



**THE MAKING  
OF THE BLACK  
RADICAL  
TRADITION**



**LOCK**

**MARX-**

**ISM**

**CEDRIC J.  
ROBINSON**

**FOREWORD  
BY ROBIN  
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**WITH A NEW  
PREFACE BY  
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# CHAPTER

## C. L. R. JAMES AND THE BLACK RADICAL TRADITION

# 10

### **Black Labor and the Black Middle Classes in Trinidad**

In the warm Caribbean Sea, where colonies of African labor were compressed on to the Antilles—the tropic archipelago that serpentineed its way from the open claw of the Yucatan and Floridian peninsulas of Central and North America to the northern crowns of Venezuela and Colombia in South America—the same Black antilogic extended itself into the twentieth century. In the earlier century, it had destroyed the plantation economy upon which the momentum of African slavery rested.<sup>1</sup> But the Africanization of the islands—their transformation from forced labor into peasant economies where daily life was mediated by the cultural syncretisms of the diaspora—had been incomplete. Political power had been transferred from the venal order of the plantocracies to an uneasy accommodation between the imperial bureaucracy at the metropolises and the highest strata among the entrenched white minorities. Even Haiti, to employ the language of Rainboro again, was witnessing the destruction of democracy by property in fear of poverty.<sup>2</sup> In the British possessions, racial arrogance assumed the posture of trusteeship over the islands' Black populations and determined its proper structure should be that of the system of crown colonies.

The Colonial Office soon realized . . . that the West Indies were quite unsuited for self-government. How could assemblies so blatantly unrepresentative of the bulk of the population be granted responsibility, asked the veteran civil servant, Sir Henry Taylor? As the islands were fast becoming financial liabilities, the old representative

constitutions became a bar to good government. The new free populations could never be “represented” under existing conditions. Thus the idea took root that the West Indies should be persuaded to reconsider their constitutions and become crown colonies.

By 1875 all the Caribbean colonies except Barbados (to which might be added the Bahamas and Bermuda) agreed to give up their old constitutions and become Crown colonies. In 1868 the colonial secretary announced that the new legislative councils would all have a basic feature: “that the power of the Crown in the Legislature, if pressed to its extreme limit, would avail to overcome every resistance that could be made at it.” In other words, the British government had stepped into the West Indies to protect the population from the power of the former slave-owning class.<sup>3</sup>

The alternative, as was demonstrated by the Black rebellion in Jamaica in 1865, was to suffer the colonial oligarchy’s inadvertent but constant encouragement to violent Black militancy.<sup>4</sup> This, we may surmise, was an unacceptable political risk to the architects and guardians of the Empire whose over-extended charge had already absorbed the disastrous mutiny in the Indian sepoy army in 1857 (and the subsequent occupation of India by British troops),<sup>5</sup> and was as well a senior and chartered member in the European “scramble” for Africa and Asia. Neither the English people themselves nor the masses of imperial subjects could be expected to perpetually accede to the imperial myth of civilizing in the face of the overtly selfish and catastrophic preoccupations of white settler colonists.

For the Black peasants and workers in the British West Indies, however, the “new imperialism” that displaced the Caribbean oligarchy was by far the more formidable enemy. While government power in the British home isles ricocheted between the Liberal and Conservative parties, as it had after the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884, while state policy staggered between “free trade, free production, the freedom of nationalities” (that is, home rule for the Irish and Welsh), and anti-imperialism<sup>6</sup> and the alternative of aggressive, jingoistic imperialism, popular support for a global British presence was measurably inconstant. Even a Select Committee of the House of Commons, as early as 1865 had “recommended that most British colonies should be given up as soon as possible and that they should be prepared for independence.”<sup>7</sup> An industrialized Britain was then more than a match for its European rivals and its domestic economy reflected its international domination of commerce. But in the last decades of the nineteenth century, “Britain was and knew herself to be threatened by ‘empires.’”<sup>8</sup> Sandwiched between the diplomatic and mercantile momenta of Germany, France, Russia, and the United States, overdrawn by financial scandal and mismanagement, the weakened British economy and a restive public encouraged and compelled the imperialist faction that, until then, could only pursue its vision with restraint. Even the final liberal government of the nineteenth century (1892–95) was overwhelmed by the imperialist ethos.<sup>9</sup> By the fateful Conservative victory in 1895,

imperialism had come to dominate the public mind. With its offer of new markets for a diminished trade, new lands for British settlement, with its new nationalistic “half-penny” press and its imperialist literati and intelligentsia,<sup>10</sup> the imperialism of the businessman’s Parliament, masked as national interest and destiny, seemed to fulfill the wildest fancy:

No doubt [in 1891] the population of Great Britain barely exceeded 38,000,000, but there were nearly 2,000,000 British subjects in Cape Colony and Natal, over 600,000 in New Zealand, over 3,000,000 in Australia, and 5,000,000 in Canada. Add to these figures the Indian subjects of Great Britain, almost 300,000,000, and a further 46,000,000 in the remaining territories under some form of British rule or influence and the total amounted to 394,600,000. What other State could hope to rival such a figure. . . . The area of the Empire was also on the increase: in September 1896, a statesman calculated that in twelve years 2,600,000 square miles had been added to it—that is to say twenty-four times the area of Great Britain. In 1895, it was 11,335,000 square miles. A few more annexations and it would amount to a quarter of the entire land surface of the globe.

This was the object which the convinced imperialists deliberately pursued.<sup>11</sup>

For another two generations, the lives of the West Indian masses and those of other colonial subjects would be directly affected by representatives of a ruling class bathed by its self-manufactured glory and whose monumental conceit hid from it the source and scale of the horrors with which it would be associated. As if to satisfy Marx’s contempt and add to Engels’s class humiliation, the English bourgeoisie and its European confederates sank into the historical swamp of pretentious imperialism and counter-preening nationalisms from which the carnivore of global warfare disgorged. Reckless provocations, diplomatic inanition (followed by its military genus) and intoxications with empire inexorably led the ruling classes of Europe to that destruction of their means of production and their labor forces that they signified with the name “World War.”

In Trinidad, during the seven-plus decades between the formal abolition of slavery in the British possessions and the slaughter of a generation in the early twentieth century, the massive withdrawal of labor from the plantations by the Africans and Creoles<sup>12</sup> had led to some dramatic countermoves on the part of the sugar estates companies and the planters.<sup>13</sup> With the moral pretensions of the abolitionists still resonating in public discourse, the former owners of Black labor resorted to pseudo-Calvinist rhetoric to elicit support from Parliament for their next exercise in the exploitation of labor. Their leading spokesman, William Burnley, lamented

the paucity of the labouring population, which prevents competition among them; and they are enabled to make more money than is good and advantageous for them which I consider to be the great cause why, instead of advancing in moral improvement, they are rather retrograding at the present period; for I hold that it is

impossible for any moral improvement to take place in a community where the want of a good character and a good reputation interpose no serious obstacle to a man gaining a lucrative employment.<sup>14</sup>

New immigrants, they all agreed, would be necessary. The competition of immigrant labor would discipline Trinidad's Black workers to reasonable wages and regular hours of labor. This would, in turn, make it possible for British sugar producers to undermine the slave sugar of their foreign competitors in the European market. "Free Trade, after all, meant the free movement of men as well as of goods."<sup>15</sup>

There were three possible sources of immigrant labor that were immediately at hand: the other islands of the West Indies; the free Negroes of the United States; and the Africans liberated by the Royal Navy from "illegal" slave ships along the West African coast. None of these sources, however, proved sufficient. Although an estimated 10,278 West Indians immigrated to Trinidad between 1839 and 1849 (in the same period another 7,582 went to British Guiana), and between 1841 and 1861, 3,581 liberated Africans from Sierra Leone and St. Helena arrived, and an even smaller number of free Blacks made their way from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, the lure of Trinidad's sugar fields was shortlived, the sources of immigration too irregular.<sup>16</sup> Somewhat tardily, indeed, following the leads of Parliament, the East India Company and the planters of British Guiana, the Trinidadian ruling class and its metropole partners turned their attention to India.<sup>17</sup> For the next 70 years, from 1845 to 1917, Indian indentured labor became the basis for the sugar plantations of western Trinidad.<sup>18</sup> "Indians, both indentured and free, had become the backbone of Trinidad's plantation labor force by about 1860."<sup>19</sup>

About 143,000 Indians came to Trinidad up to 1917. Immigration began in 1845; there was a break in 1848–51; then from 1851 right down to 1917 Indians arrived steadily each year. Between 1845 and 1892, 93,569 labourers came, channelled through two main Indian ports, Calcutta in the North, and Madras in the South. The great majority, however, came from Calcutta and after 1872 there were no more arrivals from Madras.<sup>20</sup>

They were, for the most part, peasants from the northeast of India, the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), and Bihar, and amounted to a mere fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Indians who abandoned the region in the nineteenth century's last decades to find their ways to the West Indies, Fiji, Natal, and Nepal.

This area, the seat of ancient cultures, was overpopulated and economically depressed in the later part of the nineteenth century. The extreme heat in the summer, the floods in the monsoon leading to whole-scale destruction of crops, and the recurrent famines made life difficult under the British rule. Rural indebtedness was appalling and agriculture was "by no means an easy business by which to make a living." Moreover, the Mutiny-cum-Revolt of 1857 had a disastrous socio-economic effect on this region.<sup>21</sup>

Propelled by these circumstances into the far extremities of the British colonial system, they brought with them their culture: their languages, their castes, their music, and their religions.<sup>22</sup> And up to the First World War, it came to be accepted that they served in Trinidad as a “substantial counterpoise against troubles with the negroes and vice versa.”<sup>23</sup> “Coolie” labor, to be sure, had provided momentary succor for sugar production. And Trinidad’s economy, diversified by cocoa production and, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, oil and asphalt industries,<sup>24</sup> rode above the depression that visited the other West Indian monocultures in the last quarter of that century. But a deeper social process was occurring, one beneath the apparent antipathy between “coolie” and Creole. Where they were thrown together, the existential vice of labor was drawing East and West Indian into certain cultural approximations:

In 1865 a fierce riot over precedence broke out between the Indians of Woodford Lodge and Endeavour Estate at Chaguanas. Creoles and Chinese went to the help of their workmates; loyalties to the estate transcended those of race in the fighting. . . .

Rowdy elements among the Creoles were joining in the Hosein celebrations in the 1850s. For them it was like Donnybrook Fair where people went in the hope of a fight. But also Negroes began to take a more respectable part in the procession as drummers for which they were paid in rum or cash, and, as in Mauritius in the 1850s, the *taziyas* were sometimes borne by Negroes.<sup>25</sup>

The significance of these events should have been clear, but the whites were deceived by their discourse of domination.<sup>26</sup> That error was of strategic proportions in a society that by the opening decades of the next century was 4 percent white, 15 percent mulatto, 1 percent Chinese, and 80 percent of African and East Indian origins and descent.<sup>27</sup>

The dead season of collective resistance in Trinidad, the time up to the earliest years of the twentieth century, was both real and partially imagined. Because “the Creole population had nearly all withdrawn from the estates,”<sup>28</sup> it was certainly not until they were drawn as workers to the docks, the railways, and public works, and to the oil fields and asphalt works that they would obtain an effective cause and objective circumstance to openly challenge the crown and the white minority. Meanwhile, they claimed their liberation in other ways:

Black labourers in Trinidad, during this period, reacted to the oppressive society they lived in by attempting to reduce their dependence on the plantation, by seeking to create an area of freedom for themselves, however limited. They tried to become peasants or artisans; if they failed, they drifted to the towns. In the towns, constant urban unrest reflected an awareness of oppression. The bands fought each other because they were unable to attack the real sources of their misery or powerlessness, not because they were unaware of them.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the ideologic and phatic ingredients of the radical tradition of the slaves was preserved by the African Creoles (who were augmented by the liberated Africans) in

their culture: their language, the *patois* “not understood by most policeman, magistrates, and officials”;<sup>30</sup> their profane festivals such as Canboulay and the jamaet Carnival where thinly veiled disregard for Anglican and Catholic moralities abound; in their syncretistic religious sects and noisy wakes; in their music and dance.<sup>31</sup> These evoked hostility and disgust among the Anglicized colored classes, shocked the upper-class whites, and inspired discomfort in official Trinidad. In 1868, *obeah* was outlawed; in 1883, drum dances (Calenda, Belaire, Bongo) were prohibited as “immoral”; in 1884 and 1895, the festivals or aspects of them (band stick-fighting, the wearing of masks) were suppressed. In time, too, it was believed and expected, public primary education would eradicate “Creole.” But the verse of Calypso suggested the spirit of liberation, the sense of dignity was unextinguishable. There one found a quiet but steeled expression of outrage.

Can't beat me drum  
In my own, my native land.  
Can't have we Carnival  
In my own, my native land.  
Can't have we Bacchanal  
In my own, my native land.  
In my own, native land.  
In me own native land,  
Moen pasca dancer, common moen viel.<sup>32</sup>

Indian indentured workers, who had now assumed the economic role of the slaves (and in the eyes of many, white and Creole, their status as well),<sup>33</sup> were understandably somewhat distant from collective resistance. Within 20 years of the arrival of the first 225 Indians on the *Fatel Rozack* in 1845, according to Donald Wood, their semi-segregated communities and villages had quite successfully begun the replication of much of the social striation of the subcontinent: vast chasms had been opened between the prosperous who had obtained land, shops, or managed to become money-lenders, and the “coolie” masses.<sup>34</sup> Within 20 more years, in several hundred villages woven around sugar and their own industries of wet rice, maize, and peas,<sup>35</sup> the blanket of their transferred society muffled their response to being cheated, abused, extorted, and exploited by white and countryman alike. Periodically there were labor strikes on the estates (a series of them occurred in the 1880s), but the initial expression of Indian consciousness was liberal rather than resistant.<sup>36</sup> Chinese workers, their importation abortively curtailed to less than 2,500 in total, racially melted into one or other of the Black populations or acquired their independence through crafts, the cultivation and marketing of garden vegetables, or further migration.<sup>37</sup>

For the whites, particularly the more numerous and culturally dominant “French Creoles,”<sup>38</sup> the crown, its governor, its colonial administration, and its Legislative Council were an annoyance. Elective representation would have been preferable, but the provision of an abundant supply of cheap labor in Indian immigration had largely calmed their concerns about the crown colony system. Still, the “birds of passage,”

that is the colonial officials and their families, were extended status among the upper classes in deference to their positions. For the most part, neither their culture in the national sense and in its amount, nor their education or descent qualified them for acceptance otherwise.

The governing power was, of course, "North European"; and the superstructure of government, law, and education derived from Britain. But there was an important elite group which cherished ideas and values which were Latin and French rather than Anglo-Saxon. White Creoles of French and Spanish descent outnumbered the English Creoles and British residents, and were almost certainly more influential in setting the tone of the society.<sup>39</sup>

And not until the aristocratic French Creoles were thoroughly Anglicized and substantially displaced by British capital and British upper-class families in the late nineteenth century was there any possibility of a whole-hearted reception in that quarter. The British faction (primarily English and Scottish), which during the decline of French Creole sugar fortunes in the mid-century had for a time sought to forcibly Anglicize and subordinate the "foreign" Creoles, had been subdued since Governor Gordon's regime in the late 1860s.<sup>40</sup> They were content to leave the settling in of the white hierarchy to time.<sup>41</sup> But despite their differences, the white elite held the line on two matters. The first involved representative government. The elite would raise this issue on those occasions when their more aggressive ambitions were thwarted by the crown's executive or by the British Parliament. The Water Riot of 1903 and the troubles simultaneous to the First World War were just such occasions.<sup>42</sup> The second was the colored and Black middle classes, a presence increasingly difficult to ignore. They "represented a greater threat to continued white control of the society [than the black and Indian masses], even though their numbers were relatively few; they held the key to the political and social future of Trinidad, and some far-seeing Trinidadians realised it."<sup>43</sup>

Only the colored and Black middle classes, whose development had been in a sense interrupted only to build up to a crescendo in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, were as a class unassuaged by Trinidad's prosperity and uncomfortable in the island's catacomb of class and racial relations.

[T]he coloured and black middle class consisted of two distinct groups. There was a small group of families of mixed African and European descent who were the descendants of the French free people of colour settled in Trinidad since the 1780s. Secondly, there were the people, both black and coloured, who can be described as "self-made." They were the descendants of the Trinidad ex-slaves, or of "Liberated" African immigrants, or of immigrants from the eastern Caribbean. And they had acquired their middle-class status mainly through their command of British culture and their white-collar jobs.<sup>44</sup>

The second of the colored classes, having come into being while Trinidad was under a British colonial order, was never allowed to obtain the prominence of the Romans,

Philips, Angernons, Montrichards, Maresses, and the Beaubruns of the first (which P. G. L. Borde, the French Creole historian, had described as having “formed a second society parallel to the first; and no less distinguished than it”).<sup>45</sup> In British Trinidad, the colored and Black middle classes had fallen from their previous heights, ceasing to be able to claim a share in the island’s upper classes:

Probably a majority of educated black and coloured men in this period were civil servants. With commerce virtually closed to them, teaching, the professions, and the service offered the only viable alternatives, except for the relatively small number of coloured planters. Only a small minority could hope to obtain the university education essential for law or medicine. This left employment in the service, including teaching in the government schools, as the only source of acceptable white-collar jobs.<sup>46</sup>

The distribution of privilege and advantage in a racially determinant society frustrated their larger vision: the achievement of equality with the white oligarchy, the acquisition of power. Like their counterparts among Black petit bourgeoisie elsewhere, they resented the arbitration to which the belief in Black inferiority assigned them.

A correspondent to the *Telegraph* wrote that no amount of wealth or education enabled a man in Trinidad to enjoy social prestige, if he lacked “the correct tinge.” Planters of wealth, merit, and character were “tabooed,” being without the ‘colonial passport’ . . . more potent than education, habits, principles, behaviour, wealth, talent, or even genius itself. People outside the West Indies had no idea of the actual position of the educated man “of the *incorrect* tinge.” It was especially galling when coloured men of “good” family were subjected to discrimination.<sup>47</sup>

And so, though it had not been necessary to respond to Anthony Trollope when in 1859 he published his anti-Black tome, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, by 1888 when Froude’s *The English in the West Indies* appeared, a challenge from the newer elements of the middle class was imperative.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly enough it came from a Black and not a colored representative, and was fundamentally radical. Jacob Thomas,<sup>49</sup> in his *Froudacity: West Indian Fables Explained*, set before his readers a broader canvas than the “childish insults of the blacks” with which Froude had been intellectually satisfied:

The intra-African negro is clearly powerless to struggle successfully against personal enslavement, annexation, or volunteer (or fight for) protection of his territory. What we ask, will in the coming ages be the opinion and attitudes of the extra-Africans: ten millions in the Western hemisphere, dispersed so widely over the surface of the globe, apt apprentices in every conceivable department of civilised culture. Will these men remain for ever too poor, too isolated from one another, for grand racial combination, or will the naturally opulent cradle of their people,

too long a place of violence and unholy greed, become at length the sacred watchword of a generation willing and able to conquer or perish under its inspiration.<sup>50</sup>

Thomas, whose parents had been slaves only a few years before his birth, who had himself grown up and taught in the pathetically inadequate little country schools that had been distributed by the government among the rural Black masses, and whose command of the *patois* had resulted in his writing *Creole Grammar* in 1869, spoke not for the middle class. He rejected their ambition and the master from which it was copied. The middle classes, however, could not reject him. He was the most important Black intellectual in Trinidad during his lifetime. His "efforts were important to the coloured and black middle class, for they seemed to show that this group was more cultured than the dominant whites, who were dismissed as being crassly materialistic. Thomas' literary activities indicated that non-whites were the cultural leaders."<sup>51</sup> And though the majority of the colored and Black middle classes were pained to lever their lives, their families and their reputations away from association with the Black masses, a few Black men of letters, like Samuel Carter and Joseph Lewis (the editors of *New Era*), William Herbert (editor of *Trinidad Press*, and then *Trinidad Colonist*), H. A. Nurse (George Padmore's father), and the barrister Henry Sylvester Williams, achieved, respectively, closer approximations to Thomas's comprehension.<sup>52</sup> Williams, of course, the primary initiator of the Pan-African Conference that convened in London in July 1900, came closest.<sup>53</sup> He chose to realize Thomas's ideal. He and Thomas, along with other explicitly political figures in the colored and Black middle classes (Henry Alcazar, Edgar Maresse-Smith, and C. Prudhomme David) active in the official affairs of Trinidad, tentatively began the radicalization of the island's public discourse. It was, however, a second thrust of the middle classes that set the tone and lent that discourse a particular character.

The society arranged by these generations of the colored and Black middle classes of Trinidad was a chiaroscuro of the white upper classes. Its priorities had little to do with the elements of the radical tradition sounded in Thomas's *Froudacity*.<sup>54</sup> In their society, the shadings of privilege and status, acceptability and tolerance, the play etiquette of Brown upon Black were as subtle a social art as could be devised with the cultural, historical, political, educational, familial, and financial materials in their hands. One almost had to be a Trinidadian, one with a special intuition at that, to know what was required and expected, what indeed were the possibilities for any of their young launching into the orbit of adult intercourse. While the white elite seemed to possess the convenience of bold denominational distinctions, the more easily measured amassed acreage or fortune, and the property of names that could be located in the historical traditions frankly elaborated in Trinidadian literature and journalism, the standard deviations among the colored and Black middle classes were many times of such tiny gradation that an instinctive social subtlety was a *sine qua non*. Gross disparities, to be sure existed, but they occurred too infrequently for custom or habit to be unerring guides. In any case, the highly esteemed place of

the light-complexioned elite was easily enough achieved over a generation or two. Though its value was not appreciably lessened by “mixed” marriages, simple color was considered a crude and rude measure at best. Any Black aspirant sufficiently talented, ambitious, or sponsored by professional training or family affluence could ensure his/her grandchildren would be phenotypically eligible for the pinnacle of intra-class recognition. There was though the ceiling beyond which the Black could not rise. Anticipating that closure, many of the Blacks, particularly the intelligentsia, sought to substitute education and literature as currency in the inter-class exchange. Where Thomas had succeeded, others naturally strove, hoping to draw the legitimizing attentions of white and colored alike and thereby rolling aside the stone of caste for themselves and hopefully for their children. The highest coin, as was the case among the Victorian English intelligentsia itself, was literature. It was the mark of the educated Black:

Probably because education was so important in their rise in status, the members of this group attached great weight to cultural and intellectual life. They boasted of their command of British culture, their ability to speak and write “good” English, their interest in things of the mind. It was literacy, familiarity with books, the possession of “culture” which mattered, as well as an occupation which involved no manual labour. These things were more essential criteria for membership of the middle class than wealth or lightness of skin. . . . In one sense they formed an intelligentsia, in that they took pride in being the most cultured sector of the community, although they were not part of the ruling class.

