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Reflections on Mammonism

José Brendan Macdonald

The social category that I shall call *mammonism* was an object of observation for the first time, as far as I know, in terms of a not simply sapient systematizing, twenty-three centuries ago by Aristotle. He called it *chrematistike*, a term that has not remained in the history of thought largely, it seems, because (at least in recent centuries) mammonism, albeit without that scientific label or any other, has been openly defended as opposed to the opposite attitude expressed by Aristotle and many others before the bourgeois era. It happens that mammonism is the strongest ingredient of the bourgeois soul, notwithstanding the ambiguous reservations that public opinion even today has toward it.

But we live in an era far more privileged than Aristotle's as far as the observation of the present matter is concerned. The century now coming to a close is the most mammonistic of all centuries. Political economy, economic philosophy, and other branches of knowledge have much to say on the matter.

The present work is divided into seven parts. The first five are theses about the concept of mammonism in itself: the first part attempts to define the concept that for the present we shall say refers to an attitude and behavior holding that the access to (property of) superfluous material goods is the supreme social manifestation of human achievement; the second part will state that the penchant toward mammonism is as old as humanity and that its materialization, although not as old, is indeed very old; the third one will attribute to discord—which it inevitably elicits—the criticisms that confront it; the fourth analyzes the

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relationship between it and sacredness; the fifth considers the phenomenon of sacrifice as a value and consequence of it. In the sixth part we shall see the relationship between it and Marx's fetishism of the commodity; finally in the seventh part we shall observe, considering how deeply mammonism is rooted in the human being in all eras in various degrees, what may be an implication of that for the future.

1

I call *mammonism* the human attitude and behavior whereby the possession of an amount of material goods greater than that possessed by other social actors is considered the absolute sign or symbol of human prestige. It is then a question of ideology, of a certain *Weltanschauung* wherein a hierarchy of values, or rather a fraction of such a hierarchy, is implicit, which in the case of mammonists of greater proportions means the zenith of that hierarchy. But mammonism is consequential for the mammonists themselves insofar as they manifest behavior as opposed to attitudes. Slum dwellers may entertain dreams about reaching the living standard of the Rockefellers; it may be that they dream of being, and desire to be, rich and bourgeois. Obviously they are mammonists only in intention, at least with regard to the maximum (and immaterializable) height of their desires. They will be mammonists of small proportions regarding a great part of the rest of their behavior. Besides being envious of those in a more privileged position than their own, they may actually buy more expensive clothes and other consumer goods than their condition allows.

A mammonist is thus one who holds those socially superfluous goods to be the absolute evidence of human sociability.¹ For him or her having more is being more. The most consequential and ambitious mammonists value their excess of goods as the warrant for respect by others. By *respect*, let *honor*, *prestige*, or if possible a certain *envy* be understood here. As can be seen, the practice of mammonism is a competition for what is *superfluous*. The destitute person's desire to acquire a minimum adequate living standard to guarantee physical and psychic integrity insofar as shelter, food, health, and clothing are concerned is not a

mammonistic attitude. But the desire to acquire more than the average social living standard of one's group (as long as it is a question of a group with a living standard *per se* above the satisfaction of basic needs), and in such a way that the desire is the effect of a restless appetite, is a mammonistic attitude. This should not be confused, however, with the attitude of young university students of lower-middle-class origin today who want to be doctors out of love for that profession (a desire of personal achievement through dedication to the ill, fascination by the study of biology, organic chemistry, etc.). Insofar as their vocational aspirations are pure, that is, not tainted by seduction by a higher future material living standard, such motivations are not mammonistic. It is a question of a distinction that is often difficult in the practical order but nevertheless comprehensible in the realm of concepts.

The clear antithesis of mammonism is the rare attitude and behavior of the austere monk or ascetic. Very few in today's consumer society are unaffected by a mammonism of at least small proportions.

For the mammonists of greater proportions, enrichment, the enlargement of one's fortune is a motive whereby they are truly admired by those around them. For others, knowledge may be the motive for respect, prestige, or admiration. For still others it is power (a social quality that has hardly been unlinked from enrichment during the last few centuries). Respect, prestige, admiration—these are everything that our child of Mammon expects from other people. What other people? They are peers in fortune, those who have the objective means to aspire to a similar fortune if perchance they have not got one yet. Or they may in some cases include a greater universe, the poor remainder of humankind on the rare occasions in which the mammonist pays attention to them. The mammonists surely also want to be envied; it suits them that there are always people who do not feel adequate precisely because the mammonist has something they do not have. Mammonists themselves may feel envious of another person who has a quantity or quality of goods they do not have. The mammonistic spirit, when it gets a certain hold on someone, leaves no room for a truce or quiet.

Doubtless the criteria for what is superfluous are historically variable—that is, they vary from one society to another in time and space. But I do not believe that in itself makes the understanding of the concept of mammonism difficult.

2

If we agree to understand the present concept this way, no one will deny that it is a question of an ideology and a practice typical of our consumer society at this end of the millennium and from which very few people are completely exempt. It would be a phenomenon, if not confined to it, then at least of the last few centuries or of the bourgeois era, the era of the world market. I argue, however, that the penchant toward mammonism is universal—that is, it is present in all human societies of the present and the past, albeit in varying degrees. And its accomplishment has been present, also in varying degrees, since the dawn of civilization itself (societies with a state, cities, writing, a social division of labor, social strata, etc.).

Even at its most primitive level, human society is not unfamiliar with evidence of a universal penchant toward mammonism. I am referring to Paleolithic society, a society of hunters, fishermen, and gatherers who do not practice agriculture, out of ignorance or for some other reason. At this level of the development of the productive forces, it is obviously impossible for anyone to imagine being a Rockefeller, a Fugger, a Midas, or even a prosperous cattle breeder, for one's heart does not feel what one's eyes do not see.

Among the !Kung, a people of hunters and gatherers of the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa, the exchange of gifts (especially inside each little band) is quite frequent. Almost all the modest amount of the few personal articles and a good deal of the working tools of any member of a band of this ethnic group once belonged to other members and will be sent in the future as gifts to other parties. Talks about exchanges of gifts are common among them. An anthropologist who lived among them puts it: "It is easy for the !Kung, with their highly developed powers of observation and visual memory, to keep track of the commonest objects, know the ownership, and remember the history of the

gifts” (Marshall 1982, 366). Notice however: “No one was dependent upon acquiring objects by gift-giving,” because all adult !Kung of both sexes are capable of making absolutely everything they need and inhabit a natural environment generous enough for the satisfaction of their material needs, naturally according to their own standards (367).

The constant exchange of gifts among the !Kung is motivated by their intention to keep tension, envy, and jealousy under control and to strengthen friendship and esteem. Furthermore, the !Kung do not trade with each other—that is, they do not practice bartering, for they consider it unworthy, inelegant, and a possible source of hard feelings. It is limited only to their Bantu neighbors (365). A sense of private property is extremely tenuous among them. Their attitude toward trade or commerce (the calculated exchange of useful goods) and the exchange of gifts reveals an ideology of economic leveling, an antimammonist ideology. All of this shows that they perceive the *possibility* of the emergence of mammonism, that they perceive a penchant of theirs toward mammonism.

We could cite many similar cases from the anthropological literature of this century. But suffice it to say here that such observations could be made concerning all communal peoples, both at the Paleolithic (preagricultural) and the Neolithic (agricultural—which does not exclude the coexistence of fishing and hunting with some kind of agriculture and also quite often animal-raising) stages. In Paleolithic society the consumption of an amount of goods noticeably greater for some people as compared to others would hardly be conceivable in an environment where an economic surplus exists only sporadically if at all. Such behavior would bring starvation to the jeopardized and would even be a threat to the physical survival of the very group as a whole. Even in Neolithic society, where a surplus does exist, albeit a much more modest one than that which emerges in later societies, the possibility of an unjustifiable appropriation of a greater amount of goods by some people at the expense of others is perceived as the fatal point of departure for a society of rich and poor. Hence mechanisms emerge in Neolithic society to minimize the unequal use of its surplus, such as the periodic

repartition of land among the village families, the consensual redistribution of the more generous surplus produced by families on more fertile lots of land, and the practice of shortening the working day by those families that have a number of hands noticeably above the median of the families in the community.²

In short, although mammonism does not manage to get a hold on communal societies, its possible emergence is perceived by Stone Age people. Such an emergence—considered a source of wealth and power for some and of poverty and weakness for others—is thus frowned upon and inhibited, ideologically and practically.³ Communal societies—the only classless societies (without orders, castes, estates, or any other type of social strata) to date—is the antimammonistic society *par excellence*.

We can speak of triumphant mammonism only from the stage of *civilization* on. If by *progress* we understand the growing human domination of nature, then it is with civilization that progress begins, allied as the latter is to science. In the Stone Age, advancement in the sense of progress was minimal, so much so that it seems more plausible to speak about progress only as of civilization. It is even reasonable to speculate that the origin of civilization—with its differentiation between the commanders and the commanded, that is, between the planners and hence those who have greater access to material goods on the one hand and those who carry out the commands and hence those who have lesser access on the other hand—is not always to be discovered where there is an imposition by force but rather in many cases where there is relative mass consent with an expectation of getting in return a more efficient cultivating of progress by some few specialists.

The abundance of goods that only civilization has been able to warrant enhances a certain triumph of mammonism. But since the dawn of civilization, if some have been fascinated by competition for what is superfluous, others have suspected or even condemned this competition. A good many princes and their entourages were mammonists, avid as they were for tributes exacted from their poor subjects and motivated for war not only out of the quest for military glory but also out of hunger for booty and new payers of tribute. The splendor and pomp of

princely luxury would otherwise have been impossible. It is impossible to know how important this was to the old aristocracies. Suffice it to say that there were many mammonists among them, notwithstanding the antimammonistic vein present in official religious doctrines all over the civilized world. Mammonists in spirit also existed among the general population. The figure of the poor man who is joyous when he sees the pomp and luxury of his superiors on the social scale, so common in the world even at the end of this millennium, is surely as old as civilization itself.⁴ And the most consequential mammonists before the bourgeois era were the great traders and, above all, the usurers and money-lenders, the latter two being the precursors of modern bankers.

3

The adversaries of mammonism are, as we have already said, as old as humankind itself. But if mammonism becomes consequential only at the stage of civilization, it is also only then that opposition to it is heightened. Millennial indications of that are not lacking in countries so diverse as China, India, and Egypt. Aristotle condemned *chrematistike* or the art of acquiring goods for the sake of acquisition in itself, which he opposed to economy (*oikonomia*) or the legitimate art of organizing and taking care of the use of goods by the family established at its household (*oikos*). He condemned what derived from the former, namely usury or the charging of interest, as unnatural,⁵ as did Mohammed centuries later, who condemned it as sinful. Thus the usurer, the greatest personification of mammonism in prebourgeois civilizations, was the great target of notorious criticisms of many thinkers—and of the masses. The prophets of Israel delivered diatribes against mammonistic ideology and praxis. Jesus and his followers, such as Paul of Tarsus and James, continued the antimammonistic discourse. Buddha recommended to his followers aloofness from wealth and property.

Ordinary people in all civilized societies have also been antimammonistic. In many cases it has been a question of a radical antimammonism, but perhaps more frequently antimammonism has been entertained by common people who, at other moments,

have been profoundly and fancifully seduced by the radiant mammonism of their prince or millionaire boss.

The progress brought by civilization has never benefited everyone, but rather only certain sectors of society. The asymmetric propagation of progress is a law (pattern, universal trend). In civilized society—the society with both rich and poor people—the greater domination of nature is administered by the wealthy and powerful, who prefer to benefit their own strata, whereas they benefit the lower strata only under limited specific circumstances. In bourgeois civilization, the laws of the market frequently take care of distribution automatically; the benefits of progress almost always manifest themselves in the form of commodities, which means the consumption of progress only in accordance with buying power.

