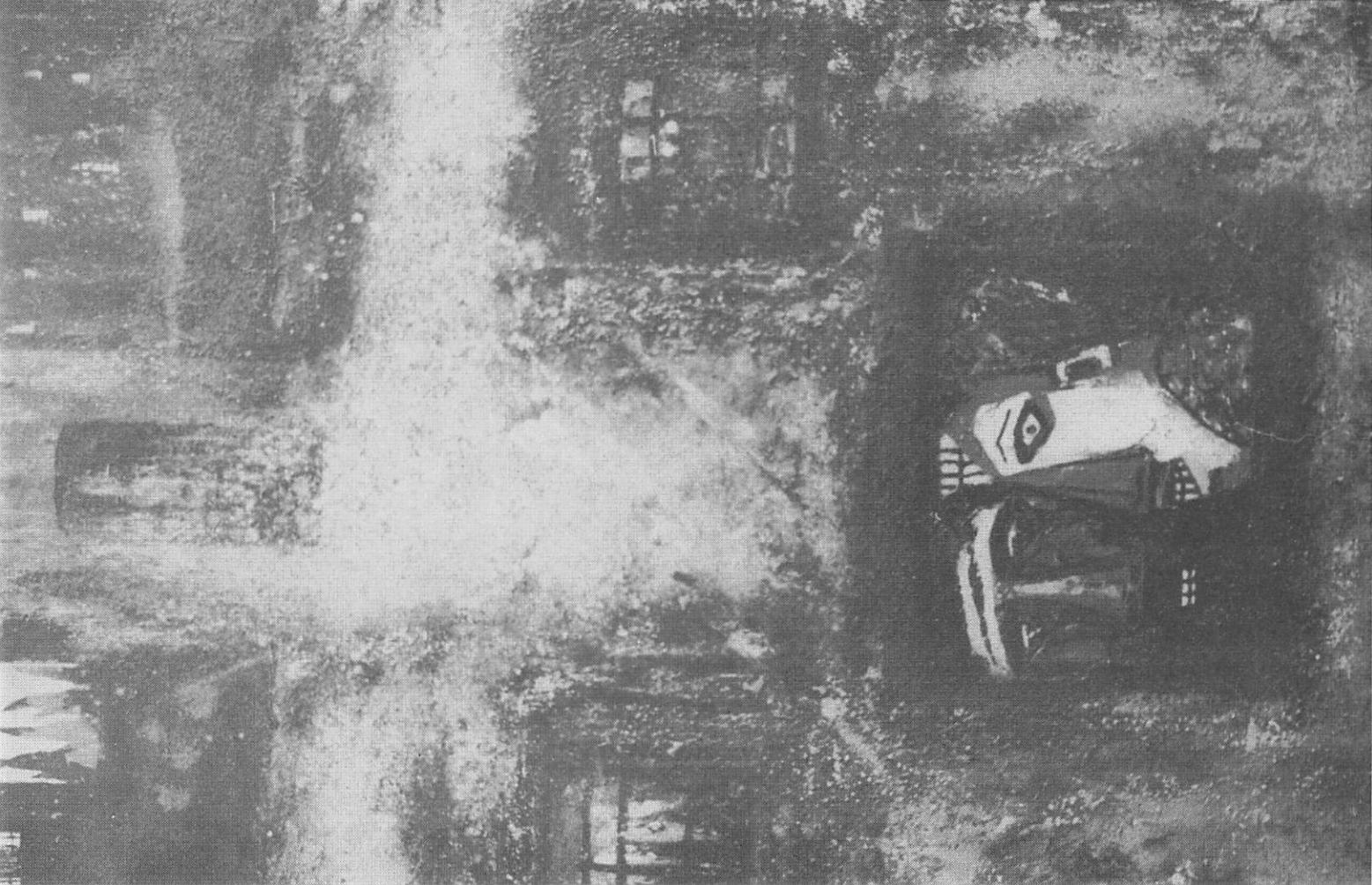
has three floors: on the third floor storage and utility room. On the second floor the studio where he paints. Rooms adjacent, across the hall, work in progress and canvas primed.

The first floor an office and research library, a kitchen. A kind of *ritualorium* with objects, prints, postcards, reproductions, anonymous funky entity essences to suggest the inhabitant.

The painting on this page is part of

Vincent's *Dry Bones Series* he was finishing when we met which was finally very successfully exhibited at the Randall Gallery, 823 Madison Ave., New York, April 11-28, 1984.

In the last year he has also shown a very important and broadly expressive show at the Center for Art and Culture at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Center in Brooklyn's oppressed black community.



ALEX KING JR.

Oil and sand on canvas by Vincent D. Smith "The Super."

“But I don’t represent no school, I’m a true Expressionist. I use figure elements, abstract, revolutionary, all kinds of materials . . .”

One shaping element of his work is The Music: Jazz, Blues, Reggae, Calypso, High Life, Boogie Woogie, a black peasant internationalist consciousness, made possible by the industrial sophistication of the workers, the city folk, the niggers in the north!

One of Vincent’s earliest influences was the master, Jacob Lawrence. Smith was 22 and “reading art books seriously,” when he happened on examples of Lawrence’s work in James Porter’s book on black artists. It turned him around. This was around 1952, then in 1955 Vincent met Jake Lawrence “on the subway,” at 3:00 a.m. in the morning.

The Lawrence influence is everywhere identifiable in Smith’s works, very much so in earlier works. But the Lawrence influence seems to me merely a leavening with the necessary historical ingredient of African American expression. Lawrence is such a necessity! To have no real acquaintance with his work is to risk babbling concerning contemporary American painting.

Another formidable and shaping influence, both visually and probably philosophically were the great Mexican muralists, Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros, themselves at the very pinnacle of what great art can be. The amazing highly stylized form, the thrilling color, the heavy social communication!

Rafael Tamayo, the Afro Cuban expressionist, Vincent lists, as well, as a shaping influence. But an artist’s whole life and experience are influences as well. Their class and national history, their background and families and close friends, as well as other paintings.

Smith’s father had come from the oil fields of Barbados, immigrating with Vincent’s mother to the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. Another shaping dimension of Vincent Smith’s work was the kind of graphic representation of the religious oriented Garveyites of the African Orthodox Church of Brownsville. West Indians made up a substantial part of the Garvey movement; Garvey was born in Jamaica. One minister at the Brownsville Garveyite church was a friend of Vincent’s father, also from Barbados.

So the brush of Pan-African consciousness must have touched Vincent when he was quite young contained in the “Black Pride” Garvey inspired

with his UNIA.

Vincent also drew as a child, as well as playing alto saxophone and piano. He said he always felt himself “on the periphery of art.” At fourteen he left school and as a painter and intellectual he is largely self-taught.

Between the ages of 22 and 23 Vincent spent time reading and studying at the Brooklyn Museum and Brooklyn Public Library. He also spent about one month studying with painter Reginald Marsh. By 1955, Vincent had studied sculpture at the Brooklyn Museum and was painting about two years when he won a competition which gave him a nine-week scholarship at Skowhegan, Maine, at the internationally known school of the arts. This widened his horizons considerably, bringing him in contact with the Doyens and reputation of the “international art

circle.”

It was at this juncture that Vincent was touched by the work of the German Expressionists of the 20’s and 30’s. Particularly he was moved by the German Expressionists’ use of the woodcut. He sees this art as not only very important to his own work but to the history of art and “despite the various isms that came and went . . . it’s coming back in high gear.”

But one interesting thing about Vincent Smith’s art is that it is so full of rhythm and color it speaks very eloquently and directly about real life. And for Vincent it has been a life of perception, sensitivity, consciousness and change. Art comes as an expression, an attempted defining of one’s life and society. It is for the artist and his audience a shared revelation in development.

Vincent was always interested in

what was the reality below the surface of things. Expressionism, as a genre, always seeks to make the real show through the apparent. He has had a conscious political dimension to his nexus with society since he was a young boy even while, as he puts it, “getting caught up in a whole lot of shit.” At the age of 16, he was working on the Lackawanna Railroad, at 17 he went into the army for one year. Even at that age he felt “politically motivated.”

At Brooklyn College Smith swung with a political group, the Labor Youth League, who considered themselves part of the “Paul Robeson Movement.” In Flatbush he ran with a group of young radicals that later got involved with the Civil Rights Movement.

“I was looking for something,” Smith says, discussing his early life and army stint in Texas. “I saw all that shit

Oil and collage on canvas by Vincent D. Smith, “Before the Mayflower.” (1972)



ALEX KING, JR.

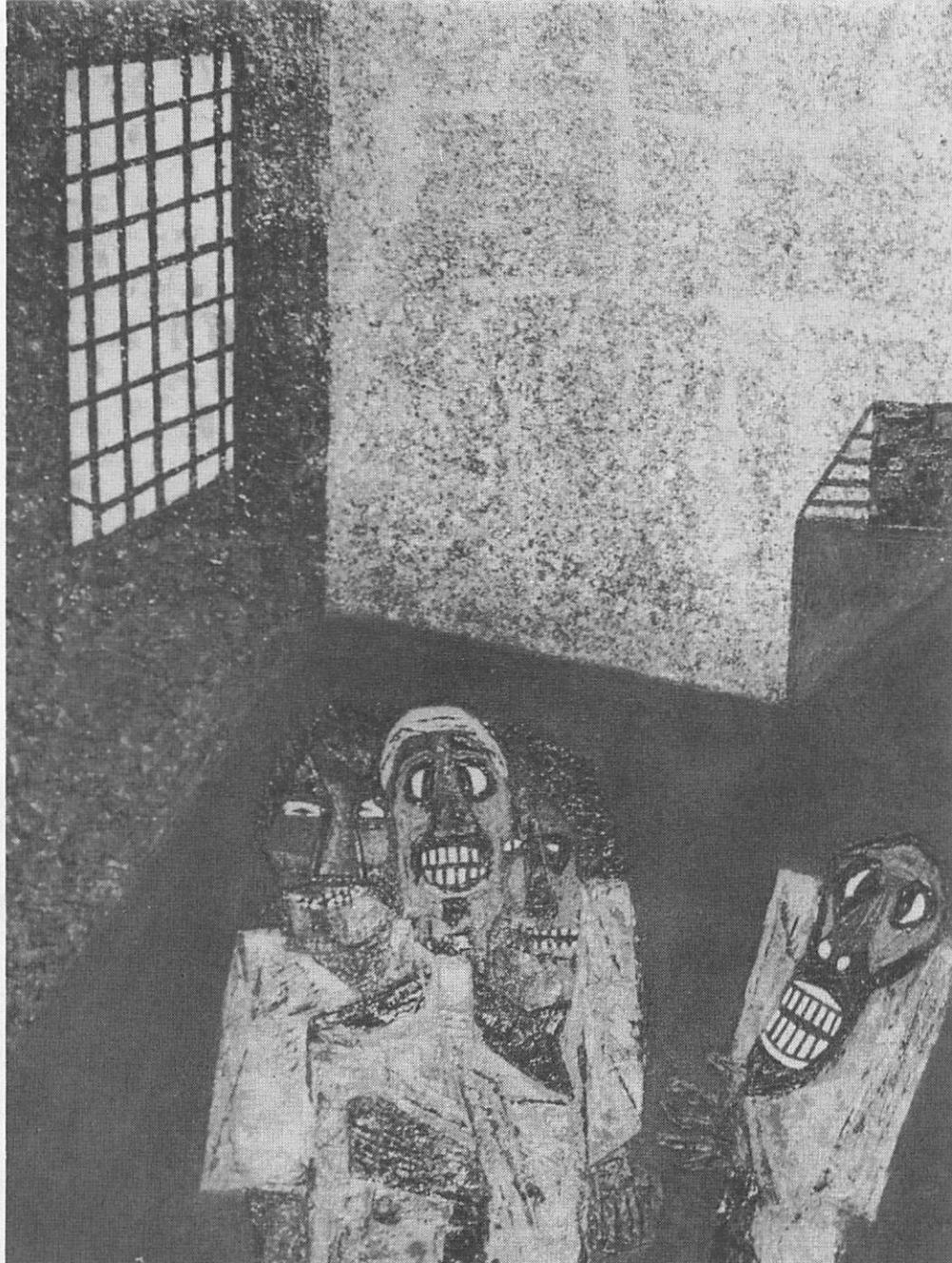
down South in Mississippi, Louisiana.” (There are drawings of this period, done a little later by Smith, that are fantastic. Simple, yet powerfully evocative ink drawings of the Civil Rights Movement in the South!)