They attached so much importance to culture because they had no other valuable and valued possession to hold on to. . . .

It is not surprising, therefore, that members of the coloured and black middle class often took the lead in literary or intellectual activities.<sup>55</sup>

In journalism and literary criticism they grew to be supreme, outdistancing the whites in their celebration and message of the most advanced social ideas, literary forms, and preoccupations available to an English-speaking public. Thus, when it was their turn to articulate a challenge to colonialism and racial domination, their superior education and intellect were both their rationale and their tool.<sup>56</sup> They were, indeed, the basis for the nationalism that C. L. R. James exhibited in his first political work, *The Case for West-Indian Self Government*:

On his arrival in the West Indies [the colonial official] experiences a shock. Here is a thoroughly civilised community, wearing the same clothes that he does, speaking no other language but his own, with its best men as good as, and only too often, better than himself. What is the effect on the colonial Englishman when he recognises, as he has to recognise, the quality of those over whom he is placed in authority? Men have to justify themselves, and he falls heavily back on the “ability of the Anglo-Saxon to govern,” “the trusteeship of the mother country until such

time" (always in the distant future) "as these colonies can stand by themselves," etc., etc.<sup>57</sup>

For a community such as ours, where, although there is race prejudice, there is no race antagonism, where the people have reached their present level in wealth, education, and general culture, the Crown Colony system of government has no place. It was useful in its day, but that day is now over. It is a fraud, because it is based on assumptions of superiority which have no foundation in fact. Admirable as are their gifts in this direction, yet administrative capacity is not the monopoly of the English; and even if it were, charity begins at home, especially in these difficult times.<sup>58</sup>

## **The Black Victorian Becomes a Black Jacobin**

Cyril Lionel Robert James was born in Trinidad in 1901, "the son of a Black Trinidadian school teacher, grandson just over half a century after the abolition of slavery of a sugar-estate pan boiler and an engine driver."<sup>59</sup> His earliest years were in Tunapuna, a village of 3,000 by his account, situated half way between the capital at Port of Spain to the west and Arima to the east. It had been along the road between Port of Spain and Arima that the ex-slaves had founded many of their new villages in the 1840s.<sup>60</sup> In the valleys around Tunapuna, "liberated" Africans had settled, planting their gardens in the hillsides, and 30 years later, in the 1870s, it was one of the sites where the dancing and fighting bands with their territorial and semisecret codes had proliferated. Tunapuna had "boasted gangs called Sweet Evening Bells, Tjepins, Greyhounds, Island Builders."<sup>61</sup> As a child in a slightly more respectable Tunapuna, James recalls that he had quite early begun to absorb much of the survival ethic that had attached itself to the Black middle class of which he was a part:

I was about six years of age when I got hold of my mother's copy of Shakespeare. There were 37 plays in it, or 36, and there was an illustration in the front of each play. The illustration had below it the Act and the Scene which it illustrated and I remember the illustration before *Julius Caesar* saying, "How ill this taper burns." Now I could not read a play of Shakespeare but I remember perfectly looking up the Act and Scenes stated at the foot of the illustration and reading that particular scene. I am quite sure that before I was seven I had read all those scenes.<sup>62</sup>

Notwithstanding the availability of adventure stories in his mother's library, the child's reading was hardly what Richard Small described as "the normal youth's interest." James was being trained in and was exhibiting the lessons of his class. In that prescribed inventory there was contained also the Puritan importance of class propriety:

I was fascinated by the calypso singers and the sometimes ribald ditties they sang in their tents during carnival time. But, like many of the black middle class, to my

mother a calypso was a matter for ne'er-do-wells and at best the common people. I was made to understand that the road to the calypso tent was the road to hell, and there were always plenty of examples of hell's inhabitants to whom she could point.<sup>63</sup>

The sexual and moral customs of the Black lower classes, for all their vitality and attractiveness, amounted to a rejection of English bourgeois sensibility, they were an affront to the morality of the colonial model set before the natives. Unquestionably, in a Black family that knew the rules, this implicitly political statement had no place in the future of a properly instructed young Black man. "Good" society, white, Black, and colored, conspired against what it interpreted as Dionysian, Satanic humors. Cricket, however, was lionized in the culture of James's class. Indeed, from all indications, its presence pervaded every strata of Trinidadian society. Richard Small reported:

The membership of the various clubs was determined by occupation and social class and at that time, even more sharply than now, that discrimination would be virtually the same as differentiation according to color. Queens Park Club, the controllers of cricket in the island, were white and wealthy; Shamrock, Catholic French Creole traders and cocoa planters; Maple, middle class of brown skin; Shannon, the Black middle class version, white collar office types, and teachers; and then Stingo, the tradesman, artisan, worker. . . . Add to that that almost everybody played or took an interest in cricket and that it was played for up to eight months of the year, and some estimate of its potential for social and sublimated social expression will be grasped.<sup>64</sup>

Cricket was James's father's game, his uncle Cuffie's and Aunt Judith's game, his cousin Cudjoe's game; an interest even to be found in his grandfather, the extraordinary Josh Rudder. It was a game of the English school boy. "Recreation meant cricket, for in those days, except for infrequent athletic sports meetings, cricket was the only game. Our house was superbly situated, exactly behind the wicket."<sup>65</sup> For James, then, it was a natural obsession; one to which he would turn as he sought to make his way in the adult world; and one to which he would return when he sought to make comprehensible his life and the colonial world in which he was raised.

The Trinidad of James's young life was already showing signs of popular agitation. In 1897, following the models of the English Workingmen's Association of the 1830s and the Leeds Workingmen's Parliamentary Reform Association organized in 1861, the Trinidad Workingmen's Association was founded. With a membership of 50 skilled and unskilled workers, which included Black carpenters, masons, tailors, and at least one pharmacist and one chemist, it was, according to Brinsley Samaroo, the first such organization in the British West Indies:

[T]he Trinidad body emerged as one concerned with both trade union and political pressure group functions. It was founded just before the visit of the 1897 Royal Commission, sent to the British West Indies to examine the seriousness of the sugar depression and to recommend measures for bringing relief to the colonies. The

Association's first president, Walter Mills, a pharmacist, gave evidence before the Commission. . . . Mills complained against the insanitary conditions of the colony's towns, dwellings and estates . . . press[ed] for a reduction in taxes, especially on foodstuffs and agricultural implements used by the labouring people . . . better transport facilities, the setting up of minor industries, the introduction of Savings Banks and the further opening of Crown Lands. In addition, the Association was strongly opposed to state-aided Indian immigration which, Mills claimed, increased the competition for the "starvation wages paid on sugar estates." . . . Above all, Mills said, the colony should be granted elective government.<sup>66</sup>

The Association soon lapsed only to be reactivated, affiliating itself in 1906 with the new British Labour Party.<sup>67</sup> Now with hundreds of members, it began to function as a representative of the working classes, campaigning for labor reform and agitating for shorter working hours, sick leave, and against the "color bar," expanding its membership by attracting the "traditionally apolitical" East Indian worker. The colonial government was unsurprisingly hostile, advising the Colonial Office of the Association's dubious character:

Its members, some of whom are of but doubtful reputation, are for the most part not workingmen, and have no stake in the colony. They have adopted their title simply with the object of securing recognition by the English Labour Party and thus obtaining for themselves an importance that they would not otherwise possess.<sup>68</sup>

But Europe and the colonial governments of the British and French empires were soon caught up in the First World War. It would prove to be a historical force from which the empires would never recover. The war itself, over and above the toll it exacted in Europe (but not entirely European), was a fundamental contradiction to the *raison d'être* of the British Empire: the assumption was that "the defence of the self-governing colonies from external attack and the maintenance of sea-power were British responsibilities."<sup>69</sup> During the war, India alone with 1½ million men and women in British uniforms of one sort or another supplied more troops than all the other dominions and colonies (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa were dominions) together.<sup>70</sup> And what India had done for Britain, Africa did for France: "Over 545,000 African native soldiers," wrote George Padmore, "were employed by France, chiefly as shock troops in stemming the tide of the German advance during the most critical periods of the war."<sup>71</sup> Tens of thousands of Africans also served with Germany, Belgium, and British forces in East Africa, while from the United States, of the 342,277 Black troops who served, 200,000 fought with the French army, uniformed as French soldiers.<sup>72</sup> From the West Indies, troops were also mobilized, most of them, some 20,000, serving in the British West India Regiment. However, there had been problems. For some, certain considerations overrode loyalty to Britain:

In Trinidad the press used the term "better class" to describe the whites and the lighter-complexioned mulattos who constituted the merchant and planter class. In

Barbados the term used was “the best class.” When enlistment of recruits started in 1915 the “better class” young men throughout the British West Indies refused to join, except as officers, in the same contingents as the black soldiers. Arthur Andrew Cipriani, a Corsican creole who was leading the campaign for recruits complained that “our better class young men are shirking” from joining the public contingents “because of the lamentable question of colour which lies at the bottom of everything in these parts.” . . . Some “better class” soldiers came to London and joined British regiments, the majority joined with “better class” soldiers in the other colonies to form the Merchants’ and Planters’ Contingent.<sup>73</sup>

But the advent of the Great War had brought to the fore a more considerable and mean enemy of colonial interests:

[N]ot everyone was prepared to make sacrifices for the general good. The colony’s merchants saw the start of the war in Europe as a signal for an immediate increase in prices. On the very day of the government’s announcement that the war had started in Europe, *The Port of Spain Gazette* reported that prices had risen steeply.<sup>74</sup>

This inflation of prices broke the backs of the Black working class in the island’s cash economy, and was the primary cause of the strikes that followed: oil workers struck in 1917, railworkers, scavengers, stevedores, sweepers, sugar, and dock workers in 1919, asphalt and railworkers again in 1920.<sup>75</sup> And the Trinidad Workingmen’s Association, joined after the war by returning ex-soldiers enraged over the racial discrimination they had experienced in military service,<sup>76</sup> was at the center of the agitation. This was the basis of the social force that Captain Cipriani, returning from the same war, would lead into the Trinidad Labour Party in 1932:

Contact with Europe during the first World War gave West Indian radicals a first-hand opportunity to learn from Europe and so the postwar period was increasingly “Socialist” in the way that West Indians understood the term. Cipriani wore a red button on his lapel and many of his followers wore red shirts in imitation of the “Reds” of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.<sup>77</sup>

In these years, Trinidad had become a part of the postwar Black movement that within twenty or so years would pull all the empires apart:

[J]ust as the 1914–18 war saw the Indian nationalists make great strides, so there were important stirrings elsewhere. In 1915, riots in central Ceylon led an alarmist governor to proclaim martial law and to imprison many notable Sinhalese. They included Don Stephen Senanayake (later the first prime minister), who never quite forgave the British. In 1918 the Ceylon National Congress was formed following the Indian precedent. In the same year as the Ceylon riots an abortive rising in Nyasaland, led by the Rev. John Chilembwe, demonstrated the growing passion of African nationalism. . . .

In West Africa the Indian nationalists had eager admirers. When India was invited to the War Cabinet in 1917 they cried: “Why not West Africa as well?” As

India and the Dominions were invited to the peace conference in 1919, Dr. Nanka-Bruce of the Gold Coast sent resolutions to the peace powers so that “the voice of West Africa” could also be heard at Versailles. The first [*sic*] Pan-African Congress met in Paris in 1919. . . .

At the same time in Kenya the Kikuyu began to organize political associations. Lives were lost in Nairobi riots in 1922. . . . Similarly, a few political movements were growing in the West Indies, such as the “Representative Government Association” of Grenada, founded in 1914, and Captain Cipriani’s “Trinidad Workingmen’s Association,” which flourished at the end of the war. Marcus Garvey of Jamaica founded the Negro nationalist “Universal Negro Improvement Association,” which had brief international fame at the end of the war.<sup>78</sup>

James, however, though he was aware of these events, kept his distance. “In politics I took little interest.”<sup>79</sup> He had finished school in 1918 and was content to tend his two passions, his two disciplines: cricket and literature.

I had a circle of friends (most of them white) with whom I exchanged ideas, books, records and manuscripts. We published local magazines and gave lectures or wrote articles on Wordsworth, the English Drama, and Poetry as a Criticism of Life. We lived according to the tenets of Matthew Arnold, spreading sweetness and light and the best that has been thought and said in the world. . . . Never losing sight of my plan to go abroad and write, I studied and practiced assiduously the art of fiction.<sup>80</sup>

He had, to be sure, made choices, political choices, with which he would find it increasingly difficult to live as the forces of the world bore down on him and the Black radical tradition acquired its revolutionary form. Still, his earliest direction was in contrast to that of Malcolm Nurse, his childhood playmate.<sup>81</sup> Nurse, matriculating at the Roman Catholic College of Immaculate Conception and the private Pamphylian High School, also graduated in 1918. For a few years, he, as did James, would work as a reporter (for the *Weekly Guardian*). In 1925, he would emigrate to the United States, and within two years of his arrival he would join the American Communist Party. It was then that Nurse would become George Padmore. But even before leaving Trinidad, he had developed an open antagonism to imperialism. The *Guardian* had provided him with an object:

The job bored him, there was no scope for thoughtful writing and he detested his editor, Edward J. Partridge, an Englishman who demanded subservience from his black staff. When Partridge died, Nurse wrote that he had been “one of the most arrogant agents of British Imperialism I have ever encountered. I held him in utter contempt, and had hoped to use my pen in exposing his role before the colonial workers and peasants whom he oppressed through his dirty sheet the *Guardian*.”<sup>82</sup>

James and Padmore would meet in London in 1932.<sup>83</sup> By then James would have just become a Trotskyist, and Padmore was barely a year from the end of his work with the Communist movement.<sup>84</sup> Their political collaboration would begin in 1935.

While still in Trinidad, James had taught in school, played cricket (for Maple), and worked as a part-time reporter. As a Black journalist on the island in the early 1920s, he witnessed the maturing of nationalist politics under Cipriani. Richard Small, however, suggests that: "It was not until 1924 that James started paying anything like close attention to [Cipriani's] speeches and not till 1931 that he became a follower of Cipriani."<sup>85</sup> It was his conversation in 1923 with Learie Constantine, the cricketer, that had unnerved him, and, perhaps begun the process:

I was holding forth about some example of low West Indian cricket morals when Constantine grew grave with an almost aggressive expression on his face.

"You have it all wrong, you know," he said coldly.

"What did I have all wrong?"

"You have it all wrong. You believe all that you read in those books. They are no better than we."

I floundered around. I hadn't intended to say that they were better than we. Yet a great deal of what I had been saying was just that.

Constantine reverted to an old theme.

"I have told you that we *won* that match. We *won* it."

The conversation broke up, leaving me somewhat bewildered.

"They are no better than we." I knew we were man for man as good as anybody. I had known that since my schooldays. But if that were the truth, it was not the whole truth.<sup>86</sup>

James's politics like those of Cipriani, however, remained within the parameters of parliamentarianism. He would need Marxism, he maintained later, to break with that assumption.<sup>87</sup> By the late 1920s he was a nationalist, but though he had read Garvey's *Negro World*, had interviewed Garvey himself when the latter visited Trinidad after his expulsion from the United States, and was also familiar with some of Du Bois's early works, James's vision had still only partially progressed beyond the ideological tradition in which he had been reared: "I hadn't really the faintest idea about Black politics then, nor was there any talk about any African or Black revolt."<sup>88</sup> His commitment was to fiction writing, an intent that had born some fruit in the publication of some of his short stories, and the development of the manuscript for what would become *Minty Alley*.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, his political apprenticeship had begun and he was preparing to write a biography of Cipriani:

I began to study the history of the islands. I collected *Hansards*, old White Papers, reports of Royal Commissions. There were plenty around which nobody wanted. It was all very simple and straightforward. For background I had the Whig interpretation of history and the declarations of the British Labour Party. For foreground there were the black masses, the brown professional and clerical middle classes, the Europeans and local whites, Stingo and Shannon, Maple and Queen's Park. My hitherto vague ideas of freedom crystallized around a political conviction: we should be free to govern ourselves.<sup>90</sup>

It was then that Constantine, the more disruptive political force in James's social milieu, intervened. Constantine wanted to write a book, one which from his experience of playing cricket in England since 1929 might express his insights into the game and English society. He invited James to England to collaborate with him on the project. In March of 1932, James left for England. He would not return to Trinidad for 26 years.<sup>91</sup>

## **British Socialism**

The socialist traditions in the British metropole to which Anglophone Blacks of Africa and the Caribbean were exposed differed decidedly from those of their Francophone and American counterparts. For one, the history of the development of socialist movements and socialist thought in Britain had been marked by unique historical events: the formation of the first significant industrial working class; the defeat of the revolutionary and then the parliamentary reform (Charter) movements in the early nineteenth century; British domination of international capital and trade during most of the century; the ambiguous presence of Marx and Engels in Britain from the mid-nineteenth century until their deaths in 1883 and 1895, respectively; the founding of the First International in 1864; the appearance of the new British Empire, and the concomitant intensification of Anglo-Saxonism as a national ideology. One of the historical consequences of these several events was the persistence into the twentieth century of a working-class movement with strong trade unionist sympathies:

[In 1895] the total membership of the unions of the United Kingdom, including those which were not represented at the Congress [of British Trade Unions that year], was estimated at one and a half million—that is, say, about a fifth of the entire number of adult male workers. There was nothing like it in any other great nation. Moreover, an estimate of the strength of the working class not confined to a general view of the country as a whole, but distinguishing between the different districts and branches of the national industry yielded even more striking results. . . . In Lancashire, Durham, and Northumberland the trade unions contained at least a tenth of the entire population, and half the adult male workers. It would be true to say that for the Lancashire cotton spinner or weaver, the miner in Durham or Northumberland, membership of a trade union was in practice compulsory.

Indeed the size of this army of workmen was perhaps the best security that the unions would pursue a prudent policy. In a highly civilized country there are not a million or a million and a half revolutionaries; and of the British unions, about the year 1895, the most conservative and cautious were precisely those whose membership included the largest proportion of the men employed in the trade.<sup>92</sup>

This impulse was joined by the formation of specifically political and electoral arms of the socialist movement: the Independent Labour Party (founded in 1893) and the Labour Party (circa 1900). Together, the trade unions and the parliamentary parties had a decisive effect on worker militancy:

While there is evidence to suggest a degree of working-class mistrust of the state in its everyday forms, the British labour movement had tended to insert both its industrial and political activities within the existing national political structure; in Gramscian terms it lacked a sufficiently hegemonic perspective to challenge the central institutions of state power.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, English nationalism or Anglo-Saxonism, so powerful an ideological phenomenon during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to some extent insulated British socialists from a ready acceptance or submission to socialist currents originating from the continent.<sup>94</sup> The political and ideological impacts of organizations like the Marxian Henry Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation (1883), which exhibited its founder's hostility to trade unionism,<sup>95</sup> William Morris's "patrician" Socialist League (1885), and the Socialist Labour Party (c.1900) inspired by the visionary American intellectual Daniel DeLeon, were of only indirect significance.

