

3

The Class-First, Race-First Debate:
The Contradictions of Nationalism
and Internationalism and the
Stratification of the World-System

As we saw in Chapter 2, Dr.W.E.B. Du Bois's monumental struggle against white world supremacy took its radical turn initially from the push given him by the New Negro Movement, which formed during the period of World War I and the Great Migration of the African American and Afro-Caribbean people to the cities of the United States. The New Negro radicals of that period were embroiled in a fierce debate about the merits of a race-first versus a class-first strategy. The details of this debate are little known today, but the substance of the debate remains an ongoing feature of contention about strategies for the advancement of Black people in the United States and throughout the world. As I have argued elsewhere (Bush 1999), the New Negro radicals transformed the *rapport de force* of the relationship between the dominant and subordinate strata in U.S. society and influenced the rise of radical and revolutionary sentiment in other parts of the African diaspora.

By the 1960s the Black freedom struggle had placed these issues before the U.S. American public in such a powerful manner that the entire society began to open up to the voices of the oppressed in an unprecedented fashion, as I describe in Chapters 4 and 5. While many saw the civil rights movement as an attempt to complete the program of social democracy introduced by the New Deal (or more grandiosely as an attempt to complete the "Great American Revolution"), the civil rights revolution and the movements that emerged in its wake eventually came to be seen by many whites (under the leadership of an intelligentsia that was now concerned about the stability of U.S. power in the wider world) as a movement of special interests that defected from the alleged universal programs of the New Deal.

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Within this context, many now argue that the conservative realignment that took place during the post–civil rights period was a justified response of the beleaguered white working and middle classes to the narrow agenda of the civil rights movement and its allied movements. Charles Krauthammer (1990), A. M. Rosenthal (1995), and Jim Sleeper (1991) have articulated this position most clearly. Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary Edsall (1992) have written extensively about this phenomenon.

The nature of these responses was influenced by changes in *rappports de force* in U.S. society and on a world scale. Because of these changes in *rappports de force* against the hegemonic U.S. strata, a small but important section of the liberal intelligentsia (many of whom had been on the left during the 1930s and 1940s) were upset at the instability of U.S. power, which they saw as a positive force in world affairs, and dramatically defected from the great society. These intellectuals came to be called neoconservatives, and they provided a sophisticated intellectual agenda for the Right. With its rise during the 1980s, the Right built its program on the basis of the legitimating the ideas of the neoconservative intelligentsia: color blindness, family values, the meritocracy, individualism. The ideological transformations of this period would finally undermine liberalism as the hegemonic ideology in the world-system.

While the response of intellectuals more partial to the “truly disadvantaged” has varied from outraged on the part of Adolph Reed, Jr., Julian Bond (1991), Stephen Steinberg (1995), and Robin D.G. Kelley (1997) to defensive and measured on the part of William Julius Wilson (1979, 1987), I want to point out that we are essentially replaying a form of the class-first/race-first debate from the early twentieth century, and we would do well to reexamine that debate so that we can position our current debate in an understanding of the *longue durée* of our historical social system.

Race, Class, and Agency

I would thus like to take a longer view on this debate by going back to the historical grounding of the class-first/race-first debate. My position is somewhat unorthodox to be sure, but I think it certainly merits a hearing.

In the nineteenth century there existed two antisystemic movements that speak to the issues of racial conflict and social class conflict that we address today. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels described the specter that haunted Europe, the specter of communism.¹ The logic of the workers’ movement seemed inexorable. Marx and Engels analyzed how capitalism concentrated workers in urban areas, formed the context in which social production was to evolve, and described with remarkable elegance the contradictions of capitalism. They elaborated a powerful analysis of how capitalism would produce its own grave diggers, would disgrace itself in its degradation of workers, and would undermine our humanity by reducing everything to the cash nexus.

Marx and Engels could not analyze the full scope of the capitalist incorporation of the noncapitalist world, however, because this did not happen during their lifetimes. While some Marxists have not gone far beyond their original account

of primitive accumulation, others have ascertained more fully the impact of capitalism's worldwide impact as it leveled the noncapitalist world, bending it to its own aims and in the process destroying much of value in those societies. The historical formation of Western hegemony involved an incalculable attack on the non-Western world.

Anouar Abdel-Malek (1981:72–73) provides a precise reading of this phenomenon:

1. The first wave of invasions, looting, penetration, occupation was to hit the Islamic-Arab . . . area, from the ninth century, from the crusades to Zionist militarism.
2. The second, more humanely murderous wave reached for the African continent, with the subsequent hemorrhage caused by the slave trade, which has so deeply influenced the potential of contemporary Africa.
3. The third wave was to destroy the Indian civilizations and societies in central and South America, subjugated by the Hispanic and Portuguese seaborne empires.
4. The last and final wave reached for south Asia, mainly the Indian subcontinent, and then south-east and, in the last instance East Asia.

The rising bourgeoisies of the West thus succeeded in destroying the centers of power of the three continents and in accumulating in their zones their material wealth and cultural potential. This is much more than primitive accumulation; it is a brutal assault, a criminal assault by an oppressive social system whose logic twisted the humanity of those who prosecuted it to a cold-blooded bottom-line mentality to which all else—all else—was subjected.

What a contrast. Marx and Engels were implacable critics and opponents of the capitalist world, yet they presented it as a progressive system that transformed the precapitalist world for the better. The view of Egyptian intellectual Anouar Abdel-Malek could not be more different. He is critical of the Eurocentrism of the Pan-European world. Rather than progress, could we say that there is a particular sense of evil embedded in the capitalistic system? I would like to preface our detailed history of the class-first perspective with two perspectives on Eurocentrism: one from the non-European world, from the Peruvian scholar Anibal Quijano, and one from the Pan-European world, from the U.S. scholar Immanuel Wallerstein.

Quijano points out that capitalism integrates and exploits workers under all forms of labor (wage labor, slave labor, commodity production, etc.), utilizing gender and race as mechanisms of domination. Prior to the advent of global capitalism, gender, age, and labor power were clearly the oldest of the attributes used in the process of the social classification that constructed and maintained power relations. With the foundation of the Americas, phenotype was added, which became the social classification on which the concept of race was based.

It would be difficult, Quijano emphasizes, to exaggerate the importance of the meaning of the category of race for the modern, colonial, Eurocentric capitalist model of global power, for this process enabled the production and

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elaboration of new social identities, and their distribution in global capitalist power relations was established and reproduced as the basic form of societal classification and as the foundation for new geocultural identities and their power relations in the world. Race came also to serve as the foundation for the production of intersubjective relations of domination and a new epistemological perspective that was imposed throughout the world as the only source of rationality.

The racialization of power relations between these new social and geocultural identities was the foundation of the Eurocentrism of this model of material and intersubjective power and pervaded all other areas of social existence in that model of power (Quijano 2006:23). As a consequence of this particular structuring of power, Quijano argues, although race and social class are conceptually separate and viewed as external to each other, social classes under capitalism have always been differentially distributed among the populations of the earth on the basis of the coloniality of power (capitalists, wage labor, middle classes, and independent peasants in the Euro-core, and tributary capitalists, dependent associates, slaves, serfs, small independent mercantile producers, reciprocal workers, wage workers, middle classes, and peasants in the colonial periphery). It is precisely this set of power relations that has allowed the capitalists to shape and finance the loyalty of the exploited or dominated whites against the other “races” (Quijano 2006:26–27).

Wallerstein’s assessment of Eurocentrism involves an extended debate about precisely what constitutes Eurocentrism. He opposes those who say that whatever Europe did, others were also doing up to the moment when Europe used its geopolitical power to interrupt the process in other parts of the world. He also opposes those who say that what Europe did is nothing more than a continuation of what others had already been doing for a long time, with the Europeans temporarily achieving hegemony for a limited time—a relatively short time in the long history of the world, which they consider to have been a capitalist world for thousands of years. He calls these two conceptions of Eurocentrism Eurocentric anti-Eurocentrism (Wallerstein 1999:177–178).

Wallerstein agrees, however, with the third argument, which holds that whatever Europe did, it has been analyzed incorrectly and subjected to inappropriate extrapolations, which have dangerous consequences for both science and the political world (Wallerstein 1999:178). His position is that Europe’s achievement is indeed different from what others were doing and that there were societal limitations in these civilizations that prevented them from launching modernity and capitalism and going on to conquer the world and exploit resources and people. Whereas there have always been some people who were involved in commercial activities and thus sought profits in the marketplace, in none of these worlds were the capitalist ethos and practice dominant. Other loci of power and values were always able to rein in the power of the capitalists and thus of the market economy. Why did this change in Europe?

Wallerstein attributes the change to the development of the structures of knowledge in Europe that were different from previous structures of knowledge, structures that gave priority to a particular kind of scientific thought. Scientific thought antedates the modern world and is present in all major civilizations.

What is specific about the structures of knowledge in the modern world-system is the concept of *two cultures*” the divorce between science and philosophy/humanities, or what Wallerstein refers to as the separation of the true from the good and the beautiful. We have thus in the West the figure of the scientist, a value-neutral specialist whose objective assessment of reality forms the basis not only of engineering decisions but also of sociopolitical decisions. The affect of the two cultures was to remove the major underlying social decisions we have been taking for the past five hundred years from substantive (as opposed to technical) scientific debate. Here Wallerstein formulates the impact of Western “rationality” in a way that completely exposes the manner in which it has concealed its secrets from the world and from the general public in the West as well. Our inability to treat simultaneously the true and the good has undercut our ability to think with any degree of social intelligence, because such questions have no standing in the scientific canon of the forms of knowledge that prevail in the Pan-European world and the world where its views prevail.

It is for that reason that I argue in what may seem a reckless or shocking fashion that a cold-blooded bottom-line mentality has been written onto the superegos of the populations of the core states. This is despite the fact that we see ourselves as virtuous and good and at least good-intentioned, even if our leaders make mistakes and blunders in their policy formulation and implementation. We can learn from those outside the cultural blinders that imprison our mentalities and from those whom Patricia Hill Collins (1991:11-13) calls “the outsiders within.”

This again emphasizes the significance of our need to learn the lessons of the struggle for social equality from the perspective of the enslaved Africans who produced this other great movement, a captive people locked in a stolen land who articulated an internationalist and egalitarian vision that did not stem from the Euro–North American workers movement but that had its own logic. That they constituted the most dynamic and militant wing of the world proletariat should be noted, but their captivity and their status as an internal colony in the bowels of the capitalist metropolis, ultimately the center of metropolitan capitalism, is of enormous import here.

We all know the story of the European workers’ movement: the theoretical commitment to internationalism, the rise of imperialism, the entering of the workers into a social democratic compromise, the resulting pro-imperialist and procapitalist stance among white workers, all resulting in what we call the taming of the dangerous classes. V. I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks attacked the fat-cat working classes of Western Europe and split with the Second (socialist) International to form the Third (Communist) International, a revolutionary socialist movement dedicated to destroying capitalism by any means necessary.

The Bolsheviks seized power in a semiperipheral zone of the capitalist economy and declared that they would hold on until the proletariat came to power in the advanced industrial countries in which the potential to build a proletarian socialist society was strongest. The proletariats of the advanced industrial zones rose in revolt but were everywhere crushed. The Bolsheviks were forced to go it alone, giving rise to the doctrine of socialism in one country.

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In the meantime, the petit bourgeois socialists of Western Europe had abandoned their internationalist pretensions for a pro-imperialist line reinforced by an ideology of Pan-European racism that reasserted the superiority of white, Western civilization. This was, of course, consistent with the positions of Marx and Engels.

Enslaved Africans underwent a Pan-African evolution, however, because of the conditions of their captivity, having a variety of African peoples thrown together and at least in the North experiencing an attempt to suppress all expressions of their African cultures. Scholars differ in their interpretation of these phenomena, that is, whether these expressions were effectively suppressed or whether they merely went underground. There is agreement, though, that these conditions of captivity led to the development of a common culture, a quite extraordinary achievement that in my view reinforced the already existing tendencies toward Pan-Africanism.

The tradition of field Negro revolt that emerged was an alternative and more vigorous expression of proletarian revolt than all of the European workers' movements. We know the stories of some of the actors here: Denmark Vesey, Henry Highland Garnet, David Walker, and Nat Turner. We need not look at the details of all these stories.

At the turn of the century the Trinidadian barrister Sylvester Williams called for the first Pan-African Congress, at which Du Bois first articulated his notion that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.

World War I created conditions that loosened the chains of social control throughout the world, making way for rebellions. One of the most significant groups that emerged out of these postwar conditions was the New Negro Movement. Du Bois even said this movement had left him far behind. During the 1920s, as we have seen, Du Bois moved dramatically away from the Fabian socialism of his earlier years. By the 1930s he had caught up with the race-first radicals of the New Negro Movement. We can better understand what this means if we review some details of the history of that movement.

The class-first position was articulated by militants and leaders of the Socialist Party. In response to a question about how they would deal with racism in the United States, the Socialist Party argued that they were the party of the proletariat and had no special program for any part of the class. Negroes, they held, were simply members of the working class. Racism would disappear with the establishment of a socialist society and the cessation of the exploitation of man by man. The basis of racism, they argued, was the divide-and-conquer tactics of capitalists who were seeking to pit one set of workers against another. Thus, any attempt to deal with the issue of racism before the establishment of a socialist society was divisive and played into the capitalists' divide-and-conquer tactics. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen of the *Messenger* Group were the main proponents of the class-first position among Black people.² When they later organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the March on Washington Movement (both all Black), they declared a tactical retreat from that position.