In 1953, Vincent had found Greenwich Village and was there, most times being at now émigré painter Walter Williams’ studio until 1958. In the early 60’s he went back down south, but since 1964 he’s been in Brooklyn. And the Brooklyn experience has contributed a great deal to the total art shaping life experience that is Vincent Smith. He speaks of these various periods of his life, early childhood, adolescence, working on the railroad, army, still other and multiple penetrations into the reality of life in this society, as learning and deepening contradictions.

For one thing Vincent has become exceedingly clear on “the lack of recognition for black painters” in this society, which is almost an understatement. It seems, from this observer’s point of view, that black painters are even “less visible” (ironically enough) in this society than black writers. In large part, I would imagine, because the graphic artist’s work can be carried off into *one* gallery or museum or person’s home and not be generally seen. (This is the importance particularly to black and working class people of inexpensive reproductions!)

Plus art books that reproduce the black painters’ works are much more expensive to publish than small literary magazines black writers can emerge in. Smith believes there is a general “absence of visual arts” in American culture. Meaning the barren blankness of too many people’s walls in their homes or even in institutions. The average educational institution, for instance, classroom walls stand blank when obviously it should be mandatory to use them for artists to teach us while we’re being taught something else formally! But the rulers of this society are merchants interested only in maximum profit. Art has use to them only for its commercial value.

Part of that “lack of recognition” Vincent speaks of is in the method by which the big galleries “look at” or exclude (*really*) people. In the main, the gallery owners are merchants as well, but with more elegant cover stories than the political bourgeoisie, but their



Oil and sand on canvas by Vincent D. Smith, “In the Yard.” (1973)

“choices” are rooted in the same White Supremacy. As Toni Morrison told us in *Tar Baby*, they think Picasso a genius because he could appropriate the African graphic style, but the originators of that style remain savages.

And this too, Vincent asserts, “all influence what and why I paint.”

“I’m a painter from the word go,” says Vincent. His face carrying that familiar cool appreciation of reality. He has a kind of hip half smile that says so much, and in opposition, and still to have accomplished so much. And still at it.

“(Even) the choice of material is influenced by experience in society. In all

things should be painted . . . don’t put (stiff) labels on things . . . I’ve been denigrated as a ‘figure painter’, ‘black painter’, ‘protest painter’.”

“But I don’t represent no school, I’m a true Expressionist. I use figure elements, abstract, revolutionary, all kinds of materials . . . paint different kinds of ways — figure, abstract, ritualistic.

“In the series (*Dry Bones Series*) I’m not jumping from one thing to another.” Indeed, *Dry Bones* is a statement of African/African American history with figures, hard-edge abstraction, multi-media using sand, strips of rope, paint dripped through



ALEX KING JR.

and against almost abstract slaveship figures bound side-by-side bound for Hell (a place with trees and a moon). Vincent has always, it seems, been pointed in the right direction, though he has followed the twists and turns of hard won rising consciousness just as any other progressive intellectual or artist. When I first blew into Greenwich Village as a teenager, Vincent was already on the scene, a figure already, in my mind, in the emerging new painter scene of the time. Many of the young painters of Vincent Smith's generation went to Europe and stayed. Part of the last waves of émigrés is the tradition of Richard Wright, Buford



ALEX KING JR.

Oil and sand on canvas by Vincent D. Smith, "Molotov Cocktail." (1968)

Delaney, or Jimmy Baldwin — and Jimmy is in this country as much as he is away. Those émigrés who thought they must go out of racist America lest they be killed with frustration, their dreams of making art trampled by white supremacy. It was the black arts generation that thundered "no!" to this back to Europe philosophy which finally does seek not only to invade the Afro American struggle against imperialism in the U.S. but maintain Europe as an aesthetic standard against which all other peoples' art only finishes a poor second.

Vincent then had a rep as a "bohemian painter," and he was a real bohemian unlike some I met then whose mothers and fathers were paying their way through bohemia. He lived the wild life of the 1950's in Greenwich Village. But when the 60's came Vincent too had amassed enough sensitivity and insight to see past the bourgeois art scene. When some of us went up to Harlem to create the Black Arts Repertory Theater School and the Black Arts Movement that came out of that short-lived pilot project Vincent was at "The Arts" as well as making his contribution to a black art that would emerge, in the period of Harlem renaissance, that would be "mass oriented, African American and revolutionary." Vincent is still doing that.

Ironically, Vincent Smith stayed in the United States and struggled to create his art against the crippling odds of this white supremacist society and his works have been powerful blindingly beautiful, destined to be part of

the African American consciousness as long as that exists. Yet Vincent is still snubbed by the Madison Avenue types, though this latest show *Dry Bones Series* is at a Madison Avenue gallery (one owned by an African American). But uptown, in Harlem, where Vincent's work should be celebrated, the Studio Museum crowd goes on as the Museum of Modern Art, Harlem branch. Many of the shows at the Studio Museum have been of black painters who are within the mainstream of bourgeois formalist art — abstract, hard edge, Mickey Mouse, op, pop, etc., who have made it "downtown" in the world where art is an expression of white supremacy. Yet these folks have never seen fit to give Vincent Smith, one of the great painters of our time, a show! He is the kind of an artist a painter rooted in the African American experience and creating forms and following the imagination of the black majority with an aesthetic that is African, Afro American, Caribbean, urban and politically progressive. (It is Vincent, for instance, in various shows who has documented the dynamic 50's, and scalding hot 60's and early 70's. Certainly a retrospective of his work is in order, but in the answer to such a proposal, I was turned down by SUNY at Stony Brook where I teach, as well as at the Newark Museum, where I live.)

But art like everything else in society is a matter of class definition and the timid Negroes who define art for the Studio Museum have the same definitions as the straight up bourgeoisie down at MOMA.

The “hipster” of Vincent is his personality, a result of his walking with the Afro American philosophical way and being a “savage” “nobody” ruled by Civilized Significants. Ah, that there would be such lowness and murder, invention of fascism, moreover, all up our chest, and to walk with that and know that and try not to be killed by that — you know, to prevail somehow. Victory, in the midst of, loss. HIP = *Aware* i.e., the property of the Digger that is to function at some high consciousness, in the midst of brute commercial savagery. What it seems, in image, the President of the music, Lester Young, *Pres*, who it was always about. To exist in some consciousness in the

midst of . . . *Squares*. Pyramid consciousness trying to survive in the midst of four sided thugs so that Vincent can say, with clarity of the repercussions of history of opposition to Afro American lives that “my works deal with black culture and civilization. I try to paint every aspect of the human condition in black. The sharecroppers, Obelisks, . . . the game reserves in West Africa.”

There is a dazzling “aliveness” to Vincent’s work. He is not circumscribed by the content of bourgeois society. While Babylon makes ready to blow up right before our eyes Vincent is painting it and painting himself painting us in the same motion.

Vincent has also “caught” sketches of advanced consciousness by way of itself through the years I say *caught* because it is like an *eye-line* pinned to us through him. Garvey in a car, waving; the struggles on those southern roads; King-like figures; Malcolm icons inscribed in the people’s memory; Dr. Carver lecturing in a wagon; Walter Rodney surrounded by young students; “snapshots” of the black power conferences; Ralph Featherstone’s blazing FBI-caused funeral pyre on the highway; Trane’s funeral; Rap Brown at the top of his thing; red, black and green lovers; African mythology and dusty green reality; Harlem star roads; that host of complexifying memory

Oil and collage on canvas by Vincent D. Smith, “Let it Be Like Men.” (1973)

ALEX KING JR.