Mammonism may in this historically recurrent fashion bring about progress as a noteworthy effect. A prince with an acute mammonistic spirit might exact tribute relentlessly from peasant subjects who drudged from dawn to dusk so that he might live in the most refined luxury his age allowed; he might draft his subjects after harvest time so that at the crack of the whip they would build pyramids and other colossal monuments in homage to him and his lineage. Captains of industry in the nineteenth century in the central countries and in the twentieth century mainly in the peripheral countries have extorted work days over twelve hours long in exchange for starvation wages to build up spectacular but asymmetric progress. In the bourgeois era, as never before, thanks to the great development of the productive powers in which the production relations are dominated by the rising and then dominant bourgeois class—those cold calculators of costs and market opportunities, assessors of the worker as one more “factor of production,” and driven willy-nilly by the demands of indefatigable capitalist competition—this same new class renders homage to Mammon and imposes its ideology and its law. Its motive is profit. Both the apologists and the adversaries of the bourgeois system agree on that point. Much more than the ancient or feudal lord, the valiant prince, avid for military glory, the bourgeois longs for profit, even compulsively. The former had to render homage to religion—Christian, Islamic, Hindu,

or what not—with strong antimammonistic components. (To what extent such a ruler personally held these antimammonistic values is another question, but the age exerted strong ideological pressure.) The bourgeoisie's idol—notwithstanding the paternalistic or even rather antimammonistic discourse they must occasionally use in public—is the philosophy of thinkers like Machiavelli, Locke, and Adam Smith, for whom good intentions do not match the general happiness.

Opposition to mammonism during any period or in any society is basically due to the fact that it is a source of discord. In the Old Stone Age (before the discovery of agriculture), its triumph would have brought about general physical extinction. During the Neolithic period, its tolerance would elicit the division between rich and poor, that is, the emergence of social stratification. We know that this is what indeed did occur after millennia of resistance, because civilization did emerge. And with it, for the first time, a minority lives in abundance, while the majority lives in relative material want, which varies from a comfortable sufficiency to a state of acute deprivation. It can also be perceived—although few manage to decode such an unpleasant truth—that a causal relation permeates the wealth/poverty dichotomy: the wealth of the few is the cause of the poverty of the many. But this exploitation, whether it is perceived as such or not,⁶ is tolerated precisely because it is hoped that through it and in exchange for it the rich will, in return, give the poor protection and other benefits as well as the glorious spectacle of their pomp.

Mammonism is also a source of discord among its very adherents. At the threshold of the third millennium, when mammonism is simultaneously a cause and an effect of a standard of living and of a culture of everyday life hitherto unheard of, ordinary people become attached to it either because now they are part of the fifteen percent included in the consumer pattern, or because they nourish the hope of reaching this state one day, or (more realistically) allow themselves to daydream, stimulated constantly by the media, lotteries, etc. Among the fifteen percent who are the haves, the endless race for what is superfluous, as brought forth or even imposed by the logic of consumerism, leads to dissatisfaction and an emotional vacuum as the logic of

consumerism places no limits on the demands for material and visual things. When the mammonistic spirit contaminates the have-nots, it is not unfamiliar with frustration and despair. For no source of consolation will ever come from the longing to have more when this is not possible.

The discord that occurs among the most illustrious children of Mammon, the megacapitalists of the most recent days, is still greater. As the economist Franz Hinkelammert mused, entrepreneurs are worth only how much they have and only while they have it. In the last century they even used bloody methods and piracy against their competitors. Competitors, who are on a par today under monopoly capitalism (the era of transnational oligopolies), are no longer so dealt with, but this does not mean that discord has disappeared. It merely makes up a *modus vivendi*, and the tension of endless competition remains.

In short, wherever it witnesses a greater or lesser triumph, mammonism generates discord: discord among the have-nots, for they feel cheated (consciously or not) by the cruelty of the rich and powerful, who relentlessly and restlessly exact from them a surplus, or because they dream of having what they will never be able to have; discord among the haves, for no matter how much they already have, they always want to have still more, since their imagination will always picture something that they still do not have but should have. For always having more and more is the warrant for the status they haughtily judge they have a right to.⁷

4

Mammonism always has sacredness as a reference. People consider *sacred* that which they judge good, unquestionable, and beyond their full and satisfactory understanding. What is sacred is held to be *supernatural*, that is, *beyond nature* as grasped by the human intellect. What is sacred is good; it operates in favor of truth and goodness even if human subjects do not always manage to understand its designs. Hence it demands the people's faith and stands beyond all questioning.

The concept of sacredness is traditionally associated with the concept of religion, which in turn is associated with the concept

of the enchantment of the world. But even if one accepts the (doubtful) premise that today religion in this restricted sense is undergoing an irreversible decline, in a less traditional sense of the term it is as alive as it ever has been. Marx speaks of the “religion of daily life” or of the “economic religion” cultivated by the modern businessperson. The latter has a faith in money, capital, profit, and the laws of the market no less resolute than that of the Christian martyrs who faced the lions’ claws in the amphitheaters of the Roman Empire.⁸ Furthermore, the ubiquity of the institutions of the economic system today—the mercantilization and monetarization of an ever-growing number of human transactions, the stock market, the credit card, the incessant daily bombardment by all kinds of advertising concerning everything from beans to sex over the telephone and all the media—make ordinary people, whose lives are already permeated by such institutions, respect and even value them as indispensable facts of current life.

If the bourgeois economic praxis is one more religion, it is worth noting that it also has its own theological discourse. After all, every religion demands a theology or systematizing of knowledge of its god or gods. In this regard Hugo Assmann refers to the

revelation of a god talk, implicit or explicit, in economics. Theology is this: the reflection, on diverse levels of elaboration, on the gods (or the demons) that men in one way or another believe in and with which they presume to have different degrees of contact in history. (Assmann and Hinkelammert 1989, 10–11)⁹

Like all theology, the theology of the economic religion has its dogmas and even its mysteries. One of the most obvious and celebrated ones is Adam Smith’s famous invisible hand. Writing with beaming euphoria, Smith says:

By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he [the investor] intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an

invisible hand to promote an end that was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it. (1976, 477–78)

Notwithstanding the centuries-old liberal (and now “neo-liberal”) attachment to this supposed automatic and natural balance of the market, the twentieth century has witnessed many massive government interventions in the market. Despite the adamant rhetoric to that effect, which says that a freer behavior by the market—free from state intervention—is always necessary, governments budget trillions of dollars not only for social expenses (ulteriorly to curb social discontent, for these expenses exist only because of the people’s pressure), but also to buy arms, support their bureaucratic machine, and even give subsidies to entrepreneurs. Without that, the social and economic edifice would collapse. The dogma of the invisible hand, of the spontaneous balance of supply and demand, is a mystery. Indeed the market can work freely and spontaneously, but that does not bring balance in the middle term, or even in the short run, especially in a system where crisis is the rule, not the exception. Nevertheless the invisible hand notion does not stop being part of the creed of the economic religion of the majority of the bourgeoisie, as a matter of fact with a recurrent euphoria in recent years. And all that with the robes of a certain scientificism.

A related theological concept of the economic religion is that of rationality. For Max Weber, rationality refers to all behavior that in economic activity aims at a determined end or plan (1969, 46). But specifically in bourgeois society, where mammonism tends to penetrate social life increasingly and endlessly, all activity that aims at the accumulation of capital is rational. No other behavior should get priority. Only accumulation will build up the happiness of the fit.¹⁰ But how, through whom? Hugo Assmann writes:

“Economic rationality” is found basically in individuals. It is fundamental to bear this aspect in mind because it is directly linked to the concept of “economic freedom” and private property. It is in the orbit of subjective “rationality” that it is sanctified. But that “rationality” should not be mixed up with consciousness. It may even be considered along the lines of (Luther’s) “servile free will.” Servile to what? It is here that a leap from one theologization to another occurs. “Rationality” is also attributed to something which is outside of individuals: the mechanism of competitiveness. “Economic rationality” is that ensemble: the subjective “rationality” of individuals (proprietors) governed by the “demands of economic rationality” which derive from the (deified) mechanism of competition. As can be seen, *a fantastic theological construct*. (Assmann and Hinkelammert 1989, 151)

5

The economic religion, like all religions, demands sacrifices. Even before the bourgeois era, when the still embryonic or underdeveloped economic religion was the exclusive confession of the big usurers and moneylenders and other unholy rebels against the Christian, Moslem, Hindu, or other gospel of human brotherhood, and therefore despised by official ideology and by public opinion, it audaciously demanded sacrifices. As opposed to the old philosophy that exalted the value in use of goods, the economic religion—all the more when in recent centuries it breaks the chains of the old humanism—announces the sacrifice of the common people, the nonproprietors, “the sacrifice of the [human] end-in-itself to a wholly external purpose,” as Marx once put it (1986, 412).

In religion a sacrifice is made as an exchange of favors with the heavens. The religious person offers sacrifices in token of gratitude or praise for benefits obtained or—and here emerges what is sometimes revealed as the instrumental, egotistic, or mean side of religion—in anticipation of favors to be granted. An example of the first type of sacrifice is the intention offered in a mass in recognition of a grace granted. The second type can be

illustrated by the promise to construct a temple as soon as a military victory is consummated or as soon as a menacing storm wanes away.

Human progress since the accumulation of capital that commenced in the fifteenth century constantly demands sacrifices of the second type. At the dawn of that accumulation, the new naval powers of the North Atlantic launched on the non-European peoples of the world a mammonistic attack previously unknown in the annals of universal history. The black slave trade scythed millions of lives prematurely on the plantations and in the mines of the Americas, and through the *encomienda* the Spanish conquistadors exacted heavy tribute with fire and brimstone from millions of Amerindians. During the same period white men too were exploited by white men: millions of peasants in Europe were ousted from their properties and lands before the devastation inflicted on them by adventurers, those new disciples of Mammon, both passively and actively supported by the legal authorities, avid for new lands where they could impose cattle-raising, forestry and other activities elicited by the growing and promising world market. Later there came the Industrial Revolution to suck the blood and sweat of legions of men, women, and children with exhausting workdays and starvation wages. Even if one acknowledges that concessions have been extracted for the wage-earners of the central countries today,¹¹ this process continues, as subhuman wages and working conditions still persist among the far more numerous workers of the peripheral countries. Moreover, in the latter countries, the process of ousting peasants is still far from being over.

To repeat: it is a question of the second type of sacrifice, that is, a gesture of generosity in order to obtain a blessing from the heavens *later on*. This blessing is called *progress*, and its manifestation is the accumulation of profits. The subjects of the sacrifice are the capitalists. They are the ones who think, plan, administer, give orders, hire and fire workers, buy inputs, etc. The objects of the sacrifice are also the capitalists themselves,¹² and, it is conceded, the workers. At the beginning of the maritime expansion of Europe, and therefore of the world market, Catholic and Protestant theologians debated about the possible

human condition of the Negro and the Amerindian. Today one no longer publicly denies the dignity of *all* people because the eighteenth century preaching in favor of universal liberty and equality, even though it never had the intention of true universality, came across new and unforeseen historical circumstances (which need not be analyzed here) that obliged the bourgeoisie to make formal concessions to the common people, especially in the central countries.

Now then, if the capitalists are also objects of the sacrifice, it can be deduced that they have the right to partake of grace once grace is really granted. And the workers? Here liberal discourse does not manage to explain the fruit gathered for them. Deep down inside, today's megacapitalist does not disagree with the first trailblazers of the world market. The workers—even if they are white and speak English—are the most appropriate ones to make the sacrifice. There is no progress without sacrifice, there is no glory without a struggle. History provides examples of religions that offered human sacrifices: The Aztecs sacrificed prisoners of war with elaborate rituals; many Chananites offered their own children to the god Moloch. Competition, the fruit of capital accumulation, allows no truce. It demands sacrifices. At most a capitalist may shed tears over the immolation of his poor workers. But progress is demanding. And Moloch is a jealous god.