The race-first position was supported by a large section of the leadership of the New Negro Movement. Hubert Harrison, Cyril Briggs, W. A. Domingo, Richard Moore, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Mosiah Garvey were well-known proponents of this position. With the exception of Garvey, these men were Black nationalists and socialists. Garvey could be called a social democrat. Those who took the race-first position held that Blacks were first and foremost victims of racial oppression, but they did not deny the importance of class. They argued that the class structure of U.S. society and of the capitalist world more generally can be understood only in terms of the impact of race and racial oppression. W.E.B. Du Bois's writings of the 1930s articulated this position clearly. He argued that the workers of color were the true proletariat of the world-system, while white workers occupied an intermediate position in the world division of labor. The psychological sop of racism undermined the commitment to equality among white workers, who instead guarded their position of relative privilege, acting as police over "niggers." Du Bois's very clear position of the 1930s came in the wake of a powerful body of literature reflecting the political thought of the New Negro Movement.

New Negro Radicalism and Race First

Winston James (1998) tells us that Hubert Harrison was a prodigious intellectual who devoted himself to the study of African and African American history, the social sciences, literature, and the natural sciences. After being fired from the post office because of his criticism of Booker T. Washington in a letter to the editor of the *New York Sun*, Harrison was employed full-time by the Socialist Party. A member of the Socialist Party since 1909, Harrison resigned in 1914 because of the party's lack of commitment to Black workers and their racist treatment of him. One of the chief architects of the race-first position of the New Negro radicals, Harrison was called the father of Harlem radicalism by none other than A. Philip Randolph, the main voice of the class-first position among the New Negro radicals. Winston James argues that Harrison was an inspiration for "two powerful and seemingly incompatible currents of black radicalism in Harlem: revolutionary socialism . . . and radical black nationalism" (James 1998:126). James divides Harrison's legacy into an early Socialist Party and Industrial Workers of the World phase, which inspired Randolph, and a later Black Nationalist phase of the Liberty League of Negro Americans, during which Harrison was closer to Marcus Garvey.

Such a distinction has to be made with a great deal of care, however, for as James points out, Harrison remained a socialist from the time that he discovered Marx to the end of his life. Harrison kept the socialist faith, but American socialism did not keep faith with Harrison, according to Winston James. Despite his fierce criticism of the Socialist Party and his tense relations with the party's New York City leadership, Harrison was not mystified by the failure of the Socialist Party to adequately address the special situation of the Black workers. They succumbed to the racist corruption of the American

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environment. The Socialist Party of America, like so many others, capitulated to “southernism.”

Following are a few telling examples: There was no official condemnation of the white members of the Socialist Party in Tennessee who prevented a leading member of the party from lecturing to black people on socialism. The national office would not route Eugene Debs through the South during the presidential year because he let it be known that he would not remain silent on the race question while in the South. Harrison criticized a report by a leading party member that argued that race feelings were a consequence of biological evolution and not social circumstances. The writer of the report argued that “class-consciousness must be learned, but race consciousness is inborn and cannot be wholly unlearned” (quoted in James 1998:127).

The report went on to say that “where races struggle for the means of life, racial animosities cannot be avoided. Where working people struggle for jobs, self-preservation enforces its decrees. Economic and political considerations lead to racial fights and legislation restricting the invasion of the white man’s domain by other races.”

Harrison was clear that it was the Socialist Party itself that was responsible for the alignment along racial lines of the overall radical movement. A section of the Black radicals then decided that it was necessary for Blacks to respond with their own sense of racial solidarity since the socialists were acting on the basis of the naturalness and desirability of white solidarity. Once support for the Socialist Party had shrunk among the white population, they began to go to Black folks with their hats in their hands, calling for a doctrine of class first. Harrison concluded, “We say Race First, because you have all along insisted on Race First and class after when you didn’t need our help” (Harrison 1997:81).

James holds that Harrison was a reluctant Black nationalist, the last resort of a Black socialist in a racist land. Harrison had long waited for a better day, when the white socialists would truly open their arms to their class sisters and brothers in the Black world, but feared that such a day would never come. In the meantime, Black people had to defend themselves, and the standard defensive ideology in a racist land is an ideology of racial nationalism for one’s own race.

Any man today who aspires to lead the Negro race must set squarely before his face the idea of “Race First.” Just as the white men of these and other lands are white men before they are Christians, Anglo-Saxons, or Republicans; so the Negroes of this and other lands are intent upon being Negroes before they are Christians, Englishmen, or Republicans. . . .

Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Charity begins at home, and our first duty is to ourselves. It is not what we wish but what we must, that we are concerned with. The world as it ought to be, is still for us, as for others, the world that does not exist. The world as it is, is the real world, and it is to that real world that we address ourselves. Striving to be men, and finding no effective aid in government or in politics, the Negro of the Western world must follow the path of the Swadesha movement

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of India and the Sinn Fein movement of Ireland. The meaning of both these terms is “ourselves first.” (Harrison 1997:40)

Like Winston James, Clifton Hawkins (2000) dates Harrison’s conversion to the race-first position to his experiences in the Socialist Party and the white Left milieu of that time. These experiences, Hawkins argues, disillusioned Harrison with cross-race organizing not only because of the pervasive racism of whites but also because of the defensive race consciousness of Blacks. Hawkins quotes Harrison as follows: “‘Behind the color line,’ Harrison sadly acknowledged, ‘one has to think perpetually of the color line, and most of those who grow up behind it can think of nothing else.’ . . . Race, not class, was the organizing principle of American life” (Hawkins 2000:51). By 1916, Hawkins argues, Harrison had embraced the *American* doctrine of race first (Hawkins, 2000:51; my emphasis).

Clifton Hawkins is blunt about how the New Negro radicals filled a void that had been vacated by the dubious tactics of the “old crowd” radicals. Of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois’s “close ranks” period, Hawkins argues, “Du Bois’ self-interested accommodationism undermined his reputation and crippled his leadership among Afro-Americans of many persuasions, not merely the radicals. For decades afterwards, Du Bois extenuated, justified, agonized over, and apologized for his wartime stance. Although he resumed a militant stance in 1919, his temporary lapse no doubt facilitated the rise of new generation of militant, uncompromising Afro-Americans, represented in part by A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, Wilfred A. Domingo, and other radicals associated with the *Messenger*” (Hawkins 2000:95–96).

Hawkins views the *Messenger* Group as a counterhegemonic enterprise. Randolph located the social base for his activities and aspirations in the working class (both Black and white) rather than in the Talented Tenth. For Randolph the role of intellectuals should have been in overcoming the hegemony that the master class and the master race exercised over the working class of all races, but this was not at all an unproblematic position, for it put him at odds with the major underpinnings of Afro-American culture and identity (Hawkins, 2000:163). Hawkins argues that Randolph was scathingly critical of all prominent civil rights organizations and educational institutions, holding that none of them were controlled in any considerable degree by Negroes. If not in the Talented Tenth, then where was the agency for the transformation of the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century? Hawkins notes that Randolph looked to the working class (Black and white) but sadly felt that they were victims of capitalist and white supremacist hegemony, both Black and white. Hawkins notes this statement of Randolph’s: “As a group we are too sentimental and credulous. We are loath to judge Negroes by universal standards. We want to change the multiplication tables for the benefit of Negro incompetents” (quoted in Hawkins 2000:187). For Randolph the agents of working-class revolution needed the guidance of an organ of worker-intellectuals such as those in the ranks of the *Messenger* Group. But how would an intellectual vanguard such as the *Messenger* Group, given its own ambivalence about the relative merits of cultivated Blacks and working-class

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Blacks, “inspire and mobilize a constituency so unlike themselves?” (Hawkins 2000:189).

Randolph had argued that the struggle against the ruling class was not simply a struggle in the workplace or at the ballot box; it was a struggle for the soul of humanity in the social order. It was in this context that the *Messenger* Group criticized every aspect of Afro-American life and called for Afro-Americans to “remake themselves, their culture, and their institutions in the very process of their liberation struggle” (Hawkins 2000:190). Hawkins does an excellent job of pointing out the contradictions and tensions in the *Messenger* Group. He clearly does not think such demands could be a realistic basis for a mass, working-class insurgency.

Hawkins’s logic is clear here, but is it really true, historically speaking, that it is not possible for someone who is critical of the masses to organize an insurgency of these same masses? I would invite Hawkins to look at the example of Malcolm X, but this is merely a suggestion to which we will return for serious analysis later in this narrative. For now we might think about how Malcolm X (a clearly race-first leader and a member of an organization with a presence on the streets of most Black communities) differed from A. Philip Randolph and the *Messenger* Group (class-first radicals with a much smaller organizational footprint on the streets).

Hawkins argues that until 1919–1920 the New Negro Movement was ecumenical. Garvey had been introduced to Harlem by Socialist Party member Hubert Harrison. He had spoken at a rally with Randolph in 1916. In 1918 he helped Randolph, Owen, Monroe Trotter, and others form the International League of the Darker Races, whose goal was securing justice for Africans at the Paris Peace Conference. When Garvey felt so discouraged by infighting in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) that he contemplated returning to Jamaica in the spring of 1917, he was encouraged to stay in the United States by Harrison and Domingo, who, along with Briggs and McKay, worked in the UNIA.³ In fact, Garvey had appointed Domingo, a prominent socialist, to the position of editor of the UNIA’s weekly newspaper, *The Negro World*.

In the tumultuous years 1919–1920 Hawkins argues, the state launched fierce attacks on militants in the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. It was in this context, Hawkins argues, that Garvey distanced himself from the socialist-oriented members of the New Negro radicals. This entailed the dismissal of Domingo from his post as editor of *The Negro World* because of his inclusion of articles from the socialist press and because his socialist-oriented editorials conflicted with Garvey’s race-first orientation. On June 21, 1919, agents of the Lusk Committee raided the Socialist Party–affiliated Rand School, where they found a document by Domingo arguing that the Achilles’ heel of the socialist movement in the United States was its failure to attend to the need to effectively organize 12 million Negroes.⁴ The discovery of this pamphlet caused a public sensation. On August 5 the district attorney summoned Garvey and grilled him on his connections to the Socialist Party, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the anarchists. Garvey, who as an immigrant

was vulnerable in this area, replaced Domingo as editor of *The Negro World* with Hubert Harrison, a former member of the Socialist Party who maintained key aspects of his socialist class-based ideology but framed it in the context of a race-first political practice. Harrison argued that Blacks resented “not the exploitation of laborers by capitalists; but the social, political, and economic subjection of colored persons by white” (quoted in Hawkins 2000:239). The color line had trumped the class line.

Hawkins argues that the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), *The Crusader*, and Cyril Briggs “propounded a coherent and wide-ranging ideology that cogently united Garvey’s ‘race first’ and Randolph’s ‘class first’ philosophies” (Hawkins 2000:336–337).⁵ For Hawkins there were three attempts to inject class consciousness into the UNIA. Harrison, McKay, and Domingo worked within the UNIA, hoping to persuade its members to embrace socialist ideas and analysis. Randolph and Owen (and Domingo after his forced exit) criticized the UNIA from outside. The ABB, a parallel organization, sought to gather enough recruits, publicity, and power to negotiate with the UNIA on equal terms, thus securing a hearing for a position that sought to combine race and class.

While James and Hawkins view Harrison’s evolution from a member of the Socialist Party to a Black nationalist as a tactical maneuver by a socialist who in a racist society both advocates and unites with the defensive Black nationalism of the Black masses, James views the trajectory of the ABB quite differently. Cyril Briggs, the founder of the ABB, started out as a Black nationalist and, combining elements of Black nationalism and revolutionary socialism, evolved more and more in the direction of revolutionary socialism until the ABB was finally merged into the Workers Party (Communist Party of the United States of America [CPUSA]) sometime after most of its national leadership had become party members.⁶

While James presents his investigation of this process in the form of an interrogation of the reason for the ABB leadership’s move to the CPUSA, he really seems clear about the reasoning. Indeed, for all his detailed analysis seeking to prove or understand the relationship between the ABB and the CPUSA, Winston James seems clearer than any other scholar who has published substantial commentary on this issue.

The year 1919 was a tumultuous one. White mobs rioted against Blacks in twenty-six U.S. cities and were confronted with Blacks fighting back, resulting in considerable bloodshed on both sides. For this reason it has come to be known as the “Red Summer.” In the December 1919 edition, *The Messenger* issued an editorial titled “Thanksgiving Homily to Revolution.” They called the Russian Revolution the greatest achievement of the twentieth century. They gave thanks for “the German Revolution, the Austrian Revolution, the Hungarian Revolution, and the Bulgarian Revolution” (quoted in Vincent 1973:46). They gave thanks for the unrest that swept so much of the world, manifested in “titanic strikes . . . sweeping Great Britain, France, Italy, the United States, Japan, and every country of the world.” They gave thanks for the solidarity of labor, the growth of industrial unionism, the growing radicalism of the U.S. working class,

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the general strike in Seattle, the growth of the New Negro Movement and its involvement in socialist politics, and what they called “the speedy oncoming of the new order of society” (quoted in Vincent 1973:47).⁷

The Founding Congress of the Communist International announced, “The epoch of the final, decisive struggle has come later than the apostles of the socialist revolution [Marx and Engels] expected and hoped. But it has come.” The CPUSA argued that “Europe is in revolt. The masses of Asia are stirring uneasily. Capitalism is in collapse. The workers of the world are seeing a new life and securing new courage. Out of the night of war is coming a new day.” Even the American Socialist Party declared that “[t]he Capitalist class is now making its last stand in history” (quoted in James 1998:164).