Oil and collage on canvas by Vincent D. Smith, "Apple Pie for the Kids." (1968)

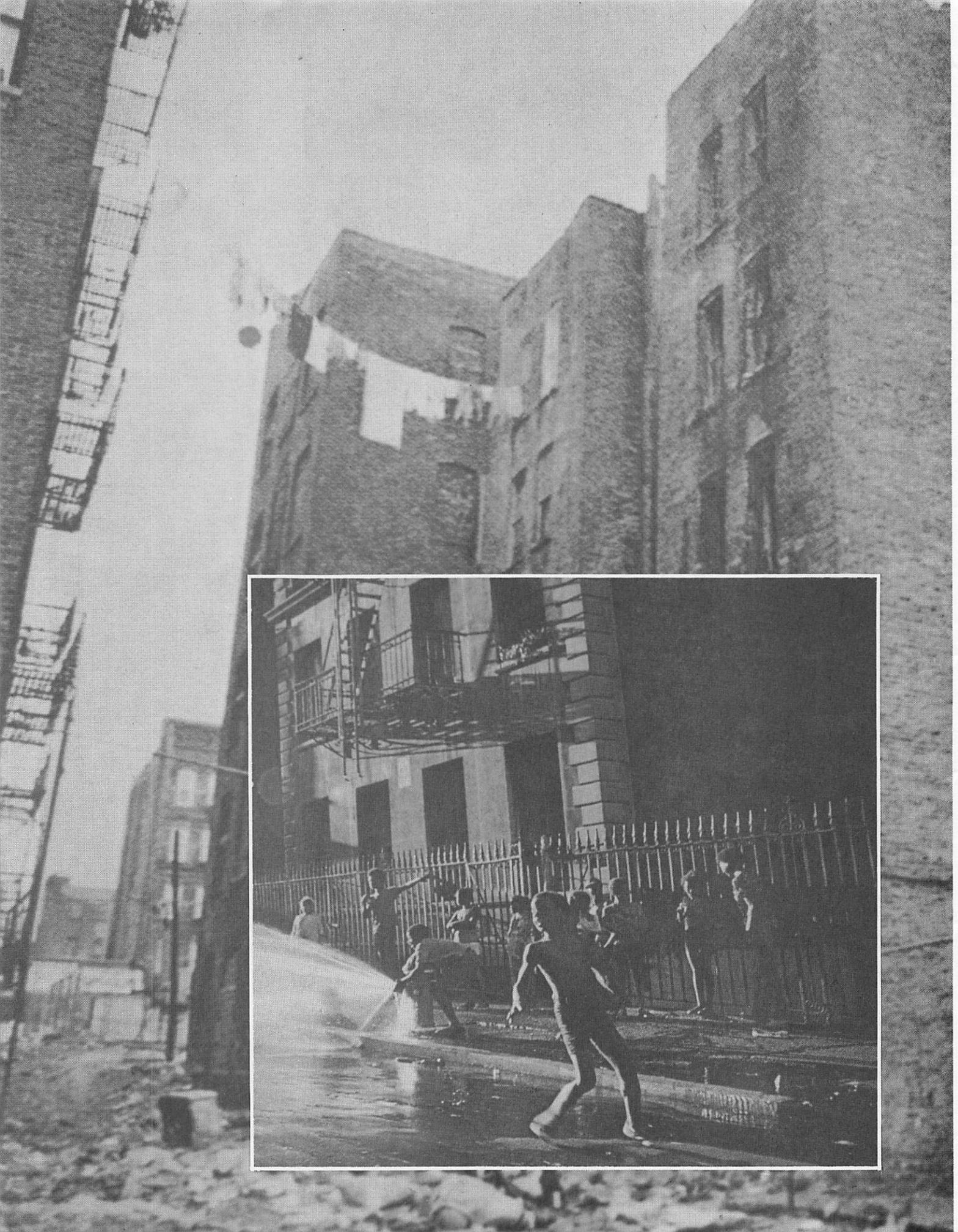
ALEX KING JR.

presents that color our seeing and understanding.

Throughout it all, there is the artist, signed "Vincent" at some place on the canvas. It ain't Van Gogh the works speak for themselves. But that abiding revolt in the midst of any dumbness, say in the face of the arrogance and ig-

norance that defines the American Sensibility. Survival is one level of revolt and the elegance of its telling. But then to be expressive, not consumer destroyed or drunk, dope addicted, or hopelessly warped by marauding reality — all the victimizations and frustrations of white supremacy and monop-

oly capitalism rendered "Romantic" by bourgeois mythology — to survive all that and then to transcend it, acknowledging that triumph with just a trace of BeBop in your walk, talk, art and address to the world, is one way into revolution.



That Old Black Music

CHARLIE R. BRAXTON

do ya dig da music daddy
 does it make ya wanna
 jump shout scream
 touch a lucky dream
 or reach for the moon maybe
 baby i know what you mean
 when you say you aint never seen
 touched tasted heard anything
 like this before in your life
 but it is your life(S') music
 living giving taking spirit quaking
 soul shaking the roof of the SAVOY
 SUGAR SHACK & COTTON CLUB
 with ancient voodoo spirits' rhythm&rhyme
 thyme for a new day of history making
 revolutionary black magic motion
 with malismatic MAU MAU movement
 sliding into a deeper shade of blue/blackness
 yea man
 come on
 listen to it
 listen to it carefully/thoughtfully
 tellin' it
 tellin' it
 tellin' it
 tellin' it
 tellin' it like it T. W. as was is
 is-to-be-forever-be-black-magic-music
 make it swing ragtime bop be-bop
 jazz funk-rock-fusion
 destroying the optical illusion cast by a
BITCH'S BREW
 cooked in a melting full black blood sweat&tears
 america's only indigenous music
 came to her in chains
 untimely ripped from the loving womb of MOMA
AFRICA
 and drugged across savage seas
 to a stolen land ran by savages
 who count their profits while tapping
 their toes to the blues/jazz beat
 ignoring the message/meaning as

it cuts through false definition
 screaming you took me stole me
 chained me but but you
 cannot contain me
 cannot control me
 cannot hold me back forever
 i don't belong to you
 i never have i never will
 for i belong to the people
 who
 belong to the land of sunburnt skins
 black magic music maker
 standing somewhere
 on the cutting edge of tradition
 preaching a blues/jazz/gospel
 for all the world to hear
 we have&will not forget you
 your gut-bucket-get-lucky-on-a-unlucky-monday
 songs
 were/are the sweet soothing salve
 of hope healing the wounds of the oppressed



Bring the Boys Home

CHARLIE R. BRAXTON

*and at last
you must admit
that
the thrill is gone
the crowd is dead
the smoke is cleared
and
the music has stopped
but
the melody still
lingers on*

*“bring the boys home
bring the boys home
say why don’t you
bring the boys back home”*

*and why don’t you
bring the boys back home
(where they belong)*

*after all you’ve got nothing
to gain
and the whole of humanity
to lose
(assuming that you
believe in humanity)
you do believe in humanity
don’t you mr. president
mr. president
mr. president*

I’m Only a Man

CHARLIE R. BRAXTON

*i wish i
could be
the man
you want
me to be*

*your knight
in shining armor
whisking you away
in my golden chariot
to that private
haven you call
heaven*

*but
i’m only a man
i have no golden
chariot
and the only thing
i have that shines
is my crutches*





Cuba — Angola

JAN CAREW

*Cuba — Angola
Angola — Cuba
Havana — Luanda
Luanda — Havana*

*The blood-knot was tied
with sinews of Black anguish
on sea lanes
where caravels hustled an plied
chased by the Trades
since sly-man, Christobal, had lied
and, Ferdinand, the trickster Sovereign of Castille,
a bigger jungle beast
had flummoxed him;
so thief from thief
made God laugh
his boisterous, Boccaccian, hurricane laugh
leaving a wake of raucous echoes
from Gracias a Dios
eastwards to rowdy Atlantic shores
off Barbados;
from the Peninsula of Flowers, south to the
Pearl Coast.*

*Talking drums
beating close to the ear of messenger-wind,
summoned our griot.
He floated down
on robes white as the wings of cranes,
and answering the drums
he spoke:*

*“Clear as thunder-footsteps of an elephant herd
I can still hear
doom and resurrection ships
ferrying cargoes in the flesh trade
to seaports of sorrow. Final destination,
a hemisphere of mistaken names . . .”*

*Our Griot keens and sways and sighs and testifies:
“Heaving darkness and midnight ancestors
battered under oaken floors
listening for three months or more
to rhythms of sea-drums oscillate
from pang-cries of homelessness
to crescendos of rage
leaving echoes drumming without songs
in the heart of Ancestor Wind;
scattering riffs
soft as a moth’s-wing-lilt
and coalescing with the mesmeric monotony
of poem hymns
stitching holes
in the immeasurable rent
between Africa
and Carib islands in the sun
with a noose of white sands
tightening around their throats . . .
In my mind’s ear the scratching of a quill
still makes my skin crawl
when a merchant of death
blind to seascapes of Sargasso
and blue horizons
where migrating birds scrawl hieroglyphics
records in his ship’s log
the code words of his cargo cult
of profit and loss,
‘The carcasses of a dozen negroes
were committed to the vasty deep
on this day of our Lord . . .”*

*The shipowners, damn their bleedin' eyes!
rant and rave about losses
of more than thirty per cent . . .
scurvy, dysentery, bleeding hearts
and g'or blimey grieving
will snatch, hopefully,
no more than three dozen . . .
God save the bleedin' king!*

*Millions vanishing
in a wake of sharks and blood
sown like skeleton-seeds
across Atlantic Ocean floors.*

*Survivors of the crossing
blinded in a newborn sun
stagger and fall over iron shackles
biting like fangs into dark, velvet flesh,
staggering and falling
stumbling and screaming with pain,
the strong helping the weary ones
to stand up again and again
swaying from side to side
like saplings with torn roots;
huddling shoulder to shoulder, flesh to flesh
meshed together by fear, rage, sweat,
crouching in the shade of el Moro's battlements.
Overseers, with mocking, mercenary eyes
announce with the crack of whips
and voices like the roll of drums:
Temes, none have survived!
Anang Ibibibos, six! Krumen, lucky seven!
Ngombes, eighteen! Wolofs, twelve!
Berbereci, four! Angolars, twenty-two!
Hausas, sixteen! Boshongos, three!
Hausa-Fulanis, all women, eleven,
and three heavy with child! Ewes, seven!
Fantis, five! Dagambas, three! Bembas, nine!
Ovimbundus, four! Ashantis, thirteen!
Others, eight!
so close the baracoon gate!
Kings, queens and serfs, griots and basias, healers,
bards, troubadors, singers of songs of the dead,
eunuchs,
priestesses, prophets, goldsmiths, warriors,
Paramount Chiefs, marabouts, gravedigger-priests,
Amazon palace guards, witches, sorcerers,
minstrels, sacred and secular musicians,
artisans, cantors in the courts of kings,
cavalrymen, mastercraftsmen, farmers, merchants,
scribes,
royal wrestlers, athletes, poets, artists,
keepers of the royal bloomeries, steelmakers,
reagents, beggars, jesters, storytellers . . .
all designated as negroes.
A slaver's branding iron erased their identity.
Night will pass, day-clean will come!"*

What About Di Working Class?