Prior to 1917 there were only two Marxist organisations of any consequence. These were the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) and the Socialist Labour Party (S.L.P.). The B.S.P. was the direct descendant of the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) founded in 1883 under the leadership of Hyndman, having been formed in 1911 as a coalition of the S.D.F., sections of the non-Marxist I.L.P., the *Clarion* movement and various local socialist societies. The membership of the S.D.F. during the nineteenth century never exceeded 4,000; the B.S.P.'s initial nominal membership of 40,000 declined to no more than a third that number by the outbreak of war, and active membership was considerably less. The S.L.P. had split away from the S.D.F. at the turn of the century. It was purer in doctrine and correspondingly much smaller; the membership never exceeded a thousand, the majority concentrated in Scotland.<sup>96</sup>

More well-known (and affluent) was the Fabian Society (Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant, Graham Wallas, Sydney Olivier, G. D. H. Cole, and Margaret Cole) whose tendencies were broad enough to encompass imperialism, state socialism, and anarchy.<sup>97</sup> Their mark would be more enduring in British thought, not the least for their establishment of the London School of Economics.<sup>98</sup> But it was "Labour Socialism," the anti-Marxist, reformist, ethical, and pragmatic resolution to the class war, that directed the policies of the British trade unions and the Labour Party, and to which British workers mostly attended:

By their very nature the rank and file—the men and women who bought and sold literature rather than wrote it, and listened to speeches rather than gave them—produced very little material of their own. We need to know more of these anonymous men and women who swelled the ranks of the trades councils, constituency parties and I.L.P. branches up and down the country. But such testimony as we do have, supplemented by the local Labour press and other historical records, testifies to the pervasive influence of Labour Socialism. Particular phrases such as "a higher social consciousness," "the social organism," "the Socialist Commonwealth," "let us

call to the man with the muck-rake," "ballot boxes and not bullets," etc. are encountered repeatedly.<sup>99</sup>

When eventually, after the Russian Revolution and the founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), an "uncompromisingly" revolutionary Marxist party appeared, it was still the case that very little success would accrue to Marxism among the working classes. As Neal Wood maintains: "British communism has to a great extent been shaped by its development in the shadow of what has become the largest and most powerful Social Democratic Party in the world." Much of the history of the CPGB and its differences from Communist parties elsewhere can perhaps be explained by the gargantuan strength and effectiveness of the Labour Party.<sup>100</sup> And neither the postwar economic decline of the 1920s nor even the Depression, coming on the heels of the party's fiasco in the General Strike of 1926,<sup>101</sup> could salvage the CPGB as a mass party.<sup>102</sup>

For the most part, then, following the Depression, English Marxism became a creature more of the sons and daughters of the middle and upper-middle classes than of English workers. Massive unemployment in their ranks, the emergence of fascist movements in Europe, a decade of the display of the corruption and incompetence of "bourgeois democracy," and the spectacular achievements of the Russian Revolution, had worked their magic:

Changes in the intellectual life of a nation can often be perceived at an early date among university students. Prior to the nineteen-thirties British students had never exhibited the political fervor so characteristic on the continent. Consequently, it must have been with some satisfaction that Karl Radek was able to announce to the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 that "In the heart of bourgeois England, in Oxford, where the sons of the bourgeoisie receive their final polish, we observe the crystallization of a group which sees salvation only together with the proletariat." The beginning of an unprecedented political ferment took place in 1931, when embryonic communist organizations were established at London and Cambridge Universities by students returning from Germany. . . . A Marxist Society saw the light of day at the London School of Economics in 1931, and the radical Cosmopolitan Society replaced the old International Society. Oxford's notorious October Club, founded in January 1932, was banned in November of the following year, ostensibly for its criticism of the Officers' Training Corps.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, class arrogance, bitter divisions between workers and the class of the intelligentsia,<sup>104</sup> the residues of xenophobia (so central in the earlier century to the role of Irish workers in the British working-class movement and later as a support for imperialism), all worked against the possibility of the British Communist movement becoming a dominant force among the country's proletariat. Indeed, counterforces to the CPGB and Bolshevism had already developed in the 1920s among British workers with the emergence of "the Plebs League, the National Guilds League, sections of the I.L.P., the Workers' Socialist Federation (W.S.F.) and the South Wales Socialist Society

(S.W.S.S.).”<sup>105</sup> By the 1930s, British Marxism—the intellectual and moral residue of British Communism—had achieved its most enduring influences among university intellectuals;<sup>106</sup> and British socialism had been transformed into an electoral phenomenon with the Labour Party and the ILP as its most significant manifestations.<sup>107</sup>

## **Black Radicals in the Metropole**

During these same years, the British Empire’s African and Caribbean subjects were not frequent visitors to the metropole. In actuality, they had much less access to Britain than their Francophone counterparts had to the European continent. Nevertheless, African merchants were frequent visitors to London, and in time Black students from the emerging middle classes or sponsored by missionary societies found their way to the British Isles.<sup>108</sup> Still, many of the figures who would emerge as important ideologues, theorists, and activists in the anti-imperialist movements in the British colonies after World War I and World War II, were forced to take rather circuitous routes before arriving in Britain. Padmore, like Azikiwe of Nigeria, Nkrumah of the Gold Coast, and P. K. I. Seme of South Africa, came to Britain from the United States. With its tradition of Black colleges and universities, America was a much more hospitable and accessible route to further education, but experience in the metropole was still important. T. Ras Makonnen (George T. N. Griffith) came to Britain via America and Denmark. A few others, like Johnstone (Jomo) Kenyatta of Kenya, spent a number of penurious years in the metropole and on the Continent caught between colonial officialdom, missionary networks of limited resources, and rather haphazard employment.<sup>109</sup> The administrators of British colonialism, as we have seen, particularly in those colonies where European settlement had occurred, were generally hostile to natives acquiring Western education outside the auspices of the missionary schools or much beyond an elementary level. Some Blacks in both the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did make it to Britain for advanced training or to further pursue professional careers. Usually the sons of the fledgling colonial middle classes found all over the Empire, they remained within the margins of what was expected of them. Among them, however, were such figures as Henry Sylvester Williams (Trinidad), already discussed, Harold Moody (Jamaica), T. R. Makonnen (British Guiana), Mohamed Ali Duse (Egypt), and James—all of whom would play prominent roles in Black politics in Britain but who traveled to Britain with at least professional interests in mind. Once there, these experienced some changes of minds, augmenting their original intents or entirely devoting themselves to Black liberation. Among their achievements in Britain would be the establishment of newspapers like Mohamed Ali Duse’s *African Times and Orient Review* (where Marcus Garvey received his first introduction to Pan-Africanism);<sup>110</sup> such publishing presses as Makonnen’s Pan-African Publishing Company; and the founding of a series of social and political organizations: the Afro-West Indian Literary Society (1900), the Ethiopian Progressive Association (1906), the Union of Students of African Descent (1917), the West African Students Union (1925), and the League of Coloured Peoples (1931).<sup>111</sup>

During the interim between the world wars, a few members of the colonial Black intelligentsia working in Britain were closely associated with Marxist or Communist movements. Padmore, prominent in the Third International until 1933, was to head the Red International of Labour Unions' (the RILU or *Profintern*) International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW); Rajani Palme Dutt, an English-born Eurasian who studied at Oxford, would become the leading theoretician of the CPGB for 40 years; Peter Blackman, a Barbadian who had worked in West Africa as a missionary, would become a prominent spokesman and journalist for the CPGB (he had been preceded by two other Barbadians, Chris Jones of the Colonial Seamen's Association, and Arnold Ward); Shapurji Saklatvala, a physician born in Bombay, was one of the first two Communists standing for Parliament to be elected, he represented North Battersea in 1922; and, of course, James was to be well-known as a writer and speaker for the Trotskyist movement.<sup>112</sup> Left politicians, such as Willie Gallacher, the Communist MP, Fenner Brockway and Rev. Reginald Sorenson among the left wing of the Labour Party (and in Brockway's instance, the Independent Labour Party), and the independent Reginald Reynolds, were all associates of the radical faction of this Black intelligentsia in Britain.<sup>113</sup> But just as some events, like the worldwide depression of the late 1920s and 1930s, would propel some members of this intelligentsia toward the left, others caused them to seriously question the commitment of European radicals, and particularly European Communists, to their causes. In the early and middle 1930s, two such events, the Third International's disbanding of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers in 1933, and the press revelation of the Soviet Union's trade with Italy in war materials during the Italo-Ethiopian War (in contravention to League of Nations sanctions),<sup>114</sup> proved to be critical. In Britain, the most radical Black activists generally turned toward Pan-Africanism as the form of their political work while retaining aspects of Marxism for their critique of capitalism and imperialism.

In these early decades of the century, as had been the case for most of the previous century, the significance of the metropole for colonial Black intelligentsias was their interest in preparing for a role in, and for some a share of, the Empire. Others—for instance tribal authorities or missionaries—might appear in London seeking official relief from this or that manifestation of greed or injustice on the parts of colonial administrators or settlers. But for the ambitious, this was entirely a waste of the seat of Empire. For them, as James would testify of his own arrival in Britain, it was often a case of the "British intellectual going to Britain."<sup>115</sup> Many, of course, returned to their colonial homelands—particularly those from West Africa and the more populous islands of the Caribbean—but quite a few remained in England for the rest of their lives. And as the century proceeded, their numbers were substantially, if intermittently, augmented by the arrivals of Blacks with peasant and urban working-class backgrounds, propelled toward the metropole by the more chaotic forces that catalyzed or were the results of the crises in the world system: that is, wars and labor shortages.<sup>116</sup> Finally, a smaller number of these Blacks, but certainly the most prominent, came to the Western metropolises to pursue careers in sport and entertainment,

careers that would be certainly delimited if not entirely proscribed in their native ground.<sup>117</sup> In some part, members of the Black intelligentsia resident in Britain acted as a mediation for Black labor in the metropole and the colonies. As doctors, like Peter Milliard (British Guiana), they tended to the needs of the Black and white working classes in the industrial ghettos; as barristers, like H. S. Williams and Learie Constantine, they often acted in the interests of colonial appellants, or were active in civil and welfare rights.<sup>118</sup> Others, such as Makonnen in Manchester, and Samuel Opoba (“Sam Okoh”) and “Joka” in Liverpool, established restaurants and dance clubs for colonial students, seamen, and immigrant workers, Black and white. Still others, like Edward G. Sankey, later a Nigerian businessman, acted as scribes and personal counselors.<sup>119</sup> Britain was at “the centre of gravity.”<sup>120</sup> It was the source of authority for the Empire, the highest seat of appeal from the sometimes arbitrary ravages of colonial policy and authority. It was the site so persistently and idyllically envisioned in the literary and historical texts employed in the “colony of schools” that ringed the Empire, and where they could extend their intellectual and professional attainments and anticipate being permitted to come into their rightful heritage. England was, in short, the natural setting for this British, if Black, middle class, frustrated at home as so many of them were by their recognition of the “two Englands—the England of the colonies and that of the metropolis.”<sup>121</sup> The first, they knew, was constricted by the castelike boundaries of racialist order; the second, they believed, was fair-minded and a virtual meritocracy.

Only a few among them came to Britain for explicitly political purposes. Makonnen and Padmore did, but such others as Williams their predecessor and James their contemporary, acquired those purposes while living in Britain. Together, they helped to constitute that generation of Black intellectuals that—at their historical juncture—presumed or perhaps understood that the project of anti-imperialism had to be centered in the metropole. After their time and because of their work, decolonization and Black liberation would return to their native lands.

Makonnen had first come to Britain in 1935. He returned two years later and took up residence for 20 years. He was a Pan-Africanist when he arrived and remained so, deserving to be ranked along with Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, and Padmore in that movement. Indeed, he was more responsible than anyone else for bringing the movement together at Manchester in 1945 for the Fifth Pan-African Congress—the last time many of them would meet as ideologues without power.<sup>122</sup> As a publisher, Makonnen had been the first to publish Eric Williams’s work and had published some of the writings of Kenyatta and Padmore as well.<sup>123</sup> For Makonnen, who had lived for a time in the United States, the center of the British Empire was a most significant platform. He celebrated the contrast between its liberalism and that of his own society in British Guiana. It did not take him long to come to the belief that colonial radicals could depend upon British traditions of free speech and a free press in their attack on the Empire.

What was it like to be a black man in the Britain of the 1930s? Certainly we were not rich; far from it. But we were generally happy in our lot—just to know that we were

challenging one of the greatest empires in the world. Imagine what it meant to us to go to Hyde Park to speak to a race of people who were considered our masters, and tell them right out what we felt about their empire and about them . . . write any tract we wanted to; make terrible speeches; all this when you knew very well that back in the colonies even to say "God is love" might get the authorities after you!<sup>124</sup>

Persistently anti-Communist throughout his life, a man who could and did beseech his brothers: "If you are interested in communism, then buy the book. . . Don't join the club!"<sup>125</sup> Makonnen could still appreciate the "leveling" in British political life that minimized national groups and negated "the Negro Problem" that he had experienced as so prevalent in America.

The few West Indians, West Africans or Somalis who worked in the ports or in London were certainly living under terrible conditions but these were not different from those of the Welsh miner, or the appalling area of the Glasgow slums. . . . [W]e were able to see the worker, the struggle of the proletariat much more clearly than across the Atlantic.<sup>126</sup>

More important to him, the same sort of solidarity was true of Blacks. Because Blacks were so few in Britain, he believed, kinship overrode class. Unlike America where a pretentious urban Black middle class had become alienated from the majority of working-class Blacks, those in pre-World War II Britain formed a responsive fraternity. When in England some of them became disoriented and went "*shenzi*," "instead of being disgraced we would provide money to pay for their passage [home]."<sup>127</sup> Harold Moody's League of Coloured People and various members of the radical Left were also a part of this services network. The most central characteristic of England for Makonnen, however, seemed a result of imperial inadvertence. While in Britain the ruling classes commanded the society by virtue of a certain hegemonic grace, in the colonies the more brutal machinery of domination persisted. Those Blacks who made the journey between these two polarities could never be the same:

[W]hen you look at the results of those Africans who had been to England, you wouldn't be far wrong in saying that England had been the executioner of its own colonial empire. In the sense that she had allowed these blacks to feel the contrast between freedom in the metropolis and slavery in the colonies.<sup>128</sup>

Padmore, it seems, despite his vigorous opposition to British imperialism, shared Makonnen's enthusiasm for the metropole. He was also impressed by the liberal traditions of what he had learned as a Marxist to identify as "bourgeois democracy." The same man, we are told, who in 1931 detailed the exploitation, "Bloody deeds," and "hypocripsy" of the Empire in Africa and the West Indies (in his *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*), was also capable of exclaiming to Makonnen in near-reckless admiration:

[T]he security people, they know we are here; they come into our offices pretending to be buying books or magazines, and sometimes when we're returning from a

trip to Russia, they hold us back after crossing the Channel. But you can joke with them and say, "We've just been across to get some Russian gold, and we're coming back to enrich the old country." Instead of giving you the American cattle-prod treatment, they laugh it off.<sup>129</sup>

Of course, it was all delusion. There was, in the 1930s, little that was quaint or liberal about British politics or generous about the British state. While it was true that in a small niche of British society the Popular Front and its Third International allies flourished, that radical writers and artists could produce political and literary journals such as *Storm*, *Cambridge Left*, *Left*, the *Left Review*, *New Verse*, and others, that such weeklies as *The Tribune* or Claud Cockburn's *The Week* could be published, that the Left Book Club could be organized, and drama groups like Unity Theatre and the Group Theatre could perform, that mass mobilizations like the unemployed of the Jarrow Crusade (1936) could demonstrate, and thousands volunteer for the Spanish Civil War's International Brigade (some 2,762 were thought to have gone to Spain, 1,762 wounded, 543 killed),<sup>130</sup> it was also true that power in British society was being employed for other things. In the streets, Sir Oswald Mosley's tens of thousands of British Union Fascists exacted a terrible physical toll on antifascists, and destroyed shops like those in London's Mile End Road owned by Jews.<sup>131</sup> Julian Symons recalled: "Certainly the police force, never notably sympathetic towards Left-wing movements, seemed always to assume very readily the task of protecting the Fascists from opposition."<sup>132</sup> But the official faces of British politics were no less venal. In 1936, at its Edinburgh conference, the Labour Party had "turned its back on the needs of republican Spain,"<sup>133</sup> and even earlier the National Government embarked on a "neutralist" course between fascist states and their victims.<sup>134</sup> Yet the same state had no pretensions toward neutrality where its Empire was concerned. Black activists in Britain in the 1930s were subject to the same "heavy manners"—as West Indians would say—as their predecessors. Just as in the 1920s, Mohamed Ali Duse had been "constantly trailed" by MI5, by Scotland Yard, and agents of the Colonial Office,<sup>135</sup> and Claude McKay, listed in the files of the British Secret Service, was prevented from returning to Jamaica decades after his single year (1919–21) of radical journalism in England,<sup>136</sup> British Intelligence and the Colonial Office had taken note of Padmore (as early as 1931) and proceeded to neutralize his work in Africa.<sup>137</sup> In the Caribbean, particularly during the workers' strikes of 1937–38, Black activism was ruthlessly suppressed. And when the Second World War followed, many of these "subversives" were duly interned.<sup>138</sup> But the delusion of liberalism of which Makonnen and Padmore spoke was also self-delusion, a piece of a larger misconception. To them and many of their fellows, England, the second England, the meritocratic England of romance novels and Whig histories, was the embodiment of fair play and deep moral regulation. It was an ideal, then, that even the most committed anti-imperialists among them found difficult to shake. Not even the gross imperfections and racism they confronted in the metropole dissuaded them. It was as though they had come to accept that as

Black Englishmen a part of their political mission was to correct the errant motherland. Of all of them, it was James who would come closest to understanding why this was so. Doubtlessly it was his comprehension of English society that provided him with insight into British imperialism, British liberalism, and the British Left. On this score, he would proceed far beyond the economism of Engels, Marx, and many of the most recent British Marxists.<sup>139</sup>

Perhaps one reason for James's less euphoric reaction to English society was that his introduction to the country had differed in important ways from those of Makonnen and Padmore. Living in Lancashire with Learie and Norma Constantine, physically remote from the more typical sites of middle-class radicalism and organized politics, James was enveloped by a more contemplative work and a more mundane politics. Through Constantine, to be sure, he had gained access to the *Manchester Guardian* and was soon substituting for Neville Cardus, the paper's cricket correspondent. But his major preoccupations: the collaboration with Constantine on *Cricket and I*, the public lectures on the West Indies, the editing of *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, provided him the opportunity to read Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, to review the lie of labor politics in Britain, and to meet with British workers for discussions removed from super-heated circumstances. Indeed, he would later admit that the development of his critical stance regarding the Labour Party (with which he had identified as a "Ciprianian" nationalist) was due to discussions with Lancashire workers that brought discredit on the Party's leadership: "My Labour and Socialist ideas had been got from books and were rather abstract. These humorously cynical working men were a revelation and brought me down to earth."<sup>140</sup> Apparently sharing their disillusionment with the Labour Party, he soon found an alternative:

I read the *History of the Russian Revolution* [Trotsky] because I was very much interested in history and the book seemed to offer some analysis of modern society. At the end of reading the book, Spring 1934, I became a Trotskyist—in my mind, and later joined. It was clear in my mind that I was not going to be a Stalinist.<sup>141</sup>

It was from this political base and ideology that he would write *World Revolution: 1917–1936. The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* in 1937, and translate Boris Souvarine's *Stalin* in 1938.<sup>142</sup> It was as a Trotskyist that James would author *The Black Jacobins*, the work for which he is best known. First published in 1938, this still formidable study of the Haitian and French revolutions and their signification for British abolitionism, was at one and the same time an analysis of the relationship between revolutionary masses and leadership, and an attempt to establish the historical legacy of African revolutionary struggles. Within the same volume it is not difficult to unearth a critique of Stalinism, an expression of Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution, and the elaboration of Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat—all constructed upon Marx's extraordinary determination of the primitive, that is, the imperialist accumulation of capital. It was from the beginning recognized as an extraordinary work. We will return to it shortly.

However, it was a second turn of consciousness that provided James with a perspective on English society. That development is recounted in *Beyond a Boundary*, James's most exquisite statement on British imperialism and the development of English bourgeois society. Published in 1963, it was a sort of autobiographic study—Sylvia Wynter has called it an “autosociographical system”<sup>143</sup>—ostensibly of the game of cricket. Here James excavated his entrance into English society as a proper member of the English middle class, steeped in the public school code. His memory of being a Black boy at Queen's Royal College in Trinidad characterized the bourgeois morality and rationalism to which he and his fellow colonials were introduced:

[I]nside the classrooms the code had little success. Sneaking was taboo, but we lied and cheated without any sense of shame. I know I did. . . .

But as soon as we stepped on to the cricket or football field, more particularly the cricket field, all was changed. . . . [W]e learned to obey the umpire's decision without question, however irrational it was. We learned to play with the team, which meant subordinating your personal inclinations, and even interests, to the good of the whole. We kept a stiff upper lip in that we did not complain about ill-fortune. We did not denounce failure, but “Well tried” or “Hard luck” came easily to our lips. We were generous to opponents and congratulated them on victories, even when we knew they did not deserve it. . . . On the playing field we did what ought to be done.<sup>144</sup>

Cricket, he writes, became one of his obsessions. He played it, he read about it, and in time as we have noted he came to write about it. In a way, his youth was dominated by the game; cricket was the means of his introduction to the island's Brown middle class; it selected his personal friends; it grounded his perceptions of manhood and the judgments he would make of other men; and eventually, through Constantine, it became the reason for his coming to England. His other obsession was literature. This, too, was an emanation of the English bourgeoisie. For James, it had begun with William Makepeace Thackeray: “I laughed without satiety at Thackeray's constant jokes and sneers and gibes at the aristocracy and at people in high places. Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me.”<sup>145</sup>

After Thackeray there was Dickens, George Eliot and the whole bunch of English novelists. Followed the poets in Matthew Arnold's selections, Shelley, Keats and Byron; Milton and Spenser. . . . I discovered criticism: Hazlitt, Lamb and Coleridge, Saintsbury and Gosse. . . . Burke led me to the speeches: Canning, Lord Brougham, John Bright.<sup>146</sup>

But the two—cricket and English literature—were complements. Each of them, as he was to discover in England, were cultural and ideological expressions of the same social order, a bourgeois order grounded on capitalism, systematized in the nineteenth century by Thomas Arnold's philosophy of the public school, tutored by the moral persuasions of Thomas Hughes, and embodied in the play of W. G. Grace, the cricketer.<sup>147</sup> The game and its place in the social history of England told it all:

It was created by the yeoman farmer, the gamekeeper, the potter, the tinker, the Nottingham coal-miner, the Yorkshire factory hand. These artisans made it, men of hand and eye. Rich and idle young noblemen and some substantial city people contributed money, organization and prestige.

The class of the population that seems to have contributed least was the class destined to appropriate the game and convert it into a national institution. This was the solid Victorian middle class. It was accumulating wealth. It had won its first political victory in the Reform Bill of 1832 and it would win its second with the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. It was on its way. More than most newcomers it was raw. . . . The Victorian middle classes read Dickens, loved Dickens, worshipped Dickens as few writers have been before or since. It is a very bold assumption that they did not understand what Dickens was saying. . . . Dickens saw Victorian England always with the eyes of a pre-Victorian. His ideal England was the England of Hazlitt and of *Pickwick*. Man of genius as he was, the Victorians were more perspicacious than he. They were not looking backwards. They wanted a culture, a way of life of their own. They found it symbolized for them in the work of the three men, first in Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, secondly in Thomas Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and lastly in W. G. Grace. These three men, more than all others, created Victorianism, and to leave out Grace is to misconceive the other two.<sup>148</sup>

Cricket and football as organized games had begun as expressions of the "artistic instincts" of the English rural and artisan classes. Had James had available to him what E. P. Thompson was concurrently formulating in *The Making of the English Working Class* (what might be mistaken for coincidence if one were not aware that both James and Thompson were Marxist historians; both were responding to a recent experience of profound political disillusionment; for James, his defeat at the hands of Eric Williams upon his return to Trinidad,<sup>149</sup> for Thompson, his resignation from a British Communist Party he reckoned morally and politically comatosed by Stalinism;<sup>150</sup> and both were, in Thompson's words, "attempting to defend, re-examine and extend the Marxist tradition at a time of political and theoretical disaster"),<sup>151</sup> he would have had no reason to hesitate in assigning this emergence of organized games to the process of working-class formation in England. These games, more particularly their organization and their preindustrial spirit "untainted by any serious corruption," were one aspect of the cultural mediation constructed by the working classes as a response to the historical processes of capitalist dislocation, expropriation, and a deepening alienation. James, however, could only hint a comprehension of that signification: "[W]hen the common people were not at work, one thing they wanted was organized sports and games."<sup>152</sup> The reflexive logic of his own development drew his attention elsewhere. He focused his analysis on what the games came to signify for the ruling classes, the classes whose capacities for literary and philosophical articulation had done so much to form his own consciousness.