In addition to the sense that the hour of the proletarian revolution was at hand, Black radicals were attracted to Bolshevism because of the nationalities policies of the Soviet Union, especially toward Jews; its uncompromising rhetoric of anticolonialism, anti-imperialism, and the right of nations to self-determination; and the policies, practices, and proclamations of the Communist International. As far as Briggs and the Black radicals associated with the ABB were concerned, the Bolsheviks were the deadly enemies of the very same people who were the most trenchant enemies of Black people around the world. So despite their sincere adherence to the race-first position emphatically reasserted at this time in the pages of *The Crusader*, the embrace of the revolutionary socialist tradition adhered to by the Bolsheviks and the Communist International made perfect sense in the minds of the ABB radicals. Thus, when members of the leadership of the ABB joined the Workers Party of America (CPUSA), this was the only means by which they could join the Communist International, to which they gave their primary allegiance.⁸ They felt that even if the white members of the Workers Party were hypocrites with feet of clay, the Comintern would force them to follow the right policy.

Race First and Internationalism

Keith Griffler (1993) disputes the assertion that the U.S. Communist movement inherited the pure-class approach of the Socialist Party out of which the class-first notion associated with the *Messenger* Group in African American parlance is assumed to have derived. Griffler argues that an alternative to the pure-class view developed simultaneously in the United States and in the Soviet Union. This view originated in the United States with the leading theoreticians of Black radicalism and in the Soviet Union with the leading theoreticians of Russian Marxism.

Both Marx and Engels had commented on the centrality of the “Negro question” to the issue of class and social struggle in the United States. Marx argued that liberation of labor in white skin could not happen as long as it was branded in Black skin. Engels argued that “race privilege” had trumped class privilege from the inception of the republic. By the turn of the century, these insights would be abandoned by the leading light of the Socialist Party, Eugene Debs. Griffler cites an article in the socialist periodical *New Solidarity* titled “There Is

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No Race Problem”: “The problem of the workers is not a race problem. There is [sic] no white or brown races. All have but one problem to solve, and that is the problem of how to overthrow the system of slavery under which all are bound to the employing class. When this problem is solved there will be no race problems” (quoted in Griffler 1993:40).

Griffler also quotes W.E.B. Du Bois, who he says gave up on the Socialist Party as a vehicle for transforming the social position of Black folks. Du Bois held that the Socialist Party lacked the “political courage” to face up to the race problem, and for that reason he did not foresee any substantial Black support for or openness to a socialist program without some wrenching changes in circumstances. How wrenching? Griffler argues that nothing short of a social revolution forced a change in the attitude of Black people in the United States toward socialism.

What made for the change? Griffler cites the elevation of the national and colonial question by Lenin and Leon Trotsky.⁹ As is well-known, Lenin showed an interest in African Americans, arguing that their social position in the American South was equivalent to that of the Russian serf except that in addition to the grinding class oppression, they were burdened by an all-pervasive racial oppression. In 1916 he argued that the American Negro should be classified as an oppressed nation and in 1920 took this position to the Second Congress of the Communist International, where he made it part of a special commission he headed, which produced “Theses on the National and Colonial Question.” It was at this congress that Lenin made the acquaintance of Otto Huiswood, a member of the ABB and a charter member of the CPUSA.

Leon Trotsky, the second-ranking member of the Communist International had lived in the United States. He wrote the “Manifesto of the Communist International to the Workers of the World,” in which he argued that the most important consequence of World War I was that it called attention to “the infamy of capitalist rule in the colonies” and highlighted “the problem of colonial slavery” like never before. It was Trotsky who authored the famous statement referred to over and over by again by the New Negro radicals: “Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation” (quoted in Griffler 1993:43). Later Trotsky made contact with Claude McKay during his stay in the Soviet Union and commissioned him to write a treatise on the Negro question; it was later reissued in English as *The Negroes in America*.

ABB founder Cyril Briggs, who had refused to join the Socialist Party because it did not recognize the special character of Negro oppression in the United States, was so impressed by the solution to the national problem in the Soviet Union that he joined the CPUSA, confident that the American party would in time follow the lead of the Soviet party.¹⁰ Griffler shows that W. A. Domingo and Otto Hall shared Briggs’s sentiments.¹¹

Griffler holds that Briggs was the earliest and most original of the Black radical intellectuals of this period. While Briggs was a member of both the ABB and the CPUSA, he held to the race-first position, which placed race consciousness at the forefront of Black radicalism. He argued that race consciousness was a

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weapon that Blacks could not dispense of since it lay at the heart of the rise and fall of nations and races and was constantly utilized by other people. The ABB, according to Griffler, “explicitly linked the destiny of African American workers to that of all people of African descent” not simply as a part of the U.S. working class but as representatives of a people dispersed throughout Africa, Latin America, and North America. They constituted not so much a peculiarly “American problem” but part of a much larger question that could be understood only in a world context (Griffler 1993:61–62). McKay also insisted that Blacks the world over could not afford to ignore the Negro question but had to insist on its resolution over and above the class question. He argued that for the Left the Negro question demanded attention on its own terms but also that its correct resolution was required before the resolution of the class question.

Richard Moore would add the proviso that large sections of the white working class of Europe, North America, and Africa “are bribed with a share of the imperialist spoils drawn out of the toil and degradation of the Negro masses, and are filled with white imperialist propaganda against these workers” (quoted in Griffler 1993:70). This meant that the labor problem could not be solved unless the race problem was solved. If white workers and their Communist Party did not renounce caste privilege, they were not only not revolutionaries but enemies of the revolution.

By 1925, Griffler argues, Black radicals had divided into three camps, one group associated with the Communist Party, another with the Socialist Party, and a third made up of independents such as the veteran W.E.B. Du Bois and the young Abram Harris.¹² The socialists clung to the Debsian position, allying themselves with the racist American Federation of Labor. The Black Communists attempted to put their internationalist line into practice. Griffler argues that under the leadership of Du Bois, the independent group articulated a middle-class nationalist program that refused any contact with white workers. This group, according to Griffler, shared the racial chauvinism of the Black Communists but had nothing but disdain for the masses of Black people.

While the leadership of the ABB had effectively merged with the CPUSA, the ABB program was not at all accepted by the white members and leadership of the CPUSA. ABB founder Cyril Briggs pointed out that most of the Negro work of the CPUSA from 1919 to 1929 was of a sporadic nature, intended as a gesture to impress the Comintern. Briggs understood white chauvinism in the CPUSA as a general underestimation of the importance of the Black masses to the overall revolutionary struggle. The CPUSA, Briggs pointed out, had even opposed the spontaneous migration of southern Blacks to the industrial North on the basis that they would hurt the economic position of northern white workers, a position that Briggs equated to Social Democracy and the American Federation of Labor. The CPUSA not only failed to consult the senior Black cadre in the party’s Negro work; they “utilized the old bourgeois trick” of assigning the least militant of the oppressed race to the work among the oppressed races (Briggs 1929).

According to ABB leader W. A. Domingo, the Negro question was the touchstone, the measure of sincerity of white radicals in the United States. Domingo

held that the strategic position of Black workers in the industrial arena gave them a power out of proportion to their numbers (McKay 1979:40).

Further, Griffler points out, the Black Communists had to carry their case to the Communist International, which they did beginning with the Second Congress in 1920, at which ABB and CPUSA member Otto Huiswood met Lenin. In his report to the CPUSA, Huiswood presented the conclusions of the Comintern's Negro Commission, in which he placed the Negro question in the domain of the colonial question. It was indeed Lenin who argued that the Communist parties of the imperialist countries had a special obligation toward the oppressed nations and colonial peoples, especially those oppressed by their own imperialists. Since Lenin had included American Negroes in this special category, Huiswood was able to say that an adjustment of CPUSA policy was required. The CPUSA had argued in 1920 that the class war knew only the capitalist class and the working class. Later the party's trade union wing would argue that the idea that white workers were relatively privileged was employer-inspired propaganda (Griffler 1993:76). Senior Black cadre such as Otto Huiswood and Richard Moore were criticized by the party leadership for speaking out against instances of white chauvinism in some party organizations.

In 1925, when Lovett Fort-Whiteman wrote an article in the Comintern's international organ, *The Communist International*, criticizing the failure of the CPUSA to recognize or implement the Comintern's understanding of the Negro question, the Comintern leadership took the unusual step of appending editorial comments supporting Fort-Whiteman's criticism.¹³ The CPUSA was effectively held up for ridicule before the world Communist movement. Fort-Whiteman had characterized them as Social Democrats, who were viewed by Communists as decidedly reformist and not revolutionary.

In 1917–1918, A. Philip Randolph of the *Messenger* Group enjoyed positive relations with the radicals who would later become members of the ABB and the CPUSA. During this period, according to Griffler, Randolph was as critical of the AFL as any, calling it “a machine for the propagation of race prejudice” (Griffler 1993:95). It might be useful to recall that Randolph and Chandler Owen were often known during those days as the Lenin and Trotsky of Harlem. Even in 1919 Randolph differed from most of the New Negro radicals, whose emphases were invariably on the Negro question. Randolph argued that the “Negro question” was a red herring introduced not by Black radicals but by the employing classes. For Randolph as for most of the members of the Socialist Party, this was a divide-and-conquer scheme. Griffler attributes the hardening of Randolph's position to his election to the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, at which time the AFL was transformed in Randolph's eyes from a machine for the propagation of race prejudice to the champion of the African American people.

After Lenin's death and the expulsion of Trotsky from the Comintern, Stalin's ascension allowed, in Griffler's terms, for the transformation of the old internationalism of the Comintern into neo-Debsianism. This, according to Griffler, started with the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. Whereas Lenin had emphasized the distinction between oppressor nations and oppressed nations

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and the duty of Communists to support those oppressed by their own imperialism, the new class-against-class position of the third period of the Comintern exhorted Black Communists to impress on the mass of the Negro people that despite white workers' Negrophobia, the U.S. working class was the only revolutionary class that would be the mainstay of Negro liberation. Furthermore, the Comintern argued that the Black working class must be taught that the first rule of proletarian morality is that no worker who wants to be an equal member of his class must ever serve as a strikebreaker. This was apparently a break from the substance of the position previously advocated by the Comintern. Further, the Comintern dropped its criticism of the CPUSA, which was subsequently left to make its own way on the Negro question (Griffler 1993:126–127). As we shall see, this was consistent with the struggle against Mir Sayit Sultan-Galiev in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.¹⁴

Griffler criticizes James Allen's formulation that the crisis in the Black Belt might have led the farmers to choose revolution before the urban proletariat did.¹⁵ This could have led, in Allen's view, to uncontrollable race warfare. To avoid this possibility, it was of the utmost importance to ensure the hegemony of the working class in order to combat chauvinistic expressions.¹⁶ The cure for Black chauvinism was an interracial movement for Black self-determination led by the Communist Party. Griffler is astounded that Allen does not even seem to notice that this formulation does away with the notion of self-determination of the Negro people altogether. The treatment of white chauvinism and Black Nationalism as twin (but not quite equal) dangers requiring the leadership of a predominantly white political party meant that the internationalist positions advocated by the former members of the ABB and the Comintern under Lenin were set aside.

Minkah Makalani (2004) lifts the debate about the relationship between the CPUSA and the ABB above the level of Communist conspiracy that is so often the foundation of the scholarship on the ABB. Makalani argues that the larger significance of the relationship between the ABB and international communism can be glimpsed in the debate between Lenin and M. N. Roy at the Second Congress of the Communist International.¹⁷ Some will be familiar with this debate.

According to Makalani, Lenin transcended the more doctrinaire class-first position associated with most socialists in the Pan-European world. He opposed the dismissal of national liberation in the "backward" colonies because whatever the limitations of this movement from the perspective of socialist transformation, it was more important for "the working class in the oppressor nations to build an internationalism that opposed their own nationalism and material interests of their own ruling classes" (Makalani 2004:133–134). In this way the proletarian revolutionaries would demonstrate a genuine commitment to democracy, not one that asked the oppressed nations to put their grievances aside until they were liberated by the coming to power of the socialist movement. For Lenin this strategy applied foremost to Negroes in the United States who he regarded as an oppressed nation. The representative of the CPUSA, John Reed, disagreed with Lenin. He argued that U.S. Blacks merely sought social equality and, since

they were concentrated mostly in the rural South, did not understand their oppression as an extension of the class struggle. The duty of the U.S. Communists should be to redirect the racial consciousness of the Negro people into class consciousness.

Roy was much less sanguine about the social character of the national bourgeoisie in oppressed nations, which in his view tended to be reactionary. More important, Roy argued for a different relationship between the national liberation and the class struggle than was generally accepted in international communism and socialism.