Not without a poetic touch, one of the greatest entrepreneurs of history, John D. Rockefeller, remarked in the last century to the pupils of a Sunday school: "The American Beauty rose can be produced in the splendor and fragrance which bring cheer to its beholder only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it." Comment by John Kenneth Galbraith: "The same sacrifices occurred in business and accounted *pro tanto*, for the splendor of a Rockefeller." John D. Rockefeller continues: "This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working-out of a law of Nature and a law of God" (Galbraith 1977, 48).

Regarding these divinely illuminated comments by Rockefeller as well as instances taken from some of our contemporary economists, Julio de Santa Ana comments, "By demanding sacrifice, bourgeois political economy confirms its religious nature" (1979, 76).

6

What is the relation between this concept of mammonism and the Marxian concept of fetishism? We cannot fully treat the complex theme of fetishism here, but only offer comments essential for a minimum understanding of the concept in order to compare it to mammonism.¹³

Marx observed that commodities are “social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses” (1996, 83). It is their imperceptible aspect, their social and not material character, that fools people.

There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relations both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (83)

Just as the mercantilists were mistaken when they attributed the generation of socioeconomic relations among people to the noble metals in themselves, and as the physiocrats were when they attributed land rent to the soil, modern economists are mistaken when they consider capital gifted with similar magic powers (93). Furthermore,

to what extent some economists are misled by the Fetishism inherent in commodities, or by the subjective appearance of the social characteristics of labour, is shown, amongst other ways, by the dull and tedious quarrel over the part played by Nature in the formation of exchange value. Since exchange value is a definite social manner of expressing the amount of labour bestowed upon an object, Nature has no more to do with it, than it has in fixing the course of exchange. (93)

But for people today—capitalists or laborers—an exchange rate, a stock certificate, a payroll, or a promissory note, as well as wages, profits, interest or rent, are all seen as *things* and not as *relations* or symbols of relations that are a part—especially of the logic—of a peculiar mode of production called capitalism. Or as Simon Mohun puts it, it is a question of false appearances, and hence a false consciousness of today's society where there occurs "the collapse of social relations into natural ones" (1979, 235). All that is part of a great array of beliefs that are the creed of capitalism. Capitalism doubtless exists and in its own way works, but it is not a thing. It is an ensemble of social relations; in short, it is a *system*. The term chosen by Marx is very fortunate, for what bourgeois ideology values is a fetish, an object with imaginary attributes and which therefore do not exist but which, from the observer's viewpoint, work as if they did exist. Although it is a social relation, capital (which hires millions of workers and fires them with a snap of the fingers; plots wars and coups d'état; and creates fashions, tastes, and values) elicits effects as if it were a thing.¹⁴

It is possible that the term *mammonism* is also derived from religion and mythology.¹⁵ Mammonism can work (for, besides being an ideology, it is also a praxis), as we have already seen, only in the case of the reproduction of an economic surplus. Neolithic society inhibited mammonism, but the latter (among other factors) wound up destroying the former. All civilized societies prior to the world market also inhibited it, but with decreasing success.

Fetishism also reflects an ideological attitude. But it comes to exist only as of the moment when there is an atmosphere in which the production of commodities, and with it a dynamic financial life, is more and more the general rule. Marx is very clear about that. He even succinctly exempted four "forms of production" from fetishism: one with an imaginary Robinson Crusoe who works diligently for himself on a desert island; that of the European feudal world, where the various links of dependence among the different estates of society take over the relations of production and thus where the production of commodities is not the rule; that of patriarchal peasant production,

where the social product is consumed by the family itself; finally, that of a socialist society of “free individuals” who are paid in accordance with their labor and who consume the surplus also according to this same criterion (1996, 87–90). Only the second and the third forms (although one may have reservations regarding the third) have existed historically, for the first one is purely imaginary and the last is thus far not more than a possible project.

In short, mammonism is that attitude or behavior that exalts competition for superfluous goods because these are taken for absolute warrants of prestige, honor, status, respect, etc. It is an ideological valuation that in given historical circumstances becomes material through social practice. Fetishism, on the other hand, refers to the phantasmagorical attribution, to the mental transfiguration, of social relations as if they were relationships between things (commodities), as if commodities per se had attributes, which actually exist only because of the *system* in force. As an ideological attitude, mammonism is as old as humanity and in this sense (as an appetite) will always exist. In order to leap from ideology to collective practice on a socially consequent scale, its minimum presupposition is the permanent existence of a surplus. On the other hand, the concrete presupposition for the existence of the fetishist attitude is the generalization of the production of commodities, which gets deeply rooted historically only when wage labor and the (almost) universal monetarization of the economy prevail. Finally, mammonism reflects an attitude, an ideological valuation of norms. Fetishism, however, is an ideological interpretation, an attempt to understand the world of commodities and the social life linked to it; and, as inevitably happens, it also leads to an attitude on certain norms, namely, to the economic religion. Here, as a matter of fact, is the point where mammonism and fetishism meet.

Hence mammonism and fetishism have an area of convergence, namely, that of sacredness and of sacrifice. It is not for nothing that authors like Hinkelammert (1981) and, up to a point, Assmann (1989), inspired by the theory of the fetishism of the commodity, write at length on these two topics. Only in an atmosphere where the production of commodities is generalized, that

is, becomes the predominant rule —which has occurred on an increasingly worldwide scale for only the past two centuries—can the mammonistic spirit exult so that it compellingly seduces the common people as never before. The bourgeoisie, the greatest devotee of Mammon, earns respectability and molds the common people to its image and likeness. Perhaps with the revival of Islamic fundamentalism as the only noteworthy exception, the traditional religions (of prebourgeois origin) are withering vis-à-vis the economic religion. Official discourse relegates unemployment and poverty to secondary concerns and, if it must mention them, teaches that they are inevitable like earthquakes and floods. And the fetish that captivates the minds of billions leads to the belief that the way the world works now is essentially the only way possible. Indeed any improvement of the health of the economy might occur only within the parameters in force.

7

In a certain passage Marx could hardly spare encomiums to the moral superiority, the official antimammonism, of the old civilizations vis-à-vis the modern philosophy on production:

The old view, according to which man always appears in however narrowly national, religious or political a determination as the end of production, seems very exalted when set against the modern world, in which production is the end of man, and wealth the end of production. (1986, 411)

In a possible future society where production is planned and carried out through the participation of society as a whole in an economy of plenty, it can be imagined that there will be no place for fetishism of the commodity since there will be no commodities and money. But the penchant toward mammonism, greater than that in the Stone Age (as an abundant surplus will be able to excite the appetites of some), will always exist to a greater or lesser degree. If humanity should arrive at that point, which today seems nothing more than sheer utopia, the great challenge will be to maintain the unequivocal feeling that, instead of the belief that wealth (the wealth of some and therefore the poverty of others) is the objective of production and production is the

objective of human activity, humanity as a whole will be the objective of production. In other words, in terms of what is utopia today but, it is hoped, the general social reality tomorrow, the production of goods must occur for the good life of all; production must be a means for the universal good life, and not—as in today's bourgeois world—an end in itself. For the conception of production as an end in itself—indeed as *the* reason for human life in society—has brought about a humanly doubtful cornucopia for a certain few and poverty and even squalor for many.

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NOTES

1. The sociability referred to here alludes to social living together, whether harmoniously or in conflict.

2. For motives I cannot explain here I see the surplus as a concept valid only when applied to human societies and not to persons individually considered. On this subject and on the mechanisms used by Neolithic society to forestall an unequal distribution of the surplus among its members, see Macdonald 1986.

3. Communal society also perceived the possibility of the emergence of a state before it existed, and for ideological motives we need not discuss here, it took measures against it. Regarding this see the very suggestive book by Clastres (1974).

Of course, at certain moments the state and civilization emerged in various parts of the world with their historical disadvantages and advantages for humanity. Exactly how this occurred we shall never know, which does not mean that it is not a worthwhile subject for speculation on the emergence of civilization and for consideration of important differences between stratified and nonstratified societies.

4. See the biblical account of the institutionalization of the monarchy in Israel by popular demand (1 Samuel, chapter 8), where the Israelites, despite vigorous divine warnings on the inconveniences of the new institution, especially the burden of heavy tribute to future kings, insist on choosing it—all that sweat and sacrifice in exchange for a spectacle of splendor, pomp, and vanity. Similarly today, poor people often internalize bourgeois thinking on wealth.

5. Regarding this see Aristotle's *Politics*, book I, chapters 8 through 10, 1256a1 through 1258a38 (pages 77 through 87 of the edition cited in the bibliography). We remember that *chremata* in Greek means *goods* or *money* and that *chrematismos* is *business*. *Chrematistike* apparently is the adjective derived

from *chrematismos*: *he chrematistike techné*, the art or skill of exchanging goods for the sake of making money and profit. In this sense it does not necessarily have the same meaning as mammonism. But the way Aristotle uses it, that is, his attitude toward this “art,” makes it the word with the meaning nearest that of our *mammonism*, if not identical to it.

Here follows a passage from that work where he demonstrates a psychological approach to the phenomenon. It is also a good example of his antibourgeois spirit in a certain sense:

The reason why some people get this notion into their heads may be that they are eager for life but not for the good life; so, desire for life being unlimited, they desire also an unlimited amount of what enables it to go on. Others again, while aiming at the good life, seek what is conducive to the pleasure of the body. So, as this too appears to depend on the possession of property, their whole activity centers on business, and the second mode of acquiring goods [*chrematistiké* as opposed to *oikonomia*] owes its existence to this. For where enjoyment consists in excess, men look for that skill that produces the excess that is enjoyed. And if they cannot procure it through money-making, they try to get it by some other means, using all their faculties for this purpose, which is contrary to nature: courage, for example, is to produce confidence, not goods; nor yet is it the job of military leadership and medicine to produce goods, but victory and health. But these people turn all skills into skills of acquiring goods, as though that were the end and everything had to serve that end. (Book I, chapter 9, 1257b40, page 85 of the edition cited in the bibliography)

6. The consciousness of one person’s exploitation of another, or more precisely, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, has been the cause of countless peasant revolts throughout universal history. In 1381, for instance, during a rising in which English peasants, inspired partly by Wycliffe’s theological doctrine and convinced of the equality among people at the dawn of human society, chanted the verses: “When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?” (cited in Hill 1973, 28). It is quite impressive that the German peasants of Anabaptist persuasion in the sixteenth century, perhaps influenced by the propagation of Wycliffian ideas in Bohemia by Huss more than a century earlier, chanted the same verses in their battles against the nobility. See Maurois 1937 (246), and Castoriadis 1991 (187).

Thus, those illiterate peasants of Europe in the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries perceived what—from the ends of the Earth—travelers, missionaries and other chroniclers soon afterwards (albeit asystematically and rather intuitively) perceived, the same being systematically perceived in the twentieth century by scholars of economic anthropology: the simple fact that the first men and women, the Paleolithic folk, our Adam and Eve, did not engage in agriculture and neither they nor their immediate children, the Neolithic people, mastered metals, were acquainted with money, etc. Stone Age society was only what it could be: a society without a social division of labor and without rich and poor.

But only with Marx's analysis of the production and appropriation of surplus value has the character of the exploitation carried out by the ruling strata of civilized societies become clear and scientifically explicit.

7. Paul of Tarsus wrote over nineteen centuries ago in 1 Timothy 6:9–10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hateful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." "The love of money is the root of all evil" was already an international proverb of the day, a part of other traditions, not only the Judeo-Christian one.

8. "In the form of paper, the monetary existence of commodities is only a social one. It is *Faith* that brings salvation. Faith in the money value as the immanent spirit of commodities, faith in the mode of production and its predestined order, faith in the individual agents of production as mere personifications of self-expanding capital" (Marx 1998, 587).

9. The "plot" of this great essay is by Assmann. The writings of Hinkelammert that are included in the book, although quite relevant, are complementary.

10. All that should, according to Francis Fukuyama (1992), lead to consumerism, a fruit of the magic of the market and of "economic miracles" (another magical-religious metaphor), one of the greatest benefits of present society.

11. The author's use of the term *central* in place of *metropolitan* as a contrast with *peripheral* follows the tradition in economic literature inspired originally by Latin American writers influenced by the literature of the Economic Commission for Latin America (an organ of the UN) during the last four decades.

