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Flora Tristan: A Predecessor of Marx and Engels

Gisela Blomberg

The French feminist and socialist Flora Tristan may be seen as a predecessor of Marx and Engels, even if they seem to have ignored her. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels refer to critical utopian socialism, particularly drawing attention to Louis Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier, among others. Among these others, however, Flora Tristan, who was in certain respects more radical than her male colleagues, is not mentioned at all.

It is not certain whether Marx was personally acquainted with Flora Tristan when they lived in the same part of Paris in 1843. Arnold Ruge, coeditor with Marx of the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher*, met her at least twice in her salon. In any case, Marx and Engels did know her concept of the workers' union, because in the *Holy Family* Engels defended Flora Tristan against the Young Hegelians.

In her book *The Universal Union of Male and Female Workers* (known by the shortened title, *The Workers' Union*), published five years before the *Communist Manifesto*, Tristan states that the emancipation of the working class can only be realized by the working class itself, and that in order to realize this aim, the working class needs a universal and strong organization. This strong organization should not be limited to the national level but should be developed on the international level as well. Male and female workers have to fight together; the emancipation of

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women is not a consequence of, but a prerequisite for, the emancipation of the working class.

Flora Tristan's life

A brief look at Tristan's biography provides a useful background for an analysis of her ideas. Flora Tristan was born in Paris in 1803. Her father belonged to one of the richest and most famous families in Peru, although her mother came from the French lower middle class. When Flora was five years old, her father suddenly died, causing a radical change in her life. The marriage of her parents was not recognized by either the Peruvian or French governments. The family of Flora's father refused to give Flora's mother and her two children their inheritance. Suddenly penniless, Flora's mother and the two little children, who were regarded as bastards, were forced to leave their manor and move to the slums of Paris.

At the age of seventeen, the very attractive young Flora married. Her husband, however, turned out to be a drunkard. When at the age of twenty-two she was pregnant with her third child, he wanted to send her into prostitution. At that moment Flora Tristan left her husband forever. Since divorce was not legal in those days, she became a pariah. After having suffered under the label *bastard* in her youth, now as an adult she found herself a woman without any rights. A few months later she gave birth to her daughter Aline, the future mother of Paul Gauguin.

Tristan had to find a job, which was nearly impossible for a woman with three children living separated from her husband. Placing her children in a boarding home and pretending to be single, she worked as an escort, mostly for British women on their travels. Thus she had the opportunity to see different countries, as well as to escape from Paris, where her husband was looking for her furiously. He attacked her violently several times, seriously wounding her with two pistol shots in 1838. For that assault, he was sentenced to twenty years of compulsory labor. The court reacted to the serious nature of his actions because by that time Flora Tristan had achieved fame as feminist and socialist writer. She had become interested in feminist and political questions after her separation from her husband in 1825,

when she came into contact with the Saint-Simonians and was impressed by their concept of women's equality.

Seeking to establish her rights as her father's legal heir, Tristan embarked for Peru in 1833. She was the only woman on the vessel. The sea voyage took several months and was followed by several days of journey by horse. She succeeded in getting an annual pension, although it amounted to only six percent of her rightful inheritance because the family did not recognize her as a legitimate daughter of her father.

After her return to France, Tristan began to write. Her first publication was entitled *The Necessity of a Pleasant Reception of Foreign Women* (Tristan 1988b). She demanded practical facilities for traveling women. She took a more progressive position than the Saint-Simonians, not relying on appeals to the ruling forces, but stressing that it was necessary for women to unite in their fight for equal rights. Tristan covered the cost of publication of this booklet by her own means, and the publication attracted public attention.

In November 1837 the first edition of her *Peregrinations of a Pariah* (1979; 1986; 1987) appeared. She wrote not only about her personal adventures in Peru, but criticized the Peruvian oligarchy on questions of social and economic injustice, the inferior status of women, slavery, and the oppression of the Indians. When her family learned about this book, they immediately stopped their payments to her.

In the summer of 1839, Tristan visited England for the fourth time. This time she came well prepared, having studied the most important literature on England's socioeconomic situation. Her intention was to investigate the situation of the English working class. She visited factories, slums, and prisons, and talked to prostitutes. With her very strong will she overcame nearly every obstacle. She concluded that exploitation was the reason for the misery of both male and female workers ("the laws of capitalism are more severe than those of slavery" [1978, 111]). She believed that England should be a lesson to the workers in all other countries.

In 1840 she published her conclusions as a book with the simple title, *Walks in London* (1978), and dedicated it to the

workers on whose side she stood. The socialist press received the publication very well, but it led to a rupture with the bourgeois women's movement. We know that George Sand, for example, did not share Tristan's ideas.

Until January 1843 Flora Tristan worked on her principal work, *The Workers' Union* (1983). No publisher dared to print it, and in desperation Tristan decided to collect the necessary money on her own. In Paris alone she visited more than two hundred people and wrote letters constantly. When she had found 123 subscribers, the first edition of four thousand copies appeared in May 1843. By January 1844, she had managed to persuade another 102 subscribers, and published the second edition with ten thousand copies. In June 1844, the third edition was released, again with ten thousand copies. The subscribers to the first and second edition were mainly members of the bourgeoisie, but nearly ninety percent of the subscribers to the third edition were workers.

By the end of 1843, she had received about two hundred letters from workers. Knowing that only a very few workers would read her "little book," as she called it, she organized meetings with workers, at first in Paris. Then in April 1844 she undertook a real promotion tour through mid and south France. Despite all obstacles, such as attempts by the French police to prevent her from contacting workers, she tirelessly arranged meetings attended by hundreds. At the same time she collected the material for her next book, although she died before she could publish it. (Discovered in the archives of Jules L. Puech, these journals were first published in 1973 [Tristan 1980a]). Totally exhausted, she died of a stroke in Bordeaux in November 1844 at the age of 41.

"The Universal Union of Male and Female Workers"

Tristan did not develop a conclusive theory of the emancipation of the working class, but in the last years of her life she dedicated herself totally to the workers' cause. Tristan felt a very strong vocation to instruct the working class; her struggle was a very passionate one, as if she felt a supernatural force pushing her into this work.

Tristan was in contact with the leading utopian socialists, in particular with Owen and the followers of Saint-Simon and Fourier. She was deeply influenced by them in many respects, but she also developed her own ideas concerning the emancipation of the working class.

Tristan declared that the working class had only their hands to earn their living, a description very similar to the words of the *Manifesto*: “the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live” (Marx and Engels 1976, 482). Tristan agreed with Prosper Enfantin (a Saint-Simonian leader known as Père Enfantin) when he tried to enhance the importance of manual work in order to gain a better recognition of the workers in society. She criticized Owen when he talked of the working class as the most numerous and miserable class; to Tristan the working class was the most numerous and the most **useful** class. Concerning the role of the working class, she was more progressive than the utopian socialists, who, according to Marx and Engels “see the class antagonisms . . . but the proletariat offers to them the spectacle of a class without any historical initiative or any independent movement” (515).

In her *Workers' Union*, Tristan clearly pointed out that for twenty-five years the most intelligent men had talked in favor of the working class, but that this was not sufficient. No improvement was to be seen, and therefore the workers themselves had to act. The workers had to fight for their own emancipation and struggle for their own interests; this was a question of life and death. Tristan did not support individual or independent solutions like the phalansteries (cooperative communities) of Fourier, or Owen's reforms in the mills of Scotland, or Père Enfantin's military villages in Algeria.

She criticized Enfantin sharply; she believed he was responsible for the decline of the important ideas of Saint-Simon. She detested his “discipline of the barracks,” as she called his method of organizing work. She fought for the emancipation and liberation of the working class. She believed a radical change of society to be necessary, but insisted that this change be a peaceful change; in this point we find her in accordance with the utopian socialists.

Tristan did not think of herself as an anarchist or a rebel (even if her personal life was full of rebellion against the inferior status of women). Radical change of society, Tristan felt, was only possible if the working class could reach a powerful position, because the government had no desire to improve the situation of the proletariat. In order to reach a powerful position in society, the workers needed a universal union.

Here is Tristan's summary of the objectives of the Workers' Union:

1) To organize the working class into a solid and indissoluble union. The division of workers into different groups is to be abolished, and every working man and woman will join the union. Foreign workers will also become members with equal rights. The union will collect money from each member. Thus, with many members and large capital, the union will become an important power in society.

Workers of one region will form a committee in order to find more members. Then the committees of the different regions will elect a central committee. This central committee is allowed to collect money from the members and will elect four people to propagandize for the union. In addition, a supervisory board will be created in order to control all financial transactions.

In the capitals of other European countries, corresponding committees will be found in order that all workers can become adherents of the Workers' Union. Exploitation of workers is not limited to one country; the union, therefore, should be an international union.

2) To have the working class represented by an agent who is elected and paid by the Workers' Union. Thus the whole nation would have to accept the powerful status of the working class.

Here Tristan refers to Daniel O'Connell, who fought for the interests of the Irish in the English parliament. According to Tristan, the working class was in need of a professional agent who was well paid so that he could concentrate on his duty.

3) To recognize the "right of property of arms" (that is, the capacity for manual labor as a property right). (France had twenty-five million proletarians who have no other properties than their arms).

In this context, Tristan speaks first of manual workers, and in addition all who have to live off their work, such as teachers and artists. Here Tristan is rather tricky in her argumentation. According to the constitution there is a right of property. If the arms of the proletarians are recognized as their property, the workers have the right to make use of their property. In order to make use of their property, the workers must work. Therefore the immediate consequence of the property of arms is the right of work.

4) To recognize the right of work for everyone (male and female).

5) To recognize the right of a moral, intellectual, and professional education for everyone (male and female).

Concerning education, Tristan was very much influenced by Fourier. She did not idealize the workers, but described the quarrels, brutality, and widespread alcoholism in working-class families. Although Tristan realized that the bad socioeconomic situation was the main reason for this behavior, as well as for crime, she also gave great importance to moral education.

6) To examine all possibilities for the organization of labor, for the right of workers to organize themselves. This demand is next in importance to the right of work itself.

7) To establish a workers' palace in every region, in which children should be educated, and those unable to work, the ill, and old people should be looked after.

These palaces will be built by the money of the workers, and thus be their own institutions. With a large membership, the union will have a lot of capital as well; Tristan felt, therefore, that the establishment of these palaces should not be a problem. The palaces will be a symbol of the power of the working class.

The union can also write letters to the bourgeoisie in order to collect money from them. But these letters are not to be simple appeals, because the union should point out that the bourgeoisie is only rich because of the exploitation of the workers and is the debtor of the workers. Tristan was not entirely convinced that the bourgeoisie would support the union, but in case of rejection the union would at least know who was on its side and who was not. Thus the function of these letters is primarily a political one.

8) To recognize the urgent necessity of giving a moral, intellectual, and professional education to the women of the people. Thus they can convey morality to the men of the people.

9) To recognize the principle of the legal equality of men and women as the only means to realize the union of mankind.

Tristan and women's rights

The question of women's rights was a very central one for Tristan. As we have seen, her first publication dealt with women's rights, and while traveling she always studied the situation of women. Thus she found out that everywhere women were oppressed (the only exception she saw in the emancipated women in Lima, and the *ravennas*, female traders who followed the Peruvian army). She devoted one chapter of her book to the situation of women. Tristan was very well acquainted with Fourier's ideas on women, only opposing him when he spoke of the superiority of women. For her, women were not superior persons, but they should have equal rights and should be equally treated. Tristan had also read Mary Wollstonecraft's outstanding book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which appeared in 1792. In this book Wollstonecraft demanded equal rights and in particular equal education for women.

The inferior status of women had disastrous consequences for the life of both women and men. That is why Tristan defended the free choice of a husband and the right of divorce as well, but first of all the economic independence of women.

Flora Tristan not only defended the rights of women in general; to her the emancipation of the proletarian woman was of special importance. The proletarian woman was the proletariat of the proletarian man. She was the weakest person in society because the male proletarian who had no rights could still be the oppressor of his wife. Like the proletarian man, the proletarian woman had to earn her living; in the worst case she was forced into prostitution. Therefore Tristan claimed equal rights and equal wages for women. Female work was not inferior to that of men, in certain cases women worked even faster and more efficiently than men. The capitalist, however, wanted to minimize costs, and for that reason kept the wages of women lower. Thus

the inequality between man and woman only increased the profit of the bourgeoisie. The emancipation of the proletarian woman, therefore, was an advantage for the proletarian man and would strengthen the union of male and female workers.

Despite the obligation to earn their living, women were responsible for the moral education of their children and also of their husbands. The education of women was therefore very important to Tristan, who in this respect was rather conventional.

The legacy of Flora Tristan

In the first years after her death, Tristan was still remembered among the workers. Many workers who had been in contact with her took part in the workers' movement in the following years. In October 1848, between seven and eight thousand workers attended the inauguration of Tristan's memorial in Bordeaux. But Tristan was forgotten in the years to follow. In the socialist literature, only Clara Zetkin wrote an article on Tristan in 1928 (1984).

In the period from 1910 on, the French historian Jules L. Puech dedicated nearly his whole academic life to Flora Tristan. In 1925 his doctoral dissertation on her life and work appeared, and it was Puech who collected and published the diary Tristan wrote during her travels to promote the Workers' Union. It is through Puech that Clara Zetkin got to know Tristan, but as a whole his work was not widely known in France before World War II.

Some people only know that Tristan as the grandmother of the French painter Paul Gauguin. Gauguin himself did not know much about her: "My grandmother was a queer woman, a socialist, anarchist blue stocking" (Leo 1990, 256).

The postwar feminist movement in France rediscovered Tristan. In May 1984 the first International Colloquium on Tristan took place at Dijon. The first English biography, by Charles Neilson Gattey, appeared in 1970 as *Gauguin's Astonishing Grandmother*. The first German biography, written by the GDR journalist Gerhard Leo, appeared in 1990.

The words of Clara Zetkin may serve as a fitting epitaph for this forerunner of the classic socialist theorists:

Flora Tristan has gained a position in the world proletariat, which she served not as an outlaw but as a fighter for the greatest aims of mankind. (1984, 135)

Düsseldorf, Germany

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Marx's Analysis of Capitalist Environmental Crisis

Paul Burkett

Introduction

Environmental crises involve discords in the coevolution of society and nature (Gowdy 1994). All concepts of environmental crisis are human-social constructs in the sense that they implicitly or explicitly define these discords from the standpoint of the environmental requirements of human and social development. Hence they are all based on a particular vision of human development in and through nature and society; a “crisis” occurs when this human development is subjected to “above normal” restrictions. These restrictions may be defined in terms of human health, mental and physical capabilities, and opportunities to appropriate, or to cohabitate with, natural conditions; or in terms of breakdowns in the reproduction of the social relations governing human production and development. Environmental-crisis theory normally focuses on environmental changes stemming from human interventions into nature, such changes being the most consistent source of “above normal” environmental restrictions on human development.

It is often argued that Marx's belief in capitalism's development of the productive forces prevented him from developing any such conception of environmental crisis. In this view, Marx had a faith in human technological progress that led him to disregard or downplay capitalism's destruction of natural conditions. Lewis Feuer, for example, suggests that “Marx and Engels . . .

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placed so much faith in the creative dialectic that they could not seriously entertain the hypothesis that modern technology interacting with the earth's physical environment might imbalance the whole basis of advanced industrial civilization" (1989, xii). Even the renowned Marxist scholar Michael Löwy points to "a tendency in Marx . . . to consider the development of the forces of production as the principal vector of progress, [and] to adopt a fairly uncritical attitude toward industrial civilization, particularly its destructive relationship to nature" (1997, 33). Löwy ascribes to Marx an "optimistic, promethean conception of the limitless development of the productive forces"—one which "is today indefensible . . . above all from the standpoint of the threat to the ecological balance of the planet represented by the productivist logic of capital" (34).

My analysis shows that Marx, with the help of Engels, did develop an analysis of capitalist environmental crisis. Specifically, Marx considers two kinds of environmental crisis produced by capitalism: (1) crises of capital accumulation, based on imbalances between capital's material requirements and the natural conditions of raw materials production; and (2) a more general crisis in the *quality* of human-social development, stemming from the disturbances in the circulation of matter and life forces that are generated by capitalism's industrial division of town and country. Whereas disruptions of capital accumulation due to materials shortages involve natural conditions as conditions of accumulation, Marx's broader conception of environmental crisis focuses on the degradation of natural wealth as a condition of human development. Nonetheless, the two kinds of crisis overlap insofar as they both involve reductions in the *quality and quantity* of appropriable natural wealth. In particular, capital's tendency to *accelerate material throughput* is not just a source of materials shortages and accumulation crises; it is also an integral element in the process of ecological degradation produced by the capitalist division of town and country.

Capitalism and material throughput

For Marx, accumulation of capital connotes accumulation of value as represented by money, value's general equivalent. Since

value must be represented in use value, capital also takes the form of “an immense accumulation” of vendible use values or commodities (Marx 1970, 27). Capital accumulation thus translates into a growing processing of materials serving as bearers of value. This growing material throughput accelerates with the rising productivity of labor—that is, with the growing amount of use values produced per labor hour, other things being equal. As Marx indicates, “the growing productivity of labour is expressed precisely in the proportion in which a larger quantity of raw material absorbs a definite quantity of labour, hence in the increasing amount of raw material converted in, say, one hour into products, or processed into commodities” (1967, 3:108).

The growth of machinery and of the division of labour has the consequence that in a shorter time far more can be produced. Hence the store of raw materials must grow in the same proportion. In the course of the growth of the productive capital the part of capital transformed into raw materials necessarily increases. . . . [T]he part of productive capital intended for wages becomes smaller and smaller in relation to that which acts as machinery and raw material. (Marx 1976, 431)

Capital's demand for materials is also buoyed by the need for growing materials *stocks* in order to maintain the continuity of production and accumulation. Marx develops this point as part of his analysis of “formation of supply” in chapter 6 of *Capital*, volume 2:

The material forms of existence of constant capital, the means of production, do not however consist only of instruments of labour but also of materials of labour in various stages of processing, and of auxiliary materials. With the enlargement of the scale of production and the increase in the productive power of labour through cooperation, division of labour, machinery, etc., grows the quantity of raw materials, auxiliary materials, etc., entering into the daily process of reproduction. These elements must be ready at hand in the place of production. The volume of this supply existing in the form of productive

capital increases therefore absolutely. In order that the process may keep going . . . there must always be a greater accumulation of ready raw material, etc., at the place of production than is used up, say, daily or weekly. The continuity of the process requires that the presence of its conditions should not be jeopardised by possible interruptions when making purchases daily, nor depend on whether the product is sold daily or weekly, and hence is reconvertible into its elements of production only irregularly. (1967, 2:141–42)

This inventory-demand for materials can be expected to increase during periods of shortage or uncertainty in materials supplies (see next section). Another notable aspect of the passage just quoted is Marx's distinction between "materials of labour in various stages of processing" and "auxiliary materials." Auxiliary materials are those which, while not forming part of "the principal substance of the product," are nonetheless required "as an accessory" of its production (Marx 1967, 1:181). They help provide necessary conditions of production (heat, light, chemical and other physical processes, etc.) distinct from the direct processing of principal materials by goods-producing labor and its instruments.¹ For present purposes, the crucial point is that Marx's analysis formally incorporates capital's growing demand for auxiliary materials used as energy sources, thus capturing the growing energy throughput produced by the accumulation process. As Marx observes, "after the capitalist has put a larger capital into machinery, he is compelled to spend a larger capital on the purchase of raw materials *and the fuels required to drive the machines*" (1976, 431; emphasis added).

Another source of rising material throughput under capitalism is the moral depreciation of fixed capital—that is, of machinery and buildings—by the development of newer, more productive machinery and structures or by rising labor productivity in the industries producing them (Marx 1967, 1:404–5; 3:113–14). Through such moral depreciation, "competition compels the replacement of the old instruments of labour by new ones before the expiration of their natural life" (Marx 1967, 2:170).² The threat of moral depreciation (nonrealization of values objectified

in machinery and buildings) also drives individual enterprises to accelerate the turnover of their fixed capital stocks by prolonging work-time and intensifying labor, further accelerating material and energy throughput.³

In sum, with rising productivity and technological advance there is an increase in the quantity of natural forces and objects that capital must appropriate as materials and instruments of production in order to achieve any given expansion of value and surplus value. Rising productivity means that each hour of abstract labor is now borne in a larger and larger quantity of use values and their material prerequisites. In this sense, capital accumulation involves a growing quantitative imbalance between value accumulation and accumulation as a material process dependent upon natural conditions. With “value . . . represented in a massive quantity of use values,” as Marx puts it, “there is an increase in [the] difference between the labour process and the valorisation process” (1988, 325). In relating this imbalance to capitalism’s undervaluation of natural conditions, John Bellamy Foster argues that

capitalism maximizes the throughput of raw materials and energy because the greater this flow—from extraction through the delivery of the final product to the consumer—the greater the chance of generating profits. And by selectively focusing on minimizing labor inputs, the system promotes energy-using and capital-intensive high technologies. All of this translates into faster depletion of nonrenewable resources and more wastes dumped into the environment. (1994, 123)

Foster’s analysis is consistent with Marx’s insofar as increases in material and energy throughput are required to produce additional commodities containing surplus value. Nonetheless, two amplifications are in order here.