Makalani points out that Roy had developed this position long before the Second Congress. It was from Mexico in 1914 that he pointed out “that the national liberation of India was central to breaking down the British Empire and capitalism” (Makalani 2004:137). In contrast to the notion that socialist revolution would lead automatically to the liberation of the colonies as Engels had argued in 1882, Roy held that it was the existence of the colonies in Asia and Africa that allowed the imperialist bourgeoisie to maintain social control over workers in the metropole, and that it would not therefore be possible to overthrow the capitalist system in Europe without the breaking up of the colonial empire (Makalani 2004:138). Lenin’s position prevailed in the deliberations at the Second Congress of the Comintern, but from the perspective of the Black radicals it broke ranks with the previous practice of the Western Left by arguing that “communist parties must give direct support to the revolutionaries in the dependent countries and those without equal rights (e.g. Ireland, and among the American Negroes), and in the colonies” (Makalani 2004:139). Makalani argues that Roy’s position would have placed the liberation of Africa and Asia (and I would add Blacks in the United States) at the center of the world socialist revolution. I think this is the more appropriate framework for understanding the significance of the ABB’s approach to the Communist International and the CPUSA.

The final issue of *The Crusader* reported on the founding convention of the Workers Party (CPUSA), to which Briggs reported the ABB had sent delegates. This association would help to weaken white supremacy and would provide support for the Black Liberation movement in the form of access to multiple publications and printing presses, a large membership, and international connections, the most important of which he felt to be Soviet Russia. Makalani argues, as have others, that the ABB militants felt that they were joining an international revolutionary organization of which the CPUSA was a part, and that as members of an international organization they were free to put pressure on the CPUSA to follow the directives of the parent organization, particularly the “Theses on the National and Colonial Question,” developed at the Second Congress of the Communist International. In the longer run, Makalani shows that the ABB moved the Communist International toward its own theoretical formulations. The “Theses of the Fourth Comintern on the Negro Question,” written in 1922, outlined four areas of organizational activity among Blacks in the United States that directly reflected the ABB’S organizational program (Makalani 2004:152).

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When the CPUSA finally began to respond to the pressure from the Comintern after the Fourth Congress, Black radicals, including ABB members, began to join the CPUSA. The CPUSA had actually altered its practice among Black people, had agreed to abide by the Comintern's "Theses of the Fourth Comintern on the Negro Question" (which was taken from the views of the ABB), and had agreed to help meet some of the needs of the ABB. While the relationship between the ABB and the CPUSA is portrayed as a symbiotic one, as Briggs indicated, Makalani argues quite forcefully that "the ABB never integrated into the Workers Party [the CPUSA] or relinquished organizational autonomy" (Makalani 2004:157). It was their own problems running the ABB that prompted the leadership to make a formal relationship with the Harlem branch of the Workers Party, especially given that most of the members of the ABB leadership were active members of the Harlem branch. Nonetheless, the Workers Party increasingly constrained the activities of its Black members, and the dissolution of the ABB itself meant that the Black radicals in the CPUSA were not able to promote an independent agenda that differed from the agenda of the leadership of the CPUSA.

Winston James is more to the point on this issue. He argues that the Black radicals, including the members of the ABB, did not see themselves as simply having joined the CPUSA. In their view, they were joining the American division of Lenin's multinational army of revolutionaries. For it was the Comintern who stated at their 1919 founding congress, "Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of the proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation" (quoted in Winston 1998:180). The only way to join the Comintern was through one of its national branches, and that is what they did (Winston 1998:180–181).

The Road to Unity

Mark Solomon's treatment of the New Negro radicals varies in its angle from that of some of the other scholars we have discussed; Solomon views them through the prism of the Communist movement, which means that Solomon's focus is on the ABB more than on the other New Negro radicals, on the race-first position espoused especially by Cyril Briggs, and on Briggs's efforts at developing a synthesis of Black Nationalism and revolutionary socialism. Solomon shows a convergence of Briggs's views with those of the Communist International and the development of a strategy of working-class unity that sought not so much assimilation of the Black working class into the white working class but a strategy that would prevent an interclass alliance between white workers and white capitalists.

Because of his nationalist credentials, Solomon viewed Briggs as unique among the New Negro radicals in "introducing the twentieth-century revolutionary tide to black America" (Solomon 1998:7). Solomon views the March 1919 formation of the Communist International as a defining event whose hostility to the veiled colonialism of the League of Nations paralleled Briggs's view of the

organization, described in the “League of Thieves,” an article published in the March 12, 1919, edition of the *New York Amsterdam News*.

During and after the Red Summer of 1919, according to Solomon, Briggs forged an ideological link among national, race, and class consciousness that provided a basis for Blacks to join the Communist movement. Briggs reaffirmed the race-first position, saying that he was first, last, and always a Negro, that if he was ever deported (the nation was in the midst of a deportation hysteria) it should be to a free Africa. If the Polish and Jewish people sought a national existence, why shouldn't the Negro? At the same time, Briggs called for class unity between Black and white workers as the only means by which to break the power of capital over U.S. society and the power of imperialism and colonialism over people of African descent and of the dark world everywhere. The Soviets were viewed as allies of Black people's global aspirations, and anti-Bolshevism was viewed as a hypocritical cover for those who wished to undermine the ability of Black people to fight the racists who would deprive them of their rights. This line is not dissimilar from Stoddard's position in *The Rising Tide of Color* (see the introduction, “The Handwriting on the Wall”).

What better company for Blacks than whites who stood up for the rights of Black people in a manner similar to the antislavery abolitionists? The connections between the ABB and the CPUSA during its formative years influenced the evolving character of the ABB and the degree to which Blacks themselves influenced Communist involvement in African American life. The ABB was based on “the themes of race patriotism, anticapitalism, anticolonialism, and organized defense against racist assault” (Solomon 1998:9–10). In addition, Briggs sought to fuse his own sense of African identity with Leninist internationalism, arguing, for example, that the destruction of capitalism and the creation of a socialist cooperative commonwealth was along the lines of “our own race genius as evidenced by the existence of Communist States in Central Africa and our leaning toward Communism wherever the race genius has free play” (Solomon 1998:13).

Could Blacks reject statehood and accept the “point of view of humanity”? (Briggs 2005:209) Here Briggs tread carefully. It might have been preferable to accept the socialist cooperative commonwealth, but the Negro had been so mistreated by the rest of humanity that he might be pardoned for looking at this issue from the perspective of a Negro rather than from the perspective of a humanity that has not always treated him humanely. Therefore, part of the strategy of liberation, from the perspective of the Negro, should involve the creation of a strong, stable, independent Negro state in Africa or elsewhere for the salvation of all Negroes. The socialist commonwealth would be the protective framework for Black national independence. The nature of the involvement of the Black world with the world and U.S. socialist movement would be that of an alliance in which a distinct Black agenda would be maintained (Solomon 1998:14).

Garvey was critical of the ABB's alliance with the Workers Party, arguing that the Communists might be worthy of sympathy but as white pariahs they could do nothing for their own cause, not to mention for Negroes. Briggs argued

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that the alliance with the Workers Party created international connections and a place for Black radicals on the stage of the world revolution. It forged links with two hundred thousand souls in groups tied to the Workers Party. This was quite different, Briggs argued, from Garvey's pathetic and useless groveling before presidents and monarchs who had engaged in ruthless exploitation and oppression of Black folks for centuries. Despite this criticism, the ABB radicals attempted to win Garvey and the UNIA to a more radical position, but they were ultimately ousted from the roster of the UNIA by Garvey. Though some prominent UNIA members who were frustrated with Garvey (Bishop George Alexander McGuire, James D. Brooks, and Cyril A. Critchlow) switched their allegiance to the ABB, the ABB was unable to win any substantial number of the UNIA rank and file to the ABB. In the meantime, the revolutionary tide in Europe began to recede with the collapse of uprisings in Germany and Hungary. Gradually the world capitalist system, widely thought by the revolutionary forces, as well as many others, to be on the brink of collapse, began to consolidate and re-stabilize itself. Mark Solomon points out that in the context of the conservative realignment, the accumulation of Blacks in the urban ghettos outside the South provided a degree of insularity from a hostile white society that they did not wish to engage. Without dangerously confronting the bourgeois order, Garvey's vibrant expressions of outrage had more appeal to these ghettoized communities than did the far more active confrontation urged by the ABB (Solomon 1998:27–28).

Solomon's verdict here seems plausible, but it is far from the only conclusion that one can draw from the contention between the two organizations and between their leaders, Marcus Garvey and Cyril Briggs. One approach to further investigation of this issue, which tends to be polarized along ideological lines, is to look more closely at the age-old issue of class consciousness versus status consciousness, whether in this case the latter be called racial or national.

We are indebted to Solomon for his close presentation of the debate on the Negro national question at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. We already know some of the details of this from Harry Haywood's classic, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*. The Siberian Communist Charles Nasanov, who had served in the United States as a member of the Young Communist International and had known Heywood Hall during his stay in Chicago, renewed contact with Hall, who was studying at the Lenin School in the Soviet Union and who had changed his name to Harry Haywood.¹⁸ Haywood tells us that Nasanov had a strong interest in the national and colonial questions and during his stay in the United States had reached the conclusion that Blacks in the South constituted an oppressed nation who should be entitled to the right of self-determination (Haywood 1978:218–219).

The details of the debate over the issue reveal a bewildering set of agendas and considerations that the members of the international and U.S. Communist movements sought to address. One is impressed with the subtleties of the dialectical imagination revealed in these debates and astonished at the statements of self-assured arrogance that presumed to proscribe the lives and destiny of an entire people on a decidedly mechanical application of Marxian historical materialism.

Solomon's presentation of the debate and the outcome is all the more interesting because he is one who is committed to the need for unity. His understanding is quite in the classical prescription of Lenin and others, however, who argue that true unity can only be the basis of an alliance of equals. This indeed is the line of one of the most embittered but still radical members of the former Communist theoreticians, Harold Cruse.

Solomon points out that those who argue against the idea that Blacks were an oppressed nation on grounds of lack of a common territory, economic system, language, and culture “neglect the bonds of memory, culture, and spirit in black American life, where the name ‘Africa’ adorned churches and civic and fraternal organizations.” He notes in passing the attacks by Communists on “the sensitive barometers of Black longing (like Du Bois) as self-serving dilettantes seeking to monopolize the Negro market” (Solomon 1998:83). While Solomon understands such positions as a “grievous weakness in the great debate of 1928,” he does not seem to comprehend the very degree to which Communists were walking on thin ice in their fierce critiques of Blacks as politically underdeveloped and lacking in class and political consciousness.

While he cites Nasanov's statement that “a people's sacred right to choose their own political life was a confirmation of their equality,” he does not seem to see the proscriptions against separatism and the very attempt to define a nation in terms that would restrict someone's right to self-determination as inherently undemocratic.

Whether the term *race* or *nation* is used in this discussion the race-first versus class-first controversy is central to the debate in the U.S. Communist movement and the Communist International about the nature and solution to the oppression of the African American people. As Hubert Harrison and Cyril Briggs pointed out during the 1910s, the race-first position was a defensive reflex among Blacks against the depredations of a racist society. Indeed Winston James (1998:286) notes that correspondence between Briggs and Haywood during the 1960s reveals that they saw themselves as allies in the party debates about the nature of the Negro national question. James argues that “they stuck to the old line—even though at times they seemed overwhelmed by their own questioning.” Briggs writes, “With Negro nationalism even then on the increase, as witness the Garvey movement, why did our Negro nation analysis have such little appeal to the Negro people?” (quoted in James 1998:286). Briggs thought that many of the thousands who passed through the party did not accept or understand that analysis.

While Solomon really seems to capture the extent to which the Communist movement's articulation of the Negro as a “nation within a nation” in the United States was key to the real democratization of the Communist movement and of the United States, in the last analysis the Left's attempt to grapple with Black Nationalism and the nationalism of other oppressed people has been grievously weak.

What, then, made Garvey so popular? Solomon is not the first to suggest that it is because his approach was less dangerous than that of his contemporaries.¹⁹ In 1921 the class appeal of the Garvey movement was recognized by

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Charles Latham, a State Department official who considered Garveyism more dangerous than communism. In one memo he wrote, “Though he is certainly not an intellectual his particular propaganda and agitation is considered dangerous in that it will find a more fertile field of class divergence than Bolshevism would be likely to find in the United States” (Martin 1976:232).

The Left (including the radical Left, which often takes strong antiracist positions) is frequently resistant to the idea that Garvey’s ideas achieved such a wide audience among African peoples everywhere precisely because of his insistence on Black control of Black institutions and the need to reinforce the solidarity of the Black community against the white world. This is inevitably related to the class-first position of most of the Left, which feels that an emphasis on racism evades the subtleties of capitalist domination of the institutions of the modern world, and that therefore antiracist strategy must be mediated through approaches that include an implicit anticapitalist component.

What if antiracist strategies are anticapitalist by definition? This is certainly an overstatement, but if we look at the evolution of the struggle against Eurocentric Marxism, we may be able to shift our stance somewhat from the Eurocentric position that is often found in the literature of the world socialist movement.

Rethinking Race First versus Class First: African Americans in the Whirlwind

Having traversed some distance along the trajectory of an old debate about race, class, and nation in U.S. and world social movements, I would like now to try to establish where this debate has taken us. This will require an examination of the origins of the class-first stance in the history of the European workers’ movement, the changing meaning of class over the history of the capitalist world-system and in the anticapitalist forces, the changing relations of force with the coming to power of the movements of the old Left in various zones of the world-system, and the relations of antiracist movements to the configuration of world-system power in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The European Workers’ Movement and the Origins of the Class-First Stance

The centrality of class in the discourse of the modern world-system originated in the interstices of the original core of the capitalist world economy in Europe. The social movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were shaped by the social structures of the nineteenth century. These structures have been totally transformed in the course of the twentieth century and have given rise to their own social movements.