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

*fram Ingran to Poelan
evry step acraas di oshan
di rulin claases dem is in a mess/yes
di capitalis system a regress
di soviet system naw progress
which wan a dem yu tink is bes
wen a di two a dem di workaz a kantes
wen crisis is di aadah af di day
wen soh much people cryin out fi chane nowaday
soh wat about di workin claas
comred chairman
wat about di workin claas
dey bear di caas
dey carry di craas
an dem naw goh figet dem tanks
in Gdansk
dem naw goh figet dem tanks
fram di eas to di wes
to di lan a ah love di bes
di rulin claases dem is in a mess
an crisis is di aadah af di day
di workaz dem demandin more pay/evryday
di pezants want a lat more say/nowaday
di yout dem rebelin evrywhey/evrywhey
insohreckshan is di aadah af di day
is a lat people cryin out fi change nowaday
noh baddah blame it pan di black workin claas
mistah racist
blame it pan di rulin claas
blame it pan yu capitalis baas
wi pay di caas
wi suffah di laas
an wi naw goh figet New Cross
nat a raas
wi naw goh figet New Cross*



After Reading Detained (for Ngügi wa Thiong'o)

STERLING D. PLUMPP

1.
*Not being defined
weightless as a Yoruba
without ancestors
With only consumption
and materialism
to insure my self with a number
An Afro-American
Stranger to my past
and alien in my homeland
yet a bearer of cards and cash
Not knowing what class
allegiance is due
because no territory
Is claimed by my name
detention is absolute
since this exiled geography
Is a cell difficult
to acknowledge
— faces are doomed
To perpetual inundations
of terrors
because my jailers hire, educate, advise*

2.
*Still Malcolms come
from behind locks
to testify clarity
And all detainees
revolting against the Eagle
jump from my memory
Like sparks from a flintstone
as Cinque co-opts an Amistad
as L'Overture cradles San Domingo
As Gabriel plans a new day
as Denmark plots a way
as Nat strikes for tomorrow
As Harriet frees slaves
in midnight flights
and as David Walker says
It is better
to be dead
than an unfree slave
And thousands
unknown and heroic
resist messages chains have*

*Through their defiance
with John Brown at Harpers Ferry
with Yankees in a Civil War*

3.
*Bound by space
and aggregate cries
behind smiles*

*Alone/i sit watching days
held by a power
making compradors*

*Incarcerate you
where puppets from their gods
proselytize*

*Yet here culture
is ground by centuries
and i hold to a blues*

*A spiritual
a little signifying
and a dance somewhere*

*Defying throbbing
crescendos of separateness
only a well-fed*

*Slave knows
in his cell/made visible
by reading a life*





Song for Walter Rodney

STERLING D. PLUMPP

*precious struggle
take my hand/take my hand
because when a man of his people
returns
and wallows in possibilities of their stench
returns to time held
hostage to their commands
when he fans reason
over sources of their troubles
lead me on
let me stand
then the anxious butchers
hire executioners
as Malcolm
for he knew the danger of moving for power
of watering Grass Roots from politic's faucet
he knew
that would shorten the vulture's bloodlines
take my hand
and George Jackson could tell
how even ringing ears with examples
or sounding defiance brings
assassins behind bars
precious struggle
lead me on
because when a man of his people
gets close
to their oppression with the commitment to end it
murderers emerge from payrolls of the exploiters
let me stand
precious struggle
lead me on
ask Martin Luther King, Jr.
whose non-violence wrought hatred
he could testify
take my hand
precious struggle*

*how putting a war within ears
lacking bread
bought the grease for Ray's trigger finger
lead me on
because exploiters fear
little men
talking sense and acting
for what their hands, common hands, make
by gripping time like it is a bottle of water*

*take my hand
 precious struggle
 for the oppressors know
 that when a man of his people
 returns
 that little men awake
 determined to rule, to own*

they rise from knees

*chiseled by whips of ignorance
 lead me on
 let me stand
 because the hands remember
 common hands, they whacked slaveships
 with a education given by cold nights
 and hungry days*

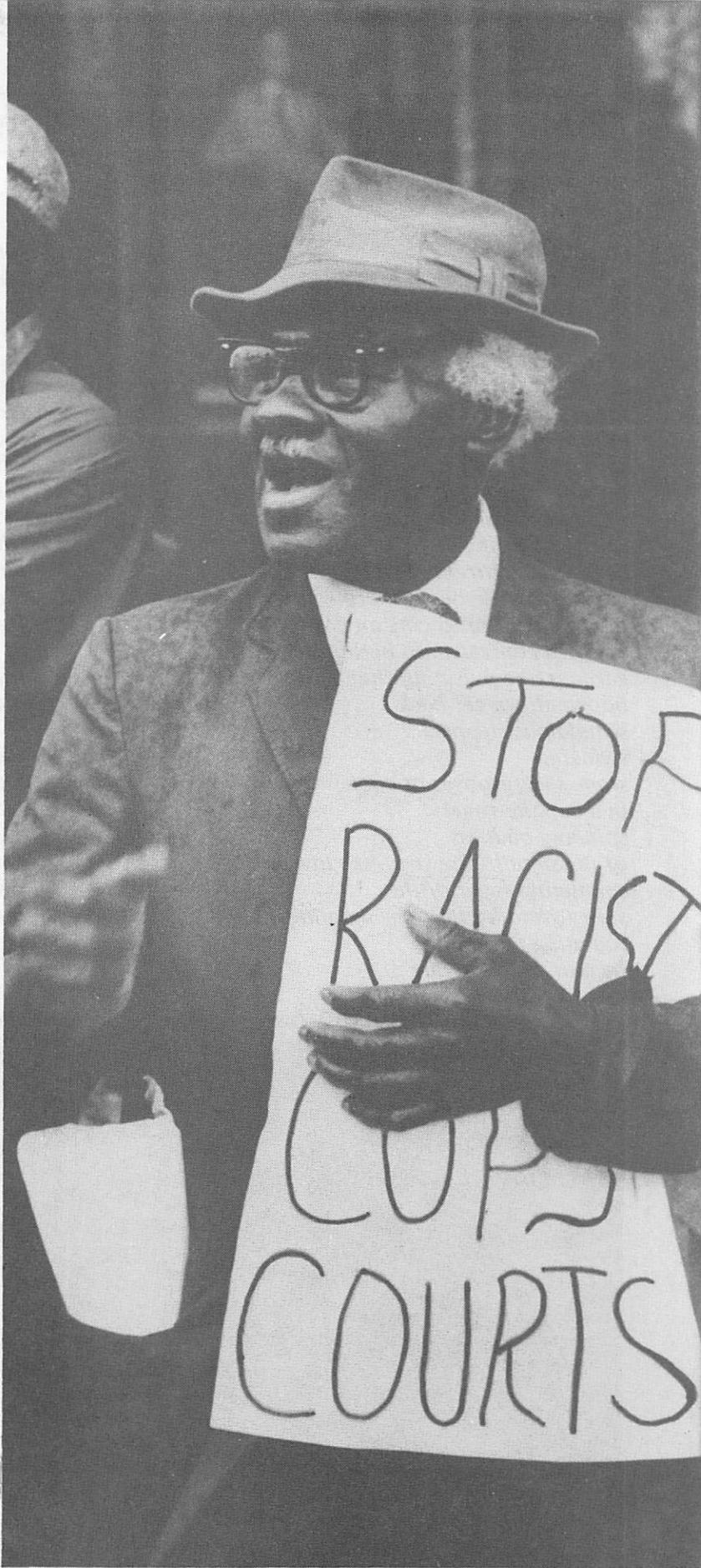
even rolling Cinque from anonymity

to brilliance

look to their rising

*because this new decade has come
 boiling with the desires of little men
 precious struggle
 take my hand
 precious struggle
 take my hand
 because I can see the killers lining up
 to stop the tide
 to throw their bullets at movements of the hands
 to shoot down The Man they think leading them
 but in little men greatness is collective
 so the leader is all of them
 common hands
 winding a line of open resistance
 from their daily humiliations
 recorded on centuries of pain
 take my hand
 precious struggle
 because they wrote Sandinista on the wind
 to tell the world Nicaragua was theirs
 they bolted a Shah in exile
 to name Iran their future
 and they defy Apartheid's murders
 to hold South Africa within their claim
 lead me on
 let me stand
 because when a man of his people
 returns
 common hands grow louder in their freedom chants
 precious struggle
 take my hand
 precious struggle
 take my hand
 lead me on*

let me stand



DEBORAH LOWE

Confirmation/Ded. to Sterling Plump

GREGORY POWELL

*i own the
music. i color
the lyrical emptiness in
fluorescent spectra
of my rhythmic
dance. i wistfully hum
the gut haunting
praises of my tonal
soul. i stylishly trod
the note spiced pathway
of a lyrical line/the music is mine/the
spirit-sea raging in
deep-laden currents erupting into tidal
crescendos/the blade-sharp wind blowing
reed solos commencing an erosion of
hellified concrete into harmonizing
gardens/the pulsating chants of
boogie-down get-back
scandalous steppers
swinging
stone slick grooves of cool
in a cut/the sweet
spinning badness
of the smooth fire strut/the low
simmering sugar of the
sultry grinding Bop/the gyrating
radiating flagellating
beautified fire-flying*

*spirit-storming
sanctified songs
of smoke/
i own the music/the song
that throbs in lascivious
visions of
Hoochie Coochie/that preaches Mojo
eye in the sky
with a sun caressed
shine/that bleeds guitar strings
in a low moaning
whine/the music is mine.
i possess
the song that sing of
free. That glides on wings
of Howling Wolves. That
trumpet-feeds fallen ashes
into deified flame.
i
own Blues/Bop/
Shout/BeBop/DoWop/
Daddy-o-Dip/Hip-Hop-Hippity-Hip-
Hop-Hop/Rock/Sci-Daddily-Dop/
De-Dow-Pop/i
own the
music
Oh yeah*

(Left to right) Billy Taylor, piano; Dexter Gordon, tenor sax; Frank Wess, sax.



REVIEWS

THE GREAT JAZZ PIANISTS

The Great Jazz Pianists
Len Lyons
William Morrow & Co., New York

JIMMY STEWART

These transcribed interviews Len Lyons conducted and published previously in *Keyboard* magazine, *Downbeat* and *Musician* magazines are collected here under one cover. Twenty seven pianists in a festschrift in celebration of the jazz piano tradition. Teddy Wilson, Mary Lou Williams, Cecil Taylor, Chick Corea, Sun Ra, John Lewis, Ahmad Jamal, Randy Weston, McCoy Tyner, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul, Jimmy Rowles, Keith Jarrett, Paul Bley, Ran Blake, Dave Brubeck, Marian McPartland, Billy Taylor, Jaki Byard, Ramsey Lewis, Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson, George Shearing, Horace Silver, Red Garland and Steve Kuhn. The title might be misleading to anybody who does not believe that anyone who has had more than five albums released in his or her name is presumed to be a "great" piano player, deserving of the sobriquet because the music that is played is jazz. The trouble with it is that by agreed consensus of nearly everybody that has listened to and enjoyed this music, especially the pianists included in this collection, know who the "great" pianists are. The best recommendation I can give to read this book is that the responses of the pianists interviewed leave no doubt as to who the great pianists are. Tatum, Waller, Bud and Monk. They are the great jazz pianists.