For James, the starting point for understanding the English ruling classes and their

hegemony over the laboring classes at home and abroad was in the historical parallel he discovered between ancient Greece and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Imperial Britain. It was a natural place for him to begin, he was British and "Greco-Roman we are."<sup>153</sup> In both societies, he recognized a relationship that fused power and organized games; an almost fanatical obsession with athletics, cemented (as he wrote of the Greeks) to the assertion of "the national unity of Greek civilization and the consciousness of themselves as separate from the barbarians who surrounded them."<sup>154</sup>

The first recorded date in European history is 776 B.C., the date of the first Olympic Games. The Greek states made unceasing war against one another. But when the four-yearly games approached they declared a national truce, the various competitors assembled at Olympia, the games were held and when these were over the wars began again. . . . To every Greek city and every colony (as far away as Italy, Sicily, Africa, Egypt and Marseilles) the envoys went from Olympia with the invitations, and the communities sent their representatives and their official deputations. Forty thousand pilgrims would assemble, including the most distinguished members of Greek society.<sup>155</sup>

But, James insisted, the whole spectacle and its apparent but deceptive parallel in British society required closer analysis. Such an inspection would reveal the subtle dialectic between culture and the exercise of domination:

The games were *not* introduced into Greece by the popular democracy. In fact, when the democracy came into power it lifted another type of celebration [the tragic drama] to a position of eminence to which the games soon took second place.

The Olympic Games had been a festival of the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie of Greece. Only the bourgeoisie had the money to stand the expense of the competitors. . . . Only the aristocratic families were in a position to take part in the chariot races.<sup>156</sup>

In England, organized sport had been a mass phenomenon, a spontaneous and public creation. And then, just as with land and labor, the rising bourgeoisie had expropriated it for their own purposes. Undisciplined, vulgar, and lacking self-confidence,<sup>157</sup> they had sensed that their reliance on naked force in their personae as expropriators, exploiters, and imperialists would ultimately destroy them if they could not establish to their own satisfaction their right to rule: "They wanted a culture, a way of life of their own."

Arnold believed in religion and he believed in character. Scarcely less powerful in his conceptions was the role of the intellect. . . . The English ruling classes accepted Arnold's aims and accepted also his methods in general. But with an unerring instinct they separated from it the cultivation of the intellect and substituted for it organized games, with cricket at the heart of the curriculum.<sup>158</sup>

The public school and its regimen of organized games and athleticism provided them with a way of life. John Rae, himself a headmaster, concurs:

Athleticism was a complex phenomenon at the heart of which was a belief that compulsory, competitive team games identified and developed qualities of character that were admirable in themselves and essential for “life’s long earnest strife.” . . . [F]or some sixty years from 1853 to 1914 this belief dominated not only the public-school system but also those areas of British and Imperial society where public-school men played the leading roles. . . .

By 1900 the original rationale for organized games had been long forgotten and athleticism had developed its own ideological justification. Games not only postponed the mental torment of sex. They taught a morality. They developed manliness and toughness without which an expanding empire could not be run. They encouraged patriotism as the fierce loyalty to house and school was transferred to the regiment and the country.<sup>159</sup>

Though it might be said: “By it a ruling class disciplined and trained itself for the more supple and effective exercise of power,”<sup>160</sup> James believed such an interpretation was too mechanistic, too much the clever manipulation, too much the literal translation of what Arnold had intended. The psychological expression of the emergent English bourgeoisie had been drawn from the historical and cultural materials within which it had generated. James preferred to see the forms of their hegemony as extracted from a movement of the national culture; a renewal of English life drawing on the Puritan past but universal enough to affect other peoples far removed from its origins: “This signifies, as so often in any deeply national movement, that it contained elements of universality that went beyond the bounds of the originating nation.”<sup>161</sup> It would be, he maintained, the only contribution that English education would make to the general educational ideas of Western civilization. He was not as sure (or as clear) as he might have been in the company of Thompson of the process he termed “modern civilization.” But he did reveal one of its consequences. The English ruling bourgeoisie, at first, had required a discipline for themselves, for their own *raison d’être* and reproduction. They found their instrument among the cultural goods produced by the working classes. What they extracted or embedded in athleticism were rules of class, moral values, and a utilitarian rationalism. What they shared in the social spectacle of the games became part of the cement that bonded the several social orders into an identical imperial mission—one that would include even those natives at the peripheries whose claims to an English identity would amount to a tragic mistake. In the absence of more telling evidence, we must surmise that James discovered that mistake in England, 30 years before he sat down to write *Beyond a Boundary*.

When James and his contemporaries appeared in the metropole in the 1920s and 1930s, the England in which they had been immersed had already passed. Indeed, except in the airy fantasies manufactured by the ruling classes and their intelligentsia,

it may never have existed. Among those elements that truly made a difference, the working classes were becoming detached from their identifications with the bourgeoisie and the nobility. English workers were militantly demonstrating that they were no longer persuaded that their future and that of the ruling classes were identical. Their betrayal by capitalism, manifested in the millions of unemployed, made many, for the moment, no longer willing to fight imperialist wars. By the mid-1930s, their declared interests could be found in demonstrations like the Hunger March of 1934 and the Jarrow Crusade of 1936; and they formed into militant grass-roots groups like the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, their numbers swelling even the membership figures of the CPGB (in one year, 1935–36, the Party went from 7,000 to 11,500).<sup>162</sup> The material crises of world capital and the political incompetence of the ruling classes, despite the repeated betrayals by the leaderships of the Labour Party and the trade union movement, provided a basis for a certain regeneration of the formal working-class movement and its electoral aspect. Membership in the trade unions expanded,<sup>163</sup> and the Labour Party, in disgrace in 1931, made substantial gains (as did the CPGB) in the municipal elections of 1932, 1933, and 1934, and the general election of 1935.<sup>164</sup> The organized Left, however, was not a major beneficiary.

For Padmore, Makonnen, and their African comrades, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson and Kenyatta, in the anti-imperialist Left, there was another difference. Inevitably, even James realized that the illusion of the Empire as a global fraternity, benevolently orchestrated by advanced races for the interests of backward ones, was at best remote from the actualities they encountered. England, with its ever-broadening, grubby, dark poverty, its “low-life” fascists actively aligned and identified with factions of the ruling classes, its vulgar displays of racism (which “inexplicably” victimized those among the colonials who were proudest of being British), and its political mediocrity, inspired contempt, not confidence. The sheer pettiness of political discourse and bureaucratic cant betrayed what one expected from the “English heritage” or even from a respected enemy. These were not the actions of pretentious colonial administrators, they were manifestations in the home country itself. And while revolutionary movements of grandeur, scale, and vision could be seen emerging among “backward” peoples in India, Ceylon, China, and Africa, while even the Japanese ruling classes were mounting a massive territorial empire and the Soviets rationalizing one, the Left in Britain displayed characteristic factionalism, ideological “toadyism,” and a politics dishonorably distant from the working classes and their struggles. Abandoned, as Padmore believed, by their most powerful ally, the world Communist movement, thoroughly disgusted with the duplicity of imperial policy, they turned toward the Black radical tradition.

## **The Theory of the Black Jacobin**

The thirties were rich in political dramas that might ground Black radical intelligentsias in their own historical traditions. Their indulgence in the militant rhetoric of the Western European Left, evoking images of emergent revolutionary lower orders of its

own would have logically brought them to it eventually. For in the older sense of the word, who was more proletarian than Blacks in the imperialist and capitalist order? But it was a different, though not unrelated, historical logic that was maturing. They read Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* with its evocation of the brilliance of Black radicalism in nineteenth-century America, and they recognized its unmistakable debt to the Black masses of the early twentieth century who had produced the Chiblembwes, the Garveys, the Lamine Senghors, and the Simon Kimbangu.<sup>165</sup> And then in 1934–35, when the Fascist Italian army invaded Ethiopia, the dam burst. Makonnen recalled:

It's very important to put the response of the black world to the Ethiopian War into perspective, especially since it is easy to get the impression that pan-Africanism was just some type of petty protest activity—a few blacks occasionally meeting in conference and sending resolutions here and there. But the real dimensions can only be gathered by estimating the kind of vast support that Ethiopia enjoyed amongst blacks everywhere. We were only one centre, the International African Friends of Ethiopia, but that title was very accurate. Letters simply poured into our office from blacks on three continents asking where could they register. . . . And the same was true of Africa. When the Italians entered Addis Ababa, it was reported that school children wept in the Gold Coast. . . .

It brought home to many black people the reality of colonialism, and exposed its true nature. They could then see that the stories of Lenin and Trotsky, or Sun Yat-sen, must have their African counterparts. . . . It was clear that imperialism was a force to be reckoned with because here it was attacking the black man's last citadel.<sup>166</sup>

Within the International African Friends of Ethiopia, however, there were disagreements as to what was to be done. Makonnen believed that the "collective security" of the League of Nations (to which Italy belonged and, paradoxically, through Italy, Ethiopia's membership had been accepted) should be invoked, arguing that it was a chimera unless Fascist Italy was stopped. James, who chaired the IAFE, was ambivalent, however. As an International Socialist, he accepted the Independent Labour Party's position that all the British and French capitalists were concerned with was using Ethiopia as a pretext for a war to destroy their rivals.<sup>167</sup> The "defense" of Ethiopia was a mask for an imperialist war. He opposed the League of Nations and the concessions (in return for sanctions against Italy) its "diplomats" had extorted from the Emperor, himself a feudal reactionary.<sup>168</sup> As a Black man, however, he had other imperatives. With Garvey in Hyde Park, denouncing Mussolini as "the arch barbarian of our times" and vigorously urging Blacks to support Abyssinia despite the Emperor's infamous reluctance at identifying himself as a Black man,<sup>169</sup> with the worldwide popular response among Blacks, James's ground was prescribed:

I offered myself through the Abyssinian Embassy here to take service under the Emperor, military or otherwise.

My reasons for this were simple. International Socialists in Britain fight British Imperialism because obviously it is more convenient to do so than fight, for instance, German Imperialism. But Italian Capitalism is the same enemy, only a little further removed.

My hope was to get into the army. It would have given me an opportunity to make contact not only with the masses of the Abyssinians and other Africans, but in the ranks with them I would have had the best possible opportunity of putting across the International Socialist case. I believed also that I could have been useful in helping to organise anti-Fascist propaganda among the Italian troops.

And finally, I would have had an invaluable opportunity of gaining actual military experience on the African field where one of the most savage battles between Capitalism and its opponents is going to be fought before very many years. . . .

I did not intend to spend the rest of my life in Abyssinia, but, all things considered, I thought, and still think, that two or three years there, given the fact that I am a Negro and am especially interested in the African revolution, was well worth the attempt.<sup>170</sup>

Obviously, James was in conflict. But by early 1936, the situation had resolved itself for the moment: the occupation of Ethiopia was an accomplished fact, and the emperor was in exile in Britain.<sup>171</sup> By the end of the year, however, the Spanish Civil War had begun. Now the entire international Left was at war.<sup>172</sup> And Blacks from Africa, the Caribbean, and America joined the International Brigades to fight against the fascist forces of Spain, Germany, and Italy.<sup>173</sup> (And some Blacks fought for fascism: the Moroccan soldiers, General Franco's "storm-troopers.") But even before the International Brigades were withdrawn from Spain in 1938–39, the West Indies exploded into strikes and brutal repression.<sup>174</sup> The world seemed enveloped in struggle and Blacks and the Black struggle were a part of that world. For many radicals, an unavoidable lesson of the era was the necessity for armed resistance to oppression and exploitation. But for James, what the Italian army had done in Ethiopia: the killing of tens of thousands of peasants, and the complicity of the "bourgeois democracies" was instruction enough:

Africans and people of African descent, especially those who have been poisoned by British Imperialist education, needed a lesson. They have got it. Every succeeding day shows exactly the real motives which move imperialism in its contact with Africa, shows the incredible savagery and duplicity of European Imperialism in its quest for markets and raw materials. Let the lesson sink deep.<sup>175</sup>

The lesson sank deeper than he imagined. His tutorship under European radical thought had come to an end. From this point on his work would leap beyond the doctrinaire constructions of the anti-Stalinist Left and Engels and Marx themselves. The force of the Black radical tradition merged with the exigencies of Black masses in movement to form a new theory and ideology in James's writings.

In James's view, with only the most sporadic support to be expected from the

European working classes and the European Left, the radical Black intelligentsia was now compelled to seek the liberation of their peoples by their own means.<sup>176</sup> But some of the others with whom he was to be associated in the successor of the IAFE, the International African Service Bureau (1937), did not agree. When Padmore, for example, expressed his own reservations in *How Britain Rules Africa*, James leveled a withering criticism:

It is on the future of Africa that the author, himself a man of African descent, is grievously disappointing. He heads one section, "Will Britain Betray Her Trust?" as if he were some missionary or Labour politician. In the true tradition of Lenin he insists on the right of the African people to choose their own development. But, astonishingly, he welcomes the appeal of "enlightened and far-sighted sections of the ruling classes of Europe with colonial interests in Africa" to co-operate with Africans. That is madness. How does the lion co-operate with the lamb?

Africans must win their own freedom. Nobody will win it for them. They need co-operation, but that co-operation must be with the revolutionary movement in Europe and Asia. There is no other way out. Each movement will neglect the other at its peril, and there is not much time left.<sup>177</sup>

He had not forsaken the anticipation of an industrial proletarian revolution but he had become aware of the existence of a more vigorous Black opposition than that with which he was familiar in his own class.<sup>178</sup> In the crushing of the Ethiopian people he had seen the naked face of Western imperialism. More importantly, however, in Ethiopia, Spain, and the Caribbean, he had witnessed the capacities for resistance of ordinary Black people, the transformation of peasants and workers into liberation forces. Unlike Padmore, whose sojourn at the pinnacle of international Communism had left him uncertain, when he could no longer rely on that source, or Kenyatta and Williams, whose encounters with the imperial and capitalist metropolises so impressed them as to advise caution, James became convinced that successful armed rebellion among Black peoples was possible. The "colonial struggle and the metropolitan struggle" were identical on that score.<sup>179</sup> For a time, this view prevailed: armed rebellion among Blacks became the official position of the IASB. But after 1938, with James away in America on a lecture tour that would last for 15 years, that stand was modified by his associates:

The work of the Bureau continued all through the war and in 1945 there came a sharp break with the theory. . . . The Bureau changed its position from the achievement of independence by armed rebellion to the achievement of independence by non-violent mass action. But to say that is one thing, to carry it out in practice is another. . . . To stake independence upon armed rebellion was therefore to have as a precondition the collapse or military paralysis of the metropolitan government. It was in other words to place the initiative for African struggle upon the European proletariat. . . .

But by the end of the war the proletariat of Britain and France had not spoken.

Imperialism still held sway at home. Only a radical alteration in theory could form a basis for action. The perspective of armed rebellion was abandoned (though held in reserve) and non-violent mass action was substituted.<sup>180</sup>

While they pinned their hopes on the disintegrative force that war represented for the empires, on the resurrection of liberal ideology expressed by ruling classes made desperate by that war, and on the political consequences of the practical support given by colonials to the imperial countries during the war, James immersed himself in the American Trotskyist movement and the struggles of Black workers.<sup>181</sup> And he, too, became reconciled to nonviolent action:

[A]s a result of the war, of revolutions and crises which had shaken contemporary society to its foundations for almost forty consecutive years, the bourgeoisie had lost its self-confidence in the face of a united mass movement. . . . [W]hen all is said and done the new political directive, breaking with the well-established ideas of the prewar period, is one of the great theoretical achievements of the present age, perhaps the first real break towards what the marxist movement requires today, the application of the traditional principles of marxism in complete independence of the stalinist perversion. It is to be noted that the theory did not reject armed rebellion, but held it in reserve in the event that the political and moral pressure envisaged failed to influence British imperialism.<sup>182</sup>

But “nonviolent mass action” threw the Black struggle back into the hands of the petit bourgeoisie, albeit a radical petit bourgeoisie. It was they who would mediate between the mass movement and the representatives of imperialism. And neither James nor any of the others ever came to terms with this theoretical error.<sup>183</sup> It was simply the case that the demand for the right of Black people to govern themselves (the position adopted at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945) articulated by a radical intelligentsia speaking on behalf of the dominated would have historical consequences quite different from those that resulted from the Black masses seizing their liberation.<sup>184</sup>

Nevertheless, James’s intervention had been significant. He had made a singular contribution to radical Black historiography when he and his comrades in the IASB were mapping out their contending positions in the last years of the third, and during the fourth decade of the century. It was then that Padmore had written *How Britain Rules Africa*, Eric Williams his *The Negro in the Caribbean*, Kenyatta his *Kenya: Land of Conflict*, and James *The Black Jacobins*. The first three had proposed national independence for African peoples but were addressed to the colonial powers. The fourth had not appealed. Instead, it was a declaration of war for liberation. “[T]hose black Haitian labourers and the Mulattoes have given us an example to study. . . . The imperialists envisage an eternity of African exploitation: the African is backward, ignorant. . . . They dream dreams.”<sup>185</sup>

The theoretical frame for *The Black Jacobins* was, of course, the theories of revolution developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. James asserted that fact rather

frequently in the text. It was not, however, entirely the case. From Marx and Engels, he had taken the concept of a revolutionary class and the economic foundations for its historical emergence. But the slaves of Haiti were not a Marxian proletariat. No matter to James: the processes of social formation were the same:

The slaves worked on the land, and, like revolutionary peasants everywhere, they aimed at the extermination of their oppressors. But working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement. (pp. 85–86)

Moreover, James seemed willing to challenge Marx and Engels on the very grounds they had laid for the sociological and political significance of early capitalism. While they had been content to locate the formation of the modern revolutionary proletariat at the core of capitalist industrial production, James was insisting that the sphere be broadened. “At the same time as the French [masses], the half-savage slaves of San Domingo were showing themselves subject to the same historical laws as the advanced workers of revolutionary Paris” (p. 243). Capitalism had produced its social and historical negations in both poles of its expropriation: capitalist accumulation gave birth to the proletariat at the manufacturing core; “primitive accumulation” deposited the social base for the revolutionary masses in the peripheries. But what distinguished the formations of these revolutionary classes was the source of their ideological and cultural developments. While the European proletariat had been formed through and by the ideas of the bourgeoisie (“the ruling ideas,” Marx and Engels had maintained, “were the ideas of the ruling class”), in Haiti and presumably elsewhere among slave populations, the Africans had constructed their own revolutionary culture:

[O]ne does not need education or encouragement to cherish a dream of freedom. At their midnight celebrations of Voodoo, their African cult, they danced and sang, usually this favorite song:

Eh! Eh! Bomba! Heu! Heu!  
Canga, bafio te!  
Canga, Moune de le!  
Canga, do ki la!  
Canga, li!

“We swear to destroy the whites and all that they possess; let us die rather than fail to keep this vow.” The colonists knew this song and tried to stamp it out, and the Voodoo cult with which it was linked. In vain. (p. 18)

Voodoo was the medium of the conspiracy. In spite of all prohibitions, the slaves traveled miles to sing and dance and practice the rites and talk; and now, since the revolution, to hear the political news and make their plans. (p. 86)

This was a complete departure from the way in which Marx and Engels had conceptualized the transformative and rationalizing significance of the bourgeoisie. It *implied* (and James did not see this) that bourgeois culture and thought and ideology were irrelevant to the development of revolutionary consciousness among Black and other Third World peoples. It broke with the evolutionist chain in, the closed dialectic of, historical materialism. But where James was to hesitate, Cabral, as we have noted before, would stride boldly forward:

[N]ational liberation is the phenomenon in which a given socio-economic whole rejects the negation of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected.<sup>186</sup>

But James's effort to level Marxist theory to the requirements of Black radical historiography was not finished. Though he bore a great respect for the work and thought of Lenin, there too he suggested a more imaginative treatment. With Lenin's notion of a cadre of professional revolutionists, the beginnings of the vanguard party in mind, James went so far as to designate an entire stratum, describing in precise terms how it was formed: "The leaders of a revolution are usually those who have been able to profit by the cultural advantages of the system they are attacking" (p. 19). This was an admission of class pride that neither Lenin nor Marx or Engels had been prepared to make.<sup>187</sup> Though surely it was an inadvertent admission, one that revealed James's own class origins, it also reflected a certain historical clarity.<sup>188</sup> The petit bourgeois intelligentsia had played dominant roles in Marxist thought as well as in the Bolshevik victory in Russia. The theory and the ideology of revolution was theirs, and unarguably too, the Russian state. They had brought to the working-class movement their "superior knowledge and the political vices which usually accompany it," as James would say of Toussaint (p. 95).

In San Domingo, the revolutionary masses had found a most propitious figure in Toussaint L'Ouverture. He knew the enemy better than they. That had been one of his rewards as a functionary in the slave system.

His post as steward of the livestock had given him experience in administration, authority, and intercourse with those who ran the plantation. Men who, by sheer ability and character, find themselves occupying positions usually reserved for persons of a different upbringing, education and class, usually perform those duties with exceptional care and devoted labour. In addition . . . [he had] read Caesar's Commentaries . . . read and re-read the long volume by the Abbe Raynal. . . . [H]e had a thorough grounding in the economics and politics, not only of San Domingo, but of all the great empires of Europe. . . . His superb intellect had therefore had some opportunity of cultivating itself in general affairs at home and abroad. (p. 91)

But in the end, Toussaint had also failed the revolution. James more than sympathized with some of Toussaint's failures: "Toussaint knew the backwardness of the labourers; he made them work, but he wanted to see them civilised and advanced in culture. . . . He was anxious to see the blacks acquire the social deportment of the better class whites with their Versailles manners" (p. 246). And he also believed that Toussaint was correct in thinking that the propertied whites who remained or returned to San Domingo were needed to help the former slaves to construct a modern state: "His unrealistic attitude to the former masters, at home and abroad, sprang not from any abstract humanitarianism or loyalty, but from a recognition that they alone had what San Domingo society needed" (p. 290). This last in almost direct contradiction to his beliefs 30 years later: "Slaves ran the plantations; those tremendous plantations, the great source of wealth of so many English aristocrats and merchants, the merchant princes who cut such a figure in English society (and French too, but we are speaking of English society)."<sup>189</sup> Yet others, even more recently, have agreed with the earlier James.<sup>190</sup> In 1938, however, James knew that the former slaves, Toussaint's contemporaries, did not agree. When they acted on those beliefs and rebelled against Toussaint because they were no longer willing to accept his egoistic compromises with the colonial bourgeoisie and the Bonapartist regime in France, Toussaint had them hunted down and executed (p. 285). That tragedy, James argued, was because Toussaint "explained nothing, and allowed the masses to think that their old enemies were being favoured at their expense" (p. 284). But more importantly, James insisted, Toussaint's failure had been the result of events beyond his control: "If he failed, it is for the same reason that the Russian socialist revolution failed, even after all its achievements—the defeat of the revolution in Europe" (p. 283). But James was quite aware that there was much that had been within Toussaint's range and much that he had botched. He seemed to sense that for all the importance that might be rightly placed on the counterrevolution in Europe and for all the genius that could be ascribed to Toussaint in the early periods of the revolution, there was still something that was terribly wrong in the man's make-up. Indeed, James admitted, Haitian leaders of much narrower experience and education than Toussaint would overcome difficulties that his psychology could not confront. And in an extraordinary series of paragraphs he tried to reconcile his admiration for the man, for the revolutionary masses that had constructed him (as I would argue), and these figures to whom history attached the completion of the Haitian revolution. These passages better than most reveal the sources of James's contradictions in 1938:

[B]etween Toussaint and his people there was no fundamental difference of outlook or of aim. Knowing the race question for the political and social question that it was, he tried to deal with it in a purely political and social way. It was a grave error. Lenin in his thesis to the Second Congress of the Communist International warned the white revolutionaries—a warning they badly need—that such has been the effect of the policy of imperialism on the relationship between advanced and

backward peoples that European Communists will have to make wide concessions to natives of colonial countries in order to overcome the justified prejudice which these feel toward all classes in the oppressing countries. Toussaint, as his power grew, forgot that. He ignored the black laborers, bewildered them at the very moment that he needed them most, and to bewilder the masses is to strike the deadliest of all blows at the revolution. . . . The whites were whites of the old regime. Dessalines did not care what they said or thought. The black labourers had to do the fighting—and it was they who needed reassurance. It was not that Toussaint had any illusions about the whites. He had none whatever. . . .