According to Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein (1989a), a variety of social groups found their traditional ways of life threatened by widening and deepening

proletarianization. The groups included craftsmen, low-status professionals, servants, peasants, shopkeepers, and small traders. The effectiveness of the social movements initiated by these groups stemmed from the very changes brought about by the processes against which their struggles were directed: “the capitalist centralization and rationalization of economic activities” (Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1989a:78).

While earlier struggles, even those at the point of production, were essentially localized disturbances, the broadening and deepening of the capitalist process mentioned above transformed isolated laborers into a society-wide social stratum. This meant that their struggles became a social problem of significant social import. However, the main weakness of the labor movement of this period was precisely that the process of centralization and rationalization of capital had not gone far enough. In the main, wage workers of this period played a limited role in production and were the majority of the population in only a few countries.

The earliest attacks on industrial capitalism predated socialist thought. John Gurley (1982) explained that they stemmed from the wrenching changes that capitalism wrought on the precapitalist world—a world that was simpler, more rural and agricultural, and more religious. The massive inequalities and competitiveness of capitalist society were shocking in their impact. Furthermore, the change from a rural agricultural society to an urban industrial society disrupted family structures in its incorporation of child labor into a labor force mired in miserable living and working conditions. The initial critics of capitalism were the followers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who sought a return to the simpler, uncorrupted life of the precapitalist period.²⁰ Thus, strong movements arose for the religious regeneration of humankind or the formation of utopian communities in which humankind could recreate conditions which favored their more optimal development. In the early period of industrial capitalism, it was easier for the critics of capitalism to visualize a step or two backward into a better life than to see it through the continued progress of existing society.

Although socialism was initially elaborated in 1827 in the work of Robert Owen (1827), these socialists were strongly influenced by Rousseau’s theories of humankind and society. The early socialists favored a system of mutual cooperation, collective organization, social and economic planning, and common ownership of capital goods. The utopian socialists who flourished from roughly 1820 to 1860 believed that the evils of capitalism could be avoided and eventually eliminated through example. They advocated the construction of model communities in which cooperation and scientific order would produce economic abundance and harmony for all their members. Although some of the utopian communities (mostly religious ones) sought to escape from the world, for the most part they sought to influence and change the world.

Accounts of the European workers’ movement often trace the definitive entry of the working class itself as a social force to Chartism, which was a movement in Great Britain to extend the franchise and to reform Parliament, with the aim of an immediate increase in the political power and the long run increase in

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the economic welfare of workers and other disadvantaged groups. Despite the economic aims at the basis of the Chartists' political demands, the movement itself was limited to the political plane because it did not have a definite economic program. Although the demands of the Chartist movement were repeatedly rejected by Parliament, the mobilizations the Chartists led eventually resulted in the establishment of the Ten Hour Bill, which for Marx was the first great victory for the political economy of the workers over the bourgeoisie.²¹

Marx and Engels were born in Prussia about thirty years after the outbreak of the French Revolution, in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. Engels was later to say that modern socialism was the direct product of the Enlightenment—the eighteenth-century intellectual movement in Europe that expressed confidence in human reason and thus in a rational and scientific approach to all problems. This movement fostered belief in inevitability of progress and the possibility of perfectibility from humankind's own efforts and attacked the dogmatism, spiritual authority, intolerance, and all other magisterial pronouncements of existing authorities. It advanced the notion that the people themselves, acting in harmony with the universal order, could bring about rational progress. Through its attacks on religion and absolutism and its advocacy of economic reforms and constitutionalism, the Enlightenment is thought to have figured prominently in bringing about the French Revolution.

The development of Marxism, specifically envisioned as a tool of combat for the working class and as a methodology for the analysis of society from the point of view of the working class, and the rise of a Marxist political movement have been central to the socialist movement of the last 150 years. As the Marxist system of theory and praxis grew, it absorbed the philosophies of three countries (French socialism, British Political Economy, and German Philosophy), the ideas of the working classes and the cultured strata, and the fruits of many areas of thought. The Marxist system of theory and praxis summed up an immense accumulation of knowledge, combined many streams of speculation, and endowed a new point of view with a more vivid and compelling life, specifically animated by its advocacy of a working class standpoint and scientific viewpoint in its analysis of capitalism.

Marx and Engels differed from other nineteenth-century socialists in the comprehensiveness and systematization of their thought, but the key political difference was that they did not imagine that socialism would be imposed on society from above by disinterested members of the ruling class. They believed that the bourgeoisie as a class could not be convinced to go against their interests. The key to the politics of revolutionary Marxism was the centrality of the class struggle, and the standpoint of the working class.

Marxism is not simply about class struggle, however. The power of Marxism is that it combines an analysis of humankind as the agent of its own emancipation (via the propertyless proletariat) with an analysis of the "laws of motion" of capitalist society and with the possibilities that might emerge from human intervention. To those who felt that it was enough merely to agitate among the people and allow the revolution to follow their wrath, Marx responded "that it was

simple fraud to arouse the people without any sound and considered basis for their activity. The awakening of fantastic hopes . . . would never lead to the salvation of those who suffered, but on the contrary to their undoing” (quoted in Wilson 1972).

Marx had been a member of the League of the Just, which was renamed the Communist League in the spring of 1847. The rapid building of the European railroad during 1846 and 1847 had been followed by a severe depression in which some fifty thousand men were thrown out of work and 10 percent of the population of Berlin was living by crime or prostitution. The revolution broke out in France in February 1848 after the unprovoked firing by soldiers on a peaceful democratic demonstration.

The uprising against the French monarchy of Louis Philippe led the way in the great revolutionary tide that swept Europe in 1848. Uprisings occurred in Vienna against the Hapsburg monarchy, in Berlin against Frederick William IV, and in Milan, Venice, London, Belgium, and many smaller cities. Marx traveled first to France, where the provisional government gave him French citizenship and where he organized the secret return of hundreds of working-class cadre of the Communist League to Germany. In April and May Marx and Engels returned to Germany. In the ensuing revolutionary period in Germany, Marx and Engels opposed organizing the working class on the basis of its own demands before the bourgeois revolution was won.

Marxism was thus elaborated in a revolutionary environment to serve the interests of the urban working class, which was demanding higher wages, better working conditions, shorter hours, limits to child and female labor, and political representation. Yet there are contradictions between the conception of Marxism as a tool of combat or analysis and Marxism as a science, the basic principles of which are laid down for society and nature in the principles of dialectical materialism.

MARXISM VERSUS ANARCHISM

Wallerstein (1984) argues that the first great debate in the workers' movement was whether or not to organize at all. There was nothing obvious about long-term organizing. Throughout history oppressed groups have complained, demonstrated, and risen. But it was not until the nineteenth century that anyone took seriously the formation of formal organization that could mobilize and collect forces over a long period of time to achieve political objectives. Some thought that conspiratorial and rapid insurrection by a small elite was the correct strategy. Some thought that withdrawal into ideal communities based on the model of the utopian socialists was the right way. Some believed in terrorism via secret societies to disrupt corrupt societies and lay the ground for the re-establishment of optimal conditions for the flourishing of humanity. In contrast to these various versions of individual or small-group voluntarism, Marx believed that only the organized strength of the entire working class could defeat capitalism and create a socialist society.

The Paris Commune of 1871 was inspired more by the ideas of Mikhail Bakunin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (both anarchists) than by Marx, although

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Marx hailed the commune.²² Many workers were opposed to Marx's authoritarianism and centralist notions and to his proposals for nationalization of the means of production. They had greater regard for Proudhon's libertarian views, emphasis on the autonomy of small groups, and practical schemes for cheap credit and fair exchange for workers' products—ways of beating capitalism by peacefully constructing alternative economic institutions around it rather than by Marx's way of a head-on bloody political revolt against it.

Otto von Bismarck placed Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's captured army at the disposal of Louis Adolph Thiers, and on May 21, 1871, it marched on Paris, taking the city in a week despite bitter resistance by the National Guard and the workers.²³ The hatred of the bourgeoisie for these uppity workers who had the nerve to seize power led them to slaughter fourteen thousand Communards and consign ten thousand others to prison or deportation. To justify these measures, the bourgeoisie of Europe attempted to interpret the Commune of Paris as a conspiracy by the International Workingman's Association (IWA).²⁴

The outcome of the struggle in Paris made it impossible to hope for a new wave of democratic revolutions in Europe. Therefore, the General Council of the IWA called for the formation of legal working-class parties in each country. The followers of Louis Auguste Blanqui and Bakunin found this unacceptable.²⁵ The English trade unions were too weak to act as an independent force. Thus, the Paris Commune was the occasion of the final split between Bakunin and Marx at the Hague Congress of the First International in 1872, where is a struggle between the Marxists and Bakunin, who was expelled for setting up a parallel organization. The General Council moved to the United States following this congress, hoping that the vitality of the workers' movement in the United States and the distance from the petit bourgeois movements in Europe would help, but the IWA was formally dissolved in 1876.

After the dissolution of the IWA, international workers' conferences were held every few years from 1877 to 1888, although some sections of the workers' movement did not attend these meetings. In 1889 two competing conferences were held, one composed primarily of trade union leaders organized by the French Possibilists, and one attended by the major working-class parties organized by the Marxist followers of Jules Guesde.²⁶ The second conference initiated the reestablishment of the international.

Although the first congress was marked by the continuing conflict between Marxists and anarchists, by the time of the founding of the Second International in 1889, the Marxists had gained great ground on the anarchists (and syndicalists). The anarchists were subsequently excluded from the international and have remained a comparatively minor political force (except in some of the less-developed countries of southern Europe such as Spain). The greater challenge to revolutionary Marxism for most of the past century has been (and remains) reformist Marxism.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL AND REFORMIST MARXISM

One of the great contradictions that presented itself to the workers' movement was the contradiction between nationalism and internationalism. This was not

so much an ideological issue as a result of the ability of the major capitalist states to attract the support of sections of the working class for their imperialist ambitions. This loyalty was a result of the ability of these states to offer reforms and concessions to the workers.

The history of the Second International illuminates the rise of reformist Marxism. The twenty-five years that preceded World War I, when the Second International was in its prime, were characterized by renewed industrial prosperity. Production rose in all industrialized countries, and those where industrialization had barely begun were incorporated into the capitalist system.

The changing structure of world capitalism, or what Lenin described as the rise of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, was the context in which the parties of the Second International waged the class struggle. The improvement in workers' living standards and in their social security, however small, resulted from these class struggles.

The working-class organizations of this period grew very strong. According to some observers, this was a departure from the norms set by Marx and Engels in the IWA. Let's look for a minute at Ralph Miliband's (1977) observations about Marxist politics.

According to Miliband, Marx and Engels consistently dismissed the notion that there was a set of ideas that specifically defined revolutionary consciousness. In the *Communist Manifesto* they said that Communists "do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement." In speaking of "alleged splits" in the First International, Marx and Engels noted that while the rules of the international gave its constituent societies a common object and program, that program was limited to outlining the major features of the proletarian movement, leaving the details of the theory to be worked out as inspired by the demands of the practical struggle and as growing out of the exchange of ideas among the sections, with an equal hearing given to all socialist views in their journals and congresses.

Miliband also emphasizes how Marx and Engels went to great lengths to stress their view that the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. They adamantly opposed any view that the working class was too undereducated and first must be liberated from above by the philanthropic or petite bourgeoisie.

Yet by the time that Engels died in 1895, the Second International was in its prime and the prototypical party was the German Social Democratic Party. What is so impressive about the Second International and the German Party, in particular, is that it had become an authentic mass organization. By 1914 it had become a vast institution staffed by more than four thousand paid functionaries and eleven thousand salaried employees, had 20 million marks invested in business, and published more than four thousand periodicals. It also had substantial parliamentary representation and was a force in local and provincial government. To a greater or lesser extent, much the same was true of social democratic parties in other European countries (Miliband 1977:121).

Nothing demonstrates the maturation of the European working class in the socialist imaginary than this fact. Normally social democratic parties of this

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period were mass parties deeply involved in the political lives of their countries, though they were all loosely connected to the Second International. Perhaps corresponding to this status, although we should not accept this without further analysis, some would say that the corollary to the above-listed achievements was the notion that the transformation of capitalist society would occur as a strictly constitutional process, which must on no account be endangered by “an ill-conceived activism and adventurist policies” (Miliband 1977:121).

One must ask if the socialist movement of this period had a strategy built into a structural and historical analysis of the social world and the potential actors, rather than a one built on a voluntarist notion of revolution?

Miliband argues that the degree to which this was an accepted tenet of the European workers’ movement was masked by the opposition evoked by Eduard Bernstein’s explicit “revisionism.”²⁷ Miliband discounts the rhetoric of the workers’ movement of that period and suggests that revisionism was the characteristic perspective of that period for all but a very small segment of the *European* workers’ movement. Thus, the “betrayal” of 1914 was a natural manifestation of it.