Since the body of the book is roughly 200 pages of interviews my remarks are on the forty pages preceding the interviews. The preface, prelude and part one. I won't take any issue with Lyons' remarks in the opening and preliminary sections of this book other than to say that they are the customary kinds of background information on the history of the jazz piano you'd find in countless other histories of the music. Which I'm sure is of immense and valuable importance to anybody who has never read anything extensively about our music. But laying aside my courtesies and acknowledgements to Mr. Lyons' researching I would like to add a few remarks of my own in regard to the piano in the total organization of the musical groups (their instrumental make-up) for the purpose of the production of our African-American musics known as Jazz. And to raise considerations of the piano, in the way that instrument fits and represents the reflections of the social and class organization in the society at large. The piano as a metaphor, more or less of how the bureaucratization of the



Fats Waller



Art Tatum



Bud Powell

Thelonious Monk



larger sphere of music itself, in that instrument's tyranny over it as the equal tempered systems-enforcer with what Mr. Lyons seem to believe its preeminence in Jazz as a whole. An opinion incidentally, which I do not share with him. The problem with the piano in Jazz is not that it cannot "bend" notes. The problem with the piano is its regulatory role in the equal temperament system in the chordbased music eighteen of the pianists here work in, and therefore its determining factor in what is *lawful* in music and what is *lawless* in music. Thinking on that for a moment, it wouldn't take you long to see how the use of these two words, "lawful" and "lawless" might be reflected in the bureaucratization of Jazz. Whether Jazz is "lawful" or "lawless" in the political systems of art might be, to some people a matter of opinion. But it is more than a matter of opinion if one would venture to say that the opinion of Josef Skvorecky, the Czech writer that Jazz is "a minor art"?!?! is an opinion not openly admitted but generally shared by a great number of whites. The difference of course is that Jazz is not as politically outlawed in this country as it was in

Skvorecky's Prague. So then what I refer to as the "lawlessness" of Jazz here is in reference to an acceptance of another sort. And the keyboard in the context I am referring to it here in Jazz is the way it was and still is employed to drill entrants into equal temperament dominated music from a musicological standpoint and fit or isolate them from a political and therefore economical standpoint. This then demonstrates "lawful" and "lawlessness." Since form in art is almost invariably associated with the status quo in class societies, you have to get a thorough picture of the ways the status quo is reflected in "forms" or "structures" and "chords" and how to differentiate between what is being referred to nowadays as "idiosyncratic Jazz" and how the upholding of the other "chord" music and the role of the piano in the perpetuation of that kind of music demonstrates the politic. Here is where the bureaucratification steps in and takes place. The old guard musicians, who only twenty years ago, were underground Beboppers now patronizingly refer to the new music musicians of jazz, but whose polite and diplomatic replies to their interviewer barely

hides their disdain for Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman and the rest of those "freedom" players as Jaki Bayard calls them, which may, in its own way merely be a cover-up to shroud what is essentially familial and only basically seeing to what is always a means and way of making those who are worth it, "earn" their way in. The "routinization of charisma" is completed up to this point, as far as most of the musicians interviewed by Lyons. Reds Garland, John Lewis, Billy Taylor, Horace Silver, Jimmy Rowles et al.

Strictly speaking, all of our musical artists are performing artists, so to approach the unstateable in this book is to indicate, if I can, their function as performers in a market economy. To pick out any one of the respondees at random will attest to the fact that there is nothing dull or senescent in our music, but other than that, economic and material

issues are very much at stake in the lives of the musicians that choose this music. Whether to use the Rhodes or not. The ARP2600 or the Bosendorfer and the rest of the controversy about acoustic instruments vs. electric instruments. Through all of these the reader has to sift out of the personal opinions of the respondees such disparate views of the state of the art as that of the venerable Teddy Wilson's riposte that Bebop music was invented to keep those customers interested who were driven out of the dance hall because of the 20% tax levied on every bill to keep those establishments open?!?! to Keith Jarrett's statement that "the world is electric to begin with" and that to plug in into manufactured electricity would make us "less strong," a theory and philosophy of art that would be an unifying cultural theory of our African-American musics which is still sorely needed. Instead of the tattered and fragmented views of the illustrious group of individuals L. Lyons has gathered here.

Of all the branches of the culture industry where profits are involved, none is more further advanced along the lines of the capitalism than the music business. And no inquiry into *Standard & Poor* or *Record World* will reveal the total revenue earned as profit by companies by the sales of records devoted exclusively to jazz. But it seems to me that as lean as the pickings are in the jazz category, pianists are in the most enviable position of all musicians, inasmuch as from the time jazz music became a sort of chamber music their ubiquity in the ensembles that produced it, virtually made pianists feel that they would never suffer the pain of not being in demand. But what is worth looking at is that a conservatism or reactionism is seriously being championed at these very people and our brothers of the yesteryears of the Sixties and the rest of those in music, which judging from the pages of *Village Voice* are Reaganizing our black music by their support of the old guard BeBop music. This is Len Lyons' book. Loud and clear. The manifestly middle-class outlook of every pianist interviewed in this book is not anything especially revealing to anybody who has made even a cursory examination of the music and I would take no umbrage with that, and I'm sure there are

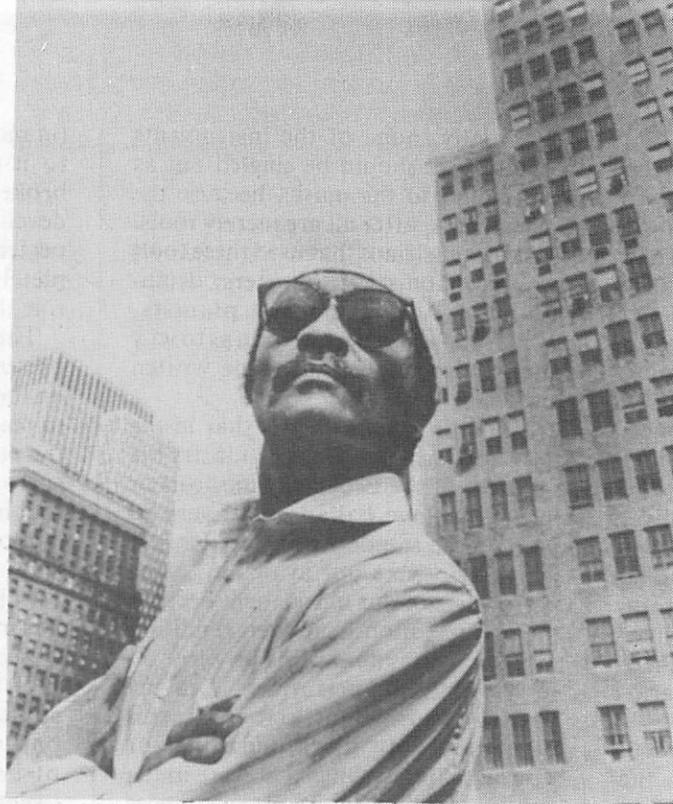
The music industry is the farthest advanced along the lines of capitalism

Keith Jarrett



many among us who would find that laudable. But the point is that the appearance of this book especially in these times is worth serious consideration. I mean that everybody in this book, with the possible exception of Cecil Taylor is marching lockstep with the conservative compradors of the current administration and the peculiar part of it all is that they do not know it. Along with the record companies that spend most of their cost to the reissuing of old releases of the forties and fifties in the interest of not only heisting the rack sales in the record shops, but by that same means determine the decidedly 50's and 60's emphasis in the music heard over the radio (in reference to the music heard in Philadelphia) and the retort that more jazz is being heard over the air today than ever disguises the fact that a conservatism is being promulgated at the same time. And keyboard players are the unfortunate dupes of this link-up to the status quo policies of the administration in the country at large. A process being undertaken by the merger of the outsiders into the system. One performer can perform for Reagan. Another, play before a racist audience in South Africa. But nobody would be foolish enough to believe that the presentation of this music in either situation has anything at all to do with increase appreciation of white people for jazz music.

Owing to the extensive piano literature, (largely European) which pianists black and white (vide the pianists in this collection) are subjected to, in order to become proficient on their instrument; a literature almost excessive, compared to the repertory available for the student who is perfecting his abilities on the contrabass, the trumpet (which probably comes up a weak second to the piano) or the guitar, but notably in comparison to the drum kit and especially to those family of instruments I deliberately left for the last: the saxophones, you can see from this, that of



Cecil Taylor

Except maybe Cecil Taylor, everybody in the book is in step with the conservatives

the least effected instruments the saxophone in close conjunction with the drums would be more worthy of attention in regard to jazz, than, the piano but instead the piano is chosen because in Len Lyons' opinion, the piano, is "the most versatile and autonomous of all the musical instruments." An opinion I'd concur with wholeheartedly, but with this one, very critical difference. And that difference is related to Ragtime, (I believe Lyons does make note of it), the first full blooming of a written keyboard music of black music. It heralded in a tighter coupling of a regimented syncopation within the parameters of a formal white format, that facilitated its accessibility throughout the country to an extent Jelly Roll or none of those pre-Rag masters had the good fortune to enjoy. Be that as it may, our masters were smart enough to see that a written key-

board music patterned in the notational system of the rest of the European derived piano music would be completely out of keeping with the nascent jazz that was coming into being. James P. Johnson, Meade Lux and rest of them went past the seductives of the piano roll industry and the Tin Pan Alley tune-plugging of the sheet music era of the country. Had they succumbed to the Ragtime enticement there would not have been a place for the piano in jazz at all. But the piano as the humunculus of the European equal temperament system, or rather the jazz pianists, provided the infrastructure of the popular music song form, on top of which the character of jazz was made. This linkage to the song forms of the popular music industry is extremely crucial to the role of the importance of the piano to the market.

If you look at this picture of a music as extraordinary as it is, supported almost entirely on the song form and harmonies of the popular dance and ballad standards of a vaudeville, Broadway and sheet music era, you can see from this the preeminence of

the piano in the maintenance of that condition. And under the licensing, copyright and royalties connection to the economies of our musicians tied in with their earnings and finally but irrefutably to the undeveloped state of this music's economy, because, as I said in the opening of this essay that to throw another light on the subject of jazz pianists, is to see them essentially as performers sets them up in perfect agreement and consistency with the aims of those of us that read this journal because even as "piano players" the struggle for change in art always reflects the struggle for change in the society.