12. In the midnineteenth century, the English economist Nassau Senior said that profit comes from the labor of the capitalist and interest from his asceticism or abstinence. With regard to this, see Marx 1996, 238, n. 1.

Even today, arguments for the liberal apologetics of the oligopolist entrepreneur are not wanting. It is he who knows what the consumer needs, he "sacrifices" himself with the (unfortunate) social budgetary duties that governments, pressured by labor unions, impose, he runs all the risks typical of the investor (which of course enhances sacrifices) and thus deserves generous gains, etc.

The imposition of strict limits on wages in the peripheral countries by the International Monetary Fund during recent decades, both in the countries where there has been galloping inflation and in those where it has been drastically contained and where wages have in any event been chronically insufficient for the workers, not to say less than human for the great majority of them—all that is a graphic proof that the common people, the workers, are the great sacrificial lambs.

13. Norman Geras notes that fetishism is a very promising category, linked as it is to themes like alienation and ideology (1972). Geras here refers to ideology as false consciousness. We do not, however, use it in this limited sense in the present article, but in the wider sense of *Weltanschauung*, the

comprehension of human society: how it works, goals and expectations, rules, and so on. Therefore ideology also defines what is or is not possible or desirable. It is both logical and ethical.

In the limited sense of false consciousness we can observe that insofar as we are concerned the only ones who think and/or act ideologically are our adversaries or those influenced by their thinking, which amounts to the same thing.

14. Here *capital* does not refer to the means of production but rather to the ensemble of the social relations of production between capitalists and workers. As a matter of fact, Marx himself almost always uses it in this sense.

15. *Mammon* or *mammona* in Aramaic means wealth or material goods. It seems—although I cannot be absolutely sure—that it also referred to a deity, to the god of wealth. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, I have taken the liberty of sometimes referring here to *Mammon* with a capital *M* as a presumed deity to mean a real and efficacious idolization (supreme esteeming) of the possession of superfluous goods.

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Racial Images in Dutch Art, 1500–1900

Ernest D. Green

Introduction

The imagery in which black subjects are portrayed in Dutch painting is an indication and reflection of changes in the mode of production from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. In this essay I examine the delineation of blacks in four works of art, each executed under a different mode of production, and analyze the meaning conveyed in relationship to the dominant class. I argue that the racial images of blacks and the associated meanings differ according to the mode of production under which the artist worked. I argue further that these depictions are dependent upon the use or nonuse of black labor as the primary unit of economic production.

Prior to the slave trade (or under a feudal mode of production), for example, racial images of blacks in most Dutch art were neutral to positive. Under a colonial and slave mode of production, however, as slavery became the dominant form of economic production, the racial images of blacks changed dramatically and became almost completely negative. Finally, following the abolition of slavery and a move toward a wage-labor system of production (under the industrial capitalist mode of production), racial images of blacks became more positive again.

The three modes of production under consideration include the feudal mode of production (1500–1625), the slave mode of

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production (1625–1863), and the industrial capitalist mode of production (1863–1900). Hendrick Goltzius's *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 1), completed in 1594, represents racial imagery under the feudal mode of production. The painting representing racial imagery under the slave mode of production is Jan Weenix's *Admiral Gilles Schey*, executed in 1693 (fig. 2). Finally, representing racial imagery under the industrial capitalist mode of production are Atlas van Stolk's print *Emancipation*, produced in 1863 (fig. 3), and Cornelis Jetses's early twentieth-century drawing *Where Do Butterflies Come From?* (fig. 4).

For a dialectical- and historical-materialist analysis, understanding the mode of production under which the artist labors is essential. The maker of the image is as significant as the image itself, in that a work of art is mediated by the consciousness of its creator (Arvon 1973, 26). Individual consciousness—that is, the way individuals understand their society—is determined largely by the class that dominates a particular mode of production. This determination follows from the advantageous position occupied by the dominant class, enabling it to shape societal institutions in its own interest. In this shaping, subordinate classes are socialized to accept ruling-class ideas and to interpret reality on that basis. A work of art, therefore, is influenced at any given time directly and indirectly by the artist's class consciousness, and by the artist's conscious and unconscious perception of societal class relations.

Historical materialism also suggests that, depending upon the particular mode of production of a society, the class most important to that process (slaves under the slave mode of production, peasants under the feudal mode of production, and the proletariat under the capitalist mode of production) takes on significant cultural meaning (Mao Tse-tung 1972, 108). Moreover, since the dominant class possesses the means to depict the exploited classes culturally, the images it uses or fails to use for such depiction are of great significance. There is a strong tendency, with good reason, for ruling classes to show exploited classes in a negative light culturally. Self-serving rationalizations help to make the process of exploitation seem justified and the result of a fair and democratic process (108).

Finally, symbolism in art is seen in the historical-materialist perspective as having great ideological significance in terms of the dominant class's use of culture to protect its interests. The ideological content of symbolism lies in the way objects in a work of art relate to the class relations of a society. Images can represent an association with a particular class, so that the imagery chosen for a work of art can accept or challenge, implicitly or explicitly, ruling-class assumptions. A painting of a mansion juxtaposed to starving children, for example, implicitly challenges the social, economic, and political relations responsible for the stark contrast. A painting of a mansion juxtaposed to its joyous proprietors playing games and having fun, however, does not. The difference between the two lies in the images chosen to depict a reality and their relationship to class interests. The first painting does not serve ruling-class interests because it exposes certain contradictions in social relations, while the second painting does serve them because it keeps these contradictions hidden.

Applying this understanding of class relations, my analysis of racial imagery in Dutch art between 1500 and 1900 will proceed as follows: first, assessment of the mode of production under which the artist labored and the class standing of the artist; second, identification of the class most important to the mode of production; and third, examination of the ideological symbolism of the created racial image in relation to the dominant class (cf. Barbaro 1972, 161).

Depiction of blacks in Dutch art, 1500–1625

The movement for national independence in the Netherlands developed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The leaders of this movement were motivated by the desire to free the nation from Spanish economic, religious, and political domination. The Spanish, under Charles V, were intent on preserving Catholicism, whereas the nascent Dutch leadership was animated by the Protestant Reformation and its spirit of capitalism. As a weapon of war, Charles V engaged in warlike suppression of the religious, political, and economic activities associated with the interests of the Dutch elite. Most important

of these sanctions were restrictions placed upon colonial expansion. Not surprisingly, the most powerful group supporting the formation of Dutch independence was the *Heeren XVII* (literally, Seventeen Gentlemen, or Council of Seventeen). Members of this group, who also governed the powerful and lucrative Dutch East India Company, wanted to expand trade to additional colonies. On 26 July 1581 the Netherlands declared its independence from Spain. It was not until 1648, however, that Spain would recognize Dutch independence (Newton 1978, 67).

The prevailing mode of production during this period was feudalism, based upon the organization and exploitation of peasant labor. It was dominated by a feudal ruling class who controlled Dutch society through its legal, political, religious, and cultural institutions (Biel 1994). From a cultural standpoint, symbols and objects were clearly associated with this class. Certain physical characteristics of people, as well as material objects such as dress, homes, architecture, and ornaments signified class membership. Nonmaterial categories like occupation, status, and social rank and practices (such as oaths of loyalty or investiture ceremonies) also conveyed class membership. Thus, racial images in works of art, whether material, like a physical attribute, or nonmaterial, like the representation of a contemplated object, also conveyed meaning. The fact that they did so allows us to assess the importance that the feudal ruling class placed on particular human characteristics under this mode of production (Mark 1974, 2).

Under consideration first is an engraving by Hendrick Goltzius (1552–1609), *Adoration of the Magi*, executed in 1594 (fig. 1). According to cultural critic Allison Blakely, “the Adoration of the Magi, featured in thousands of works, was the single most popular religious theme featuring blacks in sixteenth and seventeenth-century European art” (1993, 84). The work celebrates the Epiphany or the adoration of the infant Jesus by the three wise men. The deliberate portrayal of “Casper the Black king” in what was, to the feudal nobility, a celebrated and sacred event, suggests that race, while an obvious sign of difference, was not a dominant form of social distinction nor was it imbued with negative stereotypes as later under the slave mode of



Figure 1. Hendrick Goltzius, *Adoration of the Magi*.

production. Closer examination discloses more evidence to support this conclusion. The actual position of the black king in relation to other members of the group portrayed implies his inclusion in the feudal nobility. This is evidenced by the fence in the background that cordons off the general public. One way this can be interpreted symbolically is that the group closest to the Magi, inside the fence, represents the feudal nobility and those outside the fence represent the peasant class.

Another symbol of social distinction not based on race is the black king's giving what appears to be his hat to a white servant. This suggests not only a certain level of racial tolerance, but perhaps the subordination of some whites to some blacks. Finally, since the Magi's visit was the most popular religious theme featuring a black image in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one can safely assume that if race had been a dominant social category, a black person would not have been shown handing a hat to a white person in this way, or in fact shown as one of the three wise men at all.

Goltzius's engraving thus suggests several interpretations of racial imagery under the feudal mode of production. First, the inclusion of the black king as one of the three wise men suggests that race was not imbued with the negative stereotypes it would later acquire under the slave mode of production. Second, the placement of the black king within the feudal ruling class indicates that class was a determining factor in social standing. Third, no hostility directed at the black king is suggested; in fact, his presence seems quite normal. One way to interpret such findings, consistent with historical materialism, is that under the feudal mode of production, in which the primary element in forces of production was the labor performed by the peasantry, not black slaves, no need existed to develop an overtly racist culture. With the onset of the slave trade and the direct and indirect reliance upon slave and colonial labor, images of blacks in Dutch art would change dramatically.

Depiction of blacks in Dutch art, 1625–1863

The beginning of the slave trade in 1625 marked a transformation in racial imagery in Dutch art. The accumulation of

wealth based upon slave labor, as opposed to peasant labor, forged new economic, political, and cultural values. Economically, the Netherlands became one of the wealthiest and most powerful countries in Europe. The major practitioners of the slave trade—the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company—were not only economically powerful, but consolidated the new ruling class. According to Rodney, the Dutch financing of the seventeenth-century slave trade was instrumental in providing the economic basis for the rising capitalist class and an ever-growing middle class (1981, 80).

Politically, the rising power of the bourgeoisie moved to control the state and legitimize new colonial expansion programs. This is reflected in the establishment of the Cape Colony in 1652; Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice (now in Guyana) in 1655; and Suriname in 1667. The capture of the political apparatus by the capitalist class and its policy of colonial expansion gave rise to the notion of empire building. The Netherlands, through the process of acquiring distant lands, cultures, and people, ceased being an internally driven society and began being an externally driven one. This change was very significant for the course of racial imagery. Since the people colonized were of a darker hue than the colonizers, their subordination became synonymous with their skin color (Novack 1976, 143). Thus, the depiction of blacks in Dutch art during the slave era takes on more significance than it had in feudal times.

From a cultural standpoint, the wealth accumulated through the slave trade provided the rising bourgeoisie new ways to express its class character, one reflection of which was the depiction of the colonized in artistic form. The era of the slave trade marked a heightened portrayal of blacks as servants in Dutch art (Mark 1974). The artistic motif of the black domestic, so pervasive in this era, had a dual purpose. First, it was a symbolic way to represent rising capitalist power, wealth, status, and political supremacy. Second, it was a way to rationalize colonization and slavery by depicting its victims as docile, ignorant, and subhuman.

An excellent example of racial imagery in Dutch paintings of this period is Jan Weenix's *Admiral Gilles Schey* (fig. 2).



Figure 2. Jan Weenix, *Admiral Gilles Schey*.

Completed in 1693, this work is imbued with ruling-class cultural symbolism and racial imagery. First, we find a scene celebrating capitalist life of the time—a superior ship taking on cargo for world trade. This depiction conjures up a sense of the Calvinist tradition of the bourgeoisie of this period. Attention to business affairs was synonymous with attention to holy affairs. The businessman sought to demonstrate his preordained status by hard work, discipline, thriftiness, and the accumulation of wealth—all precursors to his entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

In the foreground, we find additional racial and class symbolism. The pompous attitude of the admiral is indicative of authority and prominence. The clothes adorning his body and the lavish furnishings surrounding him also suggest his class membership. More important, however, is the appearance of the black servant boy at the lower right of the painting. The imagery in this work has profound racial implications and is typical of Dutch art during the slave era.