Miliband concludes that this view led to the exaltation of the party as the embodiment of the working class and the guardian against those whom would impress on the working class actions and policies that the party leadership deemed to be dangerous and irresponsible. Thus, the party leadership assumed the role of those who would drive the delicate machinery of the locomotive of socialism at safe speed through capitalist society.

Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) was one of the most influential theoreticians of this period. He taught the party to rely on the relentless march of history for the final overthrow of capitalism, while he continued to interpret Marxism in activist revolutionary terms. His views on economic determinism, however, persuaded the party that revolutionary action was not necessary so long as history was there to do the job.

Edward Bernstein (1861), a member of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) who had been heavily influenced by the Fabian Socialists while in exile in England, claimed that economic, social, and political conditions had changed greatly since Marx’s day. Wages were higher, democracy and universal suffrage were spreading, reforms were more likely than ever to favor the working classes, and trade union activity was encouraging. Capitalism was showing a new capacity to adapt to new conditions, remedy its excesses, and control itself. Bernstein concluded that a socialist party enrolling a major section of the electorate and linked with trade unions and cooperatives could achieve socialism by use of constitutional means. Although he favored socialism over capitalism, he urged his followers to forget ultimate aims and work on the means.

With the collapse of the Second International in August 1914, most Western European social democratic parties were faced by small minorities attempting to reinstate the principles of revolutionary Marxism. The war years saw numerous conferences of international socialists, but it was the October Revolution and the military defeat of the Axis powers in World War I that placed proletarian revolution on the agenda in Austria, Hungary, and particularly Germany. In

Germany the naval mutiny and the victory of the Munich workers in November 1918 led to a workers' rising in Berlin supported by the soldiers. Despite their resistance, the Majority Socialists and the trade unions were forced to accept this new situation. A coalition of Majority Socialists and independent socialists (which excluded Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht) proclaimed the socialist republic.²⁸ The Majority Socialists and the trade union leaders formed a bloc with the established monarchical bureaucracy, the high command of the defeated army, and the industrialists.

The Left formed the Communist Party in late 1918, but the workers considered them to be a disruptive force. They were not heeded when they called for a permanent transfer of power to the workers' councils that had spontaneously sprung up throughout the country.

In this situation it was possible for the ruling class to reestablish itself in partnership with the Majority Socialists. To do this they were willing to make many concessions: the eight-hour day, unemployment assistance, and recognition of wage bargaining. What they really wanted, though, was for the Majority Socialists to take the rap for the war and the penalties of the peace treaty. They did not want to repeat the situation in Russia. With a strong foothold in the government, the ruling class mobilized the middle class against the Majority Socialists, who could once again be excluded from power. By the time the workers decided to implement their demands themselves, it was too late; they were attacked and defeated in one region after another.

Some point out that the October Revolution did spark the proletarian revolution that Marx had heralded, but the revolution was defeated throughout Western and Central Europe. Although these countries had to democratize their political institutions, they reestablished and strengthened their social institutions. Only in Scandinavia did the reformist working-class movement win a lasting influence over the state, although it did not threaten the structures of capitalist society. Thus we can say that the revolutionary movement in Europe saved the Russian Revolution from intervention but itself suffered defeat.

In March 1919 the founding congress of the Third International was held in Moscow. On the whole the groups at this congress were not representative of the mass workers' parties in their countries. Lenin's polemic against left-wing communism, directed against a group that split from the German Communist Party (KPD), convinced some of the larger working-class parties that the international rejected the utopianism of some of its followers in Western Europe. Thus, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), and the French, Swiss, and Italian socialists decided to consider joining the Third International.

Lenin believed that World War I had opened an era of intensified class conflict and thus placed proletarian revolution on the agenda. He believed, therefore, that a new and very different organization from the previous one had to be created to bring together revolutionary parties of a type different from those that dominated the Second International. What this amounted to was placing what Miliband calls "insurrectionary politics" on the agenda on a world scale, not so much to prepare for immediate insurrection but to prepare for the possibility of the seizure of power in many advanced capitalist countries.

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We can say in hindsight that Lenin's *Imperialism* exaggerated the revolutionary possibilities, misled by the revolutionary eruptions that occurred in Germany, Hungary, and Austria as well as the very radical temper that gripped large sections of the working class everywhere in 1918–1920 and led to great industrial strikes and social agitation. Lenin's views then represented very much the temper of the times. This was the context that fostered a class-first agenda among the revolutionaries of the Pan-European world.

If the movement was to respond effectively to the revolutionary situation that was upon them, it had to ensure that the organizational weapons at its disposal would enable it to win this showdown with capital. It is in this context that we come to understand the much-maligned twenty-one conditions of admission to the Communist International, the most important of which included (1) calls for the removal of reformists from all responsible posts in the labor movement, (2) the formation of illegal party apparatuses, (3) subordination of the parliamentary fractions of the parties to the party central committee, and (4) the binding of parties to the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Third International.

These twenty-one conditions virtually constituted a challenge to split the Western parties. Yet the USPD and the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO) joined the international against the will of some of its top leaders. A minority of the Italian socialists around Antonio Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga split off to form their own Communist Party.²⁹ By the beginning of 1921, the Communist International was a powerful force with legal mass parties in Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia and legal or semilegal parties in Finland and Poland, both of which enjoyed considerable working-class support.

The Third International broke decisively with the Eurocentrism of the second. Active support for national liberation was mandatory. Yet when the German KPD attempted to lead the masses in revolution in March 1921, the party's weakness became evident. The determination of the party was no substitute for the lack of spontaneous militancy among the working class.

The insurrection in the West had ceased. What then was to be done with the international army that had been prepared for an assault on the citadels of world capitalism? The initial impulse was that it should prepare itself for the return of the revolutionary crisis, but in the meantime those members of the Communist International located in the core states became instruments for the defense of the socialist motherland.

Harry Braverman, a militant in the Trotskyist movement, argues persuasively that

the long accruing changes in capitalism, changes which created an entirely new arena of analysis and struggle, cut the ground from under those Marxists who continued to repeat old slogans, and turned the familiar battle cries of Communism into futile incantation. . . .

The entire monolithic edifice of Communism has been splintered, in part because it had been undermined politically and morally by a series

of disastrous events and policies, and in part because in the interim the whole historical epoch for which this movement had been shaped had passed it by. . . . The movement had come to the end of its path" (Braverman 1974:43).

Thus, it was not only that the revolution that Lenin anticipated after World War I did not come about but that the "socialist" parties now were explicitly parties of social reform, whose leaderships not only had no thought of revolution, but saw themselves as the defenders of the status quo. The Communist parties, in contrast, were formally dedicated to revolution but pursued opportunistic and "wayward" policies at the behest of the Comintern (Braverman 1974). Nowhere was an independent Marxist Left able to play any more than a marginal role outside of the two internationals. After recognizing the relative stability of the capitalist world economy in 1925, Stalin expounded in *Problems of Leninism* the doctrine of socialism in one country, dismissing the traditional view that it was not possible to create in Russia the political basis and economic foundation of socialism but that the collaboration of many industrialized countries was necessary for the establishment of socialism. If there was not to be a revolution in the West, then the Soviet leadership had a right to use the Western Communist parties as tools of Soviet foreign policy regardless of the interests of the workers in the industrialized countries.

What a dramatic shift in the story of the trajectory of the world socialist movement. How do we explain this? In his two-volume work on the Communist movement, Fernando Claudin (1975) argues that the causes are very complex but that one thing is incontestable; that is, the majority of the European working class, even where the crisis went furthest, as in Germany, continued to follow their traditional political and trade union organizations and not the new revolutionary party. Lenin and the Comintern leaders referred to this phenomenon as "the betrayal of the reformist leaders" but did not satisfactorily ascertain why the working class followed these "traitors" (Claudin 1975:56). Lenin's assumptions had always been that the working class would turn its back on these reformist leaders and be won to the side of the revolutionary party when the final struggle was at hand. Thus, he imagined that the process would unfold in much the same way it had in the Russian Revolution.

In Claudin's view, Lenin critically underestimated the depth of reformist politics and mentality among the Western working class. For Claudin the root of this error was in Lenin's concept of imperialism as the "eve of the socialist revolution" and as "moribund capitalism" (Claudin 1975:52, 59). In analyzing the contradictions of imperialism, Lenin made much of the destructive effects of these contradictions but did not sufficiently recognize the degree to which a restructuring process in the imperialist countries was also a result of these contradictions.

Lenin of course held that it was the phenomenon of colonial exploitation that led to reformism in the labor movement, but his understanding of the impact that this had in the core states was limited to the corruption of the labor aristocracy. Claudin, however, argues that reformism is also the result of structural

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transformations in capitalism connected with the development of the productive forces. Nor was Lenin able to appreciate the extent to which the Western working class was attached to national and democratic values. Claudin argues that the operation of the national principle was evident in the “betrayal” of the principle of internationalism by social democratic leaders (Claudin 1975:60).

However, I would argue that it is key to relate these values to the reformist strategies of the Western European ruling classes for whom the franchise, the welfare states, and the ideology of Pan-European racism were the basis of a compromise between labor and capital in the core, who then constituted a united front against the peoples of the colonial, semicolonial, and dependent areas of the capitalist periphery, and their internally colonized peripheries .

Where, then, is the revolutionary trajectory? We know today that the wrenching transformation of the workers’ movement described above did not entail the end of the possibilities of transformation of world capitalism but the shift of the locus of revolutionary struggle from the Western proletariat to what Lenin had called the weak link of the capitalist system, but in such a manner that the full implications of this shift were not comprehended by the most influential parties in the world socialist movement.

Revolution in the East and the Challenge to the Eurocentrism of Class-First Strategies

Abdel-Malek (1981) explains that Lenin provided the link between classical European Marxism and the Orient, but Lenin remained to some extent wedded to Eurocentric notions and died too early to figure out the fuller implications of an anti-Eurocentric strategy in the world revolutionary struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Even Lenin was opposed by the Marxists of the Orient in the First and Second Congresses of the Comintern, however. In the Second, Third, and Fourth Congresses, ideological struggle was waged between Eurocentric Marxists and nationalistic Marxists from the Three Continents.³⁰ M. N. Roy, who represented the left wing of the national liberation movement, was closest to Lenin’s position, but as early as the 1920s Sultan-Galiev was pointing out the difference between the situation of the proletariat of the Muslim (non-European) nations and that of the English and French proletariats. Galiev viewed the Muslim nations as proletarian nations.

Mir Sayit Sultan-Galiev was a member of the Tartar Muslim minority in the czarist empire. He was born the son of a schoolteacher in a village in Bashkiria in 1880. In 1917 he joined the Bolshevik Party, which was supported by an important section of the Tartar intelligentsia. Given the internationalist stance of the Bolsheviks, they hoped for a reversal of their fortunes under the czars, who fostered a system of Great Russian chauvinism. Sultan-Galiev rose to the leadership of the Central Muslim Commissariat, which was affiliated with the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities, headed by the then little-known Bolshevik Joseph Stalin. Sultan-Galiev created a Muslim Communist Party, and despite the

opposition of local Russian Communists, he was able to extract a commitment from the Central Government to form a large predominantly Muslim state, the Tartaro-Bachkir Republic. Sultan-Galiev viewed Muslim society as a unit that had been collectively oppressed under czarism and whose liberation should be a central objective of the socialist revolution since the prospects of socialist revolution were brightest in the colonial world. This position firmly opposed the Comintern's tendency to focus mainly on the Western proletariat. Since the socialist revolution was to begin in the East, who could bear the torch of socialism and culture into Asia better than the Bolshevik Muslims of the Russian Empire (Rodinson 1979)?

The Muslim Communist Party lost its autonomy when the idea of a lasting alliance between the petite bourgeoisie and the proletariat was rejected by the September 1920 Congress of Oriental People in Baku. It was proclaimed there that the national revolution had to be led by the proletariat, which of course meant the Western proletariat. The project of a Great Muslim state was dropped, forcing Sultan-Galiev into opposition to fight against what he termed Great Russian chauvinism. Though he was expelled from the party and arrested in 1923, he continued to organize clandestinely after being released from jail. He had concluded that the socialist revolution did not resolve the problem of inequality among peoples. Rather, the Bolshevik program had eliminated the oppression of the European bourgeoisie and replaced it with the oppression of the European proletariat.

This was of course inconceivable in the class-first framework that dominated the worldviews of radical Marxists in the Third International. Consequently, Sultan-Galiev called for the creation of a Communist Colonial International, which would be independent of the Third International. In November 1928 Sultan-Galiev was again arrested and sentenced to ten years hard labor. He was released in 1939 but executed in 1940 (Goble 2004).

Maxime Rodinson concludes that the socialism of the socialization of the means of production does not resolve all problems. Even Lenin had concurred before the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, saying in 1916 that the fact the proletariat had carried out the social revolution would not turn it into a saint. This seems to imply that Lenin believed that one needed to be attentive to the continuation of power relations under any system. So for Rodinson, Sultan-Galiev's ideas are thought to be a precursor to Maoist communism, which concentrates on the immediate struggle for socialist revolution in the ex-colonies, but after the establishment of the socialist state, concentrated on the continuation of the class struggle in the socialist state.

Rodinson views the Afro-Asian bloc and the Chinese Communists as avatars of the Communist Colonial International advocated by Sultan-Galiev, who was the first prophet of the colonial struggle against white hegemony in socialism itself and the first to forecast a break between the Russians' European communism and colonial communism. He was also the first to proclaim the importance of Marxist nationalism in colonial countries and the international relevance for socialism of these national movements, which did not immediately envisage complete class warfare and socialization (Rodinson 1979:7).