First, from the standpoint of individual competing enterprises, it is obviously not the case that “maximizing the throughput of raw materials and energy” always results in a “greater chance of generating profits.” Although opportunities to extract surplus labor from workers, and to objectify it in vendible use values,

often entail increases in material and energy throughput, competition penalizes “above normal” throughputs by not recognizing the labor time objectified in them as socially necessary, value-creating labor. Under capitalism, “all wasteful consumption of raw material or instruments of labour,” that is, consumption in excess of the “normal” amount per commodity produced, “is strictly forbidden” in that “what is so wasted, represents labour superfluously expended, labour that does not count in the product or enter into its value” (Marx 1967, 1:196). Moreover, the normal waste, the labor objectified in which *does* enter into the value of the product, does *not* include any discarded materials or instruments that *could* have been *profitably* used in the production of other commodities:

Suppose that in spinning cotton, the waste for every 115 lbs. used amounts to 15 lbs., which is converted, not into yarn, but into “devil’s dust.” Now, although this 15 lbs. of cotton never becomes a constituent of the yarn, yet assuming this amount of waste to be normal and inevitable under average conditions of spinning, its value is just as surely transferred to the value of the yarn, as is the value of the 100 lbs. that form the substance of the yarn. . . . The same holds good for every kind of refuse resulting from a labour-process, *so far at least as such refuse cannot be further employed as a means in the production of new and independent use-values*. Such an employment of refuse may be seen in the large machine works at Manchester, where mountains of iron turnings are carted away to the foundry in the evening, in order the next morning to reappear in the workshops as solid masses of iron. (Marx 1967, 1:205; emphasis added)

In Marx’s analysis, individual enterprises have an incentive not only to avoid any above-normal waste of materials and instruments of production, since such waste represents a waste of capital, but also to reduce waste to subnormal levels in order to enjoy surplus profits at the expense of their competitors (1967, 3:194). The latter incentive encompasses the development of new and more efficient methods of profitably recycling and

reemploying the material by-products of production. In these ways, "the capitalist mode of production extends the utilisation of the excretions of production" (Marx 1967, 3:101).⁴

However, Marx's analysis also suggests that such competitive reduction, recycling, and reemployment of waste operate *within* a system of rising labor productivity in the form of mass processing of materials and energy into commodities. Under capitalist competition, "there is a motive for each individual capitalist to cheapen his commodities, by increasing the productiveness of labour" (Marx 1967, 1:317). By lowering an enterprise's private production costs per commodity produced, such productivity gains allow the enterprise to reap surplus profits and/or an increased market share at the expense of competitors. The expanding flow of normal hourly material and energy throughput that accompanies rising labor productivity does not worry the competing enterprise. True, the enterprise still feels pressure to keep throughput at or below the normal level, but this level is itself a function of the constant competitive pressure and positive profit incentive to boost output per labor hour (hourly commodity throughput).

This brings us to the second necessary amplification of Foster's (1994) analysis of capitalist throughput: the fact that capital's hunger for materials and energy is not just *quantitatively* antiecological. Capitalism's valuation of throughput according to necessary wage-labor time is a *qualitatively* antiecological representation of wealth or use value. The competitive "efficiency" of rising material and energy throughput stems from the social validation of labor productivity as if the net addition to social wealth from "normal" throughput can be measured simply by the wage-labor time it (directly or indirectly) objectifies. This measurement bypasses all the reductions in the quality of appropriable natural wealth associated with the "normal" appropriation, utilization, and disposal of materials and energy. Capitalistically "normal" throughput is determined not by the requirements of a sustainable coevolution of society and nature of any given quality, but simply and solely by the imperatives of competitive monetary accumulation. This basic tension is shown even in the capitalist recycling and "waste

management” industries that, rather than contributing to a fundamental restructuring of production in ecologically sustainable directions, have mainly served to create new vehicles of value accumulation “through fresh expenditure of energy and materials,” thus becoming “a constitutive part of the problem” (Altvater 1993, 213; cf. Gellen 1970; Fairlie 1992; Karliner 1994; Horton 1995).

Capitalism’s accelerated throughput involves a conflict between the time nature requires to produce and absorb materials and energy versus the competitively enforced dynamic of maximum monetary accumulation in any given time period by all available material means. This contradiction—nature’s time versus capital’s time—not only lessens the quality of the natural conditions of human development, but also disrupts capital accumulation itself.

Capital’s material requirements, natural conditions, and accumulation crises⁵

Marx’s analyses of materials shortages and accumulation crises are developed on two levels. The first level specifies “the general conditions of crises, in so far as they are independent of price fluctuations (whether these are linked with the credit system or not) as distinct from fluctuations of value” (Marx 1968, 515). On this level, crisis possibilities are treated in terms of “the general conditions of capitalist production,” abstracting from all changes in prices and production that involve competition within and between sectors; hence phenomena such as materials-price speculation and the competitive search for new materials supplies, not to speak of rents, are excluded. Price changes are only dealt with on this level insofar as they reflect changes in commodity values. In this context, Marx indicates:

A crisis can arise: 1. in the course of the reconversion [of money] into productive capital; 2. through changes in the value of the elements of productive capital, particularly of raw material, for example when there is a decrease in the quantity of cotton harvested. Its value will thus rise. (1968, 515; emphases in original)

Marx's point here is that a crop failure raises materials prices even insofar as these are determined by values, since each hour of agricultural labor time is now objectified in a smaller quantity of use values. Such "a rise in the price of raw material can curtail or arrest the entire process of reproduction if the price realised by the sale of the commodities should not suffice to replace all the elements of these commodities" (Marx 1967, 3:109). These price surges, and their disruption of accumulation, demonstrate capital's ongoing dependence on natural conditions:

If the price of raw material rises, it may be impossible to make it good fully out of the price of the commodities after wages are deducted. Violent price fluctuations therefore cause interruptions, great collisions, even catastrophes, in the process of reproduction. It is especially agricultural produce proper, i.e. raw materials taken from organic nature, which . . . is subject to such fluctuations of value in consequence of changing yields, etc. Due to uncontrollable natural conditions, favourable or unfavourable seasons, etc., the same quantity of labour may be represented in very different quantities of use-values, and a definite quantity of these use-values may therefore have very different prices. (Marx 1967, 3:117–18)

Materials shortages do not just disrupt accumulation by raising the value of constant capital; they also may *physically disrupt* production by "making it impossible to continue the process on the scale required by its technical basis, so that only a part of the machinery will remain in operation, or all the machinery will work for only a fraction of the usual time" (Marx 1967, 3:109). In an interesting passage in *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx analyzes the combined effects of reductions in the available quantity, and increases in the value, of materials—once again emphasizing the role of "uncontrollable natural conditions":

Since the reproduction of raw material is not dependent solely on the labour employed in it, but on the productivity of this labour which is bound up with *natural*

conditions, it is possible for the volume, the *amount* of the product of the *same* quantity of labour, to fall (as a result of bad *harvests*). The *value of the raw material therefore rises*; its *volume* decreases, in other words the *proportions* in which the money has to be reconverted into the *various component parts of capital* in order to continue production on the former scale, are upset. More must be expended on *raw material*, less remains for *labour*, and it is not possible to absorb the same quantity of labour as before. Firstly, this is *physically impossible*, because of the deficiency in raw material. *Secondly*, it is impossible because a greater *portion of the value of the product* has to be converted into raw material, thus leaving less for conversion into *variable capital*. Reproduction cannot be *repeated* on the same scale. A part of *fixed capital* stands idle and a part of the workers is thrown out on the streets. The *rate of profit* falls because the value of constant capital has risen as against that of variable capital and less variable capital is employed . . . This is therefore a *disturbance in the reproduction process* due to the increase in the value of that part of constant capital which has to be replaced out of the value of the product. (1968, 515–16; emphases in original)

Although such materials-supply disturbances involve uncontrollable natural conditions, they also implicate uncontrolled capital accumulation. This is partly a matter of anarchic competition precluding the advance planning required to minimize the disruptive effects of natural events (as will be discussed later); but there is also a fundamental imbalance between the limited natural conditions of materials production and capital's tendency toward limitless expansion. Once harnessed to the quantitatively unlimited goal of capital accumulation, the "industrial system . . . acquires an elasticity, a capacity for sudden extension by leaps and bounds that finds *no hindrance except in the supply of raw material* and in the disposal of the produce" (Marx 1967, 1:450–51; emphasis added). Marx emphasizes that the barrier to accumulation posed by limited materials supplies demonstrates the tension between capital's acceleration of production

and investment on the one hand, and the natural laws and temporal rhythms governing materials production on the other:

It is in the nature of things that vegetable and animal substances whose growth and production are subject to certain organic laws and bound up with definite natural time periods, cannot be suddenly augmented in the same degree as, for instance, machines and other fixed capital, or coal, ore, etc., whose reproduction can, provided the natural conditions do not change, be rapidly accomplished in an industrially developed country. It is therefore quite possible, and under a developed capitalist system even inevitable, that the production and increase of the portion of constant capital consisting of fixed capital, machinery, etc., should considerably outstrip the portion consisting of organic raw materials, so that demand for the latter grows more rapidly than their supply, causing their price to rise. (1967, 3:118)

A “full development” of this tension between nature’s time and capital’s must incorporate “the credit system and competition on the world market.” Marx left the bulk of this second level of analysis for the “eventual continuation” of *Capital* on which he was never able to embark (1967, 3:110). Nonetheless, “for the sake of completeness,” the modification of capitalism’s general tendency toward materials-supply disturbances by competition is “discussed in a general way” in volume 3 of *Capital*. Here, Marx points out that increases in materials prices are likely to elicit three competitive responses seemingly mitigating the disruptive effects of materials shortages. First, the “raw materials” in question can now “be shipped from greater distances, since the mounting prices suffice to cover greater freight rates”; hence there may be increased “importation from remote and previously less resorted to, or entirely ignored, production areas” (1967, 3:118–19). Second, higher prices may eventually elicit a positive supply response even from traditional suppliers, although this “increase in their production . . . will probably not, *for natural reasons*, multiply the quantity of products until the following year” (118; emphasis added). Finally, “rising prices of raw

materials naturally stimulate the utilisation of waste products” as well as “the use of various previously unused substitutes” (1967, 3:101, 118).

Marx is skeptical about the ability of these responses to ameliorate materials-supply disturbances; indeed, he argues that they are likely to worsen the instability of materials prices. By the time the “rise of prices begins to exert a marked influence on production and supply it indicates in most cases that the turning-point has been reached at which demand drops on account of the protracted rise in the price of the raw material and of all commodities of which it is an element, causing a reaction in the price of raw material” (1967, 3:118). With the “supply of raw materials” now “exceeding the demand . . . a collapse of these high prices occurs,” and this “sudden collapse of the price of raw materials checks their reproduction” (1967, 3:119). All of this leads to “convulsions . . . in various forms through depreciation of capital,” as “the sphere of production of raw materials is, by fits, first suddenly enlarged, and then again violently curtailed” (1967, 3:118, 120). Even with the fall of materials prices, however, the investments in new and old materials production areas during the preceding boom—including investments in the production of substitute materials—create a permanent broadening and deepening of the capital invested in materials production. As Marx puts it, “due to the impetus it has had, reproduction of raw material proceeds on an extended scale” (1967, 3:119). This results in intensified competition among materials producers, a competition that, in reinforcing the temporary depression of materials prices, naturally favors those “producing countries, which enjoy the most favourable conditions of production” (1967, 3:119).⁶

Competition thus tends to accentuate “the ever-recurring alternation between relative appreciation and the subsequent resulting depreciation of raw materials obtained from organic nature” (Marx 1967, 3:121). This provides an incentive for capitalists to form cartels to stabilize materials prices, either at high levels (cartels of materials *producers*) or low levels (cartels of materials *purchasers*). Marx argues that such cartels are unlikely to achieve any long-term stabilization of materials prices:

During the period in which raw materials become dear, industrial capitalists join hands and form associations to regulate production. . . . But as soon as the immediate impulse is over and the general principle of competition to “buy in the cheapest market” (instead of stimulating production in the countries of origin, as the associations attempt to do, without regard to the immediate price at which these may happen at that time to be able to supply their product)—as soon as the principle of competition again reigns supreme, the regulation of the supply is left once again to “prices.” All thought of a common, all-embracing and far-sighted control of the production of raw materials gives way once more to the faith that demand and supply will mutually regulate one another. And it must be admitted that such control is on the whole irreconcilable with the laws of capitalist production, and remains for ever a pious wish, or is limited to exceptional co-operation in times of great stress and confusion. (1967, 3:119–20)

The ephemerality of materials agreements owes much to the opportunities for individual capitalists to profit from the stockpiling of materials and from speculation on materials prices. Such practices are most common during periods of shortage, when material “elements of productive capital are . . . withdrawn from the market and only an equivalent in money is thrown on the market in their place,” the result being a further “rise in the prices of productive materials as well as means of subsistence” (Marx 1967, 2:315). Indeed, “speculation in these commodities counts on further rise in prices and the easiest way to make them rise is to temporarily withdraw a portion of the supply from the market” (1967, 3:514). These operations are fueled by an increasingly well-developed credit system, which services the growing “demand for loan capital . . . in order to pay for the purchased commodities without selling them” (1967, 3:514). Nonetheless, the demand for credit for speculative purposes may place upward pressure on the rate of interest:

Speculative stock-piling could also occur, either for the purpose of taking advantage of the most favourable

moment for production purposes, or in expectation of a future rise in prices. In this case, the demand for loan capital could grow, and the rise in the rate of interest would then be a reflection of capital investment in surplus stock-piling of elements of productive capital. . . . The higher rate of interest then reflects an artificial reduction in the supply of commodity capital. (1967, 3:514–15)

The ability of materials speculators to pay these higher interest rates without incurring large financial losses often depends on a continuation of the materials price run-up. When the downturn of prices occurs, therefore, it generates a large upward pressure on speculators' demand for money as a means of payment—a demand that the speculators, whose credit-worthiness is now in question, may only be able to satisfy by distress sales of materials inventories and paper claims thereon, thereby hastening the price deflation (Marx 1967, 3:516). In sum, the use of credit accentuates the instability of materials prices on both the upside and the downside, making it even more difficult to maintain materials cartels among competing capitalists.

Still in all, the more fundamental basis of materials supply disturbances and price fluctuations is the imbalance between industrial capital's accelerating material demands and the natural conditions of materials production. This imbalance tends to worsen as capitalism matures to the point of developing its own machine-building industries:

The greater the development of capitalist production, and, consequently, the greater the means of suddenly and permanently increasing that portion of constant capital consisting of machinery, etc., and the more rapid the accumulation (particularly in times of prosperity), so much greater the relative over-production of machinery and other fixed capital, so much more frequent the relative under-production of vegetable and animal raw materials, and so much more pronounced the previously described rise of their prices and the attendant reaction. And so much more frequent are the convulsions caused as they are by the violent price fluctuations of one of the main

elements in the process of reproduction. (Marx 1967, 3:118–19)

In Marx's view, one "moral of history" regarding capitalism's materials-supply problems "is that the capitalist system works against a rational agriculture, or that a rational agriculture is incompatible with the capitalist system" (1967, 3:121). The same moral applies to the mining industry; in both cases, a "common, all-embracing and far-sighted control of the production of raw materials" requires "the control of associated producers" (120–21). Presently, however, it is important to establish another motivation for the revolutionary transformation of production and material throughput: capitalism's tendency toward environmental crisis understood as a crisis of human development. This tendency involves the spatial organization of capitalist production.

Town and country under capitalism

Marx and Engels often analyze the environmental impacts of capitalist development in terms of the division and interaction between agricultural and nonagricultural industry and the attendant "antithesis between town and country" (Engels 1939, 323). Of course, "the separation between town and country" predates capitalism; indeed, Marx goes so far as to assert not only that it is "the foundation of every division of labour that is well developed," but that "the whole economic history of society is summed up in the movement of this antithesis" (1967, 1:352). In *The German Ideology*, we are told that the "contradiction between town and country begins with the transition from barbarism to civilisation, from tribe to state, from locality to nation, and runs through the whole history of civilisation to the present day" (Marx and Engels 1976, 72).⁷ At the same time, Marx and Engels argue that "the contrast between town and country . . . has been brought to its extreme point by present-day capitalist society," and that "far from being able to abolish this antithesis, capitalist society on the contrary is compelled to intensify it day by day" (Engels 1979, 51). It is necessary to understand the forces underpinning this compulsion in order to grasp the environmental implications of the town/country division itself.

To begin with, the genesis of capitalist production, and the creation of its home market, involve a separation of agriculture and industry via the expropriation of mainly rural producers from necessary conditions of production, especially the land (Marx 1967, vol. 1, chap. 30). In this process, activities such as “spinning and weaving become divorced from ‘domestic’ industry and agriculture,” whereupon “all those [still] engaged in agriculture become a market for spinners and weavers” (Marx 1971, 269):

Thus, hand in hand with the expropriation of the self-supporting peasants, with their separation from their means of production, goes the destruction of rural domestic industry, the process of separation between manufacture and agriculture. And only the destruction of rural domestic industry can give the internal market of a country that extension and consistence which the capitalist mode of production requires. (Marx 1967, 1:748)

The process by which “capital destroys craft and artisan labour [and] working small-landownership” culminates with the development of “Modern Industry,” which “alone, and finally, supplies, in machinery, the lasting basis of capitalistic agriculture, expropriates radically the enormous majority of the agricultural population, and completes the separation between agriculture and rural domestic industry” (Marx 1973, 512; 1967, 1:748–49). However, it remains to explain how this “setting free of a part of the agricultural population” leads to an increased *urban concentration* of industry and population (Marx 1967, 1:745). A crucial point here is that with the “thinning-out of the independent, self-supporting peasants,” the means of manufacturing production such as “spindles, looms, [and] raw material” are “now transformed from means of independent existence for the spinners and weavers, into means of commanding them and sucking out of them unpaid labour” (Marx 1967, 1:746). Insofar as supervision of free labor power requires the gathering together of large numbers of laborers under one roof, this capitalist control over means of production translates into a greater spatial concentration of workers and means of production. As Marx

indicates, “spindles and looms, formerly scattered over the face of the country, are now crowded together in a few great labour-barracks, together with the labourers and the raw material,” and this “brought about the crowding together of the industrial proletariat” (1967, 1:745–46).

There were other powerful forces compelling capital to concentrate industrial activity in increasingly large individual workplaces and urban agglomerations. For one thing, the laborers being set free from rural conditions of production were attracted by the potential job openings, and other subsistence opportunities, offered by preexisting towns. In this way, the “expropriation and expulsion of the agricultural population, intermittent but renewed again and again, supplied the town industries with a mass of proletarians entirely unconnected with the corporate guilds and unfettered by them” (Marx 1967, 1:745). Apart from this growing supply of exploitable labor power and other advantages of preexisting towns (e.g., superior access to extant financial, communications, and transport facilities), large concentrations of population created more opportunities for division of labor within and among enterprises. As indicated in *Capital*: “Just as a certain number of simultaneously employed labourers are the material pre-requisites for division of labour in manufacture, so are the number and density of the population, which here correspond to the agglomeration in one workshop, necessary conditions for the division of labour in society” (Marx 1967, 1:352). Marx develops this point in somewhat more detail in *Theories of Surplus Value*, indicating that

the proper development of the division of labour presupposes a certain density of population. The development of the division of labour in the workshop depends even more on this density of population. This latter division is, to a certain extent, a pre-condition for the former and in turn intensifies it still further. It does this by splitting formerly correlated occupations into separate and independent ones, also by differentiating and increasing the indirect preliminary work they require; and as a result of the increase in both production and the population and the freeing of

capital and labour it creates new wants and new modes of satisfying them. (1971, 269)

Marx also argues that physically larger production units tend to outcompete smaller production units, other things being equal, due to scale economies in the processing of materials and productive instruments into commodities bearing surplus value.⁸ For example, capital's "employment of forces of nature on a large scale is only possible where machinery is employed on a large scale, hence also where there is a corresponding *conglomeration* and cooperation of workers subsumed under capital" (1994, 32; emphasis in original). Similarly, in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, Engels argues that "manufacture centralises property in the hands of the few" insofar as it "requires large capital . . . to erect the colossal establishments that ruin the petty trading bourgeoisie and with which to press into its service the forces of Nature, so driving the hand-labour of the independent workman out of the market" (1973, 60). Another method by which "means of production [are] economised by concentration on a vast scale" involves "instruments of labor which, from their very nature, are only fit for use in common, such as a system of machinery" (Marx 1967, 1:623). These "conditions of social, or socially combined, labour," including buildings, "are commonly consumed in the process of production by the aggregate labourer, instead of being consumed in small fractions by a mass of labourers operating disconnectedly" (Marx 1967, 3:79).⁹

The competitive impetuses toward centralization of means of production and labor power are reinforced by, and in turn reinforce, the agglomerating effects of the division of labor among firms. Closer proximity of enterprises producing related use values may increase their ability to reap "external economies" from one another and from the grouping of production units as a social whole. In addition to potential economies from common utilization of large-scale communication and transport facilities, "the productivity of labour in one branch of industry" may serve "as a lever for cheapening and improving the means of production in another, and thereby raising the rate of profit" (Marx 1967,

3:85). Here, “the development of the productive power of labour in any *one* line of production, e.g., the production of iron, coal, machinery, in architecture, etc.,” results in “a reduction of the value, and consequently the cost, of means of production in *other* lines of industry, e.g., the textile industry, or agriculture” (1967, 3:81; emphases in original). Because of transport costs, the spatial grouping of enterprises may enable them to profit more easily from such effects. Moreover, once production is agglomerated to a certain degree at a given location, this naturally attracts an additional migration of exploitable labor power that, from the standpoint of individual enterprises, appears as virtually a public good—one imparting its own momenta to the agglomeration process (Engels 1973, 60–61).