The diminution of the differences between the classes in our nation is being off-set by the antics of one of our brothers who Janus-like subjected one of the most advanced (in my opinion) painists interviewed in this book, in a

recent article, and by the new white jazz music journalist, you'll find in the pages of *Downbeat*, *Musician* and *Keyboard* magazines, whose implicit avoidance of the "common touch" in their perusal of our music, do, by that manner endorse the support of the reactionary reversals that are going on in this country today. By exacerbating at one extreme the "class" of jazz and at the other extreme the Rap corner-boy music of Grand Master Flash and Curtis Blow "the Man" scoops up the pot in Flashdance and Staying Alive, where the "class" act Murphy brother ends up with the Reagan clone in some Caribbean Island — a Seaga pipe dream — where there is no other lines to any other black people anywhere only to Citibank and the CBI. (Caribbean Basin Initiative)

There moved thru the careers of all pianists an assigned position in the bands and combos where the distribution of players consigned some to the rhythm section as support players for the front line players, who were invariably wind instrument players. The piano, a rhythm and harmonic instrument was included among the rest in that section. But of all of the members in that section the piano was the pivotal key that laid the scaffolding, the sinews and nerves under the integument of the music. Imprisoned so to speak, by this harmonic and rhythmic cage. The interplay of these two conflicting factors provides the irresistible tension in the body of the music. Between ornamentation, (which is only a cute way of referring to improvisation) and formality.

Actually, none of the instruments used in jazz should be singled out as paramount to the music, because the instruments, after all are merely tools. And the musicians that used these tools are saxophonists, trumpeters, drummers, string players and pianists. Which might beg the question as to why pianists are singled out to be written about.

The little known fact is that in the first full flush of the music industry the set tunes of the Broadway musicals or just plain love ballads that were to become the standards of popular and jazz music were not available to the performers of our music then, because the remuneration from their rendition of the song was an earning privilege reserved for white performers. Leaving the jazz performing artist to content his or herself with discarded tunes or "throwaways," songs that were in the public domain. But as circumstances changed and the producers saw that it made better business sense to diversify the rendition of songs, the revenue that accrued to the performer under the performance rights royalties made it more profitable to make one's living by that means, than bothering to make one's own song, which might not sell anyway. Furthermore, by encouraging the performer to do the songs of legitimized songwriters covered by the imbursements the copyright pays for performances the songwriter relied on the singers and musicians, to promulgate the songs in playing them for the public. The job of the contracting company, whether recording or publishing,

(in most cases usually the same) to see to it that this concatenate is never broken. In the earlier stages of this development no musician fitted more perfectly as being the sole player completely suitable for this intermediary role than the pianist.

The object of this paper, aside from presenting the customary information on the book in question was to attempt to reach toward the broader subject of the piano as a metaphor. A paradigm, so to speak of the institutionalizing tool in the makeup of music in general and of jazz in particular. And in that way metaphorically associate the piano as subject to the present realm of politics in this country today.

Seen, in one view as the cauterizing tool, and on the other hand as the lodestone of our music. Oscillating from one to the other. From the primal tool of its heyday in this country in the twenties. The period associated with itself as a chatauqua. To that of being the machine that turned out music from rollers and from those who could read music, from sheet music. And from that to that of being a adjunct to the dance orchestra. And finally to that of being a constituent of the small group ensemble.

But here, falling in between the crevices of my neatly simple model of the role and function of the piano is the solo performer on the instrument. An interesting feature of some of the pianists selected here. Jarrell, Corea, Cecil follows the lead of Tatum and Gardner. Functioning principally as one-man recitalists. With the rest veering in and out of that role as business and employment demanded. All of which might be construed to show the perspicacity of the lone solo piano player in the music.

Obviously, it would seem as if it was more lucrative for everybody involved, including the pianist himself, as in the case of Nat King Cole to be lured to singing songs exclusively, rather than being reliant on his piano playing. But how about Gardner, promoted exclusively as a keyboard recitalist rather than as a "sideman"? To chalk these instances up, to our loss (meaning the jazz brotherhood of fellowship) and "their" gain, is to cut off our nose to spite our face to the risk involved in the perpetuation of the music.

Actually, none of the instruments used in jazz should be singled out as paramount to the music. (Left to right) Bassist Tommy Potter, saxophonist Charlie Parker, drummer Max Roach, trumpeter Miles Davis, and pianist Duke Jordan.



The Swansong of Johnny One Note

OR

Just Another Crisis in Black Cultural Nationalism

A review/Essay of *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions*

by Haki Madhubuti/
Don L. Lee
Third World Press
Chicago, IL; 1983

BARON JAMES ASHANTI

The classic boxer when he's in the ring gives his opponent angles — moving and shifting from side to side — never facilitating a sucker punch. If the boxer presents the same type of target his opponent, will no doubt, knock him out. Black poetry has been battered and slumping on the ropes for the last 12 years.

The problem with Madhubuti's latest offering, *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions* is that it lacks growth — either in the aesthetic execution of techniques, or the political matrix for contextual ideas. Madhubuti's latest collection can be substituted for perhaps his 2nd or 3rd. But then again, to call this book a collection of poetry is a misnomer, and after a 10 year absence of verse in print any constituency should be able to expect more.

The ambivalence of *Earthquakes* —

appears to be representative of Black poetry within the last decade in general. The heart failure of black poetry is caused by its myopic search for a mission. When one looks at the veritable plethora of self proclaimed poets, relatively few are politically active or politically motivated. (This also includes those who give lip service to progressive politics, socialist revolution or so called performance poets.) Most of us who write verse have not made any erstwhile commitment to the Black Liberation Struggle. The headlong anarchistic flight of the petty bourgeois poet from organizational form or the unprincipled shunning of aboveboard debate, struggle, criticism, and self criticism, in the name of a mythical unity, doesn't sanction glibness as synonym for poetic license. However, to merely put the badmouth on a strawman, which *Earthquakes* is, under the guise of critical analysis does not serve this magazine's readership. The bottom line for any literary work is does it meet the critical standards set by the specific historical moment when the work in question appears. Sadly, *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions* belongs to an era which has past.

The set of facts which Madhubuti outlines in his introduction, no doubt, are concerns of the Black Nation. The problem arises because he doesn't offer primary research into these issues, deferring, as he does, to the testimony of others. Another problem with the introduction (which should be by all accounts set criteria for what follows) is that there is no organic link between the introduction and the poems which do follow.

Where tyranny has been destroyed in the world the dialectical process has been used to destroy its yoke; building strengths from weaknesses. In Madhubuti's first section of poetry, *Issues and Killing Time*, the poet examines aspects of the black working/underclass, but he does so at a safe distance. There is little, if any compassion displayed towards Black People shown by the poet. Another trait which Madhubuti lapses into is a murkiness of his images. In *Message*, he says:

wait
yes, there is time for love but
equal and often more must be
given to war

Is he talking about imperialists or the slaves that he mentions in the 8th line? In *Expectations*, Madhubuti's world becomes clear. He says:

trust people
one by one
the darker they come
the more you can give your
heart. . .

This statement is issued from a bull-headed black cultural nationalism which is not revolutionary, but rather more romantic than realistic. Color has nothing to do with Revolution. Pablo Neruda, Mao Tse-tung, Che Guevara, V.I. Lenin were all non black, but were friends of the afro-american nation. Some of the black nation's most engaging compradors have worn dashikis and evoked 'the motherland' like a talisman as they shake and baked their way into our hearts, pockets, or organizations, a la cointelpro.

The innate patriarchal chauvinism

of black cultural nationalism comes out in the section, *The Women*. The opening statement springs from Judeo-Christian mores, (Kawaida notwithstanding). The women characters which Madhubuti describes are one dimensional and without palpable feelings. The poet of *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions* has placed women on a pedestal where he means for them to be object lesson of an artificial beauty. Women characters under Madhubuti's auspices do not breathe; pass water; nor carry out class warfare.

In the piece *Abortion*, Madhubuti utilizes a technique as old as the hills, dating back to hebraic poetry of the bible. He uses a litany of children's names which the main character has had throughout her life. One of the toughest literary techniques for an author to use is for him/her to write across gender lines. Madhubuti examines the issues of abortion without any insight, profound or otherwise, into how a woman feels, what are the specifics for this particular character. To realistically examine the desperation of the underclass black mother could have possibly produced memorable poetry, but Madhubuti sticks to his chauvinists' gun:

... by herself alone without
consultation
went under the western butchers
to get her insides
out

Who is the main character supposed to consult? The black community in general is not involved in the poem. What does Madhubuti mean to say?

In *Safisha*, we have one of the most competent images in the book, (there are no metaphors to be had for any price):

Our joining into one proceeded like
sand through a needle's eye

however:

dark women are music
some complicated well worked
rhythms . . .

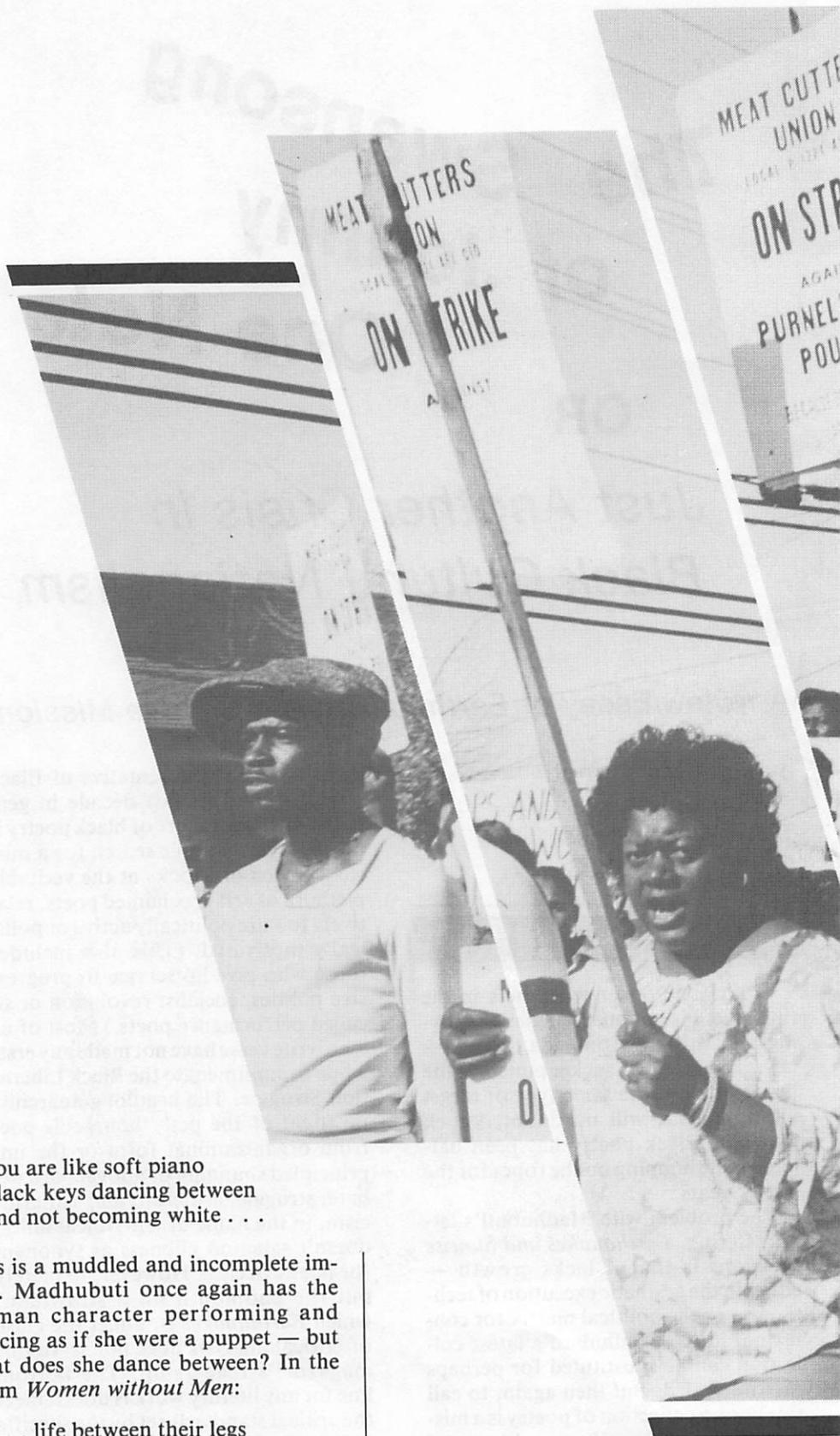
lends itself to the thought that music is played — who does the playing — one assumes Madhubuti means men.
again:

you are like soft piano
black keys dancing between
and not becoming white . . .

This is a muddled and incomplete image. Madhubuti once again has the woman character performing and dancing as if she were a puppet — but what does she dance between? In the poem *Women without Men*:

... life between their legs
will not dry up . . .

equates women by sexist definition of anatomical parts of the female body.





DEBORAH LOWE

In another poem, *Ad in a New York Weekly Newspaper*, Madhubuti goes dike baiting. By lifting an entire advertisement from a newspaper out of context, the author attempts to ridicule the sexuality of black lesbians:

like me
 if u don't know what
 Ben Wa Balls, breast cakes &
 herbal aphrodisiacs
 are
 & not "obsessed with riding a
 wild tiger"
 consider yrself (in this order)
 an unhipped, country raised
 (anywhere outside NYC)
 non-european educated farmer
 & quite possibly a 20th century
 cowboy hat wearin "dumbhead"
 who is,
 contrary to popular belief,
 absolutely
 normal and sane.

If women, by sexual preference, are not attracted to men — it does not mean that they are abnormal or freaks. First of all, to equate lesbianism with europe is ahistorical. The so called 'mandingo amazons' and others come to mind when one thinks of Africa and the lesbian question. But that is not even the point. When it comes to homosexuality black cultural nationalists bury their heads in the sand — deaf, dumb and blind. The Able African general Chaka is known to have preferred the sexual contact of men, even as he fought the incursion of european imperialism. One's sexuality preference does not stop one from being anti-imperialist; anti-colonialist or revolutionary. Madhubuti's statement on lesbianism is homophobic and boldly anachronistic and out of step with even progressive thinking.

Perhaps, to this point in the book, the clearest set of statements appear in the section *The Men*. The problem here, as is elsewhere, is that Madhubuti's poetry at its best is locked into modes of poetry which developed in the 'blessed 60's.' It seems to me that some cats and kittens go into rapture when reminiscing about the good old days; but that's the stuff diary entries are made of. Sometimes Madhubuti has good things to say, he just doesn't say them well.

again
 it was a devastating time with
 only
 quiet to debate at whether men
 should
 share in garbage emptying, floor
 mopping,
 dish washing, laundry doing,
 shopping, &c.
 when one is alone there are no
 questions
 only time
 and clarity arriving
 too late.

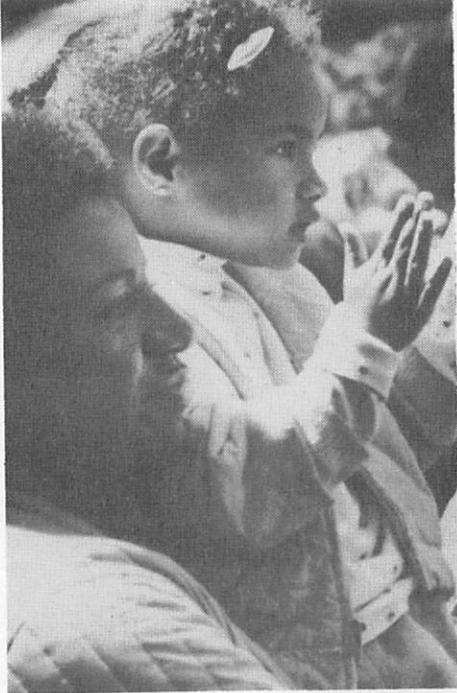
Rape: The Male Crime — this piece should have been one of the most cogent in the book, alas, it was not. The poem yields not an ounce of the horror of rape's physical and psychological violence perpetrated against women.

a significant few of their
 fathers, brothers, husbands, sons
 and growing strangers
 are willing to unleash harm on
 the earth
 and spill blood in the eyes
 of
 maggots in running shoes
 who do not know the sounds of
 birth
 or respect the privacy of the human
 form.

The poem is at best in typographical error. Does the poet wax freudian in the last stanza, is he calling women 'maggots in running shoes'; or is this just another one of the book's half baked images? Using the heinous crime of rape as subject matter Madhubuti offers, surprisingly enough, a rather blase, and pedestrian statement.

Black Manhood: Towards a definition

If a man could accede to the ideals which are set forth in this statement there would be no need for any of the world's religions and everybody would be communist. What Madhubuti asks for is nothing short of perfection, and thusly is not being realistic or of this world. Not only that, he pulls his role models from a chauvinist's idealism. Men should be perfect warriors, "protectors of Black weak." Seeing how he has not asked the same perfection of women in the book, then they must be part of the ambiguous "black weak."



BEN FERRIS

Is he calling women "maggots in running shoes"; or is this just another of the book's half baked images?

Scientific socialism points out that nothing is perfect, everything is in a constant state of flux. The dialectical process which yields the formula — thesis, antithesis, and synthesis has led to the creation of socialist state power, (dramatic indiscretions notwithstanding) in our lifetime. Cultures whose sole raison d'être being the perfection of the human spirit have notoriously been passive towards colonialism & imperialism. The only examples within recent memory to the contrary, were the movements of Gandhi, and the buddhist monks who practiced self immolation in protest of the Diem and Thieu regimes of Viet Nam. Even the Shaolin Monks who dispensed the art of Gung Fu to masses, in opposition to feudal landlords in China, had faults and

human failings. They admitted as much and often. It seems to this reviewer that there can be no nirvana under state monopoly capitalism. And spiritual perfection seems hollow in a world threatened by thermonuclear holocaust.

In the section entitled, *Destiny*, Madhubuti puts nails in the coffin of relevancy.

America: the future

...
 a black
 school aged boy
 pledged
 allegiance to the flag

... ..
 that night he asked
 his momma:

"momma why the flag got
 holes in it?"

her reply:

"daddy's back."

Of all the things Madhubuti might have said about the future in america he gives the reader, instead, a question mark. What, pray tell, does he mean? Does Madhubuti see a socialist federation of North America? The answer is a resounding "ping" against the bankruptcy of vision exhibited in Madhubuti's "poetry."

Destiny:

"cut beggars, outlaw pimps"

A revolutionary would say make the beggars part of the peoples' intelligence network; rehabilitate the whore — so that they may yet realize their true potential as human beings and give the pimp a choice. As Cabral would say, 'our people are our mountains.' People are The Black Nation's first resource. Madhubuti is a petty bourgeois artist who has not, at this late date, grasped the full implication of the Black Nation's popular culture. To paraphrase Franz Fanon, a national culture develops from the dialectical struggle of a people against their oppressor.

Madhubuti's poetry is a string of euphemisms which lack passion and fervor. Not to mention his overlooking black peoples' wit and compassion even under capitalism. The poet of *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions*

seeks after wisdom, but assumes he has all the answers. An intrinsic and immutable trait of poetry is its music. Madhubuti's poetry loses track of music in search of hip idiom and glibness. Whenever a rudimentary rhythm is established within one of Madhubuti's lines, he aborts it, by uneven lines breaks, choosing the wrong syllabic structure, and unclever devices, played out by e.e. cummings.

Like the hack actor who gets shot 10 times and each time (much to the audience's chagrin) stumbles to his feet to deliver lines which he forgot the time before — like that —

Haki Madhubuti tacks on what, no doubt what are meant to be essays; tempting the fates and daring the reader not to fall asleep between the lines. For over 50 pages Madhubuti regurgitates historical research done by Dr. John Henrik Clarke; Dr. Josef-ben Jochannon, Lerone Bennett & Chancellor Williams, yes Chancellor Williams, over the last decade. The level of scholarly research, which must bear the burden of proof in the final analysis, is all but nonexistent. The intended scope and range of topics are too varied to be adequately dealt with in one 'essay.' To deal with every fault, where competent editing might have saved the delivery of ideas would assuredly call for an essay in and of itself.

Rather than to debate erroneous logic point by point, perhaps it would be more fruitful to deal with the world view which created the 'essays.'

First of all, Madhubuti sees black people as a hermitically sealed entity in america, gift wrapped and ready for a mass movement led by who knows what kind of ideology. The author never defines what the end process of 'political involvement' is supposed to yield for the Black Nation.

Second, Madhubuti is ahistorical in his analysis of the Black Nation's plight in america. Thusly:

"... Other than it being one's time in history, why is the West in such a dominating position on the world stage? The answer is not a simple one and cannot be reduced to slogans or one word answers such as colonialism, monopoly, capitalism, or racism but for brevity can be condensed to two factors: 1) The Western-European and USA view of the world has gone beyond the previously cherished views. The knowns and

unknowns that generally handicapped a people's development, mainly religious restraint, ceased to exist about 500 years ago as Europe challenged and questioned all aspects of life including the existence of a God."