First, we notice the disposition of the black boy. With hands clasped, head tilted, eyes seeking reassurance, and kneeling, the figure suggests total submission. Symbolically, this could represent the entire colonial world. His body language is so pronounced it is as if he feels unworthy to be in the very presence of such a man as his master. Not only does the admiral have contempt for the black boy (or symbolically, colonized people of color) but it is striking that his dog does also. Even the snarling dog is elevated to a higher status than the black boy, indicating a deep-seated derision towards blacks.

Second, we notice the admiral's conspicuous finger pointing at the servant and a plant growing in a stream of light at the knees of the black boy. One could surmise from this juxtaposition, given the overt paternalistic nature of this piece, that a connection is being made between the plant and black boy (or symbolically, the colonial world). The plant is seen as small yet flourishing in the care and "light" of the admiral (or symbolically, the Dutch world). The plant is also blooming, which could signify the potential growth of the colonized masses if proper guidance and nourishment are given.

Third, this interpretation becomes more plausible if we examine it from an ideological perspective. Justification of colonialism has taken many forms historically, including the visual arts. Typically, this rationalization process starts with a dehumanized view of the colonized (Fanon 1963, 6). By dehumanizing the victims of colonization, the colonizers can remove themselves psychologically from the actual destruction that is committed. Furthermore, if the colonized can be seen as on the level of the beast, or below it as portrayed in this painting, the process of colonization can be experienced by the colonizer as a redemptive act. Thus the dehumanization of the black boy can be symbolically interpreted as the dehumanization of colonized masses. The redemptive character of colonialism is presented in the admiral's arrogance and finger pointing. It is as if he holds some tremendous knowledge so superior to the servant boy that the latter should be thankful merely to be in his presence.

A historical-materialist analysis of these findings would argue that as slave/colonial labor relations began to replace feudal labor relations, the need to justify the former necessitated a racist cultural apparatus. Race thus became synonymous with servitude, as depicted in this work of art.

The delineation of blacks in Dutch art, 1863–1900

The end of the slave trade in 1863 marked a new beginning in the depiction of blacks in Dutch art (Blakely 1993, 155). Whereas the reliance on the slave trade provided the material foundation for the negative racial imagery of blacks before 1863, its subsequent abolition provided the material foundation for more positive images. From an economic, political, and cultural standpoint the shift from a slave-based economy to a more capital-intensive, wage-labor system transformed Dutch society significantly, and consequently its portrayal of blacks.

Economically, the Dutch world was not exempt from the world-wide depreciation of slave labor in the midnineteenth centuries. The abolition of the slave trade coincided with new and more productive means of economic organization, mainly wage labor. This was the most efficient system of production for industrial capitalist development. Whereas slave labor was most

efficient for the exploitation of semitropical regions of the globe, the wage-labor system was more suited for urban environments. The transition from one form of production to another allowed for the changes in the depiction of blacks in Dutch art.

Politically, elite interests had to deal with the reality of a collapsing slave economy that ushered in significant changes in domestic race relations. While riches were being imported from distant colonies like the Mulluken Islands, Suriname, and Indonesia, for example, people of color from these same colonies, for various reasons, immigrated to the “mother country,” thus changing its racial makeup forever.

The changing racial composition of the country after 1863 is perhaps best illustrated in its cultural context in works portraying the new social relations between blacks and whites. The themes of emancipation, tolerance, and education are prominent. Two visual art pieces that capture this spirit include Atlas van Stolk’s work *Emancipation* (fig. 3) and Cornelis Jetses’s *Where Do Butterflies Come From?* (fig. 4).

Van Stolk’s *Emancipation*, drawn in 1864, embraces and expresses the joy felt by slaves at the arrival of freedom. Starting at the top right of the painting, we find an emancipation notice. Lower on the right, the chains of servitude are broken by a small boy, while another boy buries them in the earth. A whip, once the stern reminder of bondage, is being stood upon by a joyous former slave, and is also about to be buried in the ground. The outstretched hands of the freedman and his gaze at the heavens suggest eternal thankfulness at such a glorious day.

To the left of the freedman, we find a woman, presumably his wife, holding aloft a baby in outstretched arms. This is perhaps a symbolic gesture to the generations to come who will not have to suffer the indignities and humiliation of their ancestors. Interestingly enough, a book is at the side of the woman. The book is a clear reference to reading, once punishable by death, and a celebration of education and knowledge. Finally, in the background we see a slave ship departing for its final time, as those who had been its cargo look on and wave a long-awaited good riddance.

The second work that captures changing racial imagery and social relations between blacks and whites in Dutch art between

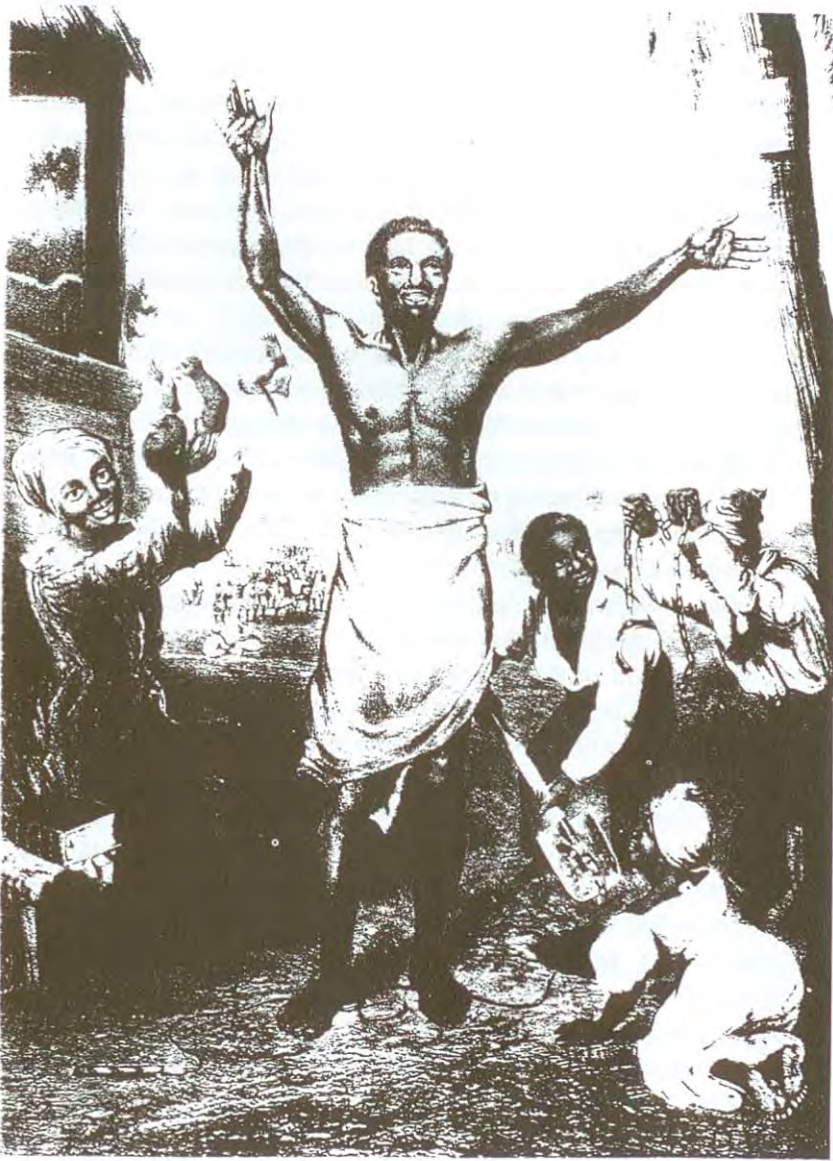


Figure 3. Atlas van Stolk, *Emancipation*.

1863 and 1900 is Cornelis Jetses's *Where Do Butterflies Come From?* This early twentieth-century drawing delineates a wholesome group of children learning together. The absence of any overt signs of racial meaning is significant in itself. The artist seems to seek to express the tranquil integration of blacks in Dutch society by focusing our attention, not necessarily on the black boy, but on the excitement of the children awaiting their first glimpse of a butterfly's cocoon.

The didactic nature of this work can be seen in other ways as well. First, the hand of the white boy is placed on the black child's back in a gesture of affection and friendship. This is perhaps the most obvious symbol of a new era in race relations. Not so obvious is the black boy's proximity to the two white girls, a poignant reminder of racist imagery prior to the abolition of slavery involving the stereotype of the black savage lusting after white women. In this picture, however, we see nothing of the sort: not only are the children close together, but their gender and whatever sexuality it may imply are completely devoid of negative racial imagery.

Finally, it is interesting to note the subtle equality of the image, particularly the black boy's presence among the group. On the one hand, it is reminiscent of race relations under feudalism, where color pigmentation had little to do with social class standing. On the other hand, this image of equality is in stark contrast to the slave era, where the black child would probably have been depicted as a submissive servant, as in the work of Jan Weenix.

Conclusion

Racial images of blacks in Dutch arts changed, I have argued, in relation to shifts in the mode of production. My analysis of the images of blacks has found that prior to the slave trade, race was less of a factor in social class standing than Christian identity and rank. With the onset of the slave trade in the seventeenth century, and the use of slave/colonial labor as a major form of production, we also see a corresponding transformation of race from a secondary social characteristic to a dominant one. What is even more interesting is that after the end of the slave trade, we



Figure 4. Cornelis Jetses, *Where do Butterflies Come From?*

witness another transformation in the delineation of blacks, this time a positive one.

What was the driving force behind this historical development? One thing we can conclude is that colonization necessitated a racist cultural apparatus. The positive images of blacks found under the feudal mode of production were incompatible with this objective. A racist cultural apparatus had not been materially necessary to feudal society, since people of color were not the primary producers of wealth. At that time, therefore, it was possible for artistic reflections of blacks to be more positive and devoid of any negative connotations. This was quite evident in Hendrick Goltzius's 1594 *Adoration of the Magi*. This work shows quite vividly a black king immersed in the elite cultural milieu of feudal society. It also appears that his status is superior to that of the peasants, who are shown cordoned off from the nobility. Given the ability of the ruling class to control images to its pleasure, and the importance of the theme of the Adoration of the Magi, it can be argued that had race been viewed as a strongly negative characteristic, a wise man would not have been portrayed as black.

The transition of racial images of blacks in Dutch art coincided with Dutch involvement in the slave trade at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The internationalization of the slave trade, and the subsequent European reliance on it as a mode of production, changed things dramatically. While slavery had been part of European society since ancient times, the slavery that took root in the early seventeenth century was quite different. The most obvious difference was that the slave owners were predominantly white and the slaves predominantly black. From a cultural standpoint, blackness soon became synonymous with servitude and oppression. Thus, blacks depicted in Dutch art between 1625 and 1863 were largely in the servile motif.

Jan Weenix's 1693 *Admiral Gilles Schey* is representative of this genre. This painting clearly delineates the conventional view of blacks as servants completely subordinant to the white "race." In this work the black servant boy juxtaposed to a snarling dog suggests that even a domestic animal had contempt for the lowly

black "race." Also, the admiral's arrogant posture contains a certain ideological justification for the colonizing process. The knowledge that makes the admiral so arrogant and justly contemptuous of the ignorant servant is the same knowledge that makes him civilized. From this perspective, then, part of being civilized is the legitimate colonization of the inferior and darker "races" of the earth.

Finally, the end of slavery as a mode of production in the middle of the nineteenth century again shifted the racial imagery of blacks in Dutch art. The move towards a wage-labor system of production provided the material basis for attitudes about race to change. Whereas slavery as a mode of production required a severe dehumanization of blacks to justify their exploitation, capitalism (as system of wage labor) did not, or at least not to the same extent. As a result, the potential for a more positive depiction of blacks came into existence with the end of slavery.