Marx and Engels point to certain factors qualifying capitalism’s urban agglomeration of industry and population. There are, for example, physical limits to the packing of industrial activity in a given space, and these limits produce a contrary tendency toward spatial widening of facilities:

It is true that, compared with handicrafts, large-scale industry may concentrate much production in a small area. Nevertheless, a definite amount of space is always required at any given level of productivity, and the construction of tall buildings also has its practical limitations. (Marx 1967, 3:781)

Urban industrial concentrations may also erode the local natural conditions of production to the point of spurring a migration of capital to less industrialized and less urbanized zones. Engels makes this point using the example of industrial water supplies:

Though water-power was necessarily confined to the countryside, steam-power is by no means necessarily confined to the towns. It is the capitalist mode of its utilisation which concentrates it mainly in the towns and changes factory villages into factory towns. But in so doing, it at the same time undermines the conditions of its own exploitation. The first necessity for the steam engine, and a main requirement of almost all branches of production, is relatively pure water. The factory town, however,

transforms all water into stinking ditch water. However much therefore concentration in the towns is a basic condition of capitalist production, each individual capitalist is constantly striving to get away from the large towns necessarily created by it, and to move towards exploitation in the countryside. (1939, 322)

Such industrial decentralization may be further spurred on by the search for lower wage costs, especially if large latent reserves of exploitable labor power remain in rural areas and smaller villages. This motivation is strengthened insofar as urban workers are more effectively organized in trade unions (Marx and Engels 1968, 43; Engels 1973, 161). As Engels indicates, “the country . . . has the advantage that wages are usually lower than in town, and so town and country are in constant competition; and, if the advantage is on the side of the town to-day, wages sink so low in the country to-morrow, that new investments are most profitably made there” (1973, 61).

Apart from these positive centrifugal forces, there are certain general conditions *enabling* capital to decentralize. Economically speaking, “density is more or less relative,” in that a “thinly populated country, with well-developed means of communication, has a denser population than a more numerous populated country, with badly-developed means of communication” (Marx 1967, 1:352–53). The same goes for the means of transport (Marx 1967, 1:384). The development of transport and communications may support more decentralized patterns of production, both across an entire country and *within* particular urban areas. On the institutional level, a prime factor enabling decentralization is the contrast between the division of labor *within* enterprises, as determined by the capitalist and her/his managerial functionaries, and the division of labor *among* enterprises, as determined by anarchic market competition:

The division of labour in the workshop implies concentration of the means of production in the hands of one capitalist; the division of labour in society implies their dispersion among many independent producers of commodities. While within the workshop, the iron law of

proportionality subjects definite numbers of workmen to definite functions, in the society outside the workshop, chance and caprice have full play in distributing the producers and their means of production among the various branches of industry. (1967, 1:355)

The above observations suggest another potential vehicle of industrial decentralization, namely the tendency for new enterprises or “additional capitals” to be “formed in the normal course of accumulation,” as “portions of the original capitals disengage themselves and function as new independent capitals” (Marx 1967, 1:625, 628).¹⁰ This tendency partially offsets “the transformation of many small into few large capitals,” as “the increase of each functioning capital is thwarted by the formation of new and the sub-division of old capitals,” thereby qualifying the tendency toward centralization of larger quantities of labor power and means of production in individual enterprises and workplaces, other things being equal. Capital accumulation now “presents itself on the one hand as increasing concentration of the means of production, and of the command over labour; on the other, as repulsion of many individual capitals one from another” (1967, 1:625).

Marx and Engels suggest that these decentralizing tendencies are insufficient to offset the centripetal forces compelling industrial capital toward urban agglomeration. Insofar as decentralization is potentially led by newly formed enterprises, it is nipped in the bud by the growing tendency for such capitals to be “already massed together by the centralisation movement” both institutionally and spatially (Marx 1967, 1:628).¹¹ Improved means of communication and transport may make decentralization more feasible, but their own production requires large-scale industrial facilities, reinforcing the spatial concentration of labor power and means of production (1967, 1:384–85).

Most importantly, the decentralization of industrial facilities itself serves to promote new growth centers of capital accumulation, hence new urban agglomerations. As Engels puts it, “every new factory built in the country bears in it the germ of a manufacturing town,” and “modern capitalist industry is constantly bringing new large towns into being by constantly fleeing from

the towns into the country” (1973, 61; 1939, 322). As a result, “the centralising tendency of manufacture continues in full force,” but now on an extended basis (Engels 1973, 61). Stated differently, the agglomeration of industry is not impeded, but rather broadened, by capitalist decentralization. Improvements in communications and transport thus translate into increased economic density not only in the monetary sense, but also in the sense of increasingly dense social interchanges (and environmental throughputs) of matter and energy over *extended* industrial zones.¹²

The profitability of capitalism’s industrial agglomerations reveals the antiecological characteristics of value and capital. In these areas, competing enterprises freely appropriate the productive potentials of their natural and social environment as means of exploiting labor power. In doing so, they ignore the combined impacts of growing industrial throughput and materially dense industry and population on the distinct ecological networks and biospheric connections constituting the ultimate natural basis of human development. Marx and Engels’s analysis of the town/country antithesis addresses these impacts through its treatment of the interchanges between agriculture and manufacturing industry under capitalism.

Capitalism and the natural conditions of human development

Capitalism’s spatial and technological transformation of production vitiates the quality of natural wealth as a condition of human development. The agglomeration of industry and population in urban areas, and the industrialization of agriculture based on the reduced self-sufficiency and depopulation of rural economy, produce a social circulation of matter that is environmentally unsustainable and directly hazardous to human health. This environmental critique of capitalist production is a recurring theme in the writings of Marx and Engels.

Industrial-capitalist cities generate two types of rising material and energy throughput. As noted earlier, the growing productivity of industrial labor translates into rising “normal” levels of material and energy throughput required for the profitable production and sale of commodities. This throughput is

accelerated insofar as industrial labor productivity is itself boosted by agglomeration. The adverse effects of “normal” industrial waste on the health of the urban population are chronicled in detail by Engels in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (1973). In addition, however, a good share of urban throughput takes the form of “excretions of consumption . . . produced by the natural exchange of matter in the human body and partly [as] objects that remain after their consumption” (Marx 1967, 3:101). The impact of these excretions on urban health, especially in working-class districts lacking adequate housing and sanitation facilities, is described not only in Engels’s classic early work but also in volume 1 of *Capital*, especially in Marx’s case studies of “The Badly Paid Strata of the British Industrial Class” and “The Nomad Population” illustrating the “accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital” (1967, 1:645, 654–67).¹³

Quite often, Marx and Engels analyze the urban-health effects of consumption excretions as part of their broader critique of the circulation of matter produced by capitalism’s division of agriculture and urban industry. They argue that the problem of urban waste grows in step with the declining fertility of the soil, as urban industrial agglomerations disrupt the previous recycling of materials through the land itself:

Capitalist production, by collecting the population in great centres, and causing an ever-increasing preponderance of town population, . . . disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil. By this action it destroys the health of the town labourer and the intellectual life of the rural labourer. (Marx 1967, 1:505)

Marx’s analysis of how capitalism “upset[s] the naturally grown conditions for the maintenance of [the] circulation of matter” clearly encompasses both agricultural and urban-industrial areas (1967, 1:505–6). The connection between urban-industrial concentration and declining soil fertility is reiterated, for example, in volume 3 of *Capital*, where Marx suggests that

large landed property reduces the agricultural population to a constantly falling minimum, and confronts it with a constantly growing industrial population crowded together in large cities. It thereby creates conditions which cause an irreparable break in the coherence of social interchange prescribed by the natural laws of life. As a result, the vitality of the soil is squandered. (1967, 3:813)

In the same volume, Marx laments over the large-scale waste of potential agricultural raw materials associated with this “break” with “the natural laws of life”—specifically the failure to recycle “excrements of consumption”:

Excrements of consumption are the natural waste matter discharged by the human body, remains of clothing in the form of rags, etc. Excretions of consumption are of the greatest importance for agriculture. So far as their utilisation is concerned, there is an enormous waste of them in the capitalist economy. In London, for instance, they find no better use for the excretion of four and a half million human beings than to contaminate the Thames with it at heavy expense. (1967, 3:101)¹⁴

Capitalism’s contrast of industrial town and agricultural country creates a circulation of matter that corrodes the quality of natural conditions not only for agricultural production but for human development more generally. It does so by violating the “demand,” as formulated by the great agricultural chemist, Justus Liebig, “that man shall give back to the land what he receives from it” (Engels 1979, 92).¹⁵ It is not just the “existence of the towns, and in particular the big towns,” however, which precludes capitalism from fulfilling Liebig’s demand (Engels 1979, 92). Capitalism’s industrialized agriculture itself despoils the natural wealth of the land, over and above the effects of urban-industrial waste and the failure to recycle excretions of urban consumption. Although agricultural labor productivity is increased by the technology provided by urban industry, the shaping of this technology and its use by the competitive pursuit of profit directly contradicts environmentally sound and sustainable farming practices. Hence, “in capitalist agriculture . . . all

progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility” (Marx 1967, 1:506). In Marx’s view,

the dependence of the cultivation of particular agricultural products upon the fluctuations of market-prices, and the continual changes in this cultivation with these price fluctuations—the whole spirit of capitalist production, which is directed toward the immediate gain of money—are in contradiction to agriculture, which has to minister to the entire range of permanent necessities of life required by the chain of successive generations. (1967, 3:617)¹⁶

Capital’s industrial vitiation of farmlands develops along with its intensified exploitation of agricultural labor power that, given the ruining of nonagricultural rural industries, is itself employed largely on a seasonal basis. “In modern agriculture, as in the urban industries, the increased productiveness of and quantity of the labour set in motion are bought at the cost of laying waste and consuming by disease labour-power itself” (Marx 1967, 1:506). In short, “all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art . . . of robbing the labourer” and “of robbing the soil” (1967, 1:506).¹⁷ The joint impacts of capitalist agriculture and urban industry on the life forces of labor power and its natural conditions are brilliantly summarized in volume 3 of *Capital*:

Large-scale industry and large-scale mechanised agriculture work together. If originally distinguished by the fact that the former lays waste and destroys principally labour-power, hence the natural force of human beings, whereas the latter more directly exhausts the natural vitality of the soil, they join hands in the further course of development in that the industrial system in the country-side also enervates the labourers, and industry and commerce on their part supply agriculture with the means for exhausting the soil. (Marx 1967, 3:813)

In sum, Marx’s analysis of capitalist environmental crisis encompasses more than the environmental effects of agriculture and urban industry considered separately. It covers the entire

process by which capitalism “develops technology, and the combining together of various processes *into a social whole*” (Marx 1967, 1:506–7; emphasis added). Capitalism “concentrates the historical motive power of society” in urban areas, thereby creating wasteful and ecologically disruptive concentrations of material throughput; but in doing so, it also “completely tears asunder the old bond of union which held together agriculture and manufacture in their infancy” while harnessing agriculture to the quantitatively unlimited goal of monetary accumulation—a goal pursued using the class-exploitative and antiecological factory-farm technologies provided by urban industry (Marx 1967, 1:505). By this total process, capital winds up “sapping the original sources of all wealth, the soil and the labourer” (1967, 1:507).

Some extensions of Marx’s analysis

Marx’s conception of capitalist environmental crisis implicates the total spatial and technological organization of capitalist economy. As such, it is the culmination of Marx’s entire analysis of capital accumulation in agriculture and urban industry. Marx’s analysis is open to an incorporation of three additional issues that must be confronted in any realistic perspective on environmental crisis: (1) the use of nonbiodegradable synthetics in production and consumption; (2) the global scope of environmental crisis; and (3) the effects of rising energy throughput from human production, given the second law of thermodynamics.

Marx could not have been aware of capitalism’s increasingly large-scale development, and disposal into the environment, of synthetic materials not easily absorbed by preexisting ecological processes. For one thing, such synthetics developed primarily after World War II, while Marx optimistically projected that the transition to an environmentally sustainable communist system of production would occur well before capitalism reached its full potential for wreaking ecological havoc (Foster 1997, 287). Yet synthetic commodities and throughput do fit into Marx’s analysis of capital’s powerful tendency to divide and simplify labor and its materials in general disregard of the ecological interconnections required for the reproduction of natural wealth of any given

quality (see Burkett 1996). Synthetic commodities, including plastic containers and other nonbiodegradable packaging, are also symptomatic of capital's fundamental indifference to the kinds of use values in which value is objectified as long as the commodities produced are vendible. As Marx indicates, "the nature of the use value, the particular use value of the commodity is, as such, irrelevant to capital," since the commodity "is produced only as a conveyor of value, and its use value only as condition to that end" (1973, 284, 694).

In short, capitalism's wasteful and unhealthy circulation of synthetic *and* organic matter within and between town and country clearly manifests the antiecological characteristics of value and capital as revealed by Marx's analysis. Together, capitalism's urban-industrial concentrations and industrialized agriculture have generated artificial material throughputs and land-use patterns inconsistent with natural species diversities (both animate and inanimate), thereby "sapping" the variety and resilience of natural wealth (Vitousek et al. 1997, 498).

To what extent does Marx's perspective encompass the biospheric sweep of these ecological disruptions? Although Marx and Engels are often somewhat ambiguous about the exact spatial scope of their analyses of town and country, including the interactions of agriculture and urban industry, it seems clear that the basic dynamics are meant to apply not only within individual regions and countries but also on a global scale. As initial evidence, one can point to Marx's analysis of the expanding sphere of capitalist production of raw materials. We have seen how cyclical materials shortages and price rises stimulate the development of new agricultural (and mining) regions.¹⁸ The spatial extension of materials production and exchange is also a natural outgrowth of the world market, the international division of labor, and the overall expansion of industrial production under the spur of competitive monetary accumulation. This general process is outlined in the *Manifesto*:

All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that

no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones. (Marx and Engels 1968, 39)

Rosa Luxemburg colorfully describes materials globalization in her classic work, *The Accumulation of Capital*:

In general, capitalist production has hitherto been confined mainly to the countries in the temperate zone, whilst it made comparatively little progress in the East, for instance, and the South. Thus, if it were dependent exclusively on elements of production obtainable within such narrow limits, its present level and indeed its development in general would have been impossible. From the very beginning, the forms and laws of capitalist production aim to comprise the entire globe as a store of productive forces. Capital, impelled to appropriate productive forces for purposes of exploitation, ransacks the whole world, it procures its means of production from all corners of the earth, seizing them, if necessary by force, from all levels of civilisation and from all forms of society. . . . It becomes necessary for capital progressively to dispose ever more fully of the whole globe, to acquire an unlimited choice of means of production, with regard to both quality and quantity, so as to find productive employment for the surplus value it has realised. (1964, 358)

This passage reveals the systemic roots of the dark “ecological shadows” cast over primary-materials producing nations and regions by industrialized nations and regions (Dauvergne 1997). Note that, in emphasizing the outward expansion of materials demand from a relatively industrialized “temperate zone” to a less industrialized “East and South,” Luxemburg comes close to recognizing the town/country antithesis on a world scale. This is not surprising, considering that Marx had previously outlined a global town/country analysis in volume 1 of *Capital*:

On the one hand, the immediate effect of machinery is to increase the supply of raw material in the same way, for example, as the cotton gin augmented the production of

cotton. On the other hand, the cheapness of the articles produced by machinery, and the improved means of transport and communication furnish the weapons for conquering foreign markets. By ruining handicraft production in other countries, machinery forcibly converts them into fields for the supply of its raw material. . . . By constantly making a part of the hands “supernumerary,” modern industry, in all countries where it has taken root, gives a spur to emigration and to the colonisation of foreign lands, which are thereby converted into settlements for growing the raw material of the mother country. . . . A new and international division of labour, a division suited to the requirements of the chief centres of modern industry springs up, and converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field. This revolution hangs together with radical changes in agriculture. (1967, 1:451)

The basic elements of the town/country antithesis are all present in this passage, but now on a world scale. This provides a framework within which one can treat the ecological and even biospheric disruptions produced by capitalism’s global circulation of matter—including disturbances from the importation of nonindigenous species into distinct ecological zones (Vitousek et al. 1997, 498).

The global scope of capitalism’s town/country antithesis seems a proper note on which to turn to the final issue to be considered: whether Marx’s framework is capable of incorporating the biospheric effects of rising energy throughput. Here, Marx’s analysis of capital’s growing material throughput explicitly incorporates the processing of fuels and other accessory materials. When combined with Marx’s recognition of the limitlessness of monetary accumulation as the goal of production, this analysis helps us understand capitalism’s tendency to convert increasing amounts of energy into less organized, more entropic forms in disregard of the earth’s limited supply of nonrenewable energy resources and limited capacity to absorb entropy without serious climactic and biospheric dislocations (Altvater 1993).

The often incisive ecological economist Juan Martínez-Alier has recently questioned whether Marx's critique of political economy provides any meaningful insight into capitalism's unsustainable processing of energy resources—his main evidence being what he terms “Engels's own negative reaction to Sergei Podolinsky's attempt in 1880 to introduce human ecological energetics into Marxist economics” (1995, 71). Yet when one looks into the relevant Engels-Marx correspondence, a more nuanced picture emerges. Engels observes, for example, that “the working individual is not only a stabiliser of *present* but also, and to a far greater extent, a squanderer of *past*, solar heat” in the form of nonrenewable energy sources as well as forests. He goes on to lament “what we have done in the way of squandering our reserves of energy, our coal, ore, forests, etc. . . . accumulated from the past” (Engels 1992, 411; emphases added). Is this simply a “negative reaction”?

Engels's recognition of the second law of thermodynamics is less important than the *methodological content* of his comments on Podolinsky. What bothers Engels is not the introduction of ecological energetics into Marx's analysis of capitalism, but rather Podolinsky's attempt to “express economic conditions in terms of physical measures” pure and simple—an effort which, given the social-relational character of all economic phenomena, is “a sheer impossibility”. Engels's complaint is that “Podolinski went astray . . . because he sought to find in the field of natural science fresh evidence of the rightness of socialism” without applying “his very valuable discovery” in the context of an analysis of capitalism's specific social forms of material production. This is the sense in which Podolinsky “has confused the physical with the economic” (Engels 1992, 411–12). Viewed in this light, Martínez-Alier's characterization of Engels's comments as “negative” is terse to the point of distortion.

The key question here is whether Marx's critique of political economy denies all natural limits to capitalist production, even historically specific ones. Marx's analyses of materials-supply disturbances, and of the town/country antithesis with its despoliation of the natural conditions of human development, clearly recognize the limited character of the natural wealth appropriated

by capital. At the same time, Marx avoids the false ascription of environmental crises to ahistorical “natural laws.” For Marx, capitalist environmental crises are not rooted in nature as such, but in the contradiction between the natural basis of human-social development on the one hand, and production driven by class-exploitative and competitive profit-making on the other.

Department of Economics
Indiana State University, Terre Haute

NOTES

1. Marx's analyses of the growing demand for materials accompanying the growth of labor productivity rarely fail to make this distinction. When treating the rising technical composition of capital in chapter 25 of *Capital*, volume 1, for example, Marx notes that “with the division of labour in manufacture, and with the use of machinery, more raw material is worked up in the same time, and, therefore, a greater mass of raw material *and auxiliary substances* enter into the labour-process” (1967, 1:622; emphasis added). Similarly, in volume 3's analysis of materials price fluctuations, Marx states that “raw materials here include auxiliary materials as well, such as indigo, coal, gas, etc.,” then adds: “Even in industries which consume no actual raw materials, these enter the picture as auxiliary materials” (1967, 3:106).

2. Marx's reference to the “natural life” of labor's instruments is not a casual one. The “destructive influence of natural forces” on machines and other means of production is discussed not only in Marx's initial analysis of the labor process in chapter 7, volume 1 of *Capital* (1967, 1:183), but also—and in detail—in chapter 8, section 2 of volume 2, where Marx carefully distinguishes between “wear and tear [as] a result of use” versus “wear and tear . . . caused by the action of natural forces” (1967, 2:170). The latter distinction is, in fact, introduced in volume 1: “The material wear and tear of a machine is of two kinds. The one arises from use, as coins wear away by circulating, the other from non-use, as a sword rusts when left in its scabbard. The latter kind is due to the elements. The former is more or less directly proportional, the latter to a certain extent inversely proportional, to the use of the machine” (1967, 1:404).

3. “The shorter the period taken to reproduce [a machine's] total value, the less is the danger of moral depreciation; and the longer the working-day, the shorter is that period. When machinery is first introduced into an industry, new methods of reproducing it more cheaply follow blow upon blow, and so do improvements, that not only affect individual parts and details of the machine, but its entire build. It is, therefore, in the early days of the life of machinery that this special incentive to the prolongation of the working-day makes itself felt most acutely” (Marx 1967, 1:404–5). Volume 3 of *Capital* also describes capitalists' resort to “flagrant prolongation of the working-time” and “alternating

day and night-shifts, so that the value of the machinery may be reproduced in a shorter time without having to place the figures for wear and tear too high” (Marx 1967, 3:113).

4. “The general requirements for the reemployment of these excretions are: large quantities of such waste, such as are available only in large-scale production; improved machinery whereby materials, formerly useless in their prevailing form, are put into a state fit for new production; scientific progress, particularly of chemistry, which reveals the useful properties of such waste. . . . The so-called waste plays an important role in almost every industry” (Marx 1967, 3:101).

5. See Perelman 1987 for further documentation and analysis of the issues treated in this section, especially concerning the connections between materials shortages and financial crises.

6. The contemporary relevance of this analysis must be acknowledged by anyone familiar with the recent history of the global oil industry, including the boom and bust of non-OPEC oil-producing regions in the Third World and even in the United States. See also Joyce Kolko’s brilliant survey of the “intensification of the traditional supply-shortage cycles” in global materials production after the late 1960s (1988, chap. 9). A full application of Marx’s materials-supply analysis to contemporary conditions must, however, incorporate rents and struggles over their distribution; see the case studies of the oil sector by Massarrat 1980 and Bina 1989.

7. In *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx suggests that “the accumulation of capital in the towns during the Middle Ages . . . was principally due to the exploitation of the country (by trade as well as by manufacture)” (1968, 232). He goes on to argue that “the urban labour of the Middle Ages already constitutes a great advance and serves as a preparatory school for the capitalist mode of production, as regards the continuity and steadiness of labour” (1971, 434).