When the author talks about 'it being one's time' could he be talking about the Christian doctrine of predestination? In other words, it was not the venture capitalism of the african slave trade (sanctioned by the catholic church — under the auspices of the asiento proviso of 1539 — giving Portugal an exclusive monopoly of the slave trade; other provisos being given to Spain and England, respectively) which gave europe the growth capital to create the industrial revolution. It follows then, that it was not europe's starving for outlet markets and raw material wealth to fuel its industrial surge which led: to the colonialization of the americas; & its imperialistic rampage through africa, the middle east and asia. According to Madhubuti it was europe's immoral challenge to its ethical standards which led to europe's genocidal dreadnought of monopoly capitalism. The building blocks which have erected the material process of history are reduced to slogans in Madhubuti's hands.

Historical materialism, which closely scrutinizes the relationship between material conditions and socio-economic development is disregarded by the good author.

Haki Madhubuti, at this late date revises the real history of the Black Nation's tenure, and enslavement in america. He is boldly revisionist in an era whose shades of gray lay only between being pro capitalist or pro socialist/communist. Which brings us to a third problem. Madhubuti on several occasions inside his latest book, calls for black political involvement, black nation building etc, etc. But he does so as if the black nation existed within a vacuum. What should be the Black Nation's relationship to socialist, communist, or quasi communist forces? Madhubuti never says. What should the black nation's relationship be to the U.S. Imperialist State? Madhubuti points out:

"4) We have to organize and demand full employment, better housing and quality education that will prepare us for the 21st century. It is also clear that

we can't totally be dependent upon the state for all of our needs, therefore, we must always be seeking alternatives to what is 'given' to us."

The problem with black cultural nationalism is that there is nothing which bars it from reaching an accord with the U.S. Imperialist State within its own borders. Providing of course, that black cultural nationalism is left alone. If black cultural nationalism was left alone to fester for a thousand years it would have no organic link nor relationship with the working black underclass. Its members have always felt that they were superior to the everyday joe or johanna; ridiculing custom or misfortune of the Black masses because 'they eat pork, fried their hair, or were just incorrect 'cause they weren't vegetarian.' If one is to lead people one must learn from the people, live among the people — not romanticizing them beyond belief — but fighting tooth and nail for clarity. Contrary to Madhubuti, who has a lot to say, without offering a printable blueprint for what he calls for, grassroots organizing is hard work. It does not drop like manna from heaven, it is something that is won. It cannot co exist with petty bourgeois elitism which is cult oriented and narrow; refusing to identify itself as being one with the aspirations of the working black underclass of the Black Nation.

In conclusion, the only redeeming qualities of *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions* lie in the 'essay' portion. This is a very small favor, insofar as the information is not primary research and may be attained through other sources. Culture does not lead political struggle but is only an integral part of that struggle. It is a people's response to capitalism which defines the role of culture; not the other way around.

A poet, 'being the soul of a people' speaks when necessary. The poetry of *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions* seems to have been prematurely born. The poetic statement, if it can precariously be stated as such, seems to exude a panic and a rushing into print; shrouding subject matter with incomplete images and little if any music. And what is poetry without the music of language?

The Poetry of *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions* leaves the reader to wonder as to whether a decade of poetic silence was long enough!

Why is the Klan a Legal Organization?

From its beginning in 1865, the KKK has existed for one main purpose, to terrorize the Afro-American people and deprive them of democracy and civil rights. A continuation of the night-riding pattyrollers (patrollers) who hunted and harassed slaves in the South, the Klan was bankrolled by the defeated southern planters in collusion with the right-wing sector of the victorious bankers and industrialists of the north. It has never existed except to beat, maim, shoot and murder Black people — to stop their exercise of political power.

Black people's struggle against the Klan and progressive people's opposition to the Klan has not been based merely on what the Klan has said. Historically, the Klan has carried out repeated, concrete acts of genocide against the Afro-American people. And because of the Klan's anti-democratic, anti-constitutional *actions*, they have been banned several times and membership in it has been punishable by fines and imprisonment. In 1871, the Congress of the U.S. passed the Ku Klux Klan Act because the Klan had waged what amounted to another civil war, killing and terrorizing Black people, actually disrupting state and local elections all over the South, and depriving Black voters of their right to vote, in violation of the 14th and 15th amendments. This anti-KKK Act was an attempt to strengthen the 1866 Civil Rights Act and the 1870 Enforcement Act, both of which were supposedly designed to see that Black citizens got democracy and equality.

But because of the betrayal of Black people by the federal government after 1876, and the infamous Hayes-Tilden Compromise, the Klan was actually allowed to flourish, openly intimidate and murder would-be Black voters or any Afro-Americans whether they were actively seeking their democratic rights or not. The Klan was organized to make sure that the equality and democracy promised all citizens by the outcome of the Civil War and the Reconstruction would never come into being. In fact the Klan was the activist counter-revolutionary instrument that helped destroy the Reconstruction and bring about the consolidation of Black national oppression!



Anti-Klan demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1980.

For the Afro-American people, the Klan has been like the Nazis! In the book called *The Economics of Barbarism*, by Kucynski and Witt, it is actually shown that the anti-Jewish, racist laws used by the Nazi state were modelled after the Black codes passed during the Klan's suppression of Black rights during the Reconstruction period.

The Klan was revived in the 1920's, this time its targets were also Catholics and Jews. These features were added so that a Catholic presidential candidate (Al Smith) could be defeated and also because of the increasing number of re-

cent immigrants from Eastern Europe who were seeking democracy and political equality. The Klan has always been the instrument of the right-wing sector of the U.S. bourgeoisie, to intimidate, terrorize and, if necessary, crush the democratic strivings of Black people and others at the bottom of the social-economic ladder of American society at any given point for the sake of white supremacy. Ku Klux Klanism is Nazism pure and simple!

The Klan was banned in New York state in 1928, after a Congressional investigation in 1920. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the 1928 New York state ban. The Klan was declared by the Supreme Court an "undesirable organization." For someone to babble the Klan should have "civil rights" is like saying Eichmann and Himmler should be allowed to carry out their fascist designs on the Jews, aided by the civil liberties union. The lynchings and burnings and bombings and murders carried out on Black citizens since 1865 make it obvious that Klansmen are a "murder gang," as historian William Foster called them, whose politics are those of the ovens and crematoria and gas chambers at Dachau and Buchenwald.

KKK serves the capitalists

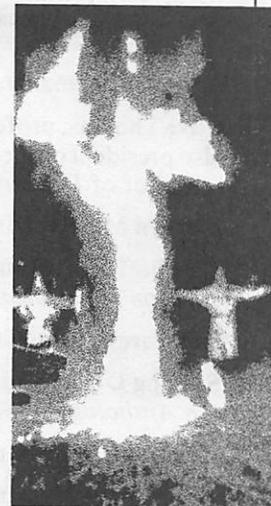
At any point where the U.S. monopoly capitalist economy lurches towards bust, as it does cyclically and as it one day must do completely and forever, the Klan is called out of mothballs to yell and scream that the problem of the economy is "niggers," not the unworkable nature of monopoly capitalism. White supremacy has been used historically to stunt class struggle in the U.S. so that the more backward elements of the U.S. population will be captured by this scapegoat mentality and not see that under monopoly capitalism there will never be full employment.

The Nazis took over from the Weimar Republic in Germany by pushing just such a scapegoat mentality that the Klan is synonymous with and which President Ronald Reagan has gotten elected on. It is no coincidence that Reagan's kick-off speech for his 1980 campaign was at Philadelphia, Mississippi, a backwoods hamlet that has only one distinction: it was the site of the horrible murder of three civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner. Even Jimmy Carter mumbled muffled cries about the Klan just after Reagan's speech. But the Klan is legal for the same reason as monopoly capitalism, the power of the bourgeoisie.

Now the Klan has gotten so emboldened by Reagan's scapegoating of Blacks and other minorities in a feeble attempt to hide the true nature of this crumbling capitalist society, that they have come out in the open again, holding a "unification" gathering in North Carolina and then daring to come up to Washington, D.C., to march in all its murderous infamy in a city of one of the largest concentrations of Black people in the U.S. It is clearly Reagan's right-wing, white supremacy babble that has given the Klan the courage to do this.

U.S. imperialism internationally has let their running dogs in Israel destroy Lebanon, a sovereign state, in order to stop the Palestinians' struggle for self-determination. It has set up the so-called "constructive engagement" with

The Klan has been the instrument of the right-wing sector of the U.S. bourgeoisie. Ku Klux Klanism is Nazism pure and simple!



the South African fascists which is really open encouragement for that racist settler colony, going so far as to set up a \$1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund. These are part of U.S. imperialism's attacks against revolution all over the world. Soon the South African racists will get bold enough to move into Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe in the same manner the Israeli fascists destroyed Lebanon and backed the slaughter of the Palestinians by their Phalangist (fascist) allies.

So in the U.S. itself, these same attacks against people's struggles are the open tactics of the Reagan Administration. Just as the Israeli Zionists cannot stop the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people for liberation, nor can the South African fascists stop the African people's struggle for liberation, neither can the murder gangs of the KKK stop the Afro-American Nation from achieving self-determination, nor the multinational masses of the U.S. from eventually smashing monopoly capitalism forever and building socialism.

In spite of the buildup of right-wing madness all over the country led by Reagan — the Eddie Carthan case in Mississippi, the railroading of the Black Liberation Army and Weather people, the murder of leftists in Greensboro and the acquittal of their Klan and Nazi murderers, the attack on the voting rights bill, the attempt to grant tax exemption to racist institutions — the people of the U.S. have already shown their willingness to struggle, that they are already growing wise to would-be Fuhrer Reagan and his gang.

So today, the people are gathered to opposed the revival of the American fascists, the KKK. We must show Reagan and his Klansmen that not only are we wise to them, but we mean to see them destroyed. *The Klan should not even be a legal organization in the United States. It is a murder gang!!!* And if the government will not stop them, then we, the people, will smash them forever.

Death to the KKK!

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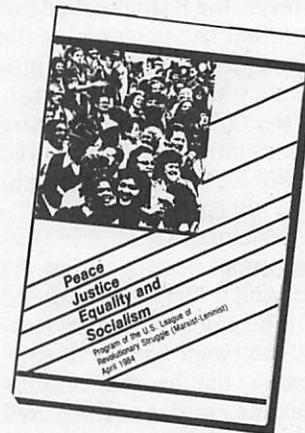
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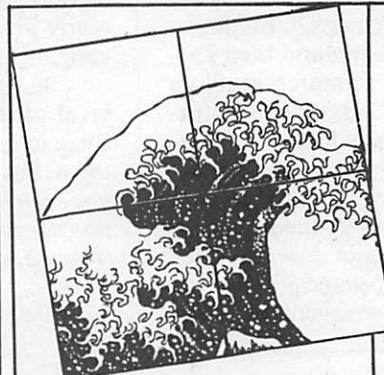
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