Yet Toussaint's error sprang from the very qualities that made him what he was. It is easy to see to-day, as his generals saw after he was dead, where he had erred. It does not mean that they or any of us would have done better in his place. If Dessalines could see so clearly and simply, it was because the ties that bound this uneducated soldier to French civilisation were of the slenderest. He saw what was under his nose so well because he saw no further. Toussaint's failure was the failure of enlightenment, not of darkness. (pp. 286, 287, 288)

Alas, from no less an authority than James himself, we know this last defense of Toussaint was not without its element of rationalization. As Toussaint wasted away in his prison in the Jura mountains, writing his letters of supplication to the little emperor, his vision gave him away: "Despite the treachery of France he still saw himself as a part of the French Republic 'one and indivisible.' He could not think otherwise . . . there was a limit beyond which he could not go" (p. 364). We, of course, recognize James (and perhaps even his impressions of Padmore) in these assertions. We can see the declared identification of a Black revolutionary intelligentsia with the masses; the willingness to continue the submission to "scientific socialism" by denying the material force of ideology while indicating a bitter disappointment with the Communist movement; the patronizing attitude toward the organic leaders of the masses; and the ambivalent pride of place presumed for the Westernized ideologue. Moreover, it is clear that James was looking critically at his own class. Unlike his confederates, he was compelled to face up to the boundaries beyond which the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie could not be trusted. For that reason he was to insist often that the revolutionary masses must preserve to themselves the direction of the revolutionary movement, never deferring to professional revolutionists, parties, or the intelligentsia. But we shall return to that in a moment.

### **Coming to Terms with the Marxist Tradition**

The year following the printing of *Jacobins*, James published *A History of Negro Revolt*. This was to be his last sustained statement on Pan-Africanism until the appearance of *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*. It was, though, a minor piece, summarizing in historical shorthand some of the occasions of Black rebellion in the

diaspora and Africa in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.<sup>191</sup> It would prove to be of some use three decades later but it was casually written, more a public lecture than a study. James was now at the center of the Trotskyist international movement,<sup>192</sup> and soon he was to be just as immersed in the American theater, stirring things up in New York, disputing with Trotsky over the Negro Question,<sup>193</sup> organizing share-croppers and tenant farmers in southeast Missouri.<sup>194</sup>

Ten years after *Jacobins*, James wrote a second masterpiece amid a crisis in which he was deeply involved. And on this occasion he found it necessary to frontally assault some of the principal figures of the Marxist movement. *Notes on Dialectics* was written in the late 1940s<sup>195</sup> a moment when the preoccupations of the Second World War had faded, leaving American Marxists free to ponder the changed circumstances they faced: the significance of postwar arrangements between the Soviet Union and the “Western powers”; the reactions of their country’s working classes to the domination of the world economies by American capital; the orchestrated expulsions of Communists from the American labor movement; the convergent pressures on the Communist movement from the American government and the Soviet Union, and—for Trotskyists—the future of the Fourth International shorn of Trotsky, its unifying symbol.<sup>196</sup> By now James had become a prominent intellectual and organizer in the Socialist Workers’ Party (swp), the American representation of the Fourth International. In this restricted arena it is fair to say he was being recognized for what he was: one of the leading Marxist historian/philosophers in the country. With Max Shachtman, however, he and others had withdrawn from the swp. In the early 1940s they formed the Workers’ Party with 600 or so members.<sup>197</sup> Then, in 1942, a further split had occurred, a group centering around James and Raya Dunayevskaya, the Johnson-Forest tendency, had left the “Shachtmanites.”<sup>198</sup> Later, in 1949 or so, the Johnson-Forest tendency would rejoin the swp only to become resolutely independent again two years later.<sup>199</sup> They required more:

We had broken with Trotsky’s analysis of the nature of the Russian state since the death of Lenin. . . . We came to the conclusion that a fundamental investigation still remained to be done, on Hegel’s *Science of Logic* (with that of course had to be associated the smaller *Logic*, a section of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*).<sup>200</sup>

*Notes on Dialectics* was James’s contribution: it was his logical and philosophical consideration and reconstruction of the history of the labor movement in relation to the formation of revolutionary action, parties, and revolutionary thought in the European experience. The grammar of the work, its logical structure, was grounded on Hegel’s construction of the dialectic. It was at once an exposition of Hegel’s philosophical method and the historical movement of the working classes. And when it was written its immediate purpose was to provide a rationale and a historical object for the political activity of his small organization: To preserve for his comrades the claim for the Leninism of an authentic socialism.<sup>201</sup> It was they who were seeking to contain a catastrophe, to rescue Marxism from its self-inflicted wounds (Stalinism and Trotskyism) thus preserving its theoretical and political core (historical material-

ism and the revolutionary proletariat). Their task was not an easy one. It was not just the political battle to be waged: a small organization in opposition to former (Trotskyist) colleagues, in opposition to Stalinism, the trade union bureaucracies, the apparatuses of the American state, and world capitalism. Those forces were more than balanced, they believed, since they were in the company of the proletarian masses. History and numbers were on their side. More decisive were the contradictions they hoped to rationalize. As Marxists they were compelled to juggle contending impulses. They were a radical intelligentsia contemptuous of the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie, in some sense themselves. They were revolutionary ideologues charged by their tradition to "criticize everything" while conserving the figures of Marx and Lenin. They were committed to the abolition of parties but their entire political history had been in association and contention with revolutionary parties. They were renegade bourgeois ideologists, trained in the ruling ideas of their time yet they believed in the imperative of penetrating the consciousness of the working classes in order to comprehend the proletariat's historical activity. And despite their sometimes feverish energies they were essentially contemplative didactics coupled with revolutionary action. James could not escape these contradictions any more than Grace Lee (Boggs) or Dunayevskaya. Neither could *Notes on Dialectics*. It contained an ideate from which James had no intention of departing but was compelled to leave behind. He supposed Hegel's dialectic would resolve the dilemma.

The delinquent premise was restated by James in the 1980 edition of the work: "What is then the beginning of the labour movement? We find the historical beginning in the French revolution *as Marx saw it*" (p. 10; my emphasis). This was the unchallengeable presupposition: Marxists had to begin where Marx had begun and as Marx had begun. It meant that the assumption made in Marx's vision of modern history had to persist in James's consideration of social revolution: the notion that implied that the proletariat constituted a class like the bourgeoisie. Like most Marxists, James was quite unwilling to contemplate that, as Cornelius Castoriadis has made clearer than anyone, since the appearance of the bourgeoisie was historically the origin of the category class it would be philosophically and historically impossible for the proletariat to recapitulate the social and ideological experience of the bourgeoisie. It could not become a class in those terms.<sup>202</sup> But there had to be limits within which the Johnson-Forest tendency was to remain. They had realized almost too late that as Trotskyists, without knowing it, they had flirted with the disintegration of Marxism: "[T]rotskyist thinking, persisted in, led the posing of the question of the disintegration of marxist theory, questioning whether we might not have to ask ourselves if it were valid" (p. 56). Their need to do things differently was to be a disciplined need. And in his consideration of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and Marx, James made good use of his predecessors, holding strictly to the lights of the tradition. His critique, notwithstanding his fundamental deference, was true to form: internally consistent, devastatingly powerful, erudite, and logically near-flawless. Within its own terms James would take the philosophic discourse of the Marxian tradition to its most complete realization in the postwar years.

He began by assuring his comrades that their appearance, their work, and their politics, based on the evolution of state-capitalism and the proletarian impulse for an organizational form that transcended the revolutionary party, were anticipated in Hegel's *Science of Logic*: their's were the "new ideas" Hegel had anticipated. The opposition to them among Stalinists, Trotskyists, and Shachtmanites was corrupted by formalism and opportunism. Paraphrasing Hegel, James asserted:

Imperceptibly the new ideas became familiar even to their opposers, who appropriated them and—though persistently slighting and gainsaying the sources and principles of those ideas—yet had to accept their results.

We can see this is our whole development. The chief, or one of the most striking examples is our application of the law of value to the Russian economy. Today these God-damned scoundrels all turn up and say "of course"! But you could look through the literature of the Fourth International for pages and pages. I do not remember any statements to that effect. (p. 13)

He reminded them that Hegel had distinguished between vulgar empiricism, understanding, and Reason (dialectical thought), charging each with a certain value, a certain threshold of thought. The Dialectic was the ultimate realization of the Mind, of the Subject. Clearly, he suggested, Lenin had been capable of dialectical thought, capable of transcending through his thought the old categories (Second International) that he had inherited: "The Russian revolution of February caused violent changes in Lenin's categories. World War I set him revising the categories of the Second International" (p. 17). On the other hand, however, Trotsky had been limited to Understanding, a necessary and useful stage of thought but one that could end in its reduction to absolute categories: "He would have been able to lecture you on changing categories most profoundly. He talked about it all the time. But fixed and finite determinations held him by the throat to the end" (p. 18). Trotsky had been unwilling to recognize the true significance of Stalinism: "stalinism as a necessary, an inevitable, form of development of the labour movement. The workers are not mistaken. They are not deceived. Not in any serious sense of these words. They are making an experience that is necessary to their own development" (p. 30). Trotsky had been convinced that a labor bureaucracy (as had occurred with the old category: the Second International) would protect private property; Trotsky had been committed to the end to winning the debate with Stalin over the permanent revolution versus socialism in one country. While the Stalinists were practical and went about seizing and then preserving their power (and, incidentally, state property), Trotsky continued to defend himself in the most fixed terms: contending with his ghosts over who was closer to Lenin.

Thus the debate, beginning with socialism in a single country, remained for ever and ever within the categories of leninism. Stalin said: whatever I do is leninism. Trotsky said no: it is not leninism. I am the genuine leninist. That was the setting. Stalin was not very serious about it. His actions were pure empiricism. Trotsky was

serious about this leninism and was caught in it and strangled in it. He was entirely wrong in every theoretical and practical conclusion that was drawn from the debate. . . . The debate was that socialism *could* not be built in a single country. Does anyone believe that Stalin or any of his people believe that what is in Russia is socialism? Only an utter fool can think so. What the debate was about was whether the state-property system would be maintained without a revolution sooner or later in the West. (p. 350)

And of course while Trotsky was preoccupied, fixed at the level of Understanding, he never possessed the energy nor the insight to realize that Stalinism . . . could only be understood by revealing its economic basis: "He did not see that the revolutionary Third International had succumbed to state capitalism aided by Russian imperialism. He never wrote about the economic changes, what he thought about it, if he did, he never thought of sufficient importance to set down. . . ." "Astonishing, isn't it?" (p. 37). Those who wished to continue with the struggles of the proletariat, to comprehend the emergence of Stalinism, could no longer afford to indulge Trotsky:

The new categories, the impulses, the instinctive actions, the strong knots formed, were observed, talked about, but always incorporated into the old shell; state capitalism or reformist international that would destroy private property and refuse to support the bourgeoisie in imperialist war, an anti-proletarian bureaucracy that thrived on state property and would defend it to the last against private property, all the knots, impulses, etc. which drove these into the mind, were allowed in only in so far as they filled into the formed and finished categories which Lenin left. That is why what were the results of Reason in one generation become Understanding in another, and the negating, the transcending of the determinations into a higher unity cannot be done. (p. 34)

Trotsky had thus mistaken Stalinism for a workers' bureaucracy, he had been incapable of transcending the once powerful categories derived from the experience of the Second International (p. 59) in order to recognize the further maturation of the contradictions of a workers' movement in capitalist society. Hegel, of course, had anticipated Trotsky's error: consciousness discovering what "was truth only for the particular vision, criterion, standards with which it looked on the world" (p. 54).<sup>203</sup> Appearance had superseded Actuality:

But you and I are dialecticians. We know that stalinism today is the true state of the labour movement. It is revolutionary, repudiating parliamentarianism, private property, national defence, and national boundaries. It is however attached to an imperialism as patron and is bureaucratic and aims at totalitarian control of labour and then of capital. (p. 43)

. . . To know true reality, to understand the labour movement, is to know that at each stage it degenerates but splits to re-instate its self-identity, its unity, but that this unity comes from divisions within its own self. . . .

Stalinism is a bitter obstacle. But see it as part of a process. Through the process of its own development, the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative, the labour movement goes through all its experiences and reaches its completely realized self only by conquering them one after the other. And only at the end, when the labour movement finds itself fully realized will we see what it is in very truth. (p. 65)

Lenin had recognized the workers in Hegel's discussions of the Doctrines of Being and Essence. It could be seen that his note on the *Logic* contained his revolutionary program in formation (pp. 98–106). He had discerned the self-movement of the proletariat, the movement that was the working class's being. He comprehended that:

The essence of a thing is the fact that it must move, reflect itself, negate the reflection, which was nothing, become being, and then become nothing again, while the thing itself must move on because it is its nature to do so. . . . The essence of the proletariat is its movement to incorporate in itself experience of the evils of capitalism until it overcomes capitalism itself. (p. 78)

James insisted that Lenin would have understood that “The history of the Third International is the history of the supersession of leninism by stalinism,” and that finally, “If the Fourth International is to supersede stalinism then it must ‘contain’ stalinism in its concept of itself. It begins from all the things that stalinism took over from leninism and kept. . . . The Other of stalinism is an international socialist economic order, embracing from the start whole continents” (p. 87). Because “this amazing, this incredible man” (p. 138) had understood the Soviets when they came in 1917<sup>204</sup> (but admittedly not in 1905), Lenin would know that in a movement dominated by the capitalist perversion of the revolutionary party he created:

*There is nothing more to organize.* You can organize workers as workers, You can create a special organization of revolutionary workers. But once you have those two you have reached an end. Organization as we have known it is at an end. The task is to abolish organization. The task today is to call for, to teach, to illustrate, to develop spontaneity—the free creative activity of the proletariat. The proletariat will find its method of proletarian organization. And, contradiction par excellence, at this stage the vanguard can only organize itself on the basis of the destruction of the stranglehold that the existing organizations have on the proletariat by means of which it is suffering such ghastly defeats. (p. 117)

Stalinism, the counterrevolution that had emerged from “arrested” Leninism (p. 150), would inevitably and spontaneously be opposed by the workers’ movement because the “great masses or classes” only learned through “struggle against some concrete thing” (p. 93).

The proletariat itself will smash stalinism to pieces. This experience will teach it its final lesson, that the future lies in itself, and not in anything which claims to represent it or direct it. (p. 92)

James finished the work, harvesting all these materials. He culled them in order to present one of the most exciting historical constructions to be produced by a Marxist thinker. Patiently, deliberately, systematically, but always mediated by his lyrical and sometimes mischievous literary “voice,” he distilled from 300 years of European history the processes and lineages of the contending forces within the proletarian movement: the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie and the working masses. The former, he maintained, made its first appearance in the English Civil War of the seventeenth century as radical democrats; the latter were the social basis for the revolutionary masses behind the French Revolution. However, each had undergone transformations through the long years between their appearances and the present (that is, 1948). These changes were the results not of years, but of capitalism. These two opposing historical forces had at last reached their final articulation in Stalinism and Fascism. In Stalinism, the petit bourgeoisie had organized the attempted destruction of the revolutionary proletariat. The petit bourgeoisie began by using the workers to destroy the bourgeoisie and then the suppression of the workers’ movement had followed. In Fascism, the petit bourgeoisie had become the social instrument of the increasingly desperate bourgeoisie in the effort to destroy the same historical subject: the workers’ movement. Together Fascism and Stalinism constituted the objective movement (centralization) of capitalist organization (p. 201). The continuing development of the organization of capitalist production and the bureaucratic administration of state capitalism had called forth a petit bourgeois class of enormous skill, responsibility, and ambitions. Within those same centuries, then, though it was possible to trace the maturation of the bourgeoisie and the working classes, *it was also necessary to recognize the transformation of the petit bourgeoisie. It was necessary because this strata had presumed the leadership of the proletarian movement and then betrayed it.* Now the radical intelligentsia at the service of the proletarian revolution—activists like those in the Johnson-Forest tendency—had to respond to these events. First it had to comprehend them, ceasing to identify the perversion of petit bourgeois leadership with the authentic forces of the revolution. Second, the “vanguard of the vanguard” had to assist the proletariat in the destruction of the “revolutionary proletarian” bureaucracy. The direction of the world was in the hands of the workers: “The proletariat will decide. The thing is to tell the proletariat to decide” (p. 181).

To the misfortune of *Notes on Dialectics*, it was an internal document. Thus for two decades its distribution was restricted, the more so since the movement to which it was addressed was small. It would not be widely read for 30 years. But, though James came to recognize it as his most extraordinary work, it did contain certain limitations. The most obvious problem stemmed from James’s fascination for Hegel’s mode of argumentation: the distillation of history into rich concentrates used solely for the grounding of abstract discourse. It was also the case that this history was exclusively European—an inadvertent but natural substantiation of Hegel’s own assertion of where history could occur. James’s style was also familiar in another way: the language was the combative one of Marxist exegeses (inherited from German philosophy)—a

dismissive tongue used to humiliate opposition. Its results were predictable corollaries: the absolute deprecation of the Fallen (Stalin, Trotsky, Shachtman, etc.) in contrast to oratory for True Thinkers (Hegel, Marx, Engels, Lenin). James relished the form and employed it consistently until he was able to rescue the tenor of his argument in the historical flourish with which he ended. Still, *Notes on Dialectics* was a remarkable achievement. It was a too rare example of a living, active, grappling Marxism. Its conceits were small ones given the company it kept. Though its author had not hesitated to assume the role of headmaster to Western Marxists, his grounds were substantial: the questions then being raised in the Marxist movement were so misconceived as inevitably to suggest abolition of the tradition itself. He had in many ways succeeded in anchoring Marx's thought in the twentieth century when to many it seemed that Lenin had accomplished the very opposite: its annihilation as a reference. He had shown a new direction when it seemed all such possibilities were at an end.

Our treatment of James must end here. However, his writing and politics continued. Deported from the United States in 1952, he returned to Britain, spent a few years at home in Trinidad only to return to the United States then Britain. Following *Notes on Dialectics*, he wrote *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950). At Ellis Island, while awaiting action by the U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization, he composed *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, a politico-literary critique of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* that included observations on detention and his personal, conflict-ridden encounter with "American" Communist prisoners. Within the next ten years he was to publish *Facing Reality* (with Grace Lee and Pierre Chaulieu, 1958), *Modern Politics* (his 1960 lectures in Trinidad), *Beyond a Boundary*, a significant appendix to the reissue of *The Black Jacobins* (1963), and a stream of reviews, introductions, articles, and position papers the range of which is suggested in the recently published collections: *The Future in the Present* and *Spheres of Existence*. Of his major works, it was the first that would draw James into the orbit of radical thought in the 1960s and afterward. It was the Black diaspora, particularly the militant Black petit bourgeoisie that had grown impatient with American apartheid, which would rediscover *Jacobins*. First the book and then the author would help them to confirm their ideological struggle with bourgeois culture. The mass Black movement provided the compulsion. James astounded this new Black intelligentsia with his brilliant thought, his provocative analyses, and his grasp of Black history. He became once again "Nello" to intimates two generations younger than his contemporaries, he became the teacher they could honor, a living, absorbing link between themselves and a past of which most had only a vague notion (or, just as frequently, a profound expectation). But he also sometimes saddened them, pitching divisive battles in fields peopled only with Marxian phantoms.<sup>205</sup> When they had recovered him, he had again become accustomed to presenting himself as a "Black European."<sup>206</sup> Some came to understand something of what he expected of them. But he also learned: "[A] great deal of my time has been spent in seeing how much I failed to

understand when I was young and my whole life was toward European literature, European sociology. Now I'm beginning to see and it is helping me to write."<sup>207</sup> Perhaps his long-awaited autobiography will ultimately demonstrate just how permanently their reflective gift of the Black radical tradition has affected him. What he gave them is no mystery.

picked at Black Reconstruction until nothing remained but the narrative of Black legislative achievement. The work of Herbert Aptheker, the leading Communist scholar on Negro Movements, began under this discipline. (See George Charney's comments on Aptheker's made-to-order work on the Hungarian Uprising, Charney, op. cit., p. 295.) The force of Du Bois's work was more than the ideologues of American Marxism required and, on the other hand, more than American academic history could accept. More than two decades would pass before *Black Reconstruction* would again receive serious attention in either circle. By that time, Du Bois was nearing his nineties and the American Communist Party had been reduced to a sect. By the third decade, the shadow of Du Bois lay across American historiography.