8. “The battle of competition is fought by cheapening of commodities. The cheapness of commodities depends, *ceteris paribus*, on the productiveness of labour, and this again on the scale of production. Therefore, the larger capitals beat the smaller” (Marx 1967, 1:626).

9. As Marx observes, “the concentration of labourers, and their large-scale cooperation, saves constant capital. The same buildings, and heating and lighting appliances, etc., cost relatively less for the large-scale than for small-scale production. The same is true of power and working machinery. Although their absolute value increases, it falls in comparison to the increasing extension of production and the magnitude of the variable capital, or the quantity of labour-power set in motion” (1967, 3:82).

10. Such capital spin-offs are often connected with “the division of property within capitalist families” and/or with “the exploitation of new inventions and discoveries, and industrial improvements in general” (Marx 1967, 1:625, 628).

11. The routinization of inventions and innovations within large-scale firms also reduces the relative importance of new, smaller-scale firms in the organization of production, spatial and otherwise (Sweezy 1943).

12. "If it were possible for this mad rush of manufacture to go on at this rate for another century, every manufacturing district of England would be one great manufacturing town, and Manchester and Liverpool would meet at Warrington or Newton" (Engels 1973, 61).

13. See Waitzkin 1983 for a survey of subsequent work in this area as well as an updated analysis of the "illness generating social conditions" produced by capitalism in urban areas.

14. Similarly, in *The Housing Question*, Engels exclaims: "When one observes how here in London alone a greater quantity of manure than is produced by the whole kingdom of Saxony is poured away every day into the sea with an expenditure of enormous sums, and what colossal structures are necessary in order to prevent this manure from poisoning the whole of London, then the utopia of abolishing the distinction between town and country is given a remarkably practical basis. And even comparatively unimportant Berlin has been suffocating in the malodours of its own filth for at least thirty years" (1979, 92).

15. See Mayumi 1991, Baksi 1996, and Foster 1997 for the significant influence of Liebig's work on Marx and Engels.

16. A particularly unhealthy circulation of matter produced by modern capitalist agriculture involves the separation of livestock raising from farming and the agglomeration of the former in mass feedlots for cattle and hogs. Rather than being used to fertilize agricultural land, the resulting concentrations of animal waste are already creating ecological havoc in various parts of the continental United States as well as the Gulf of Mexico. Indeed, it has been estimated that "a single 50,000-acre hog farm being built in Utah could potentially put out more waste than the city of Los Angeles" (*Terre Haute Tribune-Star*, 29 December 1997, A3).

17. The intensively exploitative and immiserizing character of agricultural wage labor, along with its seasonality, helps explain agricultural capital's heavy reliance on migrant workers and/or various forms of forced labor (Marx 1967, 1:693–96).

18. The following comment by Rosa Luxemburg is also of interest in this connection: "The process of accumulation, elastic and spasmodic as it is, requires inevitably free access to ever new areas of raw materials in case of need, both when imports from old sources fail or when social demand suddenly increases" (1964, 358).

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C. L. R. James, Blackness, and the Making of a Neo-Marxist Diasporan Historiography

Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua

The writers and organizers of the study of Negro history have reached a critical stage in their work. They have accumulated an imposing body of facts which demonstrate the active participation of Negroes in the making of American history and, in particular, in the creation of American liberal and revolutionary tradition. . . . But what next? Merely go on accumulating facts? . . . Historical facts, as facts, can do so much and no more. They have to be organized in the light of a philosophy of history. To be quite precise, they have to be consciously organized in the light of a correct philosophy of history.

—C. L. R. James, “Key Problems in the Study of Negro History” (1996)

In 1950, C. L. R. James challenged African American historians to transcend empiricism and apply the theories and methods of historical materialism to the black experience. Nearly fifty years later, not only has James’s call gone unheeded, but his efforts to produce such a history himself have been largely ignored. James wrote historical works on the Third International, diasporan resistance, the Haitian and the Ghanaian revolutions, the slave trade, and African American history, and he also wrote numerous essays on Marxist historiography (1980b, 49).¹

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Ironically, although he is best known for *The Black Jacobins* (1963, which was first published in 1938, James was not an academic historian. He was a revolutionary intellectual whose explorations in diasporan history remapped the conceptual landscape of historical studies of people of African descent. In his reconceptualization of African diasporan history, James utilized a historical-materialist approach that emphasized the interaction between social structures and human agency. His contention in *The Black Jacobins* that black revolutionary activity was the central social force necessitating slavery's demise, for example, refuted both liberal moralist and economic-determinist interpretations. Moreover, *A History of Negro Revolt* (1995), first published in 1938, was the first historical study to emphasize African resistance to imperialist encroachment.² In it James surveys new terrain by articulating an approach to resistance that was multifaceted and incorporated oppositional cultural practices into his developing theory of black self-emancipation. By the 1970s, James's insights into the "African initiative" framed the critical lens through which historians examined African resistance movements. Yet despite his theoretical innovations and the critical acclaim accorded *The Black Jacobins*, historians are only beginning to assess James's historical scholarship critically. Furthermore, the evaluations have concentrated on *The Black Jacobins* (Rodney 1986; Dupuy 1995); no one has yet explored James's historical corpus or his philosophy of history.

C. L. R. James was one of the most significant political theorists and activists, and arguably the most important black Marxist theoretician, of the twentieth century. James's life provides a window through which to see the complicated interactions between race and class consciousness in the making of a radical black intellectual. Specifically, I undertake here to examine James's transformation into a race-conscious neo-Marxist historian and his construction of the theory of black self-emancipation. My task is threefold: (1) to trace his development of a racial identity; (2) to examine his application of historical-materialist methodology to diasporan history; and (3) to explicate the relationship between his historical studies and the theory of black self-emancipation.

Exploration of James's transformation into a black neo-Marxist historian entails examining the role racial consciousness played in his intellectual and political development. My understanding of race consciousness derives from Marcia L. Hall and Walter R. Allen. They define it as an agglomeration of political attitudes expressing an individual's relationship with or feelings toward his or her racial group, an awareness of that race's socio-economic position, and a tendency to act on that knowledge (Hall and Allen 1989). My discussion of James's evolving racial consciousness involves two aspects: the first sketches James's transformation from a "British intellectual" into a black West Indian scholar-activist; the second excavates the role of "race" in James's materialist analysis of diasporan history. I contend that the transformation of his racial identity established the context for his rapid evolution into a neo-Marxist historian of the African diaspora. I posit that James transformed himself through historical study, praxis, and reflection.

Marxist philosopher Gerald A. Cohen argues that identity "has historically been found in identification with others in a shared culture based on nationality, or race, or religion." Marxists had traditionally "neglected the need for self-identity," Cohen contends. He claims the need for identity was as deep-rooted as class and required an innovative explanation beyond the usual Marxist interpretation (1989, 155–57). Cohen's observations advance Marxist theory by identifying a gap in its conceptual framework, but he leaves the problematic of racial identity underdeveloped. For instance, he does not pursue the problems colonialism and racial oppression pose for the dominated in constructing an autonomous identity.

Frantz Fanon and William E. Cross Jr. have addressed the problematic of self-identity and racial consciousness among the oppressed. Fanon developed his theories about racial and national identity formation during the Algerian war. Fanon adumbrates them in *Black Skins, White Masks* (1991 [1952]), *A Dying Colonialism* (1993 [1959]), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968 [1961]). Since the 1970s, Cross has systematized and elaborated Fanon's insights into an empirically tested model of black identity development (1971, 1991). My analysis

employs the Cross model to trace James's renegotiation of his racial identity.

Cross's concept *Nigrescence*, or the process of becoming black, delineates the paths black individuals traverse as they struggle to develop a positive racial identity in a racist society. His model consists of five stages characterized by increasing awareness of racism and racial salience. His collaborator Janet E. Helms views the stages of black identity development as "mutually interactive dynamic processes by which a person's behavior can be explained rather than static categories into which a person is assigned" (1995).³ The first status, *pre-encounter*, represents an identity shaped by Eurocentric values. A minority of individuals in this status have internalized white supremacist ideologies and antiblack attitudes. Most pre-encounter individuals do not exhibit the negative personality traits associated with self-hatred, but approach race and racism through a largely color-blind perspective. *Encounter*, the second status, identifies a series of critical incidents that convince the individual of the need for transformation.

Cross's third status, *immersion-emersion*, depicts two tumultuous moments. The first involves an immersion into black history and culture and a distancing from and/or denigration of "white" cultural beliefs and practices. The second part involves an emersion away from racial essentialism. In *internalization*, Cross's fourth status, race and blackness, are accorded high salience. Nevertheless, racial consciousness is not necessarily hegemonic at this moment in a person's life history. Whether nationalistic or Afrocentric perspectives are dominant depends on the person's overall ideology. Consequently, class and gender-based worldviews and multicultural perspectives can coexist with a new sense of racial salience. Unlike the *immersion* phase, however, antiwhite attitudes and practices are not prevalent. In the final status, *internalization-commitment*, an individual manifests many of the same psychological attitudes toward blackness/whiteness held during the fourth stage, but now has become involved in black cultural affairs and/or active in the black-liberation movement (Cross 1971; Cross 1991, 147; Cross, Parham, and Helms 1991; Cross 1995; Fanon 1968; Helms 1995).

Cross conceives of Nigrescence as a psychological defense mechanism that helps protect black individuals from the psychological assaults of white racist ideologies. Embedded in the theory of Nigrescence is an understanding that racial consciousness consists of *racial identification*, *system blame*, and an *action orientation* (Hall and Allen 1989). The process of black identity formation is fueled by increasing knowledge of racial oppression through experience and study. The Cross model is not a static-stage theory, but is conceptualized as a spiral that can accommodate *recycling back* through one or more statuses throughout an individual's life cycle (Cross 1991, 147; Cross, Parham, and Helms 1991, 331–33; Cross 1995, 118).

The second task also has two aspects: (1) explicating the variant of historical materialism articulated by James; and (2) tracing James's evolving "race conscious" perspective through textual analyses of his historical studies. I argue that James developed a materialist conception of diasporan history that located black agency at the core of social change. James constructed the theory of black self-emancipation in three historical moments: 1932–1946; 1947–1957, and 1958–1989.

Third, the ideas and formulations that James crystallized into the theory of black self-emancipation were constructed *primarily* from his application of historical materialism to the experiences of black people in *The Black Jacobins* and *A History of Negro Revolt*. In his political and philosophical works of the late 1940s, James harvested the seeds sown in his 1930s histories into the fully articulated theory of black agency (1963; 1977a; 1977b; 1977c; Cleaver 1979, 11).

The making of a black neo-Marxist historian

James is noted as an expert on the "race question." He articulated his basic principle on the race-class dialectic in an often-quoted passage from *The Black Jacobins*:

The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental [is] an error only less grave than to make it fundamental. (1963, 283)

The logic of James's argument suggests he believed race supplemented class; that is, he believed its inclusion overcomes deficiencies embedded in the class paradigm. Yet for the first thirty-two years of his life, C. L. R. James was unlikely to advocate the centrality of race.

Born into a middle-class black family in Trinidad in 1901, James was socialized into Victorian values. The young James immersed himself in European cultures and came to possess a Eurocentric worldview. Although born and raised in the Caribbean, "intellectually [he] lived abroad, chiefly in England" (James 1993b, 65). Several scholars have remarked on James's unusual estrangement from blackness. Historian John La Guerre considered James's degree of racial alienation "rare for a Negro intellectual of his time" (1982, 84; see also Carby 1988, 40; James 1963, 6, 24, 39; James 1993b; Martin 1972; Robinson 1983, 359–64; Worcester 1996, 3–26).

What in James's experiences enabled him to transform himself so he could articulate a radical revisioning of the relationship between race and class? A childhood friend, Richard Small, identified cricket, literature, and history as the sources of James's intellectual training and conversion to Marxism (1986). James scholars have treated history as a distinct third, behind cricket and literature, in his overall intellectual development (Carby 1988, 40–41; Farrad 1996; Hamilton 1992, 429–43; Hill 1986; Pyne-Timothy 1996). They may be right, but cricket and literature acculturated James within a bourgeois Eurocentric paradigm, whereas history gave him the intellectual tools to remake himself into a black Marxist activist-intellectual. To understand how historical study facilitated this process, we must examine critical incidents in his racial-identity formation (1993b, 124).

As an adolescent, James displayed many symptoms associated with pre-encounter status. He described himself variously as an "English puritan" or a "Black European." As a "scholarship boy" at the elite Queens Royal College, he was (mis)educated to embrace a Eurocentric worldview. By the time James graduated he was as familiar with the French and Greek classics as he was with English literature. James states about his adolescence, "I was already an alien in my own environment, among my own

people” (James 1993b, 6). His adoption of a European cultural-historical perspective blunted his sensitivity to racism. James remembered the college as a “little Eden” in which he and his schoolmates were “never troubled” by the snakes of racial oppression (1993b, 39). James’s racial alienation was not simply the consequence of his tutelage in bourgeois respectability at home or his Eurocentric formal education. Through his passions for English literature and cricket, James actively facilitated his own deracination and assimilation (Hall 1996, 16, 21).

Cricket initially suppressed James’s rebellious tendencies and helped confine him within the boundaries of the “culture of civility.” Yet his racial ambiguity produced tensions that tore at the young James’s psyche. In his autobiography he recalls:

Two people lived in me; one the rebel against all family and school discipline and order; the other a puritan who would have cut off a finger sooner than do anything contrary to the ethics of the game. (1993b, 6, 28–39)

In early twentieth-century Trinidad, cricket was more than a game and more than a metaphor for colonialism; it was a field upon which racialclass and intraracial class struggles were played out. Consequently, it is not surprising that his identity and ideological crises intensified as he pondered which cricket club to join. Unusual for a “dark” black man, James could choose between Maple, the representative of the “brown” middle class, and Shannon, the personification of the darker lower strata and classes. His selection of Maple over Shannon underscored his color alienation and bourgeois values. James’s choice was not idiosyncratic, but the consequence of his Eurocentric bourgeois education (James 1993b, 71–72, 164; Farred 1994; Farred 1996; Kingwell 1996; Small 1986; Surin 1992, 134–36).⁴

James made a similar decision when he attempted to join the Merchants and Planters Regiment at the start of World War I. The outcome of this attempt was in the hands of white elites rather than Trinidad’s “brown” middle class. So whereas he was permitted to cross the color line to play for the Maple Cricket Club, he was summarily prevented from crossing the race line to join the Merchants and Planters Regiment. James’s response provides a startling example of the low salience he attached to

race. "It didn't hurt for long," he wrote, "because for so many years these crude intrusions from the world which surrounded us had been excluded. I had not even been wounded, for there was no scar left" (1993b, 70–71). His *interpretation* of his experience at Queens Royal College allowed him to encode his rejection as an aberration, and he shrugged off this incident of racial indignity.

Such blatant acts failed to generate a psychological eruption in James, yet strangely an argument in 1923 with his friend Learie Constantine, the great cricketer, roused his racial consciousness. According to James, he was describing black West Indian infractions of the "code" when Constantine challenged his observations. Exposing the racial inferiority complex at the root of James's analysis, Constantine declared "They are no better than we!" (1993b, 116). This episode constituted an encounter in Nigrescence terminology. An encounter, according to Cross, consists of two steps: first, the status one person must be personally affected by an event; second, after one's color-blind or antiblack attitude has been pierced, the individual must begin to rethink his or her racial beliefs. James had experienced other racial episodes, but, because he personalized this incident it aroused sufficiently high levels of cognitive dissonance to launch him on a journey toward racial identity resocialization (Cross, Parham, and Helms 1991, 324; Cross 1995, 104–6).

From 1923 to 1931, James immersed himself in West Indian and African history. He also dived into the dusky river of popular culture. James began exploring the culture his parents and their middle-class friends had rejected. He visited working-class venues where calypso was performed and listened to African American jazz. James first expressed his new sensibility in fiction. He was part of a generation of diasporan writers who attempted to construct "authentic" black literatures out of Creole folk cultures during the 1920s. These literary/cultural movements were known variously as Negritude, Negrismo, and new Negroism. Participants included poets and novelists such as Aimé Césaire, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Nicolas Guillen, and Jacques Roumain. James's literary efforts are noteworthy for their attempt to reconceptualize the relationship between the colonial intellectual and the masses of

exploited peasants and workers. Buhle considered this period as James's "'conversion' experience of awakening to Black self-hood" (1994, 159). Although the images presented in his fiction contrasted sharply with his previous views, his transformation was incomplete (Buhle 1994, 159–60; Dash 1978; Carby 1988; James 1992b, 5–6; Marquez 1989; Pyne-Timothy 1996).

The decisive break with his pre-encounter perspectives occurred in two moments, which coincided with the research for and writing of *The Life of Captain Cipriani* and *The Black Jacobins*. James would eventually realize his new vision in history. Now sensitized to racist depictions, he was enraged by the representations of blacks in Colonial Office documents and histories written by Europeans. Accordingly, he decided to "vindicate the race" by producing an accurate historical account of black West Indians. In discussing his motivation for writing *The Black Jacobins* with Alan MacKenzie, James stated:

I was in the colonies and reading everything I could. I read one or two books about the Haitian Revolution written by British authors around 1850. Then there was another man, Percy Waxman who wrote a very bad book called *The Black Napoleon*. I said, "What the goddamn hell is this? They are always talking about the West Indians as backward, as slaves, and continually oppressed and exploited by British domination and so forth." So I decided that I would then write a book which showed the West Indians as something else. I came to this conclusion in the Caribbean, before I came to London, before I joined the Trotskyists, and before I became a Marxist. (James 1984b, 267; MacKenzie 1980, 70)⁵

James's rage is evident, demonstrating the evolution of his new racial consciousness. This response is markedly different from his reaction to the Merchant and Planters episode. The encounter with Learie Constantine led James to immerse himself in black history. The racist portrayals of blacks contained in those works so disturbed him that he felt compelled to refute them.

Anticolonial nationalism constituted James's first political commitment. His adoption of bourgeois nationalism provided only a partial transformation; it mitigated racial alienation, but

the essential contradiction remained (James 1992b, 47–62; 1984, 268; Worcester 1996, 22–23). In the biography of Captain Cipriani, James examined the dynamic intersection between race, color, and class in colonial Trinidad, although his racial ambiguity marred his analysis. James explicitly condemned white supremacy. Ironically, because his advocacy of self-government was built on colonialist logic; his argument implicitly supported white supremacy. Still entangled in a Eurocentric perspective, James accepted the premise of white colonial tutelage, but attempted to appropriate its discourse. The British had proclaimed “self-government when fit for it.” James attempted to recast this racist falsehood into an anticolonial argument. He contended that colonialism had created a “westernized” black middle class that was ready to govern.

Caught in what Cross called the “vortex of change,” James fluctuated back and forth, experiencing periodic recurrences of his pre-encounter views. For instance, as late as 1931 he wrote “I am not touchous [sic] on the race question” (James 1993b, 116; Worcester 1996, 16). Although he produced a body of work that portrayed people of African descent “as something else,” his continued use of the pejorative “backwards” reflects his internal contradictions. Robert A. Hill has astutely suggested that James’s development into an anticolonial Trinidadian nationalist nevertheless generated an openness to Marxism. In that sense, then, the first moment of reconstitution prepared the groundwork for the decisive second moment (James 1992c; Hall 1996, 17–18; Hill 1986; Robinson 1983, 365).

The social milieu James entered in England during these years conditioned the second moment of his revolutionary transformation. His second moment involved two movements, historical study and militant activism inside Marxist and Pan-African organizations. Shortly after his arrival in Nelson, a hotbed of worker radicalism, James began traveling to France to examine sources for *The Black Jacobins*. Hill posits that James’s study of radical French historians, such as Jules Michlet, George Lefebvre, and Jean Juarès was preparatory for his transition to Marxism. Before coming to England, James claimed, “All I knew about Marxism . . . was about eight or ten lines. But I had read a lot of history. I had been concerned about the ordinary

person, and I had read history in various parts and I was tuned” (Hall 1996, 20–21). James did not study Marxism until after he moved to London in the spring of 1934. He credits his background in European literatures, world history, and his “concern with the common people” for his rapid transition to Marxism (Grimshaw 1992, 1; James 1993b, 122–24; Hall 1996, 20–21; Worcester 1996, 28–30). He also acknowledged Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West*, Leon Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*, the first volume of Marx’s *Capital*, and the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* as significant influences.

Socioeconomic conditions also affected James tremendously. In the context of economic depression, resurgent imperialism characterized by virulent racism, and a general world crisis, James found the materialist conception of history compelling. Most important here is that historical study was a critical ingredient in his transformation into a black Marxist (Hill 1986, 67–68).

The key to his creation of a diasporan neo-Marxist perspective, however, lay in his response to Italy’s renewed attempt to colonize Ethiopia and the British Left’s refusal to defend Ethiopia. In “Theses on Feuerbach,” Marx notes, “it is men who change circumstances and that the educator himself must be educated” (1976, 7). The struggle to defend Ethiopia was James’s seminar in the race and class politics of European capitalism and Eurocentric Marxism. Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia changed the relationship between black and white radicals. It touched a deep chord in blacks around the world. Robin Kelley claims “virtually every self-respecting Black activist” rallied to Ethiopia’s defense (1995, 8). Considering James’s previous outlook, he was especially shaken by the invasion and “European indifference” to it (Buhle 1994, 161). In response he wrote “Africans and people of African descent, especially those who have been poisoned by British Imperialist education, needed a lesson” (1992a, 63). Moreover, James’s reaction transcended the written word, along with George Padmore, T. Ras Makonnen, Jomo Kenyatta, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and others, he formed the International African Service Bureau. Like numerous other blacks, James attempted to join the Ethiopian military. Why? His major reason was to fight world imperialism, especially in its fascist form.