It must be reemphasized here that the shift from the use of slave labor to wage labor in the international arena did not put an end to racism in Holland, or, more specifically, in Dutch art. Rather, it ended the depiction of blacks in a certain racist paradigm. The emancipation of millions of slaves, and their hopes and dreams of a free world, provided fertile material and a new context for artistic expression. These energies were latent (since they could not be expressed) under a slave mode of production. Indeed, racism has continued to this day in Holland and all Western European countries, although completely different in form and substance from the racism found under a slave mode of production.

This new attitude towards race was perhaps best captured in Atlas van Stolk's *Emancipation*. Van Stolk's work expresses the tremendous joy felt by millions of blacks upon their day of emancipation, and it marks a clear shift in the depiction of blacks in Dutch art that for centuries had been mired in the servile motif. This new image was strengthened in the twentieth century in Cornelis Jetses's *Where Do Butterflies Come From?* This work champions the idea of unity between the races as it delineated a black child with a white child's arm around him in a learning environment. The significance of this shift is

highlighted when we compare it to the characterization of the black child in Jan Weenix's *Admiral Gilles Schey*.

The works of van Stolk and Jetses complete the cycle of racial imagery about blacks in Dutch art between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. The shifting modes of production and their corresponding cultural apparatus brought the images of blacks from positive, to negative, and finally back to positive. While not all Dutch art follows such a clear line of delineation, these four works capture quite vividly the major trends as they relate to racial imagery and the depiction of blacks.

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Globalization and an Update on the National Question

Luis Fernandes

Talk presented at the 9th Congress of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), São Paulo, 13–15 October 1997.

“We lack a concept.” Those opening words synthesized the fundamental message in the much-hyped interview given by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to *Veja* [a Brazilian weekly periodical]. What we “lack,” according to the president, is an “ideology” that ensures the people a comprehensive interpretation (and a justification) of the agenda of his government. The basic problem is not the lack of an “ideology,” but the insufficiency and the inadequacy of its assimilation by Brazilian society. In other words, President Cardoso intends to intensify even more the gigantic ideological operation being carried out by the dominant interests in Brazil (but not only here), in order to consolidate the political and cultural hegemony of the neoliberal project. This is the objective that underlies the interview given to *Veja*.

The ideological offensive that is being carried out is founded in the concept of “globalization,” which is presented to us as a singular historical rupture imposing universal convergence in an

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agenda of liberalization. Such is the dominant idea in the media that is being disseminated in political and academic circles. Unfortunately, such an interpretation is also being assimilated in an uncritical way by leftist segments (though such segments tend to “lament” the high costs of the present “objective and unavoidable process”).

I am convinced that the construction of an effective antihegemonic alternative to neoliberalism in Brazil, which is the main objective of the Project of Political Resolution being discussed in this Congress, requires from the beginning the breaking up of the “virtual cage” created by the dominant trend around the concept of globalization in order to imprison hearts and minds.

The theoretical origins of the concept of globalization

Although issues related to economic unification and the capitalist emergence of a “universal interdependence of nations” were already important in the classical political economy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (from Adam Smith to Karl Marx), the specific study of “globalization” as an issue is relatively recent. Its recent theoretical origins are related to varied developments in the academic Anglo-Saxon world since the sixties, especially the pioneering studies of the theoretician of culture Marshall McLuhan on the constitution of a new “global village” through the use of modern systems of mass communication, and also the studies of sociologist Daniel Bell on the convergence of different international social formations in a single “postindustrial society” based on information. We may also include among the pioneers of the theoretical study of globalization the authors of the so-called “English school of international relations” (especially Martin Wight and Hedley Bull) who identified the emergence of an “international society” founded on common norms and a common international culture. We may also add to these authors Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, who have theorized since the seventies on the growing interdependence caused by the multiplication of nonstate multinational ties in the international system.

However, the great intensification of the specific study of globalization that gathered pace during the eighties was due to

the many specialized studies produced by cadres formed by management schools of the Anglo-Saxon world, especially the Harvard Business School. Outstanding among these researchers are Michael E. Porter and Kenichi Ohmae. After the global ascension of the neoliberal project during the eighties and the collapse of socialism during 1989–1991, there has been a recrudescence of these studies. As usually happens with intellectual hypes, it resulted in a series of different interpretations. The guidelines of the dominant approach to the theme, however, did not diverge much from the theoretical basis originally determined by the specialized management literature.

The dominant interpretation of the globalization phenomenon

The dominant interpretation consists of six basic and interconnected propositions selected from the numerous different ones that appeared during the nineties:

1. Globalization introduces a new stage in the development of capitalism in which the international integration of markets is substituted for the former organization of the system in autonomous national economies.

2. This new stage is characterized by the detachment of (big) capital from the national economies, granting it an essentially global character.

3. The formation of such a *global capital* is causing a general weakening of national states, which are being replaced by new international structures of power polarized by enterprises that dominate the world markets.

4. This process of economic globalization is being followed by an analogous process of cultural globalization that introduces global values and identities that subdue the national ones.

5. This cultural globalization in its turn is building a new “global civil society” that is being detached from the national basis and gradually directing its claims to international organizations that constitute the drafting of a kind of “world government” (United Nations, ITO, IMF, World Bank, etc.).

6. This framework of processes imposes, for better or worse (as one sees it), on the national states the sole agenda of macro-economic adjustment and institutional/regulatory standardization

oriented toward the “full integration” of the international flow of business and investment.

Although such an interpretation of globalization comprises processes of a social, cultural, and political nature, the phenomenon is clearly dominated by the economic. Two economic events in particular have spearheaded the process since the seventies: productive and financial globalization. The former is related to the institution of international productive chains established by multinational enterprises that surpass indistinctly territorial borders, making the state monopoly of the legitimate use of force more and more irrelevant. The latter alludes to the formation (based in technological developments of telecommunications and computer science) of a completely integrated international financial market that operates continuously and on a real-time basis without constraints and/or regulations enforced by national political authorities or multilateral organizations.

The main myths of globalization

Although it is already commonly accepted, this interpretation of the process of globalization is based on a group of myths that cannot resist a more objective and judicious appraisal. Following are the most important of these myths.

1. The myth of globalization as a “novelty”

Although the dominant approach indicates the contrary, the economic integration of the world is an ancient process that has followed the development of capitalism since its ancient commercial, manufacturing, and banking practices in the towns in Northern Italy during the fifteenth century. The transformation of “natural” capital (which was unmovable and territorial and, therefore, liable only to the restriction of accumulation) into “abstract” capital in the form of money (which was movable and not territorial and, therefore, liable to intense accumulation) stimulated the commercial expansion in Europe, resulting in the discoveries and in the launching of the material bases of the world market. Such an expansion in its turn made viable the development and the consolidation of European capitalism,

completing the economic and political unification of the world around itself in the nineteenth century.

2. The myth of national economic confinement

In opposition to the dominant approach, the capitalist economies were never confined to their respective national territories. As Marx points out in the first volume of *Capital*, modern European capitalism originated mainly from the accumulation promoted by the systematic exploitation of gold and silver in the Americas during the colonial period. The political, social, and economic strengthening of the bourgeoisie promoted by its global commercial expansion played a crucial role in the dissolution of feudal society and in the formation of the unified and centralized national states in Europe. In other words, the historical ascension of capitalism constituted simultaneously an economic and a political multinational system. The contradictory interaction of such dimensions has characterized capitalism since its origins. There is no historic example of the development of an autarkic capitalism.

3. The myth of productive globalization

In spite of several claims to the contrary, the specialized literature that closely accompanies the action and the evolution of the multinational enterprises reveals that the intensification in the global expansion of such enterprises after the war stemmed from solid national bases. From 70 to 75 percent of the value added to the great corporations of the central capitalist countries is still being produced in its countries of origin. More than 85 percent of their technological activities is concentrated in their national territories. In the case of the great U.S. enterprises, no less than 98 percent of the chairs in the administrative councils are occupied by U.S. citizens. These data indicate that the control and the strategic activities of multinational enterprises are still strongly "territorialized" (and, as we will see, are absolutely linked to the international policies of their states of origin.)

4. The myth of financial globalization

Although it constitutes the most advanced facet of the process of economic globalization, the financial system is far from being

a single global market (as the IMF itself agreed in its World Report in May 97.) There is still a strong and increasing correlation between savings and domestic investment in the world, which reveals that the “territoriality” is still a fundamental criterion to decisions related to investments. The assets of the main investment funds in the United States and in Europe (the emergence of which was identified as one of the most remarkable aspects of the process of financial globalization in recent years), for instance, are still strongly concentrated in national assets (more than 88 percent). In the monetary field, even considering the collapse of the Bretton Woods regime, the U.S. dollar still dominates the international capital markets and is responsible for 86 percent of its operations. Almost two-thirds of the international reserves are still maintained in dollars. As the emission of dollars is monopolized by the United States, it confers to the political and economic authorities of that country a brutal (and uncontrolled) power of interference in the operation of the international financial system.

5. The myth of the dissociation of market, enterprise, and state

This reasoning sends us directly to the last myth that I wish to analyze: the growing dissociation among market, enterprise, and state (and the generalized weakening of the latter.) First, the indifferent opposition between *enterprise* and *national state* in the dominant approach to the process of globalization seems problematic. In the whole history of capitalism there have always been different kinds of enterprises (few of which could command the constitution and exploration of world markets) and states (few of which have concentrated or are presently concentrating enough political and military power to impose a determined order to these markets). Ever since the concession of official monopolies to great shipping companies in the ancient systems of open colonialism, the stronger states always intended to establish economic territories that were as wide as possible in the core of the world market, reserving its exploration to certain enterprises headquartered in the metropole. At present the great

multinational enterprises continue to explore the asymmetries of political power in the international system with a view to opening, consolidating, and protecting markets. According to this viewpoint, the relation between the capital that is intended to expand globally and the central states of the international system is not external. In fact, this relation is so intimate that it is actually promiscuous. This is probably the most evident point for us. After all, it is enough to remember recent episodes like the heavy pressure exerted by the United States to force the developing countries to approve national patent legislation favorable to the interests of the big U.S. corporations; or the direct involvement of governments and secret services of the United States and France (in favor, respectively, of Raytheon and Thompson) in the polemic concurrence to the Vigilance Service of the Amazon (SIVAM) in Brazil; or still the arrogant action of the U.S. government in its attempt to force the dissolution of MERCOSUR and the enrollment of its members in the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The fact is that such involvement can only be understood by recognizing the interconnections of state and enterprise in the international system.

The dominant interpretation of the process of globalization is revealed as a mere ideological representation (in the negative sense originally given to the concept of “ideology” by Marx: that of reified inversion/falsification of the social reality). It is important to understand that it is not an ingenuous falsification. It is actually a discursive resource of power intended to disqualify as “absurd” and “backward” any proposal that opposes the “natural” and dominant agenda. That is why I reaffirm once more that it is necessary to dismantle the theoretical and conceptual trap that has been set regarding the process of globalization.

Making the concepts clear: globalization, neoliberalism, and degrees of global integration

A conceptual distinction must be made between *globalization* (as an objective process of economic integration that is stimulated by the global expansion of capital in terms of very concrete achievements such as routes of commerce, transport lines and

communication, etc.) and the *(neo)liberal agenda* (as a collection of policies oriented to the privatization of public enterprises, the deregulation of economic activities, and the restriction of rights, according to what was discussed in the National Conference of the Party in 1995). The former actually constitutes an objective and irreversible process. It follows from this interpretation that combating globalization, as sections of the Left do, is complete nonsense. After all, no alternative to neoliberalism that is intended to be viable may propose as a general policy the destruction of satellites or the closing of ports and airports. The problem is that the dominant approach insists on including in the “conceptual pack” of globalization the second dimension that was mentioned above: the liberalizing propositions. These are but subjective political options that are absolutely liable to reversion and/or surmounting. It should be enough to remember that the liberal hegemony of the nineteenth century was followed in the twentieth century by a long period of global development polarized by distinct antiliberal (or nonliberal) arrangements. The intensification of objective processes of globalization in the terms above does not imply any liberal fatalism.