## Chapter Ten

1. Hollis Lynch, writing while his historical judgment seemed to match that of his subject too closely, opened his study of Edward Blyden with the declaration that: "The nineteenth was probably the most humiliating century in the history of the Negro race." Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832–1912*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1970, p. 1. Lynch's justification rested on the persistence of the African slave trade "despite the well-intentioned efforts of the British to stop it and the legal prohibitions imposed upon it by European and American nations" (ibid.); and Negro phobia: "[P]erhaps the greatest wrong inflicted on the Negro race in the nineteenth century was the successful building up of a myth that the Negro was inherently inferior to other races" (ibid., pp. 2–3). But even more debilitating to Lynch's comprehension of the period was his consistent belittling of Black resistance. Both the Haitian Revolution and the resistance to the Confederacy by Afro-Americans were submerged in Lynch's mind by fortuitous locations and developments. Of the first, he was satisfied to write: "West Indian Negroes were fortunate in being the first in the New World to gain their emancipation" (ibid., p. 2). And of the second, he claimed: "So entrenched was slavery in the southern United States that it took the Civil War (1861–1865) to bring about its downfall" (ibid., p. 1). Indeed, Lynch's depiction of "the Negro world in the nineteenth century and the making of a race champion," entirely devoid of any reference to collective Black radicalism, revolves around the dilemma of the Black petit bourgeoisie (the "free Negro") during the eras of slavery and the postemancipation. For them, no doubt, the period was an unpleasant one.

2. "It was . . . the absence of a manufacturing infra-structure after Independence, the development of essentially feudal relations in agriculture, the struggles of the peasantry to remain landed and self-subsistent, the growth of a landed rural middle class, the creation of a prebendary state bureaucracy, the inability of any of the dominant warring factions of the ruling class to achieve a decisive and long-lasting political and economic hegemony, and the penetration and dominance of foreign capital, which would seriously block all attempts at the capitalist transformation and development of Haiti during the nineteenth century." Alex Dupuy, "Class Formation and Underdevelopment in Nineteenth Century Haiti," 1981 (unpublished paper).

3. W. David McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, Blandford Press, London, 1974, pp. 152–53.

4. For the Morant Bay Uprising in Jamaica in 1865, see Bernard Semmel, *Jamaican Blood and Victorian Conscience*, Houghton Mifflin, Cambridge, 1963; and Peter Abrahams, *Jamaica*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1957, pp. 74–127.

5. McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 169–72; and Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny*, Viking Press, New York 1978.

6. The Liberal Party, while in power, "had evacuated Afghanistan and the Transvaal, and had abandoned Cordon at Khartoum to a death they refused to avenge. They had gone further and attempted to break up the Empire. They wished to consolidate the Empire by granting the Irish Home Rule." Elie Halevy, *Imperialism and the Rise of Labour, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, Ernest Benn, London, 1961 (orig. 1926), 5:10; see also McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 124–28.

7. Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, Methuen, London, 1974, p. 66.

8. Halevy, op. cit., p. 11.

9. "[A]n entire section of the Liberal leaders, the followers of Lord Rosebery, were imperialists, and during the three years of Liberal government the Foreign Office had pursued an imperialist policy." Halevy, ibid., p. 8.

10. "For the inhabitants of these islands at the beginning of this century the British Empire was for better or worse what Lord Curzon described as 'a great historical and political and sociological fact which is one of the guiding factors in the history of mankind.' Most of them (at least outside Ireland) seem to have thought it to be for the better. . . . They would have been brought up in the nursery on the patriotic verse of Robert Southey and Thomas Campbell. At school their minds would have been moulded by men with the robust and simple-minded patriotism of Charles Kingsley and of William Johnson Cory, that vehement enthusiast who taught so many future members of the ruling class at Eton, not least among them Lord Rosebery and Lord Esher. From schools . . . this generation passed to universities where they came in contact with professors like John Ruskin: Ruskin, who told the audience at his Inaugural Lecture as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford in 1870 that it must be the task of Englishmen 'still undegenerate in race; a

race mingled of the best northern blood,' to 'found colonies as fast and as far as she is able formed of her most energetic and worthiest men;—seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and that their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and sea.' If they were historians, they would be introduced to the works of Carlyle and Froude, who spread the same message." Michael Howard, "Empire, Race and War," *History Today* 31 (December 1981): 5. See also, Brian Street, *The Savage in Literature*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975; Jonah Raskin, *The Mythology of Imperialism*, Delta, New York, 1971; V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Humankind*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969; and Halevy, op. cit., pp. 18–22.

11. Halevy, op. cit., pp. 11–12.

12. "The peons [backwoodsmen of mixed Spanish-American-African descent from Venezuela], the African immigrants, and the black ex-soldiers, and their descendants, were important groups in the island's peasantry in the nineteenth century. But the peasantry in Trinidad originated with the withdrawal of ex-slaves from the sugar plantations after 1838. Perhaps around 7,000 ex-slaves left the estates to become stallholders. Of these, about five-sixths became owners of between one and ten acres of land, growing chiefly provisions and cocoa, and often giving casual labour to the estates during crop." Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870–1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979, p. 138. Brereton's study has been of particular use in the following descriptions of nineteenth-century Trinidad. See also Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years after Slavery*, Oxford University Press (for the Institute of Race Relations), London, 1968, pp. 49ff.

13. The decline of sugar production in Trinidad during the 1840s and 1850s was also attributable to the neglect of the road systems that connected the plantations and ports in western Trinidad. This neglect was connected to the movement of ex-slaves—an attempt by the planters to keep their labor close by. Thirty years after emancipation, the new governor, A. H. Gordon (appointed in 1866) and his surveyor-general were confronted with the results: "During his early excursions Gordon saw at first hand the state of the roads. Everywhere he found neglect. As he was travelling on the main highway to San Fernando a rotten bridge collapsed beneath his party." "Gordon's response was prompt. . . . The Surveyor-General planned an ambitious programme of new roads, not without opposition from some planters who feared that an improvement in communications might drain off labourers from the estates." Wood, op. cit., p. 268, 269.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

15. *Ibid.* Brereton reports: "Victorians were preoccupied with the need for 'steady industry,' 'reliable labour,' by the non-white races of the Empire—usually for a European employer. As the London *Spectator* said, steady industry was 'in English opinion, the single virtue, except reverence for white faces, to be demanded of black men.' The 'lazy nigger' myth performed a useful role: it justified the exploitation of black labourers by the planters, and the neglect of independent peasant cultivators by the government." Brereton, op. cit., p. 148.

16. For a fuller treatment of the attempt to recruit immigrant labor from the West Indies, Africa, the United States, and China, see Wood, op. cit., chaps. 4 and 8. Of the liberated Africans, J. J. (Jacob) Thomas (who will be discussed in the text) "listed the principal tribal groups sent to Trinidad as the 'Mandingoes, Foulahs, Houssas, Calvers, Gallahs, Karamenties, Yorubas, Aradas, Cangas, Kroos, Timchess, Veis, Eboes, Mokoos, Bibis, Congoes.'" Brereton, op. cit., p. 134.

17. See Wood, op. cit., pp. 107–10.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

19. Brereton, "The Experience of Indentureship: 1845–1917," in John La Guerre (ed.), *Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians of Trinidad*, Longman Caribbean, Trinidad, 1974, p. 32.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

21. J. C. Jha, "Indian Heritage in Trinidad, West Indies," *Caribbean Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (June 1973): 30. "Conditions like these were part of the fabric of life but the Mutiny depressed them even further. Many of the Bengal army were Brahmans and Rajputs from Oudh and the North-West Provinces; the campaign ebbed and flowed over their homelands and battles were fought in districts which were centres for colonial emigration. Sharp fighting took place, for example, in Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Arrah, and Allahabad; the 17th Native Infantry had risen in Azamgarh in the first months of the troubles; and Cawnpore and Lucknow were bitterly besieged. But worse for the peasantry than pitched battles and the sieges of towns were the mopping-up raids and skirmishes in the villages; for them it was more like an episode in the Thirty Years' War than a disciplined nineteenth-century campaign." Wood, op. cit., p. 148. See also Hibbert, op. cit., for other details of the atrocities committed by the British and the rebellious sepoys.

22. See Jha, op. cit., *passim*. Hindu dominated Muslims almost 9:1.

23. Extracted from a colonial petition of August 1919, requesting the permanent stationing of a white garrison in Trinidad, and cited by Brinsley Samaroo, "The Trinidad Workingmen's Association and the Origins of Popular Protest in a Crown Colony," *Social and Economic Studies* 21, no. 2 (June 1972): 213.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

25. Wood, op. cit., pp. 152–53. "The *Tazia* procession (Husain or Hose) was the biggest festival in which

Hindus also participated. In fact, from 1850s this festival became the annual demonstration of Indian national feeling which culminated in the Hose Riots of San Fernando in 1884. A big flag is raised at the start of the ceremony and the *tazias* (replicas of the tombs of Hasan and Husain, grandchildren of prophet Mohammed) are led by specially trained moon dancers to the accompaniment of drum beating and 'garka' (stick) fighting. In the past fire rod dancing was also done, twirling a twelve foot pole with flaming rags secured to either end. Even non-Indians have been taking part in the procession." Jha, op. cit., p. 31. For the attitudes of Afro-Creoles and East Indians toward one another, see Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., pp. 188–90.

26. One prominent member of the colored middle class, Dr. Stephen Moister Laurence wrote in his memoirs concerning the language of British colonials: "When however we analyse the term 'native' in relation to racial origin as well as place of birth, we discover the true explanation of many a mistake made alike by British people in general and the Colonial Office in particular. This special class division must have begun long ago when the East—that is, India—was *the* Colonial possession. Naturally, there were but few English, and these were mostly constantly back and forth, so that the whole Indian people were referred to as natives. This was perfectly correct, because they were both of pure Indian stock and of Indian birth. This justified use of the term 'native' would be extended to the entire East, and also to Africa." "But when one turns to the West Indies the whole question takes on a very different complexion, and calls for handling from a very different angle." "If, instead of presuming that these factors in the West Indies had the same significance or insignificance as in the East, British authorities had acquainted themselves with the difference, then Downing Street [the Secretary of State for the Colonies was once located there as well as the Prime Minister] at least—not to mention religious authorities—would have made fewer mistakes and most likely scored more numerous successes than recorded history has established." "The Trinidad Water Riot of 1903: Reflections of an Eyewitness," edited by L. O. Laurence, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 15, no. 4 (December 1969): 13–14.

27. See Samaroo, op. cit., p. 206.

28. Wood, op. cit., p. 127.

29. Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., p. 148.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

31. *Ibid.*, chap. 8; see also D. V. Trotman, "The Yoruba and Orisha Worship in Trinidad and British Guiana 1838–1870," *African Studies Review*, 19, no. 2 (September 1976): 1–17; and J. D. Elder, "The Yoruba Ancestor Cult in Gasparillo," *Caribbean Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (August 1970) (cited by Brereton).

32. Brereton, *ibid.*, p. 162.

33. Wood, op. cit., p. 136.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–59. "[B]y late 1870s the Indians in Trinidad had some good horses which won prizes in races, and the best kept cows and between 1885 and 1909 they acquired 69,087 acres of land." Jha, op. cit., p. 30; see also Winston Dookeran, "East Indians and the Economy of Trinidad and Tobago," in John La Guerre, op. cit., pp. 69–83 for the persistence of poverty among East Indians.

35. Wood, op. cit., p. 276. These crops were developed by enterprising East Indians early on to substitute for imports of the foods familiar to the Indian diet.

36. See Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., pp. 191–92.

37. Chinese immigration was halted in 1866 by the Kung Convention. See Wood, op. cit., pp. 160–67 for details of the Trinidad episode.

38. "The French Creoles dominated the white Creole elite. These were mainly whites of French descent, but the term was generally understood to include people of English Irish, Spanish, Corsican, and even German descent, born in the island, and almost invariably Roman Catholic. People born in Europe, but resident in Trinidad for many years, and linked by marriage to this group, were also by courtesy considered to be French Creoles." Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., p. 35. Trinidad had served as a receptacle for French emigre aristocrats in the West Indies who fled Haiti and other French possessions in the wake of the French and Haitian revolutions.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

40. See Wood, op. cit., chap. 14.

41. This process is described in Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., p. 47.

42. See Laurence, op. cit.; and Samaroo, op. cit.

43. Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., p. 63.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

45. *Ibid.*, translation mine.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

48. Wood, op. cit., p. 249.

49. For Thomas's background, see Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., pp. 91–96.

50. Quoted in C. L. R. James, "Discovering Literature in Trinidad: The 1930s," in *Sphere of Existence*, Allison and Busby, London, 1980, pp. 241–42.

51. Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., pp. 94–95.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–97.
53. Geiss, op. cit., pp. 176ff. Williams's pan-Africanism was also anticipated in Thomas's experience: "J. J. Thomas wrote in 1889 that he was 'familiar since early childhood with members of almost every tribe of Africans . . . who were brought to the West Indies.'" Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., p. 134. For his enumeration, see note 235.
54. "J. J. Thomas was one of those who expressed strong race pride. He was only too conscious of the extent of self-contempt and self-hatred among his fellow blacks in the West Indies. He saw how the values of white superiority had been internalised, with disastrous results. One factor in this process, in his view, was the education of young West Indians by white teachers. He thought their influence was 'to a very great degree subversive of the national sentiment,' by which he meant racial consciousness." "There were individually brilliant blacks. But there had to be 'some potential agency to collect and adjust them into the vast engine essential for executing the true purposes of the civilised African Race.'" Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., pp. 104, 106.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
56. Both H. Sylvester Williams and R. E. Phipps raised the issue of the place of the West Indian middle classes in the governing of their societies at the Pan-African Conference in London in 1900; Geiss, op. cit., pp. 187, 193.
57. James, *The Case for West-Indian Self Government*, Hogarth, London, 1933, pp. 10–11. Colonial officials, apparently, were not the only ones who might be shocked by the discovery of "civilized" west Indians. Dr. Stephen Laurence observed: "Perhaps the best resume and the most fitting comment on this question is the reply said to have been given to her Majesty Queen Victoria at her Jubilee [in 1897] by the late Mr. Lazare [Emmanuel Mzumbo Lazare, a solicitor and conveyancer, born in Trinidad in 1864], himself of pure African stock: 'Do you speak English in Trinidad?' asked her Majesty. 'Madam in Trinidad we are all English.'" Laurence, op. cit., p. 15.
58. James, *ibid.*, p. 31.
59. Richard Small, "The Training of an Intellectual, the Making of a Marxist," in Paul Buhle (ed.), *C. L. R. James: His Life and Work*, a special issue of *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 13. James's paternal grandfather was the pan boiler, his maternal grandfather, Josh Rudder, was the engine driver. See James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., pp. 17–19, 22–25. Both grandfathers had achieved positions normally reserved for whites in the nineteenth century. Rudder, especially, achieved an expertise with locomotives that still put him in occasional demand even in his late retirement. He jealously husbanded his knowledge from whites. On one instance, having performed one of his miracles, James described the old man's reaction. "An enthusiastic crowd, headed by the manager, surrounded Josh, asking him what it was that had performed the miracle. But the always exuberant Josh grew silent for once and refused to say. He never told them. He never told anybody. The obstinate old man wouldn't even tell me. But when I asked him [one] day, 'Why did you do it?' he said what I had never heard before. 'They were white men with all their M.I.C.E. and R.I.C.E. and all their big degrees, and it was their business to fix it. I had to fix it for them. Why should I tell them?'" *Ibid.*, p. 25.
60. Brereton, *Race Relations*, op. cit., p. 134.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
62. Small, op. cit., p. 13.
63. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., pp. 25–26.
64. Small, op. cit., p. 13. "The game of cricket, therefore, in a real sense mirrored life in general in West Indian society, where a similar dichotomy existed. Whites were represented in the top echelons of West Indian Society, out of all proportion to their numbers in the population. They led and non-white West Indians were expected to follow. Decisions with respect to who should play, on which grounds test matches in the West Indies should be played, amount of entrance fee for games and hence profits, continued to be made by the whites." Maurice St. Pierre, "West Indian Cricket—A Socio-Historical Appraisal, Part I," *Caribbean Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (June 1973): 8.
65. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., p. 13. See also J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981.
66. Samaroo, op. cit., pp. 206–7.
67. For an account of the founding of the British Labour Party during the first three years of the present century, see Halevy, op. cit., pp. 261–81.
68. Samaroo, op. cit., p. 210.
69. McIntyre, op. cit., p. 132.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 133–34.
71. George Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, Frank Cass, London, 1972, p. 235. For details of the African and Black troops used by the colonial powers in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century (until the late 1920s), see Padmore, *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, Sun Dance Press, Hollywood, 1971, pp. 111–20. Elsewhere, Padmore had quoted General Smuts of South Africa on the French use of troops: "During

the first year of the war 70,000 black troops were raised in French West Africa. By 1918 Black Africa had furnished France 680,000 soldiers and 238,000 labourers in all. We have seen what we have never seen before, what enormously valuable material lay in the Black Continent." Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, Doubleday, New York, 1972, p. 98.

72. See Padmore, *Negro Toilers*, op. cit., pp. 117–19, for figures. Harry Haywood was a veteran of the French campaigns and describes the experience of Black American troops in France in Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, op. cit., pp. 53–78. See also W. E. B. Du Bois's treatment in "The Black Man in the Revolution of 1914–1918," and "An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War," in *The Seventh Son*, Julius Lester (ed.), op. cit., pp. 107–15 and 115–57, respectively.

73. Samaroo, op. cit., pp. 211–12. James was underage but he attempted to volunteer for the war effort (but in the Merchants' and Planters' Contingent): "Young man after young man went in [to the volunteers' office], and I was not obviously inferior to any of them in anything. The merchant talked to each, asked for references and arranged for further examination as the case might be. When my turn came I walked to his desk. He took one look at me, saw my dark skin and, shaking his head vigorously, motioned me violently away." "What matters is that I was not unduly disturbed." James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., p. 40.

74. Samaroo, *ibid.*, pp. 210–11. A more profound interpretation is provided by Fitz A. Baptiste: "The war produced a price spiral for commodities and the British Caribbean, the commodity producer par excellence, tried to cash in on the boom as best they could. Some statistics for Jamaica reveal that, despite the effects by 1917/18 of the British blockade and the German submarine warfare on Allied trade, export values were maintained, even though there were falls in volumes, owing to the general spurt in prices for commodities, especially cocoa and coffee." "While a factor in this was clearly sheer exploitative greed by the merchant categories in the colonial society, a more fundamental cause was the enforced shift of dependence for imports from Britain to the United States and to Canada as the blockade and the Battle of the Atlantic began to register themselves in the Caribbean. . . . The extraordinarily high percentage for imports from the United States [for Jamaica, 67.6 percent] clearly reflected some of the distortions effected by the war and which were still continuing into the post-war years." Baptiste, "The United States and West Indian Unrest: 1918–1939," Working Paper No. 18, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1978, pp. 5–6.

75. Samaroo, *ibid.*, pp. 211–16. "There were disturbances in British Honduras in July 1919 and again in 1920; in Jamaica on two occasions in 1918 and also in 1924; in Trinidad in late 1919/early 1920; in St. Lucia in February, 1920; and in the Bahamas in December, 1922. The list may well be shown to be longer." Baptiste, op. cit., p. 7.

76. See Small, op. cit., p. 16; and W. F. Elkins, "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: The Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy," *Science and Society* 34 (Spring 1970): 99–103 (cited by Small).

77. Samaroo, op. cit., p. 219; and James, *The Black Jacobins*, op. cit., appendix, pp. 403–4. A very different experience for Blacks in the various theaters of war was their own interaction: the discovery of their mutual oppression. Claude McKay recalled his own experience in London during the war: "One club was for colored soldiers. It was situated in a basement in Drury Lane. There was a host of colored soldiers in London, from the West Indies and Africa, with a few colored Americans, East Indians, and Egyptians among them. . . . I went often and listened to the soldiers telling tales of their war experiences in France, Egypt and Arabia. Many were interested in what American Negroes were thinking and writing." McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, op. cit., p. 67.

78. McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 209–10. In his dispatches to Washington, the Acting American Consul, Henry D. Baker, wrote from Port of Spain in December 1919 of the racial concerns he shared with Trinidad's colonial officials: "[M]ention was made of an interview between the Governor of Trinidad and Tobago and the manager of the General Asphalt Company [where a strike was expected and Baker had in place 'a trusted coloured employee'] in the course of which the Governor allegedly stated that the Colonial Government had no confidence in the local police force which was predominantly black and advised the asphalt and oil companies to establish a white militia. As if to show that he meant business, the Governor provided 25 rifles and 11 rounds of ammunition for use by the militia. That by itself, is a remarkable index of the racist reaction of the authorities, backed by the expatriate and local white interests, to what was clearly perceived as a 'black power' movement." Baptiste, op. cit., p. 12. Baker recommended to Washington: "intervention, preferably at the invitation of the British authorities, but, 'in the threatened massacre of white people,' to use his own words in a separate message, without it." *Ibid.*, p. 13.

79. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., p. 71.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.

81. Of the many recollections James has published of his friendship with Padmore, perhaps the most poignant is the brief: "[W]e were boys together, and used to bathe in the Arima River, underneath the ice factory." James, "Discovering Literature in Trinidad: The 1930s," op. cit., p. 238, see also James Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, op. cit., pp. 2–3.