Race and commitment to black liberation, however, were also part of his calculus. James claimed his attempt to join the Ethiopian resistance was a good idea because of “the fact that I am a Negro and am especially interested in the African revolution” (Kelley 1995, 109–10). These actions provide a glimpse of the distance he had traveled in racial consciousness.

By March 1936, his self-exploration through black history and participation in antiracist and anti-imperialist struggles had moved James toward deconstructing “Eurocentric Marxism” (Blaut 1994, 351–74; Kelley 1995, 11). According to Blaut, Euro-Marxists believe Europe is and has always been the initiating point for world historical change. The Eurocentric Marxist master-narrative identifies the European (white) proletariat as the historical agent and relegates people of color to the periphery. James articulated this perspective in his *World Revolution* (1977a). The immediate trigger for his ideological and political break with Eurocentric Marxism was the failure of the Independent Labor Party (ILP) to advocate workers’ sanctions against Italy. James’s perspective underwent a dramatic change between October 1935 and March 1936. The articles “Is This Worth a War? The League’s Scheme to Rob Abyssinia of its Independence” and “Abyssinia and the Imperialists” reflect the magnitude of his sudden and dramatic transformation. The differences in subject and tone are striking. The October 1935 “Is This Worth a War?,” for instance, was primarily addressed to British workers and only secondarily to Africans. It called for the European proletariat to organize independently of politicians, enact sanctions against Italy, and unite with African workers and peasants:

Workers of Britain, peasants and workers of Africa, get closer together for this and other fights. . . . Let us stand for independent organization and independent action. (1984a, 16)

The germs of agency are evident, but the initiative lies with European workers.

James rejected Eurocentric Marxism after the ILP betrayal. The first manifestations of his race-conscious Marxism appeared in two articles written in the spring 1936, “Abyssinia and the

Imperialists” and “Civilizing the ‘Blacks’: Why Britain Needs to Retain her African Possessions.” James changed his audience and recast his message, now urging blacks to take the initiative: “The only thing to save Abyssinia is the effort of the Abyssinians themselves and action by the great masses of Negroes and sympathetic whites and Indians all over the world” (James 1992a, 66). By the end of May he was chiding his comrade George Padmore for his liberal Eurocentricism. Whereas Padmore was appealing to the “enlightened” imperialists, James now declared:

Africans must win their own freedom. Nobody will win it for them. They need cooperation, but that cooperation must be with the revolutionary movements in Europe and Asia. (Kelley 1995, 11; Robinson 1983, 382)

Contained in these essays are the elements he would soon congeal into the theory of black self-emancipation (1984a, 13–16; 1992b, 63–66; Hill 1986, 61–80; McLemee and LeBlanc 1994, 212–13).

By the spring of 1936, James understood the significance of race and its relationship to imperialism, although he had yet to consolidate his ideas into the theory of autonomous black activity. Identification with black people had replaced the racial ambiguity that had characterized his previous approach to race. He now viewed European culture and western thought as cultural and intellectual traditions that shaped him, rather than essences that defined him. James would consistently be inconsistent on this question, however, throughout his life. Nonetheless, between 1936 and 1938 James moved from deconstructing Eurocentric Marxism toward constructing a race-conscious neo-Marxism. He was now attuned to how the intertwining of race and class exacerbated class conflict. Discussing an example drawn from West Africa after World War I, James wrote:

The conflict of capital and labor is intensified by the fact that capital is usually white and labor black. . . . The class conflict, bitter enough in countries where the population is homogenous in color, has an added bitterness in Africa. (1995, 72–73)

In *The Black Jacobins* and *A History of Pan-African Revolt*, James forged his repudiation of European paternalism and his notions of autonomous black action into stunning narratives of black vindication.

James and the methodologies of historical materialism

Spurred by his presentist concerns for “permanent revolution” and anti-imperialist black agency, James plunged passionately into historical production. Between 1937 and 1939, he published *World Revolution*, *The Black Jacobins*, and *A History of Pan-African Revolt*. James’s interpretation of historical materialism is the foundation undergirding these works. How did James come to write as a historical materialist? How did the materialist conception of history facilitate his articulation of the theory of black self-emancipation? Answering these questions requires analysis of James’s historical productions. It is first necessary, however, to make clear the understanding of historical materialism to be used in this discussion. The materialist conception of history is a theory, or, more precisely, an ensemble of theses that explain the structure, causal processes, and direction of social change. Historical materialism accounts for epochal historical divisions and explains the transformation from one mode of production to another. The mode of production consists of the forces and relations of production, the latter being the socioeconomic foundation of society on which arises an ideological and material superstructure composed of forms of social consciousness and social institutions (Marx 1987, 261–65; Cohen 1978; Wright, Levine, and Sober 1992; McLennan 1981, 45–65; Mills 1989; Rader 1978).

Unlike most academic historians, James often discussed the philosophical assumptions undergirding his “methodologies of history.”⁶ He developed his approach to historical analysis at an early age, before his exposure to historical materialism. Describing his initial approach to history writing, James stated:

What you need in studying any historical subject is you must get some idea of the economic circumstances, you must also get some idea of the political circumstances and you must get to know the literary circumstances. Only

when you know those three, you have some idea of the historical development of the period. (Small 1986, 57)

Philosophically, his pre-Marxist “method” represented causal pluralism, which Gregor McLennan contends is antithetical to historical materialism (1981, 233–36). His method is a mere listing that does not articulate his conception of causality. Nor does this “method” discuss his conception of the relationship between variables. Moreover, it neglects fundamental elements found in his mature historical works. For instance, it does not address the relationship between structure and agency, his emphasis on mass agency, or the relationship between leaders and the masses. He wrote *The Life of Captain Cipriani* from this underdeveloped approach.

Yet according to Robert Hill, *Captain Cipriani* “suggests very clearly the source of James’s later espousal of Marxism as a philosophical and political outlook” (1986). Hill also argues that “in this sense it could be said that James was writing as a Marxist even before he engaged consciously in the articulation of Marxism as a scientific method.” Hill is mistaken. *The Life of Captain Cipriani* was written from the perspective of the “Whig interpretation of history.” Despite his blunt criticism of the colonial system in *Captain Cipriani*, James’s anticolonialism remained within the boundaries of constitutional gradualism (James 1993b, 118–19; James 1992c, 47–62; Hill 1986, 64; Robinson 1983, 365).

In *World Revolution* he discarded the Whig theory of history for the “fundamental ideas of Marxism.” A year later, in 1938, he described his understanding of historical-materialist methodology in the preface to *The Black Jacobins*, thus:

The writer has sought not only to analyze, but to demonstrate in their movement, the economic forces of the age; their moulding of society and politics, of men in the mass and individual men; the powerful reaction of these on their environment at one of those rare moments when society is at boiling point and therefore fluid. (James 1963, x–xi)

Guided by the materialist conception of history, James transformed his methodology from an index of important historical

factors into a method emphasizing the dialectical interaction between the productive forces, relations of production, and agency, especially leadership.

In the mature Jamesian historical-materialist method, *racialclass* and/or class struggle became the dominant causal factors in a complex of reciprocal relationships. The organization of his historical accounts underscored his emphasis on concreteness and class struggle. Therefore, James began his historical accounts with a concrete discussion of the contending *racialclasses* or classes, their role in the production process, the social conditions, and the interests and capacities of each. In *The Black Jacobins*, for instance, James argued that the 500,000 African slaves—the property at the bottom of eighteenth-century Haiti’s tripartite racialclass structure—were the agents of historical change. He identifies two strata among the enslaved population: the masses of field hands and a small privileged group of artisans, drivers, house servants, and female concubines.

Next he analyzes the intraclass cleavages among Haiti’s African slave population. The small upper stratum enjoyed a better quality of life than the masses of field laborers. This stratum mainly consisted of the “mulatto” offspring of slave masters and African women, but it also included a few free blacks. Consistent with the mediation function they performed, “mulattoes” enjoyed economic rights, and many owned slaves; nonetheless they still experienced political subjugation and social degradation. Although they were extremely sensitive to racial discrimination, they displaced much of their rage onto their black slaves. At the top of Haitian society were the whites, whom James divided into three strata, terming them the big, small, and bureaucratic whites. The big whites were the large merchants, great planters, and the major shipping agents. The small whites consisted of professionals, artisans, entrepreneurs, and plantation overseers. These San Domingo-born colonists hated the French-born bureaucrats who ruled the colony. In *The Black Jacobins*, James’s prime concern is with social movement—not social structure, but the pace and direction of socioeconomic and political change, class struggle.

His first efforts at writing Marxist history reflect the influence of Leon Trotsky. Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*

was the central text influencing James's adoption of Marxism. *World Revolution*, his critique of Stalinism, was premised on Trotsky's theories of "uneven and combined development" and "permanent revolution." Trotsky believed incorporation into the world capitalist system contradictorily produced modern features and preserved antiquated aspects in the political economies of underdeveloped countries. The theory of "uneven and combined development" meant for Trotsky that whole stages of development could be bypassed. Therefore, he rejected the orthodox belief in a two-stage revolution: first democratic and then proletarian. Moreover, like most Marxists of that era, he believed an underdeveloped state, like the Soviet Union, could only survive if revolutions in the more developed capitalist states occurred. Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" contended that the socialist revolution would begin within national borders, but, because capitalism was an international system, proletarian victory could only be achieved on a global scale (James 1977a, xi, 59–62; Wright, Levine and Sober, 18–19; McLellan 1976, 78–85; Mandel 1989, 11–42, 1983, 502–3; Trotsky 1964).

Initially, James followed Trotsky's analysis on this question. He, too, saw "the salvation of the premature dictatorship of the Russian proletariat in the Socialist revolution in Europe, which would place state power in the hands of the proletariat of one or more of the advanced countries" (James 1977a, 30–31). The theory of "permanent revolution" was Trotsky's creative response to his acceptance of the primacy of productive forces. James accepted Trotsky's theories of "uneven and combined development" and "permanent revolution," but not the primacy thesis. According to him, "Marxists believe in the predominant role of the objective forces of history, and for that very reason are best able to appreciate the progressive or retarding influence of human personality" (1977a, 15–21). For James, the "objective forces of history" were not exclusively technological; they included both the forces of production and the relations of production (1977a, 60, 84; 1963, 19). In the Marxist lexicon the term *objective* is usually synonymous with *material*. In this sense then, James's use of the phrase "the objective forces of history" strongly suggests that, like Charles W. Mills, he envisioned the

forces and the relations of production as instances of the material, economic, and social (Mills 1989, 324–27).

James's critique of Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943) is illustrative. James contrasted his historical-materialist methodology to what he considered Aptheker's empiricist approach. James claimed Aptheker did not account for the transformations the cotton gin and the subsequent rise of King Cotton made in the forces and relations of slave production. Furthermore, he alleged Aptheker neglected the resulting changes in the character of slave insurrections. Explaining their effect, James wrote:

Negro slavery was more or less patriarchal so long as consumption was directed to immediate local needs. But in proportion as the export of cotton became of interest to the United States, patriarchal slavery was, in the words of Marx, "drawn into the whirlpool of an international market dominated by the capitalistic mode of production." The structure of production relations was thereby altered. . . . The division of labor increased. Slaves began to perform skilled labor and were hired out for wages. Slave labor was socialized. The slave revolts that began in 1800 were therefore of an entirely different character from those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (1994, 190)

For James, the transformation from patriarchal to "capitalist" slavery resulted from the introduction of new technologies that produced a multitude of changes. This process was economic because it transformed slavery from a system of small farms into one of large plantations. It was social in that it transformed the paternalism of the small farms, where slave owners directly supervised production, into a more impersonal multilayered management structure in which overseers and drivers supervised large-scale gang labor.

James contended that the greater division of labor, concomitant expansion of supervision, incorporation of non-slave-owning whites, and increased stratification among the slaves facilitated the emergence of a more sophisticated slave leadership. Slave rebels were forced to reconceptualize their

notion of resistance from maroonage (escape) to destroying slavery. His study of Caribbean maroonage convinced him that maroons had a narrow consciousness and did not *necessarily* oppose slavery. James's reading of maroonage reveals the extent to which he believed revolutionary consciousness was a product of bourgeois "civilization" and could not develop independently among the enslaved. He believed that revolutionary consciousness, like socialist consciousness, had to be brought to the oppressed by individuals who had received "the benefits of bourgeois culture" (1994, 189–192; Fick 1990, 5–12, 49–69, 235–50).

The question Ellen Kay Trimberger posed to British Marxist historian E. P. Thompson is relevant here: "How does the theorist integrate a consideration of the structural limits with an understanding of the logic open to human intervention?" James provided perhaps his clearest answer to this question in the preface to *The Black Jacobins*. He adumbrated his approach to historical materialism by paraphrasing, as he often did, Marx's famous comment in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. James stated:

Great men make history, but only such history as it is possible to make. Their freedom of achievement is limited by the necessities and the realization, complete or partial, of all possibilities, that is the true business of the historian. (1963, x)

His critique of Benjamin Quarles is also illustrative. James claimed Quarles and other scholars should "pose and grapple with the general historical question," which for him was "What is the role of the masses in great revolutionary upheavals?" (1996, 128). Analyzing the dialectical relationship between structural constraints, mass agency, and insurgent leadership was the central problematic of James's historical project. Mass agency provided the best opportunities for the emergence of a Lenin, a Toussaint, or a Nkrumah. According to James, individual human actors were more important for *what they represented* than for who they were. He maintained that in traditions, education, ideology, and politics, leaders represented the embodiment of their class's capacities. Class capacities refer to the human, material, organizational, and ideological resources available to a

class in its struggle to realize its interests. For James, leadership was the most significant attribute of a class's capacities. He was fascinated with extraordinary individuals; nonetheless, he never articulated the great-person theory of history. In James's view individuals embodied both subjective and objective factors.

As we can see, James's interpretation of historical materialism was premised on the dominance of "the objective forces of history," of which revolutionary leadership was a special weapon in the class struggle. James claimed, "The revolutionary leader finds his own sure foundation in the popular masses and organizes them with the utmost thoroughness," thus in the crucible of conflict, "one single individual quickly becomes the focus of an immense mass of needs, hopes, aspirations" (1963, 242).⁷ This reflected the voluntarist tendencies that sometimes clouded his thought when he worked within the "methodological subjectivism" of Trotskyism. Perhaps leadership was so central to the Jamesian historical imagination because James was primarily concerned with revolution, rebellion, and resistance. Revolutionary crises, disruptions in the accumulation process, and transitions from one socioeconomic system to another were *the* historical moments when people, especially leaders, could most effectively counter structures of oppression. James posited, "Economic relations produce certain types of people but it is the class struggle of those people that makes history move." He understood that the proletariat arrives at consciousness unevenly; therefore he stressed class struggle because it was the school of the proletariat and the soil in which leaders developed (Cambridge 1992, 163; James 1977a, 3; James 1984b, 271, 293; McLennan 1981, 64, 180; Trimberger 1984, 236).

The symbiotic unity between revolutionary leadership and the masses is a crucial problematic in *The Black Jacobins* and *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*. Toussaint and Nkrumah were tragic figures to James because their personal flaws ultimately overwhelmed the qualities that made them revolutionary leaders. James contends that between 1792 and 1800 Toussaint represented the needs and hopes of the San Dominican masses. By August 1800, James says France and economic recovery became primary in Toussaint's political calculations as he

pursued dominionship. For Toussaint, economic prosperity meant producing sugar for the international market, creating two problems. First, he had to convince the whites to remain. Why? James claims Toussaint believed mass production required white people's technical expertise. It was also necessary to restrict land redistribution and impose a strict work regimen on the freedmen. Consequently, Toussaint returned the plantations to the whites and instituted a harsh rural labor code. James agrees with Toussaint's policy, but not his implementation; Toussaint erred in method, but not in principle. According to James, racial rapprochement was inappropriate only because it overprivileged the whites. "Always, but particularly at the moment of struggle, a leader must think of his own masses, it is what they think that matters, not what the imperialists think" (James 1963, 286). Toussaint did not grasp this; therefore the people and the army hesitated at the critical moment. James claims that this was a consequence of Toussaint's autocracy, that his policies confused the masses and ultimately antagonized them. The problem, however, was not simply Toussaint's leadership style or the masses' confusion over his policies. Toussaint's policies contradicted their interests, and a less dictatorial approach would not have changed that. The masses equated freedom with abolition and land ownership. For Toussaint, abolition constituted freedom. He believed slavery could never be reintroduced and thus he prescribed a policy of racialclass rapprochement.

Alex Dupuy argues that James failed completely to explore the new social relations emerging from the revolution. Dupuy contends that James understood the racialclass basis of Moise L'Ouverture's challenge to Toussaint, but not Jean-Jacques Dessalines's. Moise represented the masses who wanted land. Except for opposing the reimposition of slavery, Dupuy argues, neither Toussaint nor Dessalines represented "the fundamental interests of the former slaves" (1995, 114). They actually represented the same racialclass of developing black landowners, but advocated different policies for securing the interests of this group. Toussaint thought alliance with France and the local whites would accomplish their goals. Dessalines opposed sharing power with native whites or "mulattoes" and sought to avoid

dependence on any one European power. Dupuy maintains that James underemphasized “the contradictions and conflicts” developing among the revolutionary leaders, the propertied class they represented, and the former slaves. Dupuy is right. The important question remains as to why James diminished these differences, and the answer is to be found in James’s conceptual framework. At that moment, he believed great leaders embodied the historic aspirations of their class and age (1963, 247, 277–88, 370–74; Fick 1990, 204–36).

As we have noted, for James the significance of leaders lies in the class forces they represent. Consequently, for him, the core of the Marxist historical method is in identifying the contending classes, delineating their interests and capacities, and demonstrating why the oppressed would ultimately reconstruct society. In his review of Aptheker’s *American Negro Slave Revolts*, for instance, James highlights the political difference between slave insurrectionists and militant abolitionists and “anti-slavery” politicians:

Marxist history consists always in contrasting these two and showing how a great social conflict is finally resolved along the lines of the despised, rejected, persecuted movement and not along the lines of parliamentarians and petty-bourgeois reformists. (McLemme and Le Blanc, 1994, 196).

This is precisely what James’s histories do. In these works James readily acknowledges how structural constraints constrict the contours of action, yet he sees crises as also generating political opportunities for revolution. In his dialectical-interactionist conception of historical materialism, therefore, class struggle was central, albeit premised on heroic leadership (1977c, 84, 103; San Juan 1996, 27).

The genesis and gestation of the theory of black self-emancipation

What is the relationship between James’s 1930s historical works and the theory of black self-emancipation? The histories represent his efforts to apply the categories of historical

materialism to the experiences of people of African descent. During the early 1930s, James was introduced to the concept of proletarian self-emancipation, and extended this concept to blacks. What made the *The Black Jacobins* and *A History of Pan-African Revolt* major revolutionary innovations was James's elaboration of the concept of proletarian self-emancipation to racial/national groups and his contention that racial/national movements could influence proletarian struggles. Consequently, James's theory supplemented Marxist theory by incorporating racial/national struggles into it, thus enhancing Marxism's applicability beyond production relations. Nonetheless, James did not create this theory out of the air, but developed it over time from his engagement with history, political praxis, racialized experiences, and philosophical studies.

Three interrelated but distinct moments in James's creation of this theory are identifiable: 1932–1946; 1947–1957; and 1958–1989. In the first period, he argued that worldwide black liberation would follow a process similar to the Haitian revolution. That is, the African revolution would be black-led, but it would be stimulated and facilitated by (socialist) insurrections in the metropolitan countries. During this phase, James was a Leninist and saw the San Domingo revolution through the lens of vanguardism, hence his emphasis on leadership. James began to tease out the particularities of the relationship between socialist and racial/national movements after his arrival in the United States.

In June of 1939, less than six months after he entered the United States, James went to Mexico to discuss the “Negro question” with Trotsky, Charles Curtiss, and Sol Lankin. James presented them with a position paper on African American self-determination and a proposal to initiate an independent militant Black mass organization. In the latter paper, James claimed socialists should support autonomous black organizations, rather than initiate “front” groups, or attempt to capture independent organizations. Furthermore, he conceived such an organization as racial, hence incorporating all classes of blacks. He explained to Trotsky and the others that the “racial” aspect of black oppression created real bases for intraracial unity despite class. Correspondingly, it created real bases for disunity among the

interracial proletariat. James simultaneously advocated black unity and interracial proletarian unity.

In 1941, after he, Grace Lee, and Rae Spiegel (Forest), who would later be known as Raya Dunayevskaya, formed the Johnson-Forest tendency, the organization embarked on a philosophical project to Americanize Marxism. "A Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question" was part of this project. In 1948, after detailed study of African American life and history and of U.S. politics and culture, and after his personal encounters with U.S. racism, James rethought his emancipatory strategy. "A Revolutionary Position," therefore, argues: (1) the Black struggle constituted an autonomous movement; (2) the independent African American movement could make powerful interventions in U.S. sociopolitical life; and (3) the Black freedom movement objectively contributes to the socialist movement. How did James reach these new conclusions? In his study of African American and U.S. history, James uncovered several moments when the U.S. Black struggle had dominated U.S. politics. He points to the abolitionist movement, the Civil War, and Reconstruction as examples. According to him, the tremendous advances made by U.S. Blacks were primarily due to their own initiative. He believed autonomous black struggles are inherently progressive, because they contest racial oppression; thus, like other autonomous democratic movements, they objectively contribute to socialist revolution. James never claims that African Americans are the primary revolutionary force in the United States. He argues that, because of their "unparalleled hatred of bourgeois society," Blacks could become the catalysts stimulating the multiracial proletariat toward socialist revolution (Trotsky 1978, 71; James 1977b, 127).