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Abdel-Malek also emphasizes the importance of the Chinese revolution as a turning point for the fortunes of the national movements. From 1927 through World War II, he points out, no socialist states were created on the three continents, thus perpetuating the primacy of Europe not only in the political and economic spheres but in the cultural and theoretical spheres as well. The revolutionaries of the periphery lived in the context of a dialogue with the Left in the core. There was no solidarity movement among the revolutionaries in the countries of the periphery unless they were geographically adjacent. The Chinese revolution was the first example of a socialist movement coming to power at the culmination of a very long and difficult war in a very large and significant country whose slogans, theoretical formulations, and lines were as autonomous as they were specific and thus very close to the political psychology of the people of the Orient. Abdel-Malek argues that this was the first alternative to both the “class against class” conception and the “national front” conception (Abdel-Malek 1981).

In this way the Chinese revolution became a model for revolutionary struggle in the periphery and semiperiphery of the world-system, but it also gained a large following in the core states, including the hegemonic power, the United States. In my 1999 book *We Are Not What We Seem* I argued that “during the 1970s the struggle against the war in Vietnam, the Black rebellions throughout the U.S., and the birth of oppositional movements of great variety severely undermined the legitimacy of the government, and indeed of U.S. civil society. The emergence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution within the process of socialist construction in China was fashioning an image of what the power of the people could do. Maoist ideas influenced the New Left throughout the United States, as in other core countries” (Bush 1999:209).

The Maoist movement that emerged from the New Left visualized reconnecting the revolutionaries to their revolutionary heritage in the Third International, through the prism of Mao Zedong thought. Maoism was envisioned to be a truly radical critique of reformism and revisionism, a means of continual social transformation through carrying out the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat in the socialist countries, through the most superexploited sections of the working class in the core countries, and through the radical national liberation movements in the periphery. Some of these organizations envisioned the creation of a new international under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, although others thought such an international body would inevitably lead to the same situation of lack of national rootedness that the Communist Party of China (CPC) fought against in the Third International. Those who were skeptical about the formation of a new international often cited Mao’s own contention that all movements had to develop their strategies according to their own conditions. Some of these organizations took the major significance of the Chinese Cultural Revolution to be the significance of proletarian socialism versus petit bourgeois socialism or liberal socialism (the socialism of the experts).

“While there was a considerable range of political sophistication in the movement, on one issue there was considerable unanimity: that through a voluntarist

effort utilizing the correct line, revolutionary transformation could be undertaken. There was a great deal of variety among these organizations; some had exceptional strengths in some areas, and utilized the ideology in creative ways” (Bush 1999:210).

Cynthia Lucas Hewitt (2002) argued in a recent article that racial stratification in national labor markets is an aspect of the worldwide division of labor that the ruling strata used to grant and restrict access to the means of production. Specifically Hewitt argues, “Capital ownership and control is 1) cumulative at a geometric rate since the inception of the system in the sixteenth century, leading to centralization, and 2) this centralization is organized through ascriptive solidarity, that rests, ultimately, upon familial relations of marriage and inheritance.” According to Hewitt, the key to this ascriptive solidarity is the European patriarchal family, and it is expressed most clearly in the concept of private property, which is then clearly expressed in white racial solidarity and endogeneity (Hewitt 2002:138).

Hewitt holds that the likelihood of employment correlates closely to one’s social closeness to owners or controllers of productive capital. Social closeness is defined racially and enforced and reflected in marriage patterns. In contrast to scholars such as Dalton Conley, (1999) who make similar arguments pointing to the defining role of class in determining race relations, following Oliver Cromwell Cox (1950), Hewitt argues that “class is largely an artifact of racialized solidarity processes of expropriation and exclusion integral to the formation of modern nation-state structures” (Hewitt 2002:140). In this way Hewitt identifies what she feels to be a crucial measure of long-term intergenerational control of productive assets, which she argues is the distinguishing feature of capitalist accumulation.

Hewitt argues that one may very well view an oppressed minority as a group in the lower class but cautions that the theory of class focuses on a process of class differentiation based on individual or family choices and opportunities in a more or less open structure. This assumes sharing in any set of national borders as mandated by the imagined nation, but the reality for racist societies or nations is that racism assumes the exclusion of the group from the national identity.

Hewitt has been perhaps the strongest voice among the Black intelligentsia calling for a deepening of the analysis of the struggles of people of the African world. I attempt to expand on how this analysis applies to the wider world by looking at the evolution of George Padmore from an official of international communism to a Pan-African revolutionary.

George Padmore and the Pan-African Struggle

During the 1930s the class-first and race-first strains among Black radicals continued with some reshuffling of positions. Over the course of the postwar period Du Bois had moved from Fabian socialism to an increasingly radical race-first stance, deemed by Wilson Moses as an Afrocentric Marxism, as we saw in Chapter 2.

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If Du Bois can be considered the father of Pan-Africanism, then George Padmore should surely be considered its ideologist. Padmore was born Malcolm Nurse. His father was a highly respected politically militant teacher who was friend and mentor to C.L.R. James's father.³¹ At that time in the Caribbean, schoolmasters were considered to be the carriers of intellectual and social life, but Malcolm Nurse was on the lower rung of the Trinidadian color hierarchy of white, brown, and black. Since all groups accepted this color hierarchy as part of the natural order, C.L.R. James feels that Nurse simply could not accept such restrictiveness and had to leave his native land for the United States in 1924 (James 1992:289).

C.L.R. James tells us that Malcolm Nurse went first to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and later to Howard University, the Black university in Washington, D.C. By the time he got to Howard, Malcolm Nurse had become a militant revolutionary.³² James tells us that

one day Esme Howard, the British Ambassador, was due to pay a visit to Howard University. In those days that was a great event and the black professors prepared a distinguished welcome for their visitor. Padmore, however, had had printed a set of leaflets which described in fierce terms the oppression of British imperialism in Africa. When the procession of dignitaries appeared, he suddenly stepped out from among the students and threw the leaflets in front of the British Ambassador, some say into his face. Padmore was not expelled as one would expect, but he abandoned his academic career and he next appeared as a paid functionary in the American Communist Party. (James 1992:289)

According to James,

George adopted the Communist doctrine completely and became very expert in it. People who knew him then agree that he was a great militant—active, devoted and fearless. The complaint of George, and most of the other blacks in the Communist Party, was that the [white] leaders never understood that the Negro question had racial connotations which demanded special consideration by a political organization—however much this organization might aim to work for the equality of all mankind. This was the problem which formed the axis of George's career as a Marxist. Nevertheless, whatever the doubts were about George's strict Communist orthodoxy on the Negro question, by 1930 he was created head of the Negro department of the Profintern, with his headquarters in the Kremlin. He held that post until 1935, and if he had done nothing else his place in black history would still be safe. (James 1992:289)

By James's own estimate, Padmore was one of the greatest politicians of the twentieth century and had earned for himself the title of "Father of African emancipation" (Simmonds 2007:A10). What is the basis of such an estimate?

We find in Padmore's experience a story that underlines the story that I am telling about the autonomy of race as a component of the stratifying processes of historical capitalism. It was Du Bois and the New Negro radicals, such as Harrison and Garvey, who made us conscious of this social fact and made Blacks a social force to be reckoned with in world politics. It was Padmore who, according to James, took the next great step in the international organization and mobilization of Blacks.

Through his experience as a journalist at the *Trinidad Guardian*, at student newspapers at Fisk and Howard, and at the CPUSA paper *The Daily Worker* and as editor of *The Negro Champion* (later *Liberator*), Padmore accumulated a skill of immense value to the struggle for human emancipation. The leaders of international communism exercised uncommon judgment in 1929 when they selected Padmore for further study at the University of Toilers of the East in the Soviet Union and then in 1930 selected him to become the Communist International's expert on Negro affairs, secretary of the International Trade Union Council of Negro Workers, and editor of its paper, *The Negro Worker*. James argues that tens of thousands of Black workers in various parts of the world received their first political education through this paper, which provided information, advice, guidance, and ideas about Black struggles on every continent.

One of Padmore's early achievements was the international conference of revolutionary Black workers held in Hamburg in 1930. Padmore personally is said to have travelled over half the globe to help assemble the delegates to the conference. In *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* he wrote,

At this conference Negro delegates from different parts of Africa, the United States, West Indies and Latin America not only discussed trade union questions, but dealt with the most vital problems affecting their social and political conditions, as for example the expropriation of land by the imperialist robbers in Africa; the imposition of Head and Poll taxes; the enslaving of toilers through Pass laws and other anti-labour and racial legislation in Africa; lynching, peonage and segregation in the United States; as well as unemployment, which has thrown millions of these black toilers on the streets, faced with the spectre of starvation and death (Padmore 1971:6).

Not merely a token leader, during his years in the Comintern Padmore had become something of an institution. By the time he left the Comintern in 1935, he took with him a "carefully fostered 'net' of more than 4,000 connections throughout the colonial world" (Edwards 2003:248).

Edwards (2003) recalls some of the Padmore legend:

There are whispers that he led a "gun-running expedition into the Belgian Congo to help native revolt there" and that he personally recruited sixty or more African radicals to study in Moscow, surreptitiously smuggling them into Europe. . . .

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Padmore was said to be a master of disguises, entering colonial areas by pretending to be an anthropologist studying the life and customs of primitive peoples; entering South Africa by pretending to be the chauffeur of a white junior officer, who was actually his assistant; traveling to Gambia using his birth name (Malcolm Nurse) to help organize a general strike with one of the first trade unions in West Africa. (Edwards 2003:248–249)

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Comintern actively supported anticolonial movements including the Black Liberation movement in the United States. Padmore viewed the struggle for socialism as encompassing the struggle for African liberation. According to Edwards, under the influence of Francophone Blacks (especially Geran Kouyate, editor of *La Race negre*) Padmore moved to embrace a form of Black internationalism that called for the unity of Blacks from Africa, the United States, the West Indies, and other lands. Eventually the focus on discovering the most efficacious mode of Black anticolonialism (not necessarily under the leadership of the Comintern) clashed with the universalist pretensions of the Pan-European Communist movement as well as its vanguardist notions of leadership.

The French Communist Party was particularly sensitive on this issue, and there was collaboration between Kouyate, a Sudanese in the French Communist Party, and Padmore, a Comintern official, to undermine the limitations of the French party. Like the Black Communists in the United States, Kouyate came to consider the Third International not only as a natural ally but also as a means toward international Black unity. C.L.R. James argues that Padmore arrived at pretty much the same position. The Comintern was a means of doing the work of the emancipation of Black people everywhere (Edwards 2003:264).

In August 1933, as proceedings to expel Kouyate from the French Communist Party were initiated, Padmore learned that the International Trade Union Council of Negro Workers would be abandoned and the Comintern's work in the African colonies would be relinquished in a strategic move by the Soviet Union to focus on the danger of Fascism in Europe by aligning with the so-called democratic imperialist countries. Padmore immediately resigned from the Comintern (Edwards 2003:268). He pointed out that neither Germany nor Japan had colonies in Africa and that the United States was the most racially prejudiced country in the world.

While this period in Padmore's life needs closer examination, we do know that the break with the Comintern pushed Padmore in the direction of finding a source for Black internationalism outside of international communism and its relatively significant resources. In February 1934 he wrote a letter to W.E.B. Du Bois, whom from his position as a Comintern official he had criticized as a petit bourgeois reformer, a misleader, and an agent of international capital (Edwards 2003:246-247).

In the letter he told Du Bois of a conference with Francophone Blacks that was the most serious political discussion he had ever had with any group of Black folks. The conference was taking the initiative to convene a Negro World

Unity Congress for the purpose of hammering out a common program of action around which Black unity could be achieved. He requested Du Bois's assistance in creating a basis of unity among the Black populations of Africa, America, the West Indies, and other lands. Thus, at the end of his long struggle for Black internationalism using the resources of international communism, Padmore moved toward the inception of a relationship of mutual respect with Du Bois and thus toward the possibility of collaboration with Du Bois, which would be realized in the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945 (James 1977:74–75).

In 1935 Padmore moved to London and reestablished ties with his boyhood friend C.L.R. James. There he joined James, Jomo Kenyatta, Amy Ashwood-Garvey, and J.B. Danquah in the International African Friends of Ethiopia to help organize opposition to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.³³ When the Ethiopian question subsided, Padmore took over the International African Friends of Ethiopia and transformed it into the International African Service Bureau, which published a paper called *International African Opinion*. C.L.R. James was named the editor of that paper (Lewis 2002:49; James 1992:292).

James tells us that for some time after his appearance in London in 1935, Padmore had a very difficult time since the functionaries and militants of the Communist International persecuted and vilified him with great bitterness. Padmore was able to maintain his bearings, however, and emerged from this period with his reputation and his political standing intact. Soviet communism of this period was not able to shake the faith that Black people had in Padmore, though James holds that it shook the confidence of Black people in the Soviet communism of that period (James 1992:292).

From the founding of the International African Service Bureau in 1937 until his death in 1959, Padmore worked ceaselessly for the independence of Britain's African colonies. Although he worked with many white organizations and spoke at their conferences, he never attached the International African Service Bureau to any of them, although he did merge it into the Pan-African Federation in 1944 (Padmore 1972:127).