82. Hooker, op. cit., pp. 3–4.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
85. Small, *op. cit.*, p. 17; see also James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
86. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
87. "The ex-British colonials have got to break away from parliamentarism. I did it through becoming a Marxist." Alan J. MacKenzie interview with James, "Radical Pan-Africanism in the 1930s," *Radical History Review* 24 (Fall 1980): 71.
88. *Ibid.*
89. For the publication of James's first major works including the novel, *Minty Alley*, see Robert A. Hill, "In England, 1932–1938," *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 19–27; and E. Elliot Parris, "*Minty Alley*," *ibid.*, pp. 97–98.
90. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–19.
91. See Basil Wilson, "The Caribbean Revolution," *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 47–54.
92. Halevy, *op. cit.*, pp. 211–12.
93. Stuart MacIntyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain, 1917–1933*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p. 23.
94. "This sour creed, imported from abroad, which refused to set before its adherents an ideal which made appeal to the heart but was content to prove by scientific arguments, or what purported to be such, the approach of a complete upheaval of society, at once violent in its methods, and beneficent in its effects, repelled many of those Englishmen who for the past twenty-five years or more [before 1884] had been approaching Socialism by other routes. In agreement with the Marxists to denounce a social order based on the unhappiness of the majority and the war of all against all, they did not share the Marxian interpretation of history. They did not invite the working classes to use violence. The formula of the class war was absent from their vocabulary. Neither Ruskin, the man whose spirit inspired British Socialism, nor William Morris himself, though he professed a species of anarchist Communism, was in the strict sense a revolutionary. England had passed through two revolutions—the Puritan revolution of the seventeenth century, the industrial revolution of the eighteenth—and their dark shadow still lay over the land. Without recourse to violence, Socialism must teach the nation the art of being good, and happy, the cult of beauty." Halevy, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–22. Halevy's prejudice is his own, but the fact of the limited impact of Marxism in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is generally established. See, for example, David Smith, *Socialist Propaganda in the Twentieth-Century British Novel*, Macmillan Press, London, 1978, pp. 4–10.
95. See Stanley Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1973, pp. 67–68.
96. Stuart MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
97. For the Fabians, see Pierson, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–39; and Halevy, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–6 for Fabian imperialism.
98. Pierson, *ibid.*, pp. 137–38.
99. Stuart MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
100. Neal Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1959, p. 23; and MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–11.
101. See L. J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party*, MacGibbon and Kee, Worcester and London, 1966, chap. 7.
102. "From the middle of 1924 until the General Strike, the party's membership doubled, largely as a result of its work in the industrial and trade union fields. During the miners' struggle of 1926 membership rocketed to over 10,000, only to start on a decline which became sharper as the party adopted a more and more uncompromising attitude towards the Labour Party and the trade unions. By the end of the twenties the membership had fallen back to 3,200, roughly the same figure as in the period 1922 to mid-1924. The adoption of the 'new line' was the main factor which accelerated the rate of decline after 1928." MacFarlane, *ibid.*, p. 286; see also Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
103. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.
105. Stuart MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 19; see also Raphael Samuel, "British Marxist Historians I," *New Left Review* 120 (March–April 1980): 23–24.
106. "A British radical intelligentsia, comparable to the long-established continental intelligentsias, did not appear until the nineteen-thirties. In the main British intellectuals had always been Liberal or Conservative. Then between 1928 and 1933 a change occurred in their outlook. Just before the opening of the new decade, G. D. H. Cole sensed 'a disquieting insecurity' among young intellectuals. Their pursuit of pleasure ceased to be satisfying. A new seriousness came to the fore in the place of the former joie de vivre. Increasing attention was given to politics. Whereas sex and aesthetics had been the major topics of conversation, now everybody began to talk politics. As time passed the politics of the intellectual moved leftward to socialism and communism. What began as a political awakening became a great radicalization." Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 37. For the impact of this movement on English historiography, see Eric Hobsbawm,

"The Historians' Group of the Communist Party," in Maurice Cornforth (ed.), *Rebels and Causes*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1978, pp. 21–47.

107. See Stuart MacIntyre, op. cit., pp. 47–65; Alan McKinnon, "Communist Party Election Tactics: A Historical Review," *Marxism Today* 24, no. 8 (August 1980): 20–26; Henry Pelling, "The Early History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1920–29," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., vol. 8 (1958): 41–57; John Strachey, "Communism in Great Britain," *Current History*, January 1939, pp. 29–31; and Hugo Dewar, *Communist Politics in Britain: The CPGB from its Origins to the Second World War*, Pluto Press, London, 1976, chaps. 7–10.

108. See Folarin Shyllon, "The Black Presence and Experience in Britain: An Analytical Overview," paper presented to the International Conference on the History of Blacks in Britain, University of London, 30 September 1981, p. 7; and Geiss, op. cit., p. 201.

109. In the post-World War I years, American and British officials worked closely to orchestrate the access of Black British colonials to the English-speaking metropolises: "According to U.S. immigration records, the United Kingdom used up 43.9 per cent of its quota between 1925 and 1929; 22.6 per cent between 1930 and 1934; and a mere 4.4 per cent in the 1936/40 period. This left room, technically, for considerable emigration to the United States from the British colonies in the Caribbean. However, this never occurred or, to be more direct, was never allowed to happen. Through the issuance of visas, and the requirement of substantial bonds, the United States, with the tacit approval of the British metropolitan and colonial authorities, exercised an extremely tight control over the flow of British West Indians. The result was a sharp decline in the numbers of British West Indians entering the United States after 1925. In comparison to the average of thousands a year up to and including 1924, the average for the rest of the 1920s and for the 1930s became hundreds a year. In 1932, for example, a mere 113 British West Indians entered the United States." Baptiste, op. cit., pp. 19–20. Recall that this was a period of Black political movement in the United States in which West Indians had played prominent parts: that is, the UNIA, the CPUSA, the student movements at Black colleges and universities, the ABB, and so on.

110. See Ian Duffield, "The Dilemma of Pan-Africanism for Blacks in Britain, 1760–1950," paper presented to the International Conference on the History of Blacks in Britain, op. cit., pp. 7–8. (Duffield's unpublished doctoral thesis, "Duse Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism, 1866–1945," Edinburgh University, 1971, is generally accepted as the definitive work on Mohamed Ali Duse.) See also Geiss, op. cit., pp. 226–27.

111. The histories of these organizations have been reviewed in Geiss, op. cit., chaps. 14 and 17; see also Nigel File and Chris Power, *Black Settlers in Britain, 1555–1958*, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1981, pp. 72–77.

112. For Padmore, Chris Jones, and Arnold Ward, see Hooker, op. cit.; and MacKenzie, op. cit.; for Dutt and Saklatvala, see MacFarlane, op. cit.; information on Blackman has been obtained from interviews with him in London, December 1981. Geiss maintains that as early as 1898 the Liberal Party was having discussions about the possibility of a Black man standing for Parliament to represent "the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, West Africa, West Indies, etc. etc." Geiss, op. cit., p. 178.

113. See Geiss, op. cit., pp. 347–53; and Hooker, op. cit., pp. 48–49.

114. The most sympathetic interpretation of the actions taken by Stalin and the Comintern is that the dismantling of much of the propaganda apparatus in support of "world revolution" and national liberation struggles in the colonies was necessary in exchange for trade, entrance into the League of Nations for the Soviet Union, and the establishment of a loose antifascist front of "collective security" with the imperialist and capitalist states. The alternative, it continues, was the prospect of a German war, tacitly approved by those ruling classes in England, France, and America for whom the Sixth Congress of the Comintern had expressed resolute hostility. Padmore, who early in 1933 had spent several months imprisoned by Nazi authorities in Hamburg, either was unimpressed with this rationale (a certain incredulosity was warranted; less than a year later, on January 26, 1934, Stalin, at the Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU, dismissed the threat of fascism to the Soviet Union and reminded his party that the USSR had established "the best relations" with fascist Italy. Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, op. cit., 1:176–77), or was no longer capable of loyalty to a world movement led by a leadership characterized by Claudin (who was himself expelled from the Spanish Communist Party in 1965 after 32 years of active membership) as suffering from "a deep-going sickness: atrophy of the theoretical faculties, bureaucratization of the organizational structures, sterilizing monolithicity, unconditional subordination to the manoeuvres of Stalin's camarilla." *Ibid.*, p. 166. Padmore's most credible statement—he was later seldom capable of the "political objectivity" regarding the Soviet Union with which he prided himself here—indicated a "betrayal of the fundamental interests of my people" (Hooker, op. cit., p. 31). Franz Borkenau suggested that a strong contributing factor to the Soviet Union's rapprochement to the imperialist powers were the struggles internal to the Soviet administration, Borkenau, *World Communism*, op. cit., pp. 388–93. Geiss maintains that "most coloured communists or fellow-travellers left the movement" at this time. He cites Padmore, Kouyaute, and Kenyatta as examples, Geiss, op. cit., p. 338. My own research suggests otherwise. Discussions with Afro-American veterans of the Spanish Civil War have indicated that even the

revelation of Soviet aid to Italy during the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia (William Nolan in his *Communism Versus the Negro*, op. cit., pp. 135, 245 n. 90, cites articles in the *New York Times*, 8 and 10 September 1935), did not deter them. James Yates told me: "We didn't get a chance to go to Ethiopia much as many of us would have liked to gone. But when Ethiopia was invaded and Italy overran it, those same troops left there and went to Spain. This was a time and a chance for especially the Blacks to volunteer and get back at the fascists that had invaded Ethiopia." Interview, 26 April 1978, Binghamton. Harry Haywood has maintained the same position. Interview, Spring 1977, Binghamton; and see also his *Black Bolshevik*, op. cit., pp. 448–49, 459–60, and chap. 18.

115. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., p. 114.

116. "When the war ended the black community in Britain was quite large, perhaps as numerous as 20,000 souls, and with the closing down of war factories they flocked to dockside areas, particularly Cardiff and Liverpool. During the war, black sailors had earned good money in the merchant navy, but with the demobilization of white sailors who had been serving in the Royal Navy, the blacks fell on hard times as they were discarded to make way for the demobilized whites. Blacks were expelled from jobs they had held for years just to make places for white men." "Resentment at blacks competing for jobs with white workers, and reaction to black men marrying white women, finally erupted into racial violence in 1919. Race riots swept such British cities and towns as Liverpool, Cardiff, Manchester, London, Hull, Barry, and Newport, Mon. Reporting the Liverpool incidents *The Times* of 10 May 1919, pointed out that the war had increased the black men in Liverpool until they then numbered about 5,000." Folarin Shyllon, op. cit., p. 8.

117. In Berlin and Paris, American Blacks, for example, Ethel Waters and Josephine Baker, joined French colonial dependents; in Britain, the prize-fighter Jack Johnson, and Paul Robeson, were contemporaries of Learie Constantine and the Sierra Leone actor, Robert Adams.

118. See Makonnen, op. cit., p. 133; Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, op. cit., p. 95; and James, *Beyond a Boundary*, op. cit., pp. 128–29.

119. Interview with Mrs. Veronica Sankey, 20 July 1980, Brighton; Edward and Veronica Sankey founded the Sankey Printing Company in Ikeja, Nigeria.

120. Makonnen, op. cit., p. 152.

121. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

122. See Geiss, op. cit., pp. 355, 387–90.

123. "I became a bona fide member of the publishers' association, and proceeded to bring out a number of pieces that needed publicity. There was a pamphlet by Kenyatta [*Kenya: Land of Conflict*], and a kind of Socratic discussion between Nancy Cunard and George Padmore on the black man's burden [*White Man's Duty*], and a manuscript by Eric Williams [*The Negro in the Caribbean*]." Makonnen, op. cit., p. 145.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 126. In Africa, "Europeans who attempted to live native style quickly went to pieces. Some missionaries who tried this approach failed wretchedly. Many white men who let their standards fall in the bush took to drink and self-despair, and some became so deranged they sought refuge from the immensity of the continent, like wild animals, in lairs under rocks or in caves. 'Going *shenzi*,' it was called." Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, Fontana/Collins, London, 1974, p. 47. Murray-Brown maintains that Kenyatta while living in Britain was driven by similar strains, but resolved them by discovering a sacred tree in his garden in Storrington, and "maintained communion with the spirits of his people through libations and prayers." *Ibid.*, pp. 214–15.

128. Makonnen, *ibid.*, p. 155.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

130. See Julian Symons, *The Thirties: A Dream Revolved*, Faber and Faber, London, 1975, chaps. 5–10; Douglas Hill (ed.), *Tribune 40*, Quartet Books, London, 1977, pp. 1–24; Neal Wood, op. cit., pp. 53–63; and David Smith, op. cit., pp. 48–56.

131. Symons, *ibid.*, pp. 56–57; and Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

132. Symons, *ibid.*, p. 56.

133. Douglas Hill, op. cit., p. 3.

134. On Spain, Julian Symons recalled: "The rebels [under Franco] were being armed with German and Italian guns and rifles, so that the British Government's declaration in favour of a policy of non-intervention was in effect support of the rebellion." "The policy of non-intervention, Stephen Spender said, was 'more grotesquely, obviously and dangerously a support of interference by the Fascist powers than was the arms embargo in the Abyssinian conflict a present of munitions and victory to Italy.'" Symons, op. cit., pp. 107, 108.

135. See Folarin Shyllon, op. cit., p. 9. Presumably, Shyllon is relying on the unpublished Ph.D. thesis authored by Ian Duffield; see note 110.

136. Wayne Cooper and Robert C. Reinders, "Claude McKay in England, 1920," *New Beacon Reviews*, Collection One, 1968, pp. 3–21 (reprinted from *Race*, ix, 1967). Cooper and Reinders recount: "McKay

escaped arrest but his 'big black grin' [McKay's description] did not prevent the Home and/or Foreign Office from preparing a dossier on him. In 1930 McKay wrote to Max Eastman that the English government prevented him from visiting Gibraltar (McKay was still a British subject) and that a French official in Fez told him that the 'British Secret Service had me listed as a propagandist.' Two years later McKay was having trouble with the British Consul in Tangiers and was prevented from entering British territory—including his home island of Jamaica. And in the following year he complained to Eastman that 'those dirty British bastards working respectably in the dark' were blocking his re-entry into the United States." *Ibid.*, p. 12.

137. See Hooker, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 43.

138. "In the Caribbean colonies, a clamp was placed on radicals. Butler spent much of the war locked up. In Jamaica, Bustamante was also interned for a while under the wartime defence regulations. Despatches from the American Consul in Kingston tell how the Colonial Government, in the face of local reactions, took advantage of the power vested in it by the Defence Regulations to detain persons who were noted as 'bitter critics' of British colonialism. One of those detained was Wilfred A. Domingo who was described as 'a native of Jamaica who for some years has been resident in New York from which place he has taken an active part in Jamaican politics.' He was removed from a ship taking him from the United States to Jamaica before it actually docked at Kingston and placed in an internment camp. . . . It is not inconceivable that the news that he was on his way to Jamaica was sent to the British authorities by the American and British intelligence networks in the United States. Intelligence was one facet and an important one of the developing Anglo-American wartime collaboration in Caribbean defence, with the Americans in the senior role." Fitz A. Baptiste, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46.

139. For a recent evaluation of British Marxist intellectuals, see E. P. Thompson's collection of essays, *The Poverty of Theory*, Merlin, London, 1978; and Perry Anderson's sometimes specious rejoinder, *Arguments Within English Marxism* Verso, London, 1980.

140. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

141. Richard Small, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

142. Robert A. Hill, "In England, 1932–1938," *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24. Hill also provides a defense of James's Trotskyism: "[A] large body of Trotsky's followers, not just in France but throughout the European working-class movement, were genuine Leninists who, while not willing to tolerate Stalin's betrayal, went with Trotsky because he seemed to offer a possibility of sustaining the revolutionary political principles of Lenin. The cadres whom James became associated with in the Trotskyist movement were bearers of the political thought and practice of Lenin and Bolshevism at its prime. *Most of them could be classified as Trotskyists only secondarily.* From them James gained an immense knowledge of the internal make-up of the revolutionary socialist movement and the special role which outstanding workers came to play in its development" (*ibid.*, p. 23). This interpretation of Trotskyism (and Hill indicates a debt to the work of Franz Borkenau—see Borkenau, *op. cit.*, p. 396) is only partially sound. It implies, correctly, the cult of personality with which Stalinists were comfortable, and frequently attached to those they opposed (the history of the Communist movement in Western countries is replete with "deviations" known by the suffix "-ite"), but it also displaces Stalin and Trotsky with Lenin by the same logic ("bearers"). I can only guess at what "outstanding workers" means, and if I have surmised correctly it suggests one of the fundamental flaws in James's thought, one which will be explored in his treatment of the Haitian Revolution. Finally, James, in his "Notes On Dialectics" (Allison and Busby, London, 1980), a manuscript that Hill had a great deal to do with preserving, provides a much more historical interpretation of Trotskyism, one which places that "phenomenon" within the history of the progressive development of the working classes. That, too, I shall attempt to demonstrate later in the text.

143. Sylvia Wynter, "In Quest of Matthew Bondsman: Some Cultural Notes on the Jamesian Journey," *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 54.

144. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

145. *Ibid.*, p. 47. For Thackeray, see Margaret Forster, *William Makepeace Thackeray: Memoirs of a Victorian Gentleman*, Quartet, London, 1980.

146. James, *ibid.*, p. 37.

147. See J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981. Mangan believes that Arnold's role has been overdone, but generally confirms James's earlier treatment of the public school phenomenon; see Mangan, chap. 1.

148. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–60. Grace, James declares, was the best known Englishman of his time, that is the last quarter of the nineteenth century. And James deplores the fact that neither Trevelyan, nor Postgate or Cole in their histories of that century found a place for him. But when he declared that he could "no longer accept the system of values which could not find in these books a place for W. G. Grace" (*ibid.*, p. 157), he was also, it would appear, coming to terms with a species of Marxism that possessed neither imagination or political relevance. He had come to terms with the relationship between culture, class power, and economic dominance that had reduced even Marx to a somewhat mumbled admission of perplexity (see Marx on the Western ideal in Greek art in his *A Contribution to the*

*Critique of Political Economy*). And James realized that he had gone quite far: "The conjunction hit me as it would have hit few of the students of society and culture in the international organization to which I belonged." *Ibid.*, p. 151. Though it is difficult to get her to say it, Sylvia Wynter confirms James' self-assessment: "The co-evolution of new popular forms of social organization, i.e., trade union organizations, political parties, international organization, organizational forms of struggle for popular democracy with the rise of the desire for organized sports all within the decade 1860–1870 provide the basis for the Jamesian reflection on the complexity of human needs, for his implicit affirmation that the 'realization of one's powers' at both the individual and the group level is the most urgent imperative of all . . . [it] was a conjunction that hit James, only because unlike Trotsky he had moved outside the monoconceptual Labor frame to the wider frame of a popular theoretics." Wynter, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

149. See Basil Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–50; see also Eric Williams's few comments on James in his autobiography, *Inward Hunger*, *op. cit.*

150. See Thompson's "Foreword" and the title essay in *The Poverty of Theory*, *op. cit.*

151. E. P. Thompson, "The Politics of Theory," in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981, p. 397.

152. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

153. *Ibid.*, p. 152. The residues of James's "Victorian" upbringing remain until this day and are given full rein at times in this volume. Witness: "The Greeks were the most politically minded and intellectually and artistically the most creative of all peoples." *Ibid.*, p. 154. Hardly a considered or even possible judgment.

154. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

155. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

156. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

157. "Wordsworth had said that England needed manners, virtue, freedom, power. Arnold saw that it had power. Freedom for him was embodied in the first Reform Act. But manners and virtue he was sure were absent and he was equally sure that their continued absence from the realm would end in the destruction of both power and freedom. Mealy-mouthed generations have watered him down as they have watered down Charles Dickens. Arnold was a man of tempestuous temperament. He was tormented all his life by the fear that England (in fact the whole modern world) would be cracked wide open by social revolution and end either in ruin or military dictatorship. It was to counter this that he did what he did. He aimed to create a body of educated men of the upper classes who would resist the crimes of Toryism and the greed and vulgarity of industrialists on the one hand, and the socialistic claims of the oppressed but uneducated masses on the other." *Ibid.*, p. 160.

158. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

159. John Rae, "Play Up, Play Up," *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 October 1981, p. 1120.

160. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

161. *Ibid.*

162. Alan McKinnon, "Communist Party Election Tactics," *op. cit.*, p. 23.

163. See Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976.

164. See Alan McKinnon, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–23. T. D. Burridge suggested one reason for the Labour Party's new vitality: "Though the Party never officially adopted an outright pacifist position, a dedicated pacifist, George Lansbury, was Leader of the Party from 1932–35. In addition, Socialist theory interpreted war in economic terms as a clash of rival imperialisms—the last, most decadent stage of capitalism. Even towards the end of the turbulent 1930s, the Party's advocacy of the collective security doctrine owed relatively little to the idea that the possession of allies would be the best means of fighting a war. Instead, much greater emphasis was placed on the argument that a collective security policy would be the most effective way of preventing a major war." *British Labour and Hitler's War*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1976, pp. 17–18. See also C. L. R. James's very insightful critique of Labour Party politics, "The British Vote for Socialism," in *The Future in the Present*, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–18 (orig. published 1945).

165. Peter Blackman, who left Barbados in the early 1930s, recalls that Du Bois was an important figure to West Indian Blacks attempting to establish their racial identity in the post-World War I period. This largely resulted from the appearance of the *Crisis* magazine. Interview, London, 18 November 1981. James implies the influence of *Black Reconstruction* on his thinking in the 1930s in several places, cf. *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, Lawrence Hill, Westport, 1977, pp. 74–75; "The Making of the Caribbean People," *loc. cit.*, p. 179; and "W. E. B. Du Bois," in *The Future in the Present*, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–12. For Chilembwe, see George Shepperson and Tom Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1958, and C. J. Robinson, "Notes Toward a 'Native' Theory of History," *Review* 4, no. 1 (Summer 1980): 45–78 (Shepperson's response follows: "Ourselves as Others," *ibid.*, pp. 79–87); for Lamine Senghor, see Geiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 310ff; and for Kimbangu, Vittorio Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1963.

166. Makonnen, *op. cit.*, p. 116. For the responses of Afro-Americans to the Italo-Ethiopian war, see S. K. B. Asante, "The Afro-American and the Italo-Ethiopia Crisis, 1934–1936," *Race* 15, no. 2 (October 1973):

167–84; and Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, op. cit., pp. 448ff.; and for the Caribbean, Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1973, pp. 102–10. For Italian imperialism, see J. L. Miede, *L'Imperialisme Colonial Italien de 1870 a Nos Jours*, SEDES, Paris, 1968, chaps. 13 and 14.

167. See Makonnen, op. cit., p. 114, for his impressions of James. James articulated his position in Fenner Brockway's *New Leader* in an article entitled "Is This War Necessary?," 4 October 1935, p. 3. For the ILP's position, see James Maxton and Fenner Brockway, "The War Threat," *New Leader*, 22 March 1935, pp. 1, 3; and Brockway, "What Can We Do about Mussolini?," *New Leader*, 19 July 1935, p. 2.

168. See James, "Is This War Necessary?," op. cit., p. 3; and the report of James's activity at the Spring Conference of the ILP, "The Abyssinian Debate," *New Leader*, 17 April 1936, p. 4. For James's opinion of Haile Selassie, see Makonnen, op. cit., pp. 114, 184.

169. Geiss, op. cit., pp. 280–81. Makonnen recalled: "It is said . . . that a number of the influential Ethiopians like [Workineh] Martin and Herouli . . . considered themselves as not being Negroes. In fact, Ethiopians were said to have betrayed the same attitude when, after Haile Selassie's coronation, a delegation came to America. Dr. Workineh Martin was on it, and he refused to lecture even at Howard University. And when the delegation took with them back to Ethiopia only two or three very fair-skinned Negroes, this again seemed to prove that they thought themselves to be white people." "This apparent preference for mulattoes, and the Emperor's refusal to receive the Garveyite delegation, made Garvey bitter about Haile Selassie until the time of the former's death. It was one of the issues that George Padmore and I used to fight him over, because at that time in London, Haile Selassie symbolized our unity in Europe. And yet from the time of the Emperor's arrival in England, Garvey castigated him as a man who, instead of dying on the battlefield in the tradition of Ethiopian leaders, had slunk away to England to find refuge; how could such a coward, Garvey alleged, be the leader of such a great nation?" Makonnen, op. cit., pp. 74–75; see also Weisbord, op. cit., pp. 100–101, 103.