In a transitional moment, between 1943 and 1947, the Johnson-Forest tendency came to conceptualize Marxism in Hegelian philosophical terms. They now saw Marxism as a social theory of human activity, "of men active in the production process." Consequently, they concluded that the proletariat was "the most important part of the productive forces." Because of their Hegelian explorations, the civil rights phase of the black-liberation movement, and the Ghana revolution, James was

forced to revise the theory of black self-emancipation again. Between 1948 and 1958 the Johnson-Forest tendency reconceptualized black self-activity from a Leninist theory emphasizing leadership into a Hegelian theory emphasizing mass agency. After the successful mobilizations of black people in Montgomery, Alabama, and Ghana, West Africa, under the slogans “mass direct action and civil disobedience” and “positive action,” James replaced, in his political theory, the concept of *revolutionary violence* with *mass mobilization and direct action*. This transformation was the logical consequence of his abandonment of Lenin’s concept of the vanguard party.

The theory of *state capitalism* undergirded James’s contention that the “self-mobilization of the masses is the dominant feature of our age.” The Johnson-Forest tendency’s philosophical and economic explorations between 1943 and 1950 had culminated in the idea of state capitalism. State capitalism was the base of their theoretical pyramid, the foundation upon which they built their other theorems. Consequently, it precipitated his repudiation of the vanguard party and extension of insights derived from the theory of black self-activity to other oppressed social groups. These two theorems composed the sides of the Johnson-Forest tendency’s theoretical pyramid. James now advocated unifying workers’ councils and the new social movements (identity-based liberation movements and movements *not* based on race, class, or gender) into a new movement (Glberman 1990; Boggs 1996; Turner 1996; Castorriadis 1996).

Conclusion

The singular achievement of C. L. R. James was to construct the theory of black self-emancipation. This accomplishment involved two related but different questions. The first is black self-emancipation. Embedded within this is the problem of leadership and the self-mobilization of the masses, the tension between vanguard and mass agency.

The first question is mainly racial; it concerns how James freed himself from the myth of white supremacy, came to see the salience of race, and created the theory of black self-emancipation. First, through the *Nigrescence* process he managed

to mediate, if not resolve, his racial alienation. Second, from the combination of historical research; anti-imperialist, antiracist, and socialist praxis; and self-reflection, James developed an openness to autonomous black activity. He concluded from his experiences that even though built upon and intertwined with class exploitation, racial oppression could not be reduced to class. Finally, his research convinced him that black people had waged unremitting struggles against slavery, colonialism, and other forms of racial oppression.

James began his transformation into a race-conscious neo-Marxist historian after he was infuriated by racial myths masquerading as historical scholarship. He decided to refute these racist lies. The desire to repudiate racist myths remained a central part of James's political-historical project. The first chapter of *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, for example, concerns racial mythology. The Haitian revolution was his initial model and he saw armed struggle as the means by which African people would obtain their freedom. Culled from the history of the only successful slave revolution, the theory of black self-emancipation was shaped by James into an attack on European paternalism, both liberal and leftist.

The second question examines the relationship between leadership and mass self-mobilization. Carole Fick's *Making of Haiti: The San Domingue Revolution from Below* (1990), although inspired by *The Black Jacobins* (1963), is an explicit critique of James's emphasis on leadership. Fick contends that James underemphasizes the autonomous activities of the masses

to focus on revolutionary leaders. James does not, in fact, neglect the masses, although Toussaint, Dessalines, Moise, and Christophe occupy most of his attention in this book. His concentration on leadership diminishes the autonomous action of the San Domingo masses.

Between 1946 and 1948, the Johnson-Forest tendency began their critique of Trotskyism and their repudiation of vanguardism. This naturally led James to recast his position on the role of leadership. Ironically, his new position was similar to Trotsky's critique of Bolshevism between 1904 and 1917. It was, however, rooted in the Johnson-Forest tendency's reading of the

early Marx, especially *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1975), revisitation of Hegel, and analysis of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. It is ironic that James's investigation of Hegel moved him away from Leninism. After all, it was Lenin's exploration of the "Hegelian contradiction" during his exile in Switzerland from 1914–1917 that inspired James's study of Hegel. According to James, the epoch of state capitalism and the spontaneous rise of proletarian consciousness make it necessary for contemporary revolutionaries to go into, through, and beyond Leninism. For James, the vanguard concept was predicated on what Trotsky had called "substitutionism"—the belief that a small group of individuals could: (1) represent the general interests of the proletariat, (2) represent the internationalist view, and (3) embody the maximum program and ultimate objectives of the laboring class. James argued, therefore, that the vanguard party was the product of a specific historical experience. Consequently, he concluded that in state capitalist societies the vanguard party was an antiquated and reactionary organizational form (1977b, 178; 1968, 87, 93; McLellan, 1976, 78–85; Shandro 1995, 271; Anderson, 1995).

In many ways, *The Black Jacobins* and *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* form bookends bracketing James's initial Leninist and final populist articulations of the theory of black self-emancipation. His analysis of the "rise and fall of Kwame Nkrumah" flows from his critique of vanguardism. According to James, Nkrumah toppled British colonial rule in 1957 by mobilizing the masses in Ghana via "positive action," the tactics of mass direct action and civil disobedience. James contrasted mass mobilization with the vanguard party. He claimed that electoral success in 1951 had begun a process through which the Ghanaian revolution was transformed from a mass movement into electoralism. He alleged that the seeds of bureaucracy sown in 1951 culminated in the Convention People's Party becoming an elite party of new bureaucrats. Thus, for James, the fall of Nkrumah was in part due to the difficulties of transforming an underdeveloped society into a modern nation-state, and in part due to his increasing reliance on an elite party whose leadership

had become detached from the masses. Consequently, according to James, Nkrumah devolved into a dictator (James 1980a, 180; James 1984a, 172–85).

James's analysis represents a sophisticated exposition that both illuminated and obscured Lenin's position(s) on the vanguard role of the proletarian party. His critique was both right and wrong. James was right to historicize the vanguard party, for like all social phenomena it is a product of a particular historical situation, but his overall conclusion was wrong. Furthermore, James's historicization of the Leninist party, though correct, failed to explore Lenin's changing conceptions of the party. His critique is limited to Lenin's perspective in *What Is to Be Done?* But this seminal text represents only one of the four positions Lenin expressed regarding the party's role, character, and composition. In 1895, Lenin argued that the workers would learn from union struggles the necessity of waging a revolutionary war against the entire capitalist social order. Then he assumed that *economic struggles* would be the medium for teaching the proletariat its *political role* (1960). By 1902, Lenin had reversed himself; he now contended the working class could only acquire trade-union consciousness from shop-floor struggles. Arguing that socialism is the product of intellectuals, he now advocated an elite party of professional revolutionaries composed of workers and intellectuals. This vanguard would inject revolutionary proletarian consciousness into the workers' movement. During the 1905 worker-initiated Russian revolution, Lenin called for a loosening of party restrictions to incorporate workers "by the hundreds and thousands" (Lenin, 1962, 32). After the proletarian revolution of 1917, Lenin envisioned the trade unions supplanting the party. At the Second All-Russia Trade Union Congress in 1919 he stated, "The time has come for the trade unions, as the broadest organisation of the proletariat on a class scale, to play a very great role, to take the centre of the political stage, to become, in a sense, the chief political organ" (1965a, 418). But a few months later, in the context of a civil war and foreign intervention, and in subsequent years, Lenin called for a tightening of the rules for admission into the party (Cronin 1991, 15; Lenin 1965b, 257). Lenin adapted the vanguard party's role, character,

and composition to meet new political circumstances. By failing to explicate Lenin's dynamic understanding of the party, James presents an abstract and static view of Lenin's conception of the vanguard party (see also Gwala 1991; Lenin 1961).

James's critiques of the vanguard party suffer from other limitations as well. In *Notes on Dialectics*, when he chastised those who contended that a party including "all the workers to a man" was not a vanguard party, James was defending the vanguard role of the party. He still believed in the vanguard role of the party and was principally arguing for a change in the party's character. In essence he was counterposing a mass party to Lenin's 1902 conception of a vanguard party. The problem with this formulation is not just that it froze Lenin's dynamic conception of the party, but also that the antonym of *mass* is *small*, or more appropriately in this instance, *elite*. The synonym of *vanguard* is *leading*, which refers to the *role* the party was expected to play in the revolutionary movement, not its character. James's use of the phrase "vanguard of the vanguard" to describe his "new" Marxist organization demonstrates that he had not yet completely abandoned the vanguard role of revolutionary parties. The historical model for James's theorizing was the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Based on the CIO's militancy and anti-bureaucratic practices, James postulated that "the new party would be the CIO politically transformed" (James 1980a, 181). He even speculated that the CIO might become the labor movement itself! Therefore, James's formulation was a call for the creation of a mass party. In 1948, in the context of massive labor unrest, James, like Lenin in 1905, reappraised the character of the working-class party. Consequently, it is not surprising that his position bore a striking resemblance to Lenin's reassessment in 1905. Again, at this moment, James still supported a version of the vanguard party; however, it was a mass party, rather than an elite party that he now advocated (McLemme and Le Blanc 1994, 34 n. 42).

At the heart of James's renunciation of vanguardism was his rejection of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," the need for the political transitional period to which the vanguard party is related. James claimed that the development of modern capitalism and the creation of workers' councils eliminated the need for

a “transition to socialism” (1968, 98–99). By the writing of *Facing Reality* in 1958, he no longer believed in a worker-governed state (1977b, 178, 1968, 87, 93; McLellan 1976, 78–85; Castorriadis 1996, 285–86; Forsythe, 1975, 138).⁸ Explaining why the term “worker” was excluded from the Correspondence Group slogan “independent editorial committee,” James argued:

The conception of workers in the plants, or of any one class dominating the whole of society and imposing its will upon all others, was a product of a certain stage of industrial and social development. Today this conception is, in the mind of workers, professional and clerical middle classes, and farmers alike, charged with all the crimes and horrors of Stalinist totalitarianism. (1968, 127)

James’s newfound fear of worker domination led him to adopt a strategy that would subordinate the working class to petty-bourgeois “heterogeneous forces.” By rejecting the necessity of political transition, James abandoned core theses of historical materialism and moved beyond the boundaries of Marxism. Lenin had maintained that acceptance of this concept was fundamental to Marxism and that its denial constituted a disavowal of Marxism. By repudiating the vanguard party and the dictatorship of the proletariat, James adopted a spontaneous theory of revolution (Shandro, 1995, 292).

This directly contradicts the beliefs he advocated from the 1930s to the late 1940s. Then he not only defended this perspective, but he also argued that an individual could embody the interests and aspirations of a class. He still considered the proletariat as the *primary* revolutionary force, but he no longer believed it was the “historical agent,” the universal embodiment of humanity’s aspirations (1968, 82). Therefore, he concluded:

All these beliefs led to the conclusion that the organization was the true *subject*; that is to say, the motivating force of history. If the organization was the *subject* of history, the proletariat was the object. In this conception the organization, in philosophical terms, was the Universal. (93–94)

For James, organization had become synonymous with self-activity, and self-activity replaced the proletariat. His conception

of class thereby shifted from a Marxist concept, in which exploitation was at the center and the proletariat represented the universal, to a populist notion based on oppression.

In his historical works of the 1930s and his historiographic critiques of the early 1940s, James had developed a historical-materialist methodology premised on racialclass/class struggle. At this moment, he highlighted the class character of racial oppression and, correspondingly, racial/national struggles by showing the conjunction between changing modes of production, socialist revolution in European metropolises, and racialclass struggles in the colonies. In these works James accorded race a high salience, yet not only did he not disengage race from class, he maintained until the late 1940s that it supplemented class. His construction of autonomy in 1948 was designed to underscore the autonomy of “races” or nations to act independently, but in objective support of the socialist movement. This conception enabled him to apply the Leninist formulation that a small nationality could in some circumstances induce the proletariat to action. He concluded that African-descended people could and did play such a role. On this basis he vigorously fought all attempts to undermine autonomous black activity. James implied that the black struggle was in essence a racialclass struggle. Why else apply Lenin’s defense of national-liberation movements, which he considered a *form* of class struggle?

The answer is to be found at both ends of the race/class dialectic. On the one hand, the question is: what is the source and character of black oppression? On the other, it is: what class leads the black-liberation movement? Racial domination manifests itself through capitalist institutions and, despite the role of white workers in supporting a segmented labor force, the motive force for black oppression is capitalism. Correspondingly, even when the black struggle is led by the petty bourgeoisie and subjectively aimed at acquiring a “piece of the pie” (because that piece most often turns out to be a sliver, if not illusory), black people’s demands objectively heighten the contradictions in U.S. society. Note that James never claimed the black struggle was innately anticapitalist, only that it could spark the proletarian revolution.

This conception was Leninist, as was his emphasis on leadership. Initially, the theory of black self-emancipation was *not* a theory of the autonomous activity of the masses. But, after the Johnson-Forest tendency's encounter with the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1975) and Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1969), James abandoned vanguardism, and his notion of autonomy came to emphasize mass agency, despite class. His repudiation of vanguardism also involved expanding insights derived from the theory of black self-emancipation to other social movements. Thus, what began as a progressive project to fill theoretical gaps in Marxism regarding race, by the late 1940s had evolved into a theory recognizing the autonomous activity of all socially constructed groups, and by the late 1950s had devolved into a denouncement of the historical agency of the proletariat. James continued to believe that "the interpretation of history" was "a class question" (James 1980b, 49), but after 1958, populism had replaced a Marxist class analysis in his world view.

Department of Historical Studies
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

NOTES

1. When "Black" is used for African Americans as a national group, it is capitalized. However, when "black" is used as a "racial" designation—as a synonym for African or indicating a person of African descent—it appears in lower case.

2. *A History of Negro Revolt* was republished as *A History of Pan-African Revolt* by Drum and Spear Press of Washington, D.C., in 1969; in 1985 by the Brixton-based collective Race Today; and by Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company of Chicago in 1995. All quotations used in this essay are from the Kerr edition.

3. Because critics refused to utilize the operational definition she provided for the term "stages," Helms has replaced it with the concept "status" (Helms, 1995).

4. After his identity transformation and radicalization, James was able to articulate the unity between "cricket, English identity and imperialist culture." Consequently, in *Beyond a Boundary* he converted the "code" and its values of fair play and honesty into weapons against racial oppression and colonialism (1993b).

5. Alan MacKenzie published his interview with James separately in the *Radical History Review* in the fall of 1980. The organization of radical historians, MARCHO, republished it in 1984 with a 1982 interview conducted by the black British cultural nationalist Paul Gilroy (MacKenzie 1980; James 1984b).

6. Gregor McLennan uses this term to discuss historians' notions of causation, social theories, and historical methods (1981, 95–6).

7. James would eventually repudiate much of this interpretation of Leninism because of its subjectivism. This view of Leninism was mediated through the gaze of Trotsky and overemphasized the role of heroic leaders or the vanguard party (Cambridge 1992, 163–78).

8. After 1917 Trotsky adopted the Leninist concept of the vanguard party. Castorriadis maintains that as late as 1958 James and Grace Lee and James Boggs remained rooted in vanguardism (Castorriadis 1995, 277–97).

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Bringing Socialism to the National Agenda of South Africa: The 10th Congress of the South African Communist Party

Sitaram Yechury

The 10th Congress of the South African Communist Party was held in Johannesburg, 1–5 July 1998. This report about the Congress was originally published in “People’s Democracy” (organ of the Communist Party of India [Marxist]), 12 and 19 July 1998.

The 10th Congress of the South African Communist Party (SACP), held at Johannesburg, concluded on Sunday, July 5, with a stirring, yet a matured and balanced, call by its newly elected general secretary, Blade Nzimande, who declared in his closing speech:

“History is such that people usually look back and remark how events that took place were significant, but that it is not obvious to them at that time. This Congress has been one of those rare historic occasions, the significance of which all of us felt as we participated. Despite the reactionary views of our detractors, despite the speculation by sections of the press on the imminent demise of the party this Congress has reaffirmed the future and the role of the party. The SACP remains a Marxist-Leninist party, committed to bringing about the socialist transformation of our society and country. Our party is the unbroken thread of socialist consciousness, of peace, progress

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and development in a country that has seen the worst of colonialism, imperialism, racialism, and capitalism.”

Committed to the alliance

The Congress adopted a Declaration—a sort of a final document—which summed up the present situation in South Africa: “On the one hand, powerful forces in the country, the beneficiaries of apartheid wealth and privilege, allied with powerful external forces, are bent on blocking and subverting the ongoing radical transformation of our society. On the other hand, there is the real possibility and necessity of pressing fearlessly ahead with national democratic transformation.” It further states that “the precondition for the democratic strategy to succeed is an ANC-COSATU-SACP alliance. [The opponents of this strategy] seek an ANC-COSATU-SACP alliance that is fragmented, dissipated and divided. This is why there are forces in our society who work so hard to achieve this outcome, and why they so dishonestly goad the SACP into playing brinkmanship with our alliance.”

The SACP general secretary, in unambiguous terms, stated: “Not only is the party committed to the alliance, but this Congress has reaffirmed the leading role of the ANC and has committed the thousands of party members to work for an overwhelming victory of the ANC in the 1999 elections.”

The Declaration, while underlining the commitment to strengthen the alliance, stated that this is “*rooted in seven decades of alliance experience (and) is not simply a matter of history. It is, above all, a strategic imperative.*” However, it added that, “*The SACP’s commitment to the alliance is, in no way, a renunciation of our own autonomous, communist organisation, policies, and programmes. On the contrary, a strong SACP is a precondition for a strong ANC and COSATU and vice versa.*”

Having settled this issue, the Congress placed itself in the international context of present day capitalist development: “The current phase of capitalist globalisation is one which is progressively impoverishing the inhabitants of most developing countries, women in particular. The current crisis in our own economy is directly attributable to the crisis of capitalism,

internationally and domestically. In such a period the class struggle is bound to intensify. These features of capitalism affect us as we are attempting to transform our society, from an apartheid one to a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic one.

In this background, the general secretary stated: *“The key issue for us as the SACP, and for the national liberation movement as a whole, is not to focus on our differences, which are few and largely of a tactical nature, but to concentrate on what unites us.”* Thus there is the need to “consolidate and advance the national democratic revolution,” said the Declaration.

But as the general secretary stated, the key role that the SACP must play in the national democratic revolution (NDR) must be “mindful of the class realignment taking place . . . [and that] as we transform our society we transform our organisation.” Having said this, he went on to emphasize that “what is fundamental for us as communists is to recognise that we do not retreat when class struggle intensifies. When they sharpen and deepen, we engage and we ensure that the resolution of the contradictions will take the revolution forward towards our socialist objective.”

On transformation of the state

One of the issues that the Congress identified as contentious and contradictory is the transformation of the state. The general secretary stated: “The dialectical relationship between the people and the government which leads the state is a complex one, but in developing it we truly believe that we can fundamentally alter not only the conditions of the people but the consciousness of the people. For the party, this participation by the masses in governance is a key component of building socialism. We should not pretend that transformation of the state is an easy process. Because of the interests concerned, the nature and culture of the bureaucracy we have inherited from the apartheid regime, this transformation will be a protracted difficult struggle. We need to ensure that in this process party cadres are well prepared. The state must be under the leadership and hegemony of the working class to build socialism.”

The other contradiction relates to the current economic policies the government is pursuing. The Declaration stated: “That

macro-economic policy (GEAR, of which we will speak later) on its own is insufficient, and we need, in particular, an active, progressive and integrated industrial policy, an overreaching and integrated job creation strategy, and social security nets. Any macro-economic policy must be aligned with these and other transformation policies. The SACP will continue to pursue all these matters in the context of the forthcoming alliance summit meeting and other processes.

But, while expressing the resolve to overcome this contradiction, the general secretary warned: “we are aware, as communists, that capital in its true economic form is central to development in our country. But socialist experience around the world has taught us that without social capital, controlled by the government, development will be one-sided and in the interests of the few. We therefore give notice to the capitalist of this country, that we intend to socialise the wealth that you currently own. Your choice is to throw your lot in with the people of the country or to resist this process of economic transformation. But socialisation is a fact, it will happen, so get used to it. International capital must also understand, we need investment, but not at any price. Investment must be sympathetic to our national democratic revolution and objectives of transformation.

Strong party: Paramount need

But in order to do this, what is required is a strong and effective party. The general secretary, recollecting Lenin’s *Party Work in the Masses*, reiterated his emphasis on organising a political party in order to organise the people against capitalism.

In an emotional outburst, the general secretary called upon the delegates to organise the ANC, the COSATU, and above all to organise the party. Party leaders and cadres working in the mass organisations cannot neglect the most important task of organising the party and building it into an effective force. As the general secretary stated: “*Central to the success or failure of the revolution is whether we build this Communist Party.*” The Congress also had a specific commission on party building and outlined immediate and long term tasks towards achieving this objective.

While there are fundamental obstacles in achieving this objective, there are also favourable conditions to do so. Consider the following: the tripartite alliance has a six-member secretariat—the general secretaries of the ANC, COSATU and SACP and their deputies. Today, all six of them are SACP members! Prior to this Congress, five (and now four) were members of the SACP Central Committee! The fifth opted out of the Central Committee as he is currently the general secretary of the ANC! Likewise, many veteran communists opted out of the Central Committee due to their official positions in the government. The newly elected Central Committee too has many cabinet ministers, including the defence minister, and officials, including the chief of intelligence!

But despite all this, if the SCAP is unable to influence the policy direction of the government, it is because of the well entrenched elements that oppose such a vision, as well as due to the ineffectiveness of the ANC's organisational mechanisms. The ministers virtually enjoy autonomy, guided by the still dominant apartheid bureaucracy.

This is what the SACP has to successfully struggle against. But to do so, the party has to refurbish and strengthen itself. Towards this end, the general secretary stated: "One of the weaknesses we noted of the party after the 8th Congress was our failure to practically implement our very good theories and programmes we had drafted. Building socialism is a labour, it is a full time occupation, and we must become serious in our efforts. *The time for talking is over.*"

The Congress thus ended, with clenched fists, to the song *Internationale*, reflecting a new found determination to carry forward these tasks.