C.L.R. James had met Kwame Nkrumah as a student at Lincoln University.³⁴ In 1944, James, who was living in the United States, gave Nkrumah a letter of introduction to Padmore. When he traveled to London, where Padmore resided, to attend law school, Nkrumah met Padmore. They became fast friends, and Padmore became a mentor to Nkrumah. Padmore and Nkrumah worked together on the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, where the decision was made to organize and mobilize the African masses for independence. When the United Gold Coast Convention invited Nkrumah to return to Ghana, it was Padmore who persuaded him to accept the invitation (Lewis 2002:49).

Padmore's work as a revolutionary thinker, strategist, journalist, and union organizer aided him in his ability to summarize his thinking, experiences, and observations so as to benefit the movement and others who were interested. As we have seen, in 1931 he published *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* to highlight the exploitation of Black labor throughout the world (Simmonds 2007:A10). In 1945 he published *The Voice of Coloured Labour (Speeches and*

Reports of Colonial Delegates to the World Trade Union Conference), which provided colonial workers and workers of color their first opportunity to voice their grievances and express their hopes and aspirations before a world audience (Simmonds 2007:A10). He documented the Ethiopian crisis in *Africa and World Peace* (1937). After World War II he wrote *Africa: Britain's Third Empire* (1949) which triggered the move toward independence in the Gold Coast (Ghana) and Kenya, though the colonial government in those countries banned his books (Simmonds 2007:A10).

In addition to his books, Padmore's analysis of reality was often an accurate guide to understanding the unfolding events in the social world. Hooker argues that Padmore was the first to identify neocolonialism. James argues that Nkrumah lacked theoretical sophistication when he met Padmore in the forties, but after a year of working with him he was writing the most sophisticated books on imperialism in all the world. Padmore was very much involved in the tactics and strategy of the revolutionary movement in Ghana under Nkrumah's leadership. He traveled between Accra and London. He was in Ghana in 1951 to witness Nkrumah's installation as leader of government business and the reopening of the legislative council (Lewis 2002:50).

In August 1957 Padmore moved to newly independent Ghana, where President Nkrumah appointed him his personal adviser on African affairs. Hugh Smythe described Padmore as the "silent hero of Ghana and a venerated and respected figure throughout Black Africa" (Lewis 2002:49).³⁵ He organized the first meeting of independent heads of state in Accra and the first All-African People's Congress (Lewis 2002:50).

Padmore's death in 1959 of course brought his involvement in the decolonizing project to an end, but ten years later more than forty African and Caribbean countries had achieved their independence. Padmore is increasingly being celebrated by scholars as a leading pioneer in the great movement for the redemption of Africa. Padmore himself concluded his presentation of Pan Africanism or Communism with the following commentary: "In our struggle of national freedom, human dignity, and social redemption, Pan-Africanism offers an ideological alternative to Communism on the one side and Tribalism on the other. It rejects both white racialism and black chauvinism. It stands for racial co-existence on the basis of absolute equality and respect for human personality" (Padmore 1972:355).

The Unfinished Business of Decolonization: How Long Imperialism's Last Stage?

Since the publication of Kwame Nkrumah's 1965 book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, not a few people have puzzled over just how long the peoples of the Three Continents would have to contend with this "last stage." By the 1970s there had developed something of a consensus within the world Left that the locus of the main contradiction had shifted from the contradiction

between capital and labor in the West, or between capitalism and socialism, to a contradiction between imperialism and the national liberation movements in the third world. The victory of national liberation movements in country after country since 1945 generated much optimism, though there was also a general consensus that the danger of neo-colonialism was an immediate danger to all of these movements as they came to power, thus achieving political independence.

But the post-Second World War order under U.S. hegemony was precisely one in which direct political over-rule was eschewed, for the economic integration of the world and the clarification of North/South disparities in wealth. Imperial over-rule was deeply entrenched in the modern world-system as had been recognized by dependency theorists in Latin America (whose achievement of political independence from Spain had not helped very much with dealing with the control over their economic and political affairs by the United States, and being consigned to the U.S. backyard). African and West Indian intellectuals had also elaborated versions of dependency theory, which would eventually be elaborated into world-systems theory by intellectuals and militants from and working in Africa (including Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Terence K. Hopkins, and Giovanni Arrighi). The 1949 victory of the Chinese Communist, the 1954 ouster of the French from Vietnam by the Viet-Minh, the stalemate in Korea in its war with the United States, the victory of forces of liberation in Algeria, and then Cuba, and then Vietnam, this time against the United States, the rise of the Black Power Movement in the United States which made common cause with these movements were all considered to be vindications of Nkrumah's claim that the national liberation movements would cut off the arms of the imperialist octopus, thus narrowing its options and room for maneuver, or of Lin Bao's notion that the countryside would surround the cities of the world placing a stranglehold on their power.

But the 1967–73 end of the postwar expansion of the world-economy curtailed the social democratization which much of the progress of the postwar world represented. It had to be admitted that global liberalism could not be spread to the entire world, and the people of the core states and of the third world had to dramatically reign in their expectations. Neoliberal globalization was the term given to the submission of all activity to the dictates of market rationality. Keynesianism which had been the orthodoxy of the postwar world was now a dead letter. The representatives of the national liberation movements in power now were forced to submit to the humiliation of structural adjustment.

Latin America, which had won its political independence from Spain in a different era, had been laboring under what some Latin Americans called the coloniality of power since that time. While African and African Diasporic intellectuals have also contributed significantly to this concept, we might consider in this vein the work of Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Leopold Senghor, Richard Wright, W.E.B. Du Bois, John Henrik Clarke, George Padmore, C.L.R. James, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré, and others. But I would like to look at the work of some who are now calling for a decolonial option in Latin America.

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Quijano argues that the formation of the Americas was constituted by two fundamental historical processes: (1) the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of “race,” assumed to be a biological category that naturalized the hierarchical relationship between the conquerors and the conquered on the basis of the superiority of the conquerors and the inferiority of the conquered; and (2) the articulation of all known forms of labor control (slavery, serfdom, small commodity production, and reciprocity) on the basis of capital and the world market. The population of the new world and later the entire world was ordered along these axes. Terms which had heretofore referred to geographical designation such as European, Spanish, Portuguese now referred to a putative racial designation.

In Latin America the cultural repression and colonization of the people’s imaginary was accompanied by a massive extermination of the indigenous people through harsh conditions of labor, the process of conquest, and diseases brought by Europeans. Within 50 years the European conquest had led to the extermination of 65 million inhabitants in the Aztec, Maya, Caribbean, and Tawantinsuyana (or Inca) areas (Quijano 2007).

This cultural repression and massive genocide destroyed the high culture of America, turning them into illiterate peasant subcultures condemned to orality without their own pattern of formalized, objectivised, intellectual, and visual expression. The colonial relations of previous periods did not produce the same consequences because they were not the cornerstone of a global system of power relations.

In the Europe of the Enlightenment the categories of humanity did not extend to non-Western peoples, or only in a formal way. In accord with the organic image of reality Europe was the brain of the entire organism, and in every part of the world the “others” were the white man’s burden. History was conceived as an evolutionary continuum from the primitive to the civilized; from the traditional to the modern; from the savage to the rational; from pre-capitalism to capitalism. And Europe thought of itself as the future to which all others aspired, the advanced form of the entire species.

In the Americas the idea of race was a way of granting legitimacy to the relations of domination imposed by the conquest. After the colonization of America, Quijano argues, the expansion of European colonialism to the rest of the world, and the subsequent constitution of Europe as a new identity required the elaboration of a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, what Quijano views as “a theoretical perspective on the idea of race as a naturalization of colonial relations between Europeans and non-Europeans” (Quijano 2000:534-535).

Social domination was not new, but the use of the concept of race as a means of legitimizing this domination was indeed new, and has proven to be the most effective and long-lasting instrument of universal social domination. Race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society’s structure of power.

This new structure of power included a new articulation of a variety of forms of labor control deliberately established to produce commodities for the world market. These forms of labor control included slavery, serfdom, petty commodity

production, reciprocity, and wages. These forms of labor control were not mere extensions of their historical antecedents because of the manner in which they were tied and articulated under a system of commodity production for the world market.

In Anglo America the indigenous people were not colonized but were formally recognized as nations with formal international relations with international commercial and military relations. Colonial/racial relations only existed between blacks and whites. When the nation began to expand it dispossessed the native Americans of their land, and almost exterminated. The survivors were then imprisoned within North American society as a colonized race (Quijano 2000:560).

Quijano argues that the critique of the European paradigm of rationality/modernity is urgent. For him it is indispensable that we extricate ourselves from the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality, from all power which is not freely chosen by free people. It is the instrumentation of the reasons for power, of colonial power which distorted paradigms of knowledge and spoiled the liberating promise of modernity.

He concludes that this calls for the destruction of the coloniality of world power, the first step of which is epistemological decolonization, as Decoloniality to clear the way for new intercultural communication. It is the very height of irrationality for some group to insist that its own cosmic vision should be taken as a universal rationality. This is nothing but an attempt to impose a provincialism as universalism. This is an attempt to liberate intercultural relations from the prison of coloniality so that people are free “to choose between various cultural orientations, and above all the freedom to produce, criticize, change, and exchange culture and society. This liberation is part of the process of liberation from all power organized as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and as domination” (Quijano 2007:178).

Walter Mignolo agrees on the whole with Quijano, but also calls for the assertion of an “identity in politics” by internally colonized populations. He contends that Mignolo argues that Latin America is not a subcontinent naturally named by God, it is an invention of the Creole elite of European descent in the nineteenth century with French imperial designs. Ethnicity in Latin America is thus a “site of struggle, the site of the coloniality of power, of knowledge, of being” (Mignolo 2007:43). But *rappports de force* are rapidly shifting following the increased assertiveness of Indians and people of African descent who are “shifting the geography of knowledge and taking epistemology in their own hands” (Mignolo 2007:44). Mignolo distinguishes this process from what we now refer to (often dismissively) as identity politics, but as identity in politics which he feels is necessary “because the control of identity politics lies precisely in the construction of an identity that doesn’t look as such but as the natural appearance of the world” which one finds in the white, heterosexual men. This hegemonic identity politics denounces opposing identities as fundamentalist and essentialist. One must speak from the identities that have been allocated in order to de-naturalize the imperial and racial construction of identity in the modern world-system. Such constructions have not expelled certain people from the system but has marked

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them as exteriorities, as stigmatized beings by their superiors for purposes of maintaining the interior space which they inhabit.

For Mignolo the consequence of 300 years of direct colonial rule and 200 years of internal colonialism has been the growing force of nations within nations where in Latin America *metizaje* became the ideology of national homogeneity, while an Anglo-Protestant culture core into which others would assimilate characterized the United States. But de-colonial thinking is the road to pluriversality as a universal project. This is posed in opposition to an abstract universalism whether of the liberal or the radical (Marxist) variety. For Mignolo the defense of human sameness above human differences is always a claim made from what he refers to as the “privileged position of identity politics in power” (Mignolo 2007:55).

Mignolo argues that epistemic fractures are taking place around the world, not just among indigenous communities in the Americas, New Zealand, and Australia, but also among Afro-Andean, and Afro-Caribbean activists, and intellectuals, and among Islamic intellectuals and activists. Contrary to what might be assumed, this process has led to a retreat of nationalism, conceived as the identification of the state with one ethnicity and therefore to the fetishization of power. If the state is identified with one ethnicity then there is no difference between the power of the people and the power in the hands of people of that ethnicity who represent the state. And the model of this form of organization is the Western bourgeois state based upon the political theory from Plato and Aristotle to Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke. The de-colonial option came to the fore when Indigenous people around the world began to claim their own cosmology in the organization of the economic and the social, of education and subjectivity, when Afro-descendant groups in South America and the Caribbean follow the same path, and will gain significant momentum when Islamic and Arab intellectuals and activists follow the same path.

The U.S. American model of multiculturalism conceded “culture” while maintaining “epistemology.” Andean intellectuals introduced the term “interculturality” as a means of claiming epistemic rights (Mignolo 2007:62). For Mignolo the struggle for epistemic rights because this struggle is what will determine the “principles upon which the economy, politics, and education will be organized, ruled, and enacted” (Mignolo 2007:65). These principles will allow many worlds to co-exist and not be ruled out in the name of simplicity and the reproduction of binary opposition. This approach allows for the rise of a communal system (different from the capitalist and socialist systems) in which power is not located in the State or in the individual (or corporate) proprietor but in the community.

One might conclude from the work of Quijano and similar work by Mignolo, Grosfoguel, Madonado-Torres, Santiago-Valles, Boyce Davies, Wynter, and Montes-Lao a body of work and praxis is accumulating which questions the universalist pretensions not only of Western Liberalism, but also class-first socialists. For Quijano socialism is not at all state control of each and every sphere of social existence. This is simply a form of despotism that appears to be a radical redistribution of power in the minds of only the power holders. On the contrary, socialism involves “the trajectory of a radical return of the control over labor/

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resources/product, over sex/resources/products, over authorities/institutions/violence, and over intersubjectivity/knowledge/communications to the daily life of the people” (573). The imposition of race to naturalize the relations between the conquerors and the conquered as the constitutive act of the capitalist world-economy seems to require the decolonial option as suggested by Quijano and his comrades.