170. James, "Fighting for the Abyssinian Empire," *New Leader*, 5 June 1936, p. 2.

171. Some colonial authorities would trace the disturbances of the late 1930s in the West Indies to the Italo-Ethiopian War. In 1938, Sir Selsyn Grier would inform his audience at an Oxford University seminar on colonial administration: "Repercussions of the Italo-Abyssinian War were profound and widespread. The people of the West Indies saw in it an unprovoked attack by the European upon the African, and this gave rise to a feeling of racial animosity." "Unrest in the West Indies," in Oxford University Summer School on Colonial Administration, op. cit., p. 61.

172. See Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, Harper and Row, New York, 1961; Fernando Claudin, op. cit., pp. 210–42; and Julian Symons, op. cit., pp. 106–22.

173. There were five brigades: the Eleventh, German, known as the Thaelmann Brigade the Twelfth, Italian, known as the Garibaldi; the Thirteenth, pan-Slavic, known as the Dombrowski Brigade; the Fourteenth, French and Belgian; and the Fifteenth, consisting of British (English, Canadians, and Irish), American (the Abraham Lincoln Battalion), Caribbean, Central and South American (59th Spanish Battalion) volunteers. See Joseph Brandt (ed.), *Black Americans in the Spanish People's War Against Fascism, 1936–1939*, New Outlook Publishers, New York, n.d. [1979?]; "A Negro Nurse in Republican Spain," *The Negro Committee to Aid Spain*, New York, 1938 (reissued by Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, 1977); Salaria Kee (now O'Reilly) was the subject; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, op. cit., chap. 18; and interviews with Haywood (Santa Barbara, 6 February 1980) and James Yates (Binghamton, 26 April 1978), both Black veterans of Spain. Brandt estimates that between 80 and 100 Black Americans volunteered for the Spanish Civil War. For Nyabongo, a Ugandan who fought with the antifascists in Spain, see Kenneth King's note in Makonnen, op. cit., p. 176 n. 16.

174. For the disturbances in Trinidad, see Eric Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, People's National Movement Publishing Co., Port-of-Spain, 1962, pp. 232–42, and Brinsley Samaroo, "Politics and Afro-Indian Relations in Trinidad" in J. La Guerre, op. cit., pp. 84–97; for Jamaica, see Ken Post, *Arise Ye Starvelings: The Jamaican Labour Rebellion of 1938 and Its Aftermath*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1978.

175. Cited in Geiss, op. cit., p. 346.

176. This was the position that James would espouse in his meetings with Trotsky in Mexico in 1939. See James, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the USA," in *The Future in the Present*, op. cit., pp. 119–27. For the discussions with Trotsky at Coyocan, see George Breitman (ed.), *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, Merit Publishers, New York, 1972, pp. 24–48; Tony Martin, "C. L. R. James and the Race/Class Question," *Race 2* (1972): 183–93; and Paul Buhle, "Marxism in the U.S.A.," in *Urgent Tasks 12* (Summer 1981): 28–39.

177. James, "'Civilising' the 'Blacks,'" *New Leader*, 29 May 1936, p. 5.

178. Robert Hill adds an interesting and provocative element to the analysis of James's development of consciousness: "At a very profound and fundamental level, Robeson as a man *shattered* James's colonial conception of the Black Physique. In its place the magnificent stature of Robeson gave to him a new appreciation of the powerful and extraordinary capacities which the African possessed, in both head and

body. Robeson broke the mould in which the West Indian conception of physical personality in James had been formed. That was a time when Black West Indians grew up with an unconscious prototype of the white Englishman and white Englishwoman as their absolute standards of physical perfection and development. James's encounter with Robeson was nowhere more profound than in its forcing him to abandon these inherited values." "Thus, it is the contention of the present writer that *The Black Jacobins* would have been significantly different in quality in the absence of James's relationship to Robeson." "In England, 1932–38," op. cit., pp. 24–25. James met Robeson in 1936 and the latter performed the title role in a production of James's play, *Toussaint L'Ouverture*. Dorothy Butler Gilliam, in her biography of Robeson, puts the meeting and the production of the play at Westminster Theatre in early 1936, see Gilliam, *Paul Robeson: All-American*, New Republic Books, Washington, D.C., 1976, pp. 87–88. For James's view of Robeson's Marxism, see *ibid.*, p. 127; and James, "Paul Robeson: Black Star," in *Spheres of Existence*, op. cit., pp. 261–62.

179. See James's criticisms of Padmore on this issue, *Nkumah and the Ghana Revolution*, op. cit., p. 63; for Kenyatta, see Murray-Brown, op. cit., p. 221.

180. James, *ibid.*, pp. 69, 71. For James in the United States, see Martin, "C. L. R. James and the Race/Class Question," op. cit., pp. 184–85; and Buhle, "Marxism in the U.S.A.," op. cit., *passim*.

181. These views were summarized in the final resolutions passed by the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, 1945: "The first of these, 'The Challenge to the Colonial Powers,' took an intermediate line between the revolutionary impatience of Padmore and Nkrumah on the one hand and Du Bois's more cautious conception of 1944 on the other. 'The delegates to the Fifth Pan-African Congress believe in peace. . . . Yet if the Western world is still determined to rule mankind by force then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve Freedom, even if force destroys them and the world.' The second general statement was the 'Declaration to the Colonial Workers, Farmers and Intellectuals,' drafted by Nkrumah, which expresses once again the limitless desire for independence: against imperialist exploitation the colonial peoples should concentrate upon winning political power, and for this an effective organization was essential. The tactics recommended were strikes and boycotts—non-violent methods of struggle." Geiss, op. cit., p. 407.

182. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, op. cit., pp. 73–74.

183. As recently as 1977, James was declaring: "The man at the helm is the African intellectual. He succeeds—or independent Africa sinks: unlike Britain in the seventeenth and France in the eighteenth centuries, there is no class on which the nation falls back after the intellectuals have led the revolution as far as it can go." *Ibid.*, p. 15.

184. Azinna Nwafor, in one of the most forceful critiques of the Pan-African movement, sees the Manchester conference as one of the more progressive moments in Pan-Africanism. Nevertheless, Nwafor concludes: "Pan-Africanism did not offer a revolutionary choice to the emancipation of Africa from its centuries of conquest, domination, and colonial exploitation. The necessarily progressive role which the movement played in the evolution of Africa to independent status should not be underestimated, but the severe limitations of the scope and method are such that it contributed in no small degree to the disarray of the contemporary African scene and the general disenchantment with the fruits of political independence. It would seem that the storm centres of popular uprising for African emancipation were in fact headed off with the aid of Pan-Africanists, who represented themselves to the colonial authorities as the only forces capable of curbing the violence of the masses." "In many respects the OAU [the Organization of African Unity] is the culmination and embodiment of that Pan-Africanism which Padmore has chronicled. Starting as a political movement in exile, and handed on to a group of aspiring and dedicated African leadership who led their several countries to political independence, Pan-Africanism had been a movement carried out over the heads and at the expense of the African peoples themselves. At Addis Ababa [in 1963] this breed of African leadership determined to constitute itself as a new kind of Holy Alliance to preserve the existing status quo which they had inherited from their colonial masters. Their abhorrence of political revolution is total. As one of them stated, with brutal frankness: 'Speaking for ourselves, we prefer things as they are.'" Nwafor's "Introduction" to the 1972 reissue of Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, op. cit. pp. xxxvii–xxxviii, xxxix–xl.

185. James, *The Black Jacobins*, op. cit., pp. 375–76. Subsequent pagination during the discussion of the work will be cited in text.

186. Cabral, "The Weapon of Theory," in *Revolution in Guinea*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1969, p. 102. Earlier in the same address (given at a Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Cuba, January 1966), Cabral had asked: "[D]oes history begin only with the development of the phenomenon of 'class,' and consequently of class struggle? To reply in the affirmative would be to place outside history the whole period of life of human groups from the discovery of hunting, and later of nomadic and sedentary agriculture, to the organisation of herds and the private appropriation of land. It would also be to consider—and this we refuse to accept—that various human groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America were living without history, or outside history, at the time when they were subjected to the yoke of imperialism.

It would be to consider that the peoples of our countries, such as the Balantes of Guinea, the Coaniamas of Angola and the Macondes of Mozambique, are still living today—if we abstract the slight influence of colonialism to which they have been subjected—outside history, or that they have no history.” *Ibid.* p. 95.

187. Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky were bourgeois ideologists in terms of their social origins and educations. Marx and Engels had seemingly acknowledged this in *The Communist Manifesto*: “[S]o now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.” Furthermore, with the exception of Engels, none of them seems to have given over much time to the study of working classes. For the most part their works were concentrated on the bourgeoisies: their histories, their States and administrations, their organization of production, their ideologies and philosophies. All, of course, certainly looked closely at the historical and social processes of the breakdown of societies, viz. revolutions, but these were the contradictions of bourgeois societies. It was also the case that few proletarian intellectuals were ever attended to in their writings. This raises again the question: Is Marxism a theory for the proletariat or of the proletariat? One American Marxist has answered the question in this way: “While in their practice Marxists have often tried to take account of the praxis of the proletariat, their theory proves a hindrance.” Dick Howard, *The Marxist Legacy*, Macmillan, London, 1977, p. 274. E. P. Thompson seems to have come to similar conclusions in *The Making of the English Working Class*, op. cit., and *The Poverty of Theory*, op. cit.

188. In 1949, Cornelius Castoriadis wrote in “The Relations of Production in Russia”: “The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be simply the political dictatorship; it must be above all the economic dictatorship of the proletariat, for otherwise it will only be a mask for the dictatorship of the bureaucracy.” Cited by Dick Howard, op. cit., p. 266. Castoriadis has proven to be one of the most consistently critical Marxists. His conclusions followed those of James made ten years earlier in *World Revolution, 1917–1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*, Martin Secker and Warburg, London, 1937. Interestingly enough, Oliver C. Cox, writing in 1948, had not yet found it possible to hone his considerably acute and critical eye on the Russian state: see *Caste, Class and Race*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1948, chap. 11.

189. James, “The Making of the Caribbean People,” op. cit., p. 180.

190. This is the position taken by Robert Lacerte, “Xenophobia and Economic Decline: The Haitian Case, 1820–1843,” *The Americas* 37, no. 4 (April 1981): 499–515.

191. Marvin and Anne Holloway reissued the book in 1969 through their Drum and Spear Press. This version was entitled *A History of Pan-African Revolt* and included an “epilogue” which detailed Black movements between 1939 and 1969.

192. David Widgery notes: “As disaster overwhelmed the German Left, and Stalin switched to the desperate alliance-mongering of the Popular Front, James—now the editor of the Revolutionary Socialist League’s paper, *Fight* made regular clandestine visits to the Paris exile grouping of revolutionaries around Trotsky. ‘They were very serious days,’ James admonishes, inflecting the adjective ‘serious’ as only an old-time Trotskyist can. ‘There was a German boy very active in our movement. One day we found him at the bottom of Seine.’ ” “James was, with D. D. Harber, the British delegation to the founding conference of the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1938. This tiny body was established with the hope that, in the holocaust to come, a clear-sighted International might find a way through the chaos. But Trotsky and, effectively, Trotskyism succumbed to the terrible repression.” “A Meeting with Comrade James,” *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 116.

193. Tony Martin, for one, believes that James was disciplined by Trotsky on the “Negro Problem” to good purpose. See Martin, “C. L. R. James and the Race/Class Question,” op. cit., pp. 27–28. What is purported to be three direct transcripts of the discussions between James, Trotsky, and others have been published as *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, George Breitman (ed.), Merit Publishers, New York, 1967. Some flavor of the exchanges can be found in their remarks on Black self-determination:

“Johnson: I am very glad that we have had this discussion, because I agree with you entirely. It seems to be the idea in America that we should advocate it as the CP has done. You seem to think that there is a greater possibility of the Negroes’ wanting self-determination than I think is probable. But we have a hundred percent agreement on the idea which you have put forward that we should be neutral in the development.

Trotsky: It is the word ‘reactionary’ that bothers me.

Johnson: Let me quote from the document [Johnson’s position paper]: ‘If he wanted self-determination, then however reactionary it might be in every other respect, it would be the business of the revolutionary party to raise that slogan. I consider the idea of separating as a step backward so far as a socialist society is concerned. If the white workers extend a hand to the Negro, he will not want self-determination.’

Trotsky: It is too abstract, because the realization of this slogan can be reached only as the 13 or 14 million Negroes feel that the domination by the whites is terminated. To fight for the possibility of realizing an independent state is a sign of great moral and political awakening. It would be a tremendous revolutionary step.

This ascendancy would immediately have the best economic consequences." *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32. "Johnson" was of course James.

194. For some of his experience in the Missouri work, see James, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the USA," and "Down with Starvation Wages in South-East Missouri," in *The Future in the Present*, op. cit.

195. *Notes on Dialectics* (Allison and Busby, London, 1980) was in the original a series of letters from James to his associates in the Johnson-Forest organization (see below). According to Robert A. Hill (personal communication) they were known as the "caretaker" papers. David Widgery quotes James as saying the letters were "written in Reno when I was seeing about a divorce." Widgery, op. cit., p. 116. Hill, in collaboration with the Detroit-based Friends of Facing Reality group (whose nucleus was the older members of the Johnson-Forest organization), edited the letters into book form in 1966. For some of the history of the Detroit group, see Dan Georgakas, "Young Detroit radicals, 1955–1965," *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 89–94.

196. "Although the Communist Party reached its numerical peak of 80,000 during wartime, it had become a virtual agent of State Capitalism in Russia and America, as its bitter opposition to A. Philip Randolph's planned March On Washington, its avid support of the No Strike Pledge and of the Minneapolis Trotskyists' prosecution by the government all attested. Interlocked with the Red Army invasion of postwar Eastern Europe—'Revolution from the Tank Turret' carried out with the imprisonment or murder of opposing radical and democratic forces as if no other form of liberation were now imaginable—the Communist direction showed something more than 'betrayal' had taken place. The Party's ethnic and race following, which had in a certain sense compensated for its limited cadre outside the leadership of industrial unions, drifted away. Whatever its future, American radicalism would be something very different from what it had been." Paul Buhle, "Marxism in the U.S.A.," op. cit., p. 32.

197. See Stanley Weir, "Revolutionary Artist," *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 87; and Tony Martin, "C. L. R. James and the Race/Class Question," op. cit., pp. 25–26.

198. See W. Jerome and A. Buick, "Soviet State Capitalism? The History of an Idea," *Survey* 62 (January 1967); and Martin, *ibid.* Daniel Bell has contributed a comic version of American Trotskyism, cf. *Marxian Socialism in the United States*, op. cit., pp. 153–57.

199. See Martin, *ibid.*; and Georgakas, op. cit., *passim*.

200. James, *Notes on Dialectics*, op. cit., p. 7. Subsequent pagination will be indicated in the text.

201. "Lenin had a notion of socialism. It is noticeable that up to 1905 he thought of socialism always in terms of the Commune. And after 1917 he changed—he changed not for Russia but for the world. We have to do the same. We have not done it. For if we had we would recognize in Lenin's articles and methods in Russia of 1917–23 the greatest possible source of theoretical understanding and insight into the world of today." *Ibid.*, p. 147.

202. On occasion, James came quite close to acknowledging this paradox: "The party is the knowing of the proletariat as being. Without the party the proletariat knows nothing. We are here at the climax of a development characteristic of class society. The proletariat is the only historical class to which the party, the *political party*, is essential. . . . the bourgeoisie has never found a political party necessary to its existence. The characteristic form of bourgeois political power is the perfection of the state, and for long periods the bourgeoisie has been content and flourished even without control of the state power. The bourgeoisie has no need for a special organization of knowing. Bourgeois society is capitalist production, and by its position as agent of capital, the bourgeoisie automatically is in possession of capitalist knowing, science, art, religion, and the essence of bourgeois politics which is the maintenance of capitalist production." "Apart from its existence as wage-slaves, the proletariat has no history except the history of its political, i.e. revolutionary, organizations. No class in history except the proletariat (and this is by no means accidental) has ever openly, boldly, and both theoretically and practically, aimed at the seizure of state power. The history of the theory and practice of this unprecedented phenomenon in human history is the history of the proletarian political party." *Ibid.*, pp. 172–73. For Castoriadis, see his "On the History of the Workers' Movement," *Telos* 30 (1976): 3–42; and Dick Howard, op. cit., chap. 10.

203. "[A] moment's (Marxist) reflection points to the inadequacy of Trotsky's notion of Russia as a 'degenerated workers' state. . . . The 'degeneration' would concern only the form, not the essence, of the Russian social formation. But this confuses the juridical forms of property with the actual relations of production themselves. For Marx, it is precisely these relations of production which determine the forms of distribution and their (deformed) superstructural reflection. The vacillations in Trotsky's own analyses—for example on the question of 'Thermidor,' or on the tactics to be followed by the Opposition—stem from the identification of form and essence." Dick Howard, *ibid.*, p. 265.

204. "It was the workers who did the theoretical work on the soviet. . . . They thought over the soviet. They analysed it and remembered it, and within a few days of the February revolution they organized in the great centres of Russia this unprecedented social formation. Lenin saw it this time." James, *Notes on Dialectics*, op. cit., p. 138.

205. Vincent Harding recalled: "One of the things I remember with a combination of sadness and humor

was a long conversation that C. L. R. and Harry Haywood had in our house in Atlanta. It was focused to a large degree—and I just found it somewhat ironic and, as I said, somewhat sad, even though a lot of the development of the conversation also had its humor to it—to see these two really experienced and gifted Black men literally arguing about which expression of Marxist ideology and organization was really best. I think with that experience it took both of them out of the mainstream of so much of Black life, and took their strengths away from that mainstream. I just have the feeling it would have been so much healthier if both of these men might have found some common ground and might have found ways of using their energy beyond those kinds of arguments that grew out of the experiences of the late twenties and thirties, that for them were very fresh wounds and very hard experiences . . . it was just very hard to feel the real significance of some of those ideological arguments that they were carrying on at that time.” Interview with Harding by Ken Lawrence, published as “Conversation,” *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 124.

206. See John Bracey’s “Nello,” *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 125.

207. Paul Buhle/Noah Ignatin/James Early/Ethelbert Miller interview with James, *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981): 82.

## Chapter Eleven

1. The social and literary critiques of H. L. Mencken and the radical novels of Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser were Wright’s formative introduction to American thought. See Michael Fabre, *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright*, William Morrow, New York, 1973, pp. 67–69. He had, however, an earlier instruction that Addison Gayle recapitulates: “He discovered that the actions of whites were often precipitous; altercations with them might occur spontaneously, for seemingly illogical reasons or none at all. Among his earliest jobs was one as a porter in a clothing store owned by two white men, father and son. Both sported reputations for maltreatment of blacks. He witnessed several beatings and slappings of blacks who fell behind in their payments. One of the most despicable concerned a black woman. Unable to pay her bill, she was dragged into the store by the two men and herded toward the back room, where she was pummeled and kicked. Afterward, in a state of semiconsciousness, she was shoved out into the street. A white policeman appeared as if on call, stared contemptuously at the dazed woman, then arrested her for drunkenness. The two men washed their hands, gazed benevolently at Wright.” Gayle, *Richard Wright: Ordeal of a Native Son*, Anchor Press, Garden City, 1980, p. 35. Among numerous instances like this, two others are enlightening: “He did not take [white] threats about murder lightly. The example of Bob, brother of one of his classmates, was too recent. Bob, who worked in a hotel frequented by white prostitutes, was rumored to have been involved with one of them. Some white folks warned him to end the relationship. For whatever reason, he did not do so and was lynched. When his classmate had rendered the episode to him, Wright had been moved by his friend’s grief; but he had felt, too, something of the anxiety and fear that the act of murder produced in the entire black community. Such actions were designed to control behavior and to stem the desire for rebellion among blacks.” *Ibid.*, p. 36. Earlier, white terror had struck much closer. Wright’s mother had taken her two sons to live with her sister Margaret and her husband, Silas. One night Silas did not return: “The atmosphere in the house was one of silent, desperate waiting. Food was kept hot on the stove. Each sound inside and outside the house rang with deafening clarity. The two sisters took turns peering into the early mist. Sometime later, they were called to attention by a knock on the door. It was not Silas’ knock. It was the knock of the dreaded messenger, one of the unsung blacks who historically, sometimes in the dark of the night or the early morning, surreptitiously delivered messages of disaster. This one was short, precise: Hoskins had been killed by white men. His family was to stay away from town. There were to be no final rites.” *Ibid.*, p. 17. Experiences such as these, coupled with his father’s abandonment of his family, his mother’s breakdown and paralysis, his short but nightmarish stay in an orphanage, had predictable results on Wright’s personality. But most can be directly and not too indirectly traced to their bases in American social history, particularly where Black labor had been employed. It is hardly to the point, as in the instance of Martin Kilson’s pseudo-psychological and reductionist treatment of Wright, to frame them in terms of “marginality.” Cf. Kilson, “Politics and Identity Among Black Intellectuals,” *Dissent* (Summer 1981): 339–49.

2. See James Baldwin, “The Exile” and “Alas, Poor Richard,” in *Nobody Knows My Name*, Dial, New York, 1961; and also Ellen Wright’s accounts of Baldwin and Wright in Faith Berry, “Portrait of a Man as Outsider,” *Negro Digest*, December 1968, pp. 27–37.

3. See James Ford, “The Case of Richard Wright,” *Daily Worker*, 5 September 1944.

4. See Ben Burns, “They’re Not Uncle Tom’s Children,” *The Reporter* 14, no. 8 (March 1956): 21–23; and Gayle, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

5. See “Amid the Alien Corn,” unidentified author, *Time*, 17 November 1958, p. 28; see also Gayle’s speculations, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

6. Gayle, who has had access to heavily censored documents from the American State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Central Intelligence Agency, reports that the CIA was “monitoring” talks by Wright as early as April 1951 (*op. cit.*, pp. 219–21); that Wright’s “leadership of the Franco-