Mandela receives Chris Hani Award

Earlier, on July 1, the opening day of the Congress, South African president Nelson Mandela addressed the delegates, recollecting that "My commitment to the Communist Party began in the 1940s." In a touching gesture, Mandela removed his shirt to wear the T-shirt and cap of the 10th SACP Congress and

danced with the delegates who were singing old revolutionary songs.

Since the 9th Congress of the SACP and the unbanning of the ANC, SACP and COSATU (the tripartite alliance that won liberation from apartheid), Mandela has always addressed the SACP Congress in one capacity or another. This time he was there to receive the second Chris Hani Peace Award.

The SACP instituted this award in memory of its former general secretary who was assassinated in 1993, The first recipient was Walter Sisulu, the legendary ANC leader. Mandela's presence and intervention was significant in the sense that it reflected the potential conflict of a fundamental nature amongst the alliance partners. In his written speech, Mandela praised the role of the alliance in realising the goal of ending apartheid and liberating the people. He underlined the importance of strengthening this alliance for a successful reconstruction of South Africa.

Perhaps the more important aspect came in the unprepared ex-tempore speech he gave after his written speech. In a strongly worded statement he warned the alliance partners-ANC and COSATU—not to publicly air differences and take issues to the streets. He in fact went to the extent of asking the allies to be prepared for the consequences.

Point of difference

The point of dispute is the economic policy being pursued by the government. In 1996, the government announced a macro-economic policy framework called GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution). This policy was clearly influenced by the neo-liberal ideological framework of reliance on the market and privatisation.

The SACP and COSATU have been publicly airing differences on some aspects of the GEAR. Presenting the Central Committee's report to the Congress, outgoing SACP general secretary, Charles Nqula, too came down heavily on the GEAR.

The report in clear, unequivocal terms characterised the GEAR as the "wrong macro-economic policy" for South Africa's restructuring. This policy is aimed primarily at stabilising the economy along neo-liberal lines. The SACP,

however, believes “that macro-economic policy should be aligned much more actively with our transformational goals.”

These policies of curtailing budget deficits and privatisation have resulted in growth targets not being achieved, unemployment growing with a net loss of jobs, and not sufficient funds being available for social concerns like health, education, etc. Noting that South Africa’s requirement today is a process of restructuring that provides the vast majority of the population with basic needs and improves their livelihood, the report noted: “Yes, we must be concerned about the budget deficit, but that concern must never obliterate our concern for the terrible social deficit we have inherited.”

This, in a sense, reflects a deeper contradiction in South Africa. As an economic power, it rates strong enough to qualify for being a part of the First World. However, the inhuman apartheid regime allowed and perpetuated such wide disparities that its people’s living conditions are comparable with the Third World. The successful struggle against apartheid not only liberated millions of South Africans, but enormously aroused hopes for and illusions of a better future. Any restructuring of South Africa would have to address this contradiction and map out as rapid an advance as possible to meet the people’s aspirations.

This, however, is not to suggest that nothing much has been gained since the first democratic, non-racial elections in 1994. Substantial gains have been recorded in the sphere of political democratisation by universalising the long-denied democratic rights. In contrast to the over 15,000 murdered in political violence in the nine years preceding 1994, the period since then has been one of relative peace and stability. Further, the process of unravelling the full truth about the gross violation of human rights and outright abuses like assassinations and disappearances, is on. This has so far revealed more than 480 unmarked graves of SACP comrades who were secretly executed or tortured to death. The SACP underlined the need to carry forward this process: *“Our resolve in this regard is not motivated by a spirit of vengeance, but by a sense of justice and, above all, by the knowledge that unless the killer squads are exposed, they will regroup to undermine our emerging democracy.”*

However, notwithstanding such gains, the report noted “*The strategic defeat of apartheid was essentially a political and moral defeat. On the front of social and economic change, where we are up against powerful vested interests and powers, transformation is often blocked and subverted.*”

Opposition to privatisation

It is, therefore, precisely in the economic sphere that contradictions arise. The minority white population still controls the strategic lines of the economy and their aggressive pursuit of neo-liberal policies is aimed precisely at consolidating their control. This privatisation of the public sector is aimed at transferring huge public assets to private capital, more importantly, to remove them from the control of the government that in all likelihood will be a black majority one. This is ideologically buttressed by the concept of “Black Economic Empowerment,” aimed at enticing a minuscule black and coloured social minority (e.g. of Indian origin) who aspire to a bourgeois status. As the SACP report stated, this “is reduced to the promotion of a new black (and mostly male) elite.”

“In its campaign against the GEAR, interestingly, the SACP quotes from the earlier ANC resolutions! In 1969, the ANC, outlining its strategy and tactics, stated that its struggle to end the apartheid regime should not be “confused with the classical drive by an elitist group among the oppressed people to gain ascendancy so that they can replace the oppressed in the exploitation of the masses.”

While arguing for efficient management of public sector, its fiscal discipline, and “transforming bloated bureaucracies,” the SACP firmly opposes privatisation. It exposes the claim that this would be part of Black Economic Empowerment, by pointing out that these assets belong to the public that is predominantly black. Selling them “to a handful of emerging black consortia, along with other private investors, removes this key public utility from the sphere of meeting social needs, to the sphere of market-driven, profit-seeking operations. It would in fact be Black Economic Dis-empowerment.”

The parallels with our struggle in India in defence of the public sector cannot be more obvious. Whatever be the specifics, the objective of neo-liberal economic policies is to transfer public assets to private hands at very cheap prices.

The crucial issue in South Africa, however, is not the need for restructuring the society and the country, but the content of such restructuring. It is now an irreversible fact that the apartheid regime is a thing of the past. But the new society to be built—its content—is what engages all of South Africa. The minority that controls the strategic economic lines, aided to the hilt by imperialism, seeks to retain real economic control. But the entire liberation movement is the antithesis of this. The pressures of neo-liberal economic lobby, aided by the minuscule emerging black bourgeoisie, seek to allow formal political liberties but not the live economic emancipation of the people who struggled for nearly a century.

Crucial element in transformation

It is the resolution of this contradiction that will shape the future of South Africa. And the unity of purpose, that was there amongst the tripartite alliance during the struggle against apartheid, is the crucial element in resolving it and taking the struggle of the South African people to its logical culmination. Here, the differences between the alliance partners have come to dominate political discourse. As the SACP report noted: “Apart from election campaigns where there has been mass mobilisation in the past four years, it has mostly been ANC-aligned formations waging campaigns against ANC-led government or one of its ministries. There is, of course, nothing wrong with this principle. But it does raise the obvious question: why have all our mass campaigns been turned inwards? Why do those, and we are thinking primarily of big capital in our country, who retain massive powers and privileges accumulated illegally and illegitimately in the apartheid past, remain unscathed? It is they who constitute the primary strategic opponents of change, but they have been able to watch amusedly from the sidelines, while we mobilise against each other.”

Shortly, a summit meeting of the tripartite alliance leaders is to take place. The SACP has decided to take these concerns there. But then it has also decided on its approach at this summit. The SACP Central Committee report stated: “The agenda of the SACP is unabashedly socialist. It is not a secret agenda. Nor is it an attempt to hijack the national democratic struggle. The president of ANC said last week, at the COSATU Central Committee meeting, that a strong COSATU and a strong SACP contribute to building a strong ANC and vice versa. We agree. A strong SACP is a communist SACP. What else can it be? We are profoundly convinced that the ongoing national democratic revolution needs to have a continuous injection of socialist ideas. The assessment of whether progress is being made or not needs constantly to be subjected to a collective, working class, political analysis.

“By the same token, we are persuaded that the task of all genuine socialists in our country is to be in the midst of the vast national democratic revolutionary transformation underway—and led by the ANC.”

It is under these concrete conditions that the SACP has decided to firmly remain within the alliance, strengthen it and at the same time continuously inject socialist ideas into its agenda.

The Congress had a heavy agenda—a new updated programme, a new constitution, and a programme of action. On the very opening day, the SACP reiterated its commitment to Marxism-Leninism, to its past, present, and confidence in the future.

Wild speculations put to rest

On July 2, putting to rest all speculation raging in the media, the 10th SACP Congress unanimously elected its office bearers. According to its constitution, its central office bearers are directly elected by the Congress. Outgoing general secretary Charles Nqula was elected chairman, Geraldine Fraser deputy chairperson, outgoing acting chairman Blade Nzimande was elected general secretary, Jeremy Cronin was re-elected deputy general secretary and Taba Majumadi treasurer.

The South African media, unable to reconcile to the important role of the communists, indulges in wild speculation and

story-telling. Apart from stories of the young-old divide in a scramble for the SACP leadership, the media is full of stories about the break-up of the tripartite alliance of the ANC, SACP and COSATU. President Nelson Mandela's speech at the Congress on the opening day was headline news, posed as heralding the end of the alliance. Yet the leaderships of all the alliance partners have not only pledged to maintain and strengthen their unity, but also emphasised that anything to the contrary would only disrupt the national democratic revolution now underway.

In contrast to the first day, the second day saw a more reasoned and mature exchange of views amongst the partners. ANC president Thabo Mbeki—South Africa's vice president and most likely future president in case Mandela refuses to stand for a second term—passionately argued the same point that Mandela had expressed on July 1, calling for restraint in airing differences publicly. Replying to this, SACP deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin reiterated the communist resolve to strengthen unity but not at the expense of abdicating the SACP's communist identity. He recalled that since the 1930s it was the communists who consciously strengthened this unity under ANC's leadership to successfully conduct the liberation struggle. But this unity can be strengthened only if all partners grow stronger. And the SACP can strengthen itself only by reiterating its communist identity which means that while thousands of communists today are in governmental positions at various levels, the SACP shall resolutely oppose all anti-people policies, particularly the neo-liberal economic policies.

Similar was the opinion expressed by the SACP chairman while opening the Congress. He said: "It is not our detractors or cynics that will take us to the goal of socialism. It is the majority of the working people." And their interests can never be compromised by the communists. Dispelling doubts that this means opposing the ANC-led government, he said: "*Our independence is not defined by opposition to the ANC, but by our independent vision of socialism.*"

In sharp contrast to Mbeki's intervention was the COSATU leaders' intervention who lambasted the neo-liberal policies and detailed the growing unemployment and consequent miseries of

the vast majority of the people. Clearly, the main issue confronting the SACP is how to translate the political victory over apartheid into real meaningful liberation of the people. Here the class battle comes into sharp focus. The white minority that still controls the decisive levers of the economy, and the minuscule emerging black, Asian and coloured bourgeoisie, opt for the neo-liberal policies to consolidate their position. This can potentially negate the hopes and aspirations of the millions of South Africans that made the victory over apartheid possible. To discuss this and other ideological and organisational issues, the Congress divided itself into six commissions for its third day.

The basic question passionately debated at the SACP Congress related to the party's role in the current national democratic revolution with the objective of mobilising the society for socialism. This was discussed in all its implications for the party—its programme, constitution, party building, and concrete programme of action today.

Basic issue today

At the time of the 1994 general elections the SACP had decided to carry forward in the new phase the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance that had decisively defeated apartheid. Accordingly, its members contested elections as ANC nominees. The ANC got 63 per cent of the vote and 252 MPs in a house of 400 under the proportional representative system. Of these, 80 are members of the SACP; many of them are cabinet members. In fact, the newly elected deputy chairperson, Ms. Geraldine Fraser, is the minister for welfare.

The basic issue, therefore, is: as members of the government and ministry, how to influence the direction of the ongoing national democratic revolution towards socialism?

At the political level, there is unanimity of opinion that the alliance should not only continue but be strengthened in order to consolidate the gains achieved so far—particularly in the light of the fact that the white minority almost completely controls the economy as well as the bureaucracy.

However, practical problems arise regarding the policies the government must follow. The basic difficulties, as reported

earlier, relate to the economic policy. The SACP's direction is contained in the slogans "Build People's Power!" and "Build Socialism Now!"

The first slogan is intended to strengthen participatory democracy through decentralisation. The draft programme document summed up this objective by stating: "*We need the state to transform the society and society to transform the state. It is this essentially dialectical interaction between the state and popular forces in society that lies at the heart of our concept of a national democratic developmental state.*" At the level of political structures, transformation of the democratic state to socialism should be capable of mobilising "the resources of our society, including the energies, organisational capacity and expectations of the historically oppressed majority, and indeed of the totality of our population."

Conceptual problems

It is the second slogan of building socialism now, that is causing conceptual problems. How can socialism be built under a capitalist state? One delegate, part in jest but more in seriousness, quipped: "Why stop at socialism, why not say, Build Communism Now!"

To be fair to the SACP, its conception of the slogan must be properly understood. The SACP categorically asserts that "Socialism requires working class hegemony." Further, it defines socialism as a transition period (*à la* CPI(M)'s 12th Congress ideological resolution) from a class society to a classless society of communism. As to the character of such a society, it says: "A Socialist Democracy is a society in which the socialised sector of the economy is predominant; democratic, rational planning is increasingly possible; a democratic culture and [democratic] practices reach deeply in every sphere of social life; and in which there is substantial equality in income, wealth, power and opportunities for all its citizens, and thus a growing freedom for all."

However, while stating that this is a society of the future, the SACP argues that socialism is not a vision or ideal located in some distant future. "As the SACP we seek actively to build

capacity for socialism, momentum towards socialism, and elements of socialism, here and now.” What does it mean?

The effort seems to be to build a social order and transform it in such a manner as will help the future socialist state. This, at the level of the superstructure, includes building People’s Power and “socialising the management function,” i.e., reforming it from bureaucratic control and neo-liberal management while it firmly remains under state control. Likewise, for the private sector, issues like workers’ participation in management from bottom to top.

At the level of the economic base, the immediate objectives are to protect and build a strong public sector and extensive cooperative sector; to ensure workers’ control over social capital (pensions and provident funds); to make health care, education, housing, etc., the state’s responsibility and not reduced to commodities, etc.

A glaring omission in the document is the question of land reforms, though it was referred to in another context.

However, for the moment the SACP seems to be more engaged in a defensive battle to defend the existing gains from neo-liberal attacks. The positive programme is the strategy for the future.

On the international situation

“The third world is allowed to run the global race, but is always only allowed to come third,” stated the SACP Central Committee’s report to the 10th SACP Congress, concluding its analysis of the current international situation and global economy. The report noted that the decade of the 1990s has seen deepening impoverishment and marginalisation of the third world. The globalisation of finance capital has led to an intensification of exploitation of the third world as a whole, of the working people globally.

The report noted that the basic critique of capitalism, made by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* 150 years ago, “remains absolutely pertinent.” Capitalism revolutionises production and technology but always at the behest of private

profits, not to meet social needs. When there is only social need and no profit, capitalism is at best slow on the scene.

The widening of global economic disparities, the rolling back of the welfare state in the advanced capitalist countries, the evaporation of the dreams of former socialist countries of a rapid advance into the capitalist first world, and the sublimation of the illusion that the third world countries can advance by tying themselves to the apron strings of imperialism as evident from the collapse of the South East Asian tigers—all represent a new offensive of capital.

Solidarity with progressive trends

The report, however, noted that these international trends are not going unchallenged. “*Everywhere there is a renewal of Left, progressive and alternative movements and campaigns.*” Noting many important waves of popular struggle, the report emphasised the trends in the African continent: “One of the citadels of neo-colonial power, Mobutu’s Zaire, has been swept away in a wave of popular struggle. Elsewhere, democratic forces from Nigeria to Swaziland are mobilised in a common rejection of corrupt, undemocratic, neo-colonial rule.”

Expressing solidarity with all these struggles and reiterating its commitment to strengthen internationalism and anti-imperialist struggles the world over, the Congress paid special tribute to Cuba’s exemplary defence of socialism and successful resistance against the U.S. machinations. True to the character of the South African comrades, the entire Congress rose in unison, singing songs, to hail Cuba.

An important aspect of its internationalist commitment was the SACP’s approach to an African Renaissance. The ANC, at its National Conference in 1997, had resolved to struggle for such a renaissance. In this regard, the report stated: “Our own country, our own region and our continent confront the choice between continuing to be little more than neo-colonial enclaves in an otherwise entirely marginalised continent, or struggling for people’s control and people-driven continental reconstruction and development. If the latter is what is understood by the African

Renaissance, then the SACP expresses its wholehearted support for such a vision.”

Discussion on the economy

On the fourth day, the SACP Congress spent long hours discussing and adopting the reports of the various commissions. Predictably, a large part of the discussion centered on the report of the commission on economic transformation.

Much of this revolved round the SACP's attitude towards the macro economic policy for Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). Much of the discussion was a repetition of the debate reported earlier. The issue was finally clinched by the adoption of a special resolution on GEAR whose sense was that the SACP opposes the overall thrust of this policy and that the party should engage the alliance partners, government and the mass democratic movement in a dialogue to evolve an alternative and appropriate macro-economic policy.

This debate once again underlined the complex nature of economic problems the South African people face. The Reserve Bank of South Africa has recently issued its report where it noted that employment in the last four years has actually declined in absolute terms. Along with this, the report noted a sharp decline in domestic savings, meaning a large-scale flight of capital from South Africa. Obviously, the white minority big business and the multinational corporations are transferring profits out of the country. This repatriation of massive profits is naturally leading to a sharp fall in investment. This in turn reduces productive activity, leading to sharp falls in employment levels.

Thus, far from generating fresh employment opportunities, vital for meeting the newly aroused aspirations of the majority of black people, existing employment is sharply falling. More than 50 percent of the black population is estimated to be unemployed. This is exacerbating the crime situation with insecurity growing, particularly in cities. Not surprisingly, the white minority uses this situation, which was in the first place caused by their own past and present policies, to mount fresh ideological attacks against the blacks and to “demonstrate” their so-called incapacity to govern.

Issue of land reforms

However, problems of such dimensions cannot be solved unless the vital issue of land reforms is addressed. As pointed out earlier, this does not find the necessary attention it requires. Agriculture in South Africa, after mining of precious metals and minerals, was the mainstay of white minority economic consolidation and found its consequent political reflection in apartheid. This also brings to mind how indentured labourers from India were taken, centuries ago, by the British colonialists to work in the sugar cane fields.

Even today, agriculture is not based on peasant farming. The landlords in South Africa, organising agricultural production on modern capitalist lines, have not left an inch of available land free. Under these circumstances, distribution of land to the landless black can only mean distribution of infertile waste lands, which makes no significant dent in poverty or employment level—unless, of course, the government is able to legislate some form of a land ceiling.

Politically, however, the ANC government seems unable to move in this direction given the white minority domination over the economy and bureaucracy. This remains a major problem. No reasonable amount of industrialisation (even if it were to take place in these unlikely circumstances) can absorb such high levels of unemployment.

Further, under pressure from international capital and the IMF, the government is adhering to a regime of high interest rates to woo international capital. As is its wont, such capital only flows to speculative channels. This is making South Africa more vulnerable to international finance capital. Since the SACP Congress began, the value of the South African currency, the rand, fell from 5.6 to a dollar to 6, i.e., an effective devaluation of nearly ten per cent in five days!

Keeping high interest rates to woo international capital means maintaining a low rate of inflation so as not to erode the real rate of profits of speculators. This, however, is done by reducing government expenditure in the name of curtailing budget deficits. This leads to a deflation of the economy which reduces both employment and domestic demand and, more importantly,

creates a vicious circle—a fall in demand, leading to a fall in employment, a further fall in demand, and so on.

Sounds familiar to all of us in India! This only emphasises the commonality of the IMF prescriptions irrespective of the political or other status of the country. The singular motive of international finance capital is to maximise its speculative profits by enmeshing the world into its vortex.

But in the South African case, the mismatch is that an ANC government is facilitating this process. More so because the ANC received universal unequivocal support of the progressive world in its fight against apartheid—a struggle that was wedded to the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle.

Consciousness of historic role

The SACP is caught in this very crossfire. It was the South African communists who consciously promoted the line of broadest unity of anti-apartheid forces. Following the Communist International's call to the communists to work with other anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist forces, South African communists, consciously since 1935, worked for such a unity and nurtured it subsequently. It was the SACP that provided the morale whenever the spirit of the struggle seemed to be flagging. It is they, today, who have the responsibility to keep the unity of the tripartite alliance alive while demarcating themselves from the anti-people economic policies. This is the crucial area where the SACP needs to assert its politics; only the future will tell us of the SACP's success in tackling this situation with maturity.

Conscious of this role, the delegates elected, on July 4, a new Central Committee through secret ballot. Earlier, the Congress had, after thorough debate, decided to limit the size of the Central Committee to thirty, with a provision to co-opt another five members. Accordingly they had to elect twenty-five members to the Central Committee, as they had already elected the five office bearers who automatically became Central Committee members. Thirty-two comrades contested for the twenty-five positions. The penultimate day of the Congress began with the announcement of these election results.

BOOKS AND IDEAS

by *Herbert Aptheker*

On Martin Luther King Jr.

A precious gift has come to all of us in the appearance of a recent book, *A Knock At Midnight* (New York: Warner Books). This is a collection of the great sermons of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Its chief editor is Clayborne Carson, a professor at Stanford and director of the King Papers Project.

The first sermon, "Rediscovering Lost Values," is an early one, a pre-Montgomery King, but it already rings with the prophetic fervor that becomes overwhelming by the time of one of his final warnings in Washington, at the end of March 1968, less than a month prior to his assassination.

Each sermon is introduced by an outstanding religious leader. To me the most moving of these introductions are those by Dr. Vincent Harding, a friend of King, now a professor at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, and that by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a leader of the revolution in South Africa. The passion of King and his talent make these sermons works of art. In several places I had difficulty continuing to read because of the tears welling up in my eyes.

All the sermons reflect King's genius, but his later and especially the final ones show deep insight and prophetic vision. He knew how difficult was the struggle for justice and decency, but he knew also that participating in it was the most fruitful way to live.

I have misgivings with certain aspects of the book, such as the uncritical presentation of Thomas Jefferson. It is significant and

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illuminating to remember that the author of the Declaration of Independence held scores of slaves to the end of his life and that he did not hesitate to punish those who rebelled. Nor should one forget that when Benjamin Banneker, a free Black man who helped lay out the District of Columbia, tried through a letter to help Jefferson overcome his racist blindness, Jefferson responded with formal courtesy but did not take seriously Banneker's point. King devoted some time to Lincoln and his greatness—of which patience and understanding were not the least hallmarks. But he omits the fact that Lincoln *forcibly* rejected the slaveholders' effort at destroying this republic. Here Lincoln met counterrevolution with fierce and protracted violence.

In his insistence that violence is always wrong, King cites the universality of the language of our Declaration of Independence. But that Declaration was an act of *war*, a bitter war lasting several years. Jefferson thought that force was justifiable and necessary; King avoids commenting on that reality.

Violence certainly is painful, but forcible resistance to abominable violence is not abhorrent. Often it is necessary; the examples of slavery and the Civil War and Nazism illustrate that reality.

In the struggle against the monstrosity of racism, King's genius was vital. That his efforts were not fully successful reflects upon the limitations of this nation. But that they were partially successful is a precious reality. Building upon his life is a splendid heritage. Carrying on his struggle for justice and liberation is the finest tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.

John Brown—again

Since 1859, when John Brown delivered an armed blow against slavery, scarcely a year has gone by without a book about the Old Man appearing, and 1998 was no exception. A portrait appears now in the form of a lengthy historical novel, *Cloudsplitter*, by Russell Banks (New York: Harper Collins).

The *New York Times* book reviewer (22 Feb. 1998) aptly summarizes:

This book's battles are fought mostly in [Brown's son] Owen's head, and its fundamental issue isn't slavery but the challenge of living with a fanatic.

“Fanatic, madman, lunatic”—these are the predominant characterizations of John Brown as presented in many books about him, mostly by white authors. But it is not the view presented by W. E. B. Du Bois in his life of Brown, first published in 1909 and republished by him (with significant additions) fifty years later. In the preface to the 1909 volume, Du Bois emphasized that the essence of Brown’s meaning lay in his identification with the African American. Wrote Du Bois: “Brown came to Black people on a plane of perfect equality—they sat at his table and he at theirs.”

This identification won the hearts of Black people. Telling was Frederick Douglass’s account of his secret meeting with Brown shortly before the assault on Harper’s Ferry. Douglass brought Brown money contributed to him by Black women in Brooklyn. Accompanying Douglass was Shields Green, a fugitive slave in his twenties whose wife was still in slavery.

Brown told Douglass of his plan and urged him to join. Douglass raised perfectly logical objections: Brown had not examined the Harper’s Ferry armory; Brown had not considered that his assault upon it would mean federal soldiers immediately confronting him; Brown had not given the relatively few slaves of the area notice of his coming. Still Brown persisted: “Your joining the effort will help arouse the nation to the enormity of slavery.” But Douglass, citing his relative youth, refused. As he began to leave he observed that Shields tarried. Douglass turned to him and said, “Shields, are you coming?” “No,” said Green, “I believe I’ll go with the Old Man.” He did and died with him. What a tribute to Brown—that this Black fugitive saw in this old white man one whom he could trust with his life!

That is the essence of John Brown—complete identification with the Black human being, utter detestation of slavery as besmirching the Republic, and preparation to give his life in a blow against the monstrosity.

Du Bois ended his great 1909 book by quoting the final words of John Brown: “You may dispose of me very easily—I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled—this Negro question, I mean. The end of that is not yet.”

True in 1909; true in 1999. Yes, John Brown still challenges “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” And books still appear belying this fundamental truth, with authors being blinded by the racism spawned by slavery and yet besmirching the nation.

The rich and the poor

The disparity between the incomes of Black and white families in the United States always has been great. It narrowed slightly in the 1960s due to the fierce struggles of that decade, but now it is again growing and is so large as to be scandalous.

In February 1998 the White House Council of Economic Advisors reported that the gap between African American and white families is greater today than it was in the 1970s. The report stated that the typical Black household had a net worth of about \$4,500, which was one-tenth that of the average white household. A slight decline in poverty among Black children has occurred recently, but the percentage of Black children who are poor stands at 40%—a frightful figure.

A month later a report from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation stated that there has been a growth in the African American middle class, but found that racial inequalities in income are “becoming deeply rooted in American society.” The report affirms, “The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and minorities are suffering disproportionately.”

Among industrial nations, this report finds that the United States is first when it comes to wealth inequality. In urban schools students typically do not reach what are called “basic” achievement levels. One in three African American men is in prison, on parole, or on probation. The United States imprisons more people than any nation in the world.

The report shows that while some progress came by the close of the 1960s, this stopped by the closing years of the 1970s and the nation “began in many ways to go backward.”

Overall, this is the reality, says this semiofficial report: The top one percent of the population has more wealth than the bottom ninety percent; this fact, it affirms, “places the United States first among industrial nations when it comes to wealth inequality.”

A new study has appeared—there have been many—of the realities of life in urban America: *On the Outside Looking In* by

Christine Rathbone (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press). This time predominantly Black and Hispanic teenagers in Manhattan's West Side High School are examined. Shortage of funds means that this school is on three noncontiguous floors in an office building with no gym and no cafeteria. It has a shortage of text books. In this so-called high school, actual illiteracy is commonplace. The author develops profound sympathy for the students and rejoices at victories like learning how to read. But she does not spare her readers knowledge of the devastation caused by impoverishment and racism in this so-called "high school" in the middle of a city in the richest nation in the world.

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Book Reviews

Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States. By Paul C. Mishler. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. 172 pages, cloth \$52; paper \$20.

Paul Mishler has written an excellent survey of the efforts made from the 1920s through the 1950s by the Communist Party and other left groupings to counter the ideological indoctrination to which all children in the United States are subjected in the school system in particular and the media in general. The absence today of comparable institutions serves as a reminder of the disastrous consequences for the U.S Left of the postwar anti-Communist hysteria and McCarthyism.

A distinctive feature of the Communist Party's approach to this problem was to couple the ideological education of the children with semiautonomous political activity. To further this activity, the Young Pioneers of America, organizationally independent of the Party, was established in the 1920s with a troop structure that paralleled the Boy Scouts. In contrast to the Boy Scouts at that time, however, the troops had their own democratically elected leadership that planned their participation in the class struggles of the day. Although advisors from the Young Communist League or Communist Party helped guide the activity, the Pioneers planned their activities with minimal interference from the advisors, who would facilitate activities, rather than direct them.

The Pioneers' activity included leafleting at schools and participating in demonstrations, strike picket lines, and celebrations

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sponsored or supported by the Communist Party. The autonomy that characterized the Pioneers enabled them to reach out to other children, forming, for example, organizations among the children of strikers as a step toward involving entire families in these struggles in various parts of the country. Mishler notes that the Young Pioneers had even become the dominant children's organization in rural Plentywood, Montana.

An important part of the education of the Pioneers was their absorption of working-class culture through songs, skits, games, and literature. The book brought back memories of my own experience. Mishler gives four lines of the first song I remember, as a Young Pioneer at the age of six in 1932:

One, two, three,
Pioneers are we.
We're fighting for the working class
Against the bourgeoisie.

I would have given the next two lines as well:

Four, five, six,
Happy Bolsheviks!

Marching in their Pioneer uniforms in the May Day parades was always the big event of the year for me and my fellow Pioneers, often with our own fife and drum corps.

One of the most important aspects of the Communist children's movement was its identification with the struggle against racism, something that was entirely absent from the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, as well as from most of the non-Communist Left. Young Pioneers were deeply involved in antisegregation struggles and such campaigns as that to free the nine African American youths framed on a rape charge in Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1931. All of the Scottsboro defendants, except for the youngest—a 13-year-old boy—had been sentenced to death. Indeed, the first political slogan that I learned as a Young Pioneer was "Free Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro Boys" [Mooney was a West Coast labor leader framed on a murder charge in 1916].

An important part of this immersion in working-class culture was the network of Pioneer summer camps, in which more structured ideological education was possible.

Mishler gives particular attention in his study to the interplay between the non-English-speaking radical organizations and their ethnically integrated counterparts associated or allied with the Communist Party. Those familiar with its history will be aware that the CPUSA arose largely out of the merger of two Communist parties, one based in branches that conducted their meetings in English and the other consisting largely of non-English-speaking ethnically organized branches. Although finally merged into one party, tension between the two organizational forms continued to express itself in various ways through the 1920s and 1930s, diminishing as the English-speaking membership became dominant in numbers. By the midtwenties, the Workers Party (which formally changed its name to the Communist Party in 1929) largely conducted its activities in English, and the Young Pioneer organizations were instructed to conduct their meetings in English. Nevertheless, according to Mishler, the Young Pioneers sometimes had branches organized along national lines. He cites an International Children's Day celebration in Minneapolis for which the Pioneers of the Finnish Workers Club prepared a dramatic presentation jointly with those of the Jewish Workers Club.

In 1934, as if in anticipation of the emergence of the Popular Front strategy of 1935, the Young Pioneers of America was dissolved and the junior section of the newly organized Communist-led International Workers Order (IWO), based largely, but not exclusively, on ethnic branches, became the primary organization for the activities of Communist children. Although the IWO was primarily a cultural, mutual-aid organization that provided medical insurance to its members, its political orientation was guided by the Communist Party members in its leadership, the membership base itself being broader Left. By the late 1930s and through the 1940s, its youth sections became increasing "Americanized" culturally, in line with the CPUSA's slogan, "Communism is Twentieth-Century Americanism." My own club of IWO juniors in their early teens in the residential area of Coney Island (around 1938), although sponsored by the IWO section called the Jewish People's Fraternal Order, had no activities that could be identified specifically with Jewish

culture. As an indication of this “Americanization,” Mishler notes that at the opening of the 1938 IWO softball tournament, Joe DiMaggio threw out the first ball. (At that time, by the way, our club was picketing Ebbets Field in Brooklyn to demand that the Brooklyn Dodgers hire a Black baseball player.)

Mishler’s discussion of the young people’s camps operated by the Communist Party and the Party’s association with the broader Left-led camps unfolds an important piece of this century’s U.S. cultural history. He shows how these activities gave rise to the emergence of the Left-led folk-song revival of the late 1930s through the 1960s.

Mishler’s concluding chapter deals with the legacy of the attention given by the Communist movement to the cultural/ideological development of its children, many of whom played leading roles in the civil rights, free-speech, and antiwar movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Mishler has made a significant contribution to the history of U.S. radicalism in the twentieth century.

Erwin Marquit
School of Physics and Astronomy
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Seed of the Fire: A Novel. By Virginia Warner Brodine. New York: International Publishers, 1996. 310 pages, cloth \$18.95; paper \$9.95.

While Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes* has had remarkable and well-deserved success, *Seed of the Fire* may not receive the acclaim and recognition it deserves. While McCourt’s jaunty response to a situation of pain and humiliation caught the imagination and sympathy of the U.S. reading public, Brodine’s story of a broader struggle against oppression and exploitation may not reach as wide an audience. History—historical reality and

moral lessons—is not our national strong point. One can only hope that Brodine’s skill and talent will break this cultural barrier.

A brief sketch of the Irish immigrant experience begins the novel. We see and feel the pain of separation from family, friends, and land. But some must escape the harshness of the perils of unrewarding agriculture, the uncertainty of even meager crops. The other escape is from the struggle with the Sassenach—English invaders and occupiers.

The material possessions of the immigrants are few. Their main baggage is memory and hope. The central figures of the novel, Dan and Mary Griffen, are shown leaving the region of West Cork knowing they may never return to the scenes of joy, fear, and tragedy. They hold the thread of a promised job and stories of a golden America.

On arriving in Ohio, they find work available, but brutally harsh work at minimal wages. We are made to feel the sweat and strain of the canal men, as well as their heat exhaustion. But need drives them to the task each new day—sometimes days of ten to sixteen hours. The tactics of the bosses, from the banking investors to the foreman, are presented. The foreman is under pressure to exploit the workers. He presents himself as their friend (and sometimes he was), but he mixes appeals to their trust with threats, and he cracks the whip of firing and later the sophisticated tactic of blacklisting.

The conditions on the job that challenge Dan Griffen and his crew are matched by the living conditions. Mary Griffen assumes leadership in the community. She is the heroine of this novel. The primitive conditions do not defeat her. She achieves the victory of being a good wife, mother, and neighbor. The terror of canal fever brings her immediate response. She nurses the sick and buries the dead with no fear, but competence and loving care. She takes on the task of chief cook for the crew until she is fired for “uppity” insolence in facing up to Jamie, the foreman.

The courage of Irish women has come to the fore throughout their tormented history, from Easter Week to today’s Bernadette McAliskey. The courage is not just physical but intellectual. Mary Griffen effortlessly overcomes the racial barrier when she

encounters Tessa, the Black cook in the property owner's home. Brodine presents the Black woman as heroic in her own way. Instead of prejudice and ignorance, friendship and mutual respect blossoms. They help each other because they have the intellectual and emotional openness to see that what they have in common is far more substantial than the difference of color. Both have suffered; both share the struggle to survive.

Tragically, Tessa's future at the end of the novel is less promising than Mary's. She remains an African American in the United States, while the Griffens can take a chance on owning land and can count on the possibility of help from countrymen who have gained a foothold on the ladder to success in the new land, the goddess Fortuna.

Those interested in labor history will find this story includes the account of Irish laborers transferring their tactics from conflicts on Irish soil to a new scene. When the exploitation of the workers reaches a breaking point, they organize. The key is secrecy and loyalty. In the United States, as in Ireland, the effort can be betrayed by the hated informer, the labor spy.

Another facet of this book is its presentation of Irish culture. The charm of the novel is enhanced by the author's authentic use of the idiom and rhythm of Irish speech. The blessing, cursing, and keening are essential parts of the tradition. Gaelic words and phrases season the immigrants' speech. The power of the absent church is portrayed. (The home mass was a part of my mother's frontier experience.) The music and dancing—the *ceili*—were and are sustaining factors in a harsh and threatening surrounding.

This is no *Little House on the Prairie*; not all is sweetness and light. There is the greed, deceit, and ruthlessness of the bosses. The workers are vulnerable to drink and violence. Some even succumb to racism in its worst form. There is a Zolaesque quality to the author's indignation.

Instead of just listing briefly credits and sources, Brodine gives us five pages detailing her methods and sources. It is her recipe for producing an American epic. William Dean Howells in his later years, asked by an aspiring writer how to begin, responded that historical research should initiate a great novel. Following his own advice, he went to Ohio historical records and

created *The Leatherwood God*. Howells also knew that ethnicity and universality are compatible. Critics, on the other hand, have been guilty of narrow parochialism. Great works such as Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* and Meyer Levin's *The Old Bunch* were neglected by the larger public.

The words that Faulkner used in *The Sound and the Fury* in his chapter on Dilsey, the Black servant, startled this reader: "They endured." Faulkner sums up the Black experience in that awesome, mysterious statement. Brodine's story fleshes out in Irish immigrant ordeal what they endured. *Tiocfaidh ar la*. Our day will come.

Robert D. Lippert

Department of English, Emeritus

University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota

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ABSTRACTS

Gisela Blomberg, “Flora Tristan: A Predecessor of Marx and Engels”—Flora Tristan (1803–1844) was a militant French feminist and socialist who can be considered to be a predecessor of Marx and Engels. The legacy of her activity and writings has been unjustly ignored in the Marxist literature. Her linkage of women’s equality to working-class issues led to a rupture of her ties with the bourgeois feminism of the 1830s and 1840s. In her 1843 call for a universal union of male and female workers, Tristan included demands for full legal and organizational equality of men and women; the right to work; worker participation in the management of the workplace; universal education; and educational, cultural, and recreational facilities under the control of workers.

Paul Burkett, “Marx’s Analysis of Capitalist Environmental Crisis”—Many have argued that Marx had such faith in technological advance that he disregarded or downplayed capitalism’s tendency to undermine its own natural conditions. Closer investigation reveals that Marx analyzes two kinds of capitalist environmental crisis: (1) crises of capital accumulation due to materials shortages, rooted in the imbalance between capital’s growing material requirements and the limited natural conditions of materials production; (2) a more general crisis in the *quality* of human development, stemming from the industrial division of town and country with its disturbances to the circulation of matter and life forces. Both kinds of crisis restrict human development by reducing the quality and quantity of appropriable natural wealth, and both implicate the acceleration of material throughput in service of capital accumulation. Marx’s analysis is easily extended to incorporate synthetics, the global scope of environmental crisis, and the entropic effects of rising energy throughput.

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Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, “C. L. R. James, Blackness, and the Making of a Neo-Marxist Diasporian Historiography”—

C. L. R. James was one of the most significant activist-intellectuals of the twentieth century and arguably the most important Marxist theoretician of African descent. His life provides a window through which we can examine the complicated interactions between race and class consciousness in the making of a radical Black intellectual. This article (1) traces his development into a Black Marxist historian; (2) examines his application of historical materialism to diasporan history; and (3) explicates the relationship between his historical studies and political theories. The author contends that the transformation of his racial identity established the context for his construction of the neo-Marxist theory of Black self-emancipation.

Sitaram Yechury, “Bringing Socialism to the National Agenda of South Africa”—

This report by the delegate of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to the 10th Congress of the South African Communist Party (SACP) discusses the strategy of the SACP outlined at the Congress for bringing about the eventual socialist transformation of the country. The Congress reaffirmed the Marxist-Leninist character of the Party. The precondition for such a democratic development strategy is the preservation of the tripartite alliance among the SACP, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and the African National Congress (ANC). Some tensions have arisen within the alliance in connection with proposals of a neoliberal character from within the ANC for national macroeconomic development. The efforts by the beneficiaries of apartheid wealth and privilege, allied with powerful external forces, to goad the SACP into playing brinkmanship with the alliance must be repulsed.

ABREGES

Gisela Blomberg, «Flora Tristan : une précurseur de Marx et Engels»—

Flora Tristan (1803-1844) était une féministe française militante et socialiste qu'on peut considérer comme prédécesseur de Marx et Engels. L'héritage de son activité et de

ses écrits ont été injustement ignorés dans la littérature marxiste. Les liens qu'elle faisait entre l'égalité des femmes et des questions importantes à la classe ouvrière menaient à une rupture de ses rapports au féminisme bourgeois des années 1830 et 1840. Dans son appel de 1843 pour un syndicat universel des ouvriers et ouvrières, Tristan a également demandé l'égalité organisationnelle et légale des hommes et des femmes; le droit au travail; la participation des ouvriers dans la gestion des usines; l'éducation universelle; et des équipements éducationnels, culturels, et sportifs sous le contrôle ouvrier.

Paul Burkett, «L'analyse de Marx de la crise environnementale capitaliste»—Bien des gens ont proposé que Marx croyait tellement aux avances technologiques qu'il a négligé ou qu'il a minimisé la tendance du capitalisme à saper ses propres conditions naturelles. Une enquête plus détaillée révèle que Marx analyse deux types de crise capitaliste environnementale : (1) des crises de l'accroissement du capital dû à l'insuffisance matérielle, enracinée dans le déséquilibre entre les exigences matérielles croissantes du capital et les conditions naturelles limitées de la production matérielle; (2) une crise plus générale dans la *qualité* du développement humain, provenant de la division industrielle entre la ville et la campagne avec ses dérangements à la circulation de la matière et des hommes. Tous les deux types de crise retiennent le développement humain en réduisant la qualité et la quantité des biens naturels appropriables, et tous les deux impliquent l'accélération de la consommation matérielle au service de l'accumulation du capital. L'analyse de Marx s'étend facilement à incorporer les synthétiques, la portée globale de la crise environnementale, et les effets entropiques de l'utilisation croissante de l'énergie.

Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, «C. L. R. James, la négritude et la création d'une historiographie néo-marxiste de la Diaspora»—C. L. R. James se comptait parmi les intellectuels activistes les plus significatifs du vingtième siècle et on peut soutenir qu'il est

le théoricien marxiste le plus important d'origine africaine. Sa vie offre une fenêtre par laquelle nous pouvons examiner les interactions compliquées entre la conscience de race et de classe dans la formation d'un intellectuel radical noir. Cet article (1) trace son développement comme historien marxiste noir; (2) examine son application du matérialisme historique à l'histoire de la Diaspora; et (3) explique les rapports entre ses études historiques et ses théories politiques. L'auteur prétend que la transformation de son identité raciale a établi le contexte pour sa construction de la théorie néo-marxiste de l'auto-émancipation noire.

Sitaram Yechury, «L'introduction du socialisme à l'ordre du jour national en Afrique du Sud»—Ce rapport par le délégué du Parti Communiste de l'Inde (marxiste) au 10e Congrès du Parti Communiste de l'Afrique du Sud (SACP) discute la stratégie du SACP telle qu'elle a été résumée au Congrès pour effectuer la transformation socialiste éventuelle du pays. Le Congrès a réaffirmé le caractère marxiste-léniniste du Parti. La condition préalable d'une telle stratégie démocratique du développement est la préservation de l'alliance tripartite parmi le SACP, le Congrès des syndicats sud-africains (COSATU), et le Congrès National Africain (ANC). Quelques tensions se sont levées dans l'alliance suite à des propos d'un caractère néolibéral venant de l'ANC pour le développement national macroéconomique. Les efforts des bénéficiaires des biens et privilèges de l'apartheid, en alliance avec des forces puissantes extérieures, à talonner le SACP à jouer à la stratégie du bord de l'abîme, sont à repousser.