From the conceptual distinction between “globalization” and “(neo)liberalism” proposed above we can introduce a third concept of a variable nature: the *degree of global economic integration*. It should be stressed that such a degree does not accompany mechanically the intensification of the process of globalization. It depends on developmental policies adopted by different countries and on the specific importance that the processes of globalization have to their internal dynamics. Such processes cannot be assessed a priori and depend on concrete investigation and analysis. In this connection, if the significant increase of international economic transactions during the last decades is undeniable in the realm of commerce and as well as in the realm of investments and finances, the fact is that, in many crucial dimensions, the degree of international economic integration promoted by such processes is still much inferior to that existing during the end of the *belle époque* of liberalism at the beginning of the century. The value of external flows of capital of the main investor countries, for instance, is not more than 2 percent of

their GDPs against an average of 4 to 6 percent at the beginning of the century. (England reached the peak of 9 percent in this period.) The present relatively low degree of global economic integration reveals that, in spite of the development of objective processes of globalization, we are still facing a world in which (at least according to the point of view of the dominant countries) the national markets still surpass the international transactions.

U.S. neoliberalism and hegemony

The background of the conceptual discussion developed in this paper is the question of the relevance of the theory of imperialism to the contemporary world. In all different versions, particularly Lenin's reasoning, the theory of imperialism always emphasizes the intimate relationship between the expansionist impulse of monopoly capital and the policies of aggression/domination implemented by the central capitalist countries in the international system. The dominant approach regarding globalization insists that this issue is no longer relevant since the new "global capital" is completely detached from its state of origin and is not any longer led by territorial considerations (i.e., it is not designed with a view to conquer and preserve "economic territories"). The basic idea that I have developed so far in this paper is that this is a false interpretation that disguises (and therefore preserves) the fundamental structures of domination and oppression that still guide the evolution of the world.

According to this point of view, the neoliberal project itself may be better understood, particularly in developing countries, as a strategy designed to open markets to conquest by the great capital of the central countries that make use of their political supremacy to force the rest of the world to dismantle fundamental instruments necessary to maintain sovereignty and national protection. It is a movement to recompose and reinforce U.S. hegemony through the unilateral instrumentation of positions of economic, political, and military force occupied by the United States in the international system. Important implications stem from such an interpretation. Two of them seem to be absolutely

fundamental to the challenge of constructing an antihegemonic political alternative:

1. It is necessary to identify and explore the increasing tensions and contradictions between the central capitalist countries in the implementation of the (neo)liberal project, since the fact that the United States is being favored in the process intensifies the resentment of other states.

2. It is necessary to insert the national question into the core of the programs of resisting (and surmounting) the neoliberal offensive, since in this dimension the sole essence of this offensive is most comprehensively and deeply confronted.

Both indications are evidently relevant to the consideration of the most adequate set of alliances necessary in the present stage of the struggle against neoliberalism in Brazil and in the world.

MARXIST FORUM

Nature , Society, and Thought initiated with vol. 6, no. 1 a special section called “Marxist Forum” to publish programmatic materials from political parties throughout the world that are inspired by the communist idea. This section makes available to our readers (insofar as space restrictions permit) a representative cross section of approaches by these parties to contemporary problems, domestic and international. Our hope is to stimulate thought and discussion of the issues raised by these documents, and we invite comments and responses from readers.

Letter from Japanese Communist Party to Leaders of Countries Possessing Nuclear Weapons

Tetsuzo Fuwa

Tetsuzo Fuwa, Japanese Communist Party Presidium chair, in a press conference on 4 June 1998 announced that he had sent a letter to President Clinton and other leaders of countries possessing nuclear weapons to call on them to take “all necessary measures to eliminate nuclear weapons and fundamentally prevent nuclear war.” The English text of the letter presented here was provided by the International Department of the Central Committee of the Japanese Communist Party.

The successive nuclear weapons test explosions by India and Pakistan have brought about an extremely grave stage in the situation around nuclear weapons and nuclear war, having a bearing on the very life and death of humanity.

In this situation, the Japanese Communist Party, a party working in the same country where people suffered the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, appeals with its whole heart to all the governments of the nuclear weapons possessing countries, including your country, to take all necessary measures to eliminate nuclear weapons and fundamentally prevent nuclear war.

(1) The Japanese Communist Party has pointed out to both India and Pakistan, which have just carried out nuclear test

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explosions, that their nuclear tests will bring about a new nuclear arms race in Asia and that it carries the real danger of nuclear war, and we have resolutely protested against these tests. The Japanese people together with so many people all over the world have raised their voices in protest by the same token. This is only natural for those who hope for a peaceful world in which there is no need to worry about nuclear weapons and nuclear war.

But, it is important to note that the dangerous situation brought about by the nuclear tests of India and Pakistan cannot be resolved just by protesting against the actions of the two countries.

The important thing is that the monopoly system on nuclear weapons by the five major nuclear powers has collapsed, unveiling its contradictions. This system has been premised on "controlling" every nuclear weapon on earth, by giving exclusive rights to the existing five nuclear weapons states to develop and possess nuclear weapons in order to prevent their proliferation to other countries. But it has become evident that this can neither check the nuclear arms race nor prevent nuclear war. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the danger that the new move started by India and Pakistan to possess nuclear weapons might set off a chain reaction in other countries, if the situation is left as it is.

We consider that the situation urgently demands a change of direction toward the elimination of nuclear weapons, and in this regard puts serious tasks and responsibilities before the nuclear weapons possessing countries.

(2) Basically, the nuclear nonproliferation initiative, which is based on the exclusive right of the existing nuclear powers to possess nuclear weapons and a ban on their possession by other countries, involves grave contradictions bearing on the fundamentals of international order which stress equality between nations. It is this equality that the modern international law system has given priority to as the fundamental principle of international order.

Such discrimination in rights between nuclear haves and have-nots might be justifiable if and when the elimination of nuclear weapons becomes an internationally agreed-upon and established objective, and if this constitutes a temporary measure

in the limited transitional period of time leading to the realization of this objective; in this case this might also be allowable in light of the standards of international justice. But the inequality between the nuclear haves and have-nots under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) is neither a temporary nor a transitional measure leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons; rather the treaty aims to perpetuate a monopoly over nuclear weapons by the existing nuclear weapons powers. This became all the more decisive when the NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995.

The NPT, with the aim of reducing this inequality to a certain extent, in its preamble calls attention to “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war,” and in article 6 provides for the obligations of the nuclear weapons possessing countries to “undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.” This is not an article to resolve the contradictions inherent in the NPT system, but is only a partial provision for alleviation. Still the fact is that the nuclear weapons states have trampled even on this minimum article aiming at reducing inequalities.

It is true that negotiations on some reductions in nuclear weapons were conducted, mainly between the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia), and that some reductions have been made. But these negotiations were not aimed at the elimination of nuclear weapons, and there still exist on earth an enormous number of nuclear warheads, capable of destroying the earth many times.

Worse still, even after the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed in 1996, some nuclear weapons powers have conducted subcritical nuclear tests, based on their privileged position of having a monopoly over nuclear weapons and their technological superiority. They are heading straight toward what can only be viewed as the further development of nuclear weapons and the expansion of nuclear armament.

It is extremely grave that some nuclear weapons powers adopt as part of their military strategy the preemptive use of nuclear weapons; giving various excuses, they even put forward

an open policy to launch a unilateral nuclear strike against the countries which have no nuclear weapons. This will deepen the contradictions in the NPT system, to the point that they will become fatal to world peace. To formulate a strategy where nuclear war is waged with the aim of maintaining a nuclear weapons monopoly is to abandon their own moral qualification to speak about the danger of nuclear weapons.

These contradictions in the nuclear weapons monopoly system have become so serious that the system itself can no longer be maintained in the traditional way.

(3) The nuclear weapons tests conducted this time by India and Pakistan are directly linked with the wrong policies of the governments of the two countries that rely on the possession of nuclear weapons for their countries' security. The Japanese Communist Party severely criticizes such policies. But what underlies the circumstances in international politics which led to the situation is the fact that the NPT system, under which only particular countries are allowed to continue to possess and develop nuclear weapons while other countries are forbidden access to them, has actually served to induce and encourage these dangerous attempts. This is an obvious fact that no one can deny.

I sincerely request the governments of nuclear weapons possessing countries not to turn their eyes away from this fact, to search for a new way out of this dangerous situation and take a serious step toward a new road of commitment to the cause of the elimination of nuclear weapons. I would like to stress that this road is a new one for countries which have supported the monopoly of nuclear weapons by a handful of superpowers, but for human beings who have been faced with the danger of nuclear weapons and nuclear wars for the past half century, it is a road to which they attach their hope for the future, the road they have striven for from the very beginning.

The very existence of nuclear weapons represents a threat to the existence of human beings. The United Nations, which was founded after the Second World War, made clear in its General Assembly Resolution No.1 the need "for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major

weapons adaptable to mass destruction.” I am convinced that returning to this original point is the only way to get out of the current dangerous situation.

Today more than one hundred nonaligned countries have proposed to eliminate nuclear weapons “within a time-bound framework.” In UN general assemblies, under the support of an overwhelming majority of the countries, resolutions calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons have been repeatedly adopted.

Even in the nuclear weapons possessing countries, voices calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons are spreading. Above all, I take notice that many people in the military and professional engineers, who were directly engaged in the production and operation of nuclear weapons, point out the unrealistic and dangerous nature of the idea of ensuring the security of a country with nuclear weapons. I believe now is the time to have the courage to leave the nuclear deterrent theory behind, for the sake of peace in the world and the safety of nations.

(4) Fifty-three years have already passed since the first nuclear weapons were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now that the twenty-first century is just around the corner, we need to make a decision to make the new century one which is free from the nuclear threat—a century of hope for human beings.

Only when nuclear weapons possessing countries make a responsible decision to eliminate nuclear weapons, can we get out of the vicious circle of the nuclear arms race, which includes emergence of another nuclear weapons possessing country, and open up the way to a peaceful future for the world.

From this viewpoint, I would like to ask your government to make a decision to immediately start to consider the following steps:

1. To start international talks on the elimination of nuclear weapons, including a decision on a concrete date for their elimination.

2. To cancel all nuclear tests, including subcritical ones; to stop any further development of nuclear weapons, irrespective of whether the tests will be conducted or not.

3. To declare the position to denounce the preemptive use of nuclear weapons. To abandon the preemptive nuclear strike strategy, if such is in your military options.

I earnestly hope that you will give these steps serious consideration and respond in a forward-looking way, to ensure that human beings and the earth will be able to keep existing with a bright future.

Socialism in the Soviet Union: Lessons and Perspectives

**From the Program of the Fourth Congress of the
Communist Party of the Russian Federation,
20 April 1997**

The Great Socialist October Revolution was for Russia the only genuine chance of national self-preservation under the conditions of military, political, and economic collapse; territorial disintegration; and the complete social incapacity of the bourgeois-landowning bloc to govern. The Soviet state and social order was distinguished by its ability to deal with the unsolved economic problems with which capitalist Russia could not cope.

Achievements and deficiencies

On the one hand, the power of the working people, the majority of the population, was established, and a planned economy based on socialized property was introduced. The Soviet people put an end to unemployment, established a vast social-welfare system, and carried out a cultural revolution. On the other hand, changes in the character of the productive forces in comparison with capitalism were insignificant. The external imperialist threat that hung over the USSR at that time required a rapid and precise response. Under these conditions the only appropriate response was expressed by the slogan, "Catch up and surpass." In practice, all efforts were devoted to extending a mobilization type of

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economy to the very limits of possibility. Industrialization that had taken the capitalist countries an entire epoch was carried-through in a historically short time. In the interest of industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture was completed at an accelerated tempo.

The victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War and the successful rebuilding of the economy were historical proof of the correctness of our path of development. It was, however, necessary to carry out an extensive centralization and nationalization of many spheres of social life. Unfortunately, this path was incorrectly absolutized and made into a guiding principle. As a result, the free, self-governing organization of the people was increasingly limited, and the energy and initiative of the working people was not supported.

In face of the task of developing socialism on its own foundations, the socialist idea was oversimplified. The principally correct slogan, "Ever better satisfaction of the growing needs of the working people on the basis of the scientific and technological revolution" was not realized. The achievements of the scientific and technological revolution were not joined with the potential of socialism. In practice, modern science and technology were introduced in the Soviet Union only in a limited way, and the entire pathos of the 1961 third program adopted by the CPSU was guided by the earlier slogan, "Catch up and surpass," the essence of which was to copy the model of Western society in the sphere of production and consumption.

On the one hand, this conscious decision pushed the Soviet economy into the role of a loser, and on the other hand, it prevented the solution of the principal task of socialism. This task is not the formal and legal, but rather the real socialization of production—both the creation of a higher quality of life of the people and the development of productive forces in comparison with capitalism, leading on this basis to self-administration of the labor collective, the application of effective motivation and stimuli for labor, and the creation of a free and harmonious development of people. In the type of model taken for the

development of productive forces, socialism lost much of its historical initiative, and not only in the economic sphere.

Two wings in the CPSU

The crisis that came upon Soviet society was due in large measure to the crisis in the Party. Two opposing tendencies existed in the CPSU—proletarian and petty bourgeois, democratic and bureaucratic. The struggle between them sharpened particularly after the October Revolution. As Lenin had warned, quite a few pseudorevolutionary and empty-headed careerists nestled into the governing Communist Party. Due to their large numbers and tenacity, the bearers of petty-bourgeois ideology represented the greatest danger for socialism. They viewed the country and state property as booty to be divided.

Underestimation of petty-bourgeois influences, a monopoly of power and ideology, and the “Communist arrogance” of a number of Party leaders put the CPSU into the position of an “overbearing” Party. The top layer increasingly detached itself from the millions of Communists and working people.

Two wings, corresponding with the two tendencies, then developed within the CPSU. In the course of the ensuing continual struggle between them, a political line was shaped in practice. Without taking this into account, it is impossible to understand such contradictions in Soviet history as that between the massive creative enthusiasm and the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s. Only by keeping these conditions in mind can one reach an objective assessment of the role of such Party and state leaders as Stalin and Molotov, Khrushchev and Malenkov, Brezhnev and Kosygin.

The pursuit of high numbers of members, as well as the lack of a mechanism for the systematic renewal and rejuvenation of its leading cadres, led to a situation in which the healthy part of the Party was unable to protect its lawful right of control over the Party leadership and unable to prevent the growing infusion of careerists into the leadership. The struggle for the correct course of transformation of the country, for a genuine socialism, however, never ceased.

The counterrevolution

In 1983, with broad support of the masses of Party members, Andropov began the process of redirecting the economy and democratizing state and public life. This had a good effect on the life of the people. In the succeeding period, the efforts of the progressive sectors of society aimed at developing reforms in the country and achieving a higher level of development were, although long overdue, nevertheless misused in deceitful ways by corrupt and incompetent leaders for unpatriotic goals directed against the state. Deceitful statements about the equality of all forms of property were pronounced. Indeed, the role of publicly owned property as the most appropriate form of ownership was undermined in every way. The essence and form of the cooperative economy were deformed. The mass media were consciously allowed to fall into the hands of people who defamed and hated our country. Using the methods of psychological warfare, they overwhelmed the consciousness of the working masses with a mighty stream of slander against the Soviet Union and Russian history, and were given free reign.

Personal responsibility for betrayal of the Party, ignoring of the national interests, and destruction of our motherland is borne by Gorbachev, Yakovlev, Yeltzin, and Shevardnadze. The thoroughly corrupted leaders and their henchmen decided to “exchange power for property.” Since their actions met with opposition from honest members of the Party, they banned the activity of Communists in the workplace collectives of state enterprises and offices, and in August/November 1991 they carried out a counterrevolutionary subversion and undertook an attempt to ban the Communist Party for all time. The shameful climax of this action was the Belovezh Agreement. They trampled under foot the desire of the Soviet people to live in a unified state, as expressed in the referendum of 17 March 1991. . . .

A further step toward the destruction of the country was the bloody October of 1993. The clash with the Supreme Soviet was the prologue to pushing through the antipopular constitution and presidency with absolute powers. In this way the prospect was assured of the likelihood that the resistance to the forces hostile

to the course of socialist construction would not fade away, but would grow in forms that were often extremely horrible and offensive. . . .

Socialist renewal

Nevertheless the forces of socialism have not been overcome. Russia must and will emerge from the crisis.

The Party sees three political stages for achieving its goals consistently and peacefully. In the first stage, Communists organize the defense of the social, economic, and political interests of the working people, and conduct mass actions of the working people for their rights.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) is working toward the rebirth and development of direct local democracy—the soviets of the work collectives, the salvation committees, the local soviets of people's deputies, etc. Together with mass patriotic forces, the Party has entered upon a close regional economic coordination and political cooperation in which the left forces share positions closely. The CPRF is striving to create patriotic bonds of effective, popular control over the executive and representative organs of power.

The Party, along with its allies, is striving for the formation of a government of national salvation. Before it stands the task of recovering from the catastrophic consequences of "reform," halting the decline in production, guaranteeing the working people basic socioeconomic rights. Property of the people that was appropriated in contradiction to their interests must be returned to them and brought under the control of the state. Conditions must be created for commodity production that will allow this to be done effectively according to the law.

The path to this is self-management and control of production and distribution of the national wealth by the labor collectives.

In this stage, different economic forms of the productive forces will coexist. The organs of power and government will safeguard the conditions for national security and independence, and establish guarantees against the attempts of the creators of

the “new world order” to seize the natural wealth and productive resources of Russia. They will promote the comprehensive economic and political integration of the criminally dissolved Soviet Union.

In the second stage, after a balanced economic and political stability has been achieved, the working people can participate more actively and on a broader scale in the state guidance of the soviets, the trade unions, workers’ self-management and other organs of direct people’s power that come into being. In the economy, socialist forms of economic guidance will assume the leading role based on the best social, structural, and technological/organizational means for securing the welfare of the people. This will be the stage of transition, of restoration.

The third stage represents the definitive formation of socialist relations in the economic base. The dominant form of property relations will be the public ownership of the means of production. As the level of real socialization of labor grows, the dominance of the workers in the economy will assert itself.

Following Lenin, we define fully realized socialism as a classless society freed from exploitation of one person by another, in which the necessities of life are distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of labor. It is a society of higher productivity able, on the basis of scientific management and planning, to employ postindustrial labor-reducing and resource-conserving technologies. It is a society of genuine democracy and developed culture that will stimulate the creative activity of the individual and self-government of the working people.

Under socialism, the necessary prerequisites will arise and develop for the communist association of the future, in which the free development of one is the condition for the free development of all.

English translation by Erwin Marquit of the German text as published in *Unsere Zeit*, 17 April 1998 (abridged and translated from the Russian by Willi Gerns).

BOOKS AND IDEAS

by *Herbert Aptheker*

U.S. “secret” foreign policy

The diabolical character of U.S. foreign policy since the death of President Franklin Roosevelt has been documented in book after book. Assassination of progressive leaders (Lumumba and Allende); military interventions with the death of millions (Korea and Vietnam); stimulated and financed counterrevolutions costing the lives of hundreds of thousands (Chile and Indonesia). Two additional revelations have appeared recently. The February 1998 (vol. 26, no. 1) issue of the *OAH Newsletter* (a publication of the Organization of American Historians) contains significant documents—hitherto “secret”—related to the murder of President Kennedy and to Washington’s plans to kill Castro and to return Havana to its prerevolutionary dependency upon the United States.

The documents are released by Anna K. Nelson, a professor of history at American University in Washington. Professor Nelson also serves on an ongoing JFK Assassination Records Review Board. She remarks that the documents here reproduced are “small examples” of the “countless meetings on Cuba within the Defense Department in 1962–63.” There is no indication of when or if other relevant documents concerning these “countless meetings” will be made public. The few documents now released—thirty-five years after their creation—are sensational.

The first document from the FBI contains reports from an informant in high Soviet circles showing that Moscow was shocked by Kennedy’s assassination and keenly worried about

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the character of Lyndon Johnson; one source stated that the KGB was “now” in possession of information implicating Johnson in Kennedy’s murder.

A second document demonstrates that in December 1963, John J. McCloy, a member of the Warren Commission, “had serious doubts on the credibility of the investigation to date” and that “he does not eliminate the possibility” that more than one person was involved in the president’s murder. This is ignored and attention is fastened on confirming Oswald’s guilt “and that he had no accomplices.”

Six other documents are reproduced, “part of a larger body of material” not here published. They establish that the CIA and other agencies of the government were “plotting the demise of Fidel Castro.” One of these documents “indicates that the President approved the anti-Castro efforts. The documents date from before and after the Cuban Missile Crisis; one is only five months prior to Kennedy’s murder. One of the documents is entitled “Possible Actions to Provoke, Harass and Disrupt Cuba.” These include actions to “disrupt/disable military and commercial communication facilities in Cuba”; others suggest ways “to create unrest and dissension among the Cuban people”; another to lead to the “removal” of Castro; others to disrupt communications, destroy production, to induce “elements or individuals of the Cuban military to defect with equipment”; another to introduce materials that would “cause aircraft, vehicle or boat accidents,” another to act in ways that would convince Cuba it was “in imminent attack,” and so forth.

One of the documents states sabotage and physical assaults “have already been approved and are being implemented.” The article includes reproduction of several of the documents described above. The intention of the activity is spelled out: “The ultimate objective of this policy . . . is to bring about the eventual liquidation of the Castro/Communist regime.”

The documents are incontrovertible proof of the criminal character of Washington’s conduct of this nation’s foreign affairs.

An earlier account of this kind of activity by the U.S. government was published in the *Record*, a publication of the National Archive and Records Administration (vol. 4, no. 2, 1997).

Evidence is presented of repeated efforts financed by Washington to overthrow the progressive government in Guatemala led by Jacobo Arbenz. Washington financed the training of about forty CIA officers in a base near Miami. One of the documents reproduced referred to “psychological warfare, economic, diplomatic and paramilitary actions.” The president and officials appointed by him were in direct charge of the effort including “liquidation of personnel” and conferences with “assassination specialists.” By the spring of 1954, Arbenz was overthrown and Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, the CIA puppet, was installed as president. All this, as the documents show, was to “provide stability” and of course to “ensure protection for American business.”

These documents prove the criminal character of Washington’s government, and only fractions of them have so far been reproduced. They substantiate and even elaborate upon the revelations that have periodically been made by the Left and ignored or ridiculed by the dominant instruments of communication.

Spirit of the sixties

An honest book depicting the 1960s in the United States is *Heretic’s Heart: A Journey through Spirit and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997, \$24). The author, Margot Adler, takes us to the Berkeley campus: the uprising, the brutal repression, the endurance, and the victory. She touches the impact of the Vietnam war through correspondence and experience with a veteran who illuminates his own despair, drops into cynicism, and never does understand the war—nor does the author. A shining moment is her participation in the freedom struggles in Mississippi. She is welcomed as a guest in the home (a shack) of a sharecropper and learns something of graciousness and courage. The description of this period is the most notable feature of the volume. Second to this is the account of some days living and working in revolutionary Cuba. It moves her, but doubts remain. As one fine person’s experiences in the never-to-be-forgotten 1960s, the book is important.

New look at U.S. slavery

A very significant book is *Slave Laws in Virginia*, by Philip J. Schwarz (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996). The work is unusual in that the author, a professor of history at Virginia Commonwealth University, writes that he wishes “to explore several aspects of the process by which law makers and law enforcers in Virginia *responded* to slaves’ behavior and to whites’ perception of and assumptions about that behavior” (1; emphasis in original).

With this purpose, the author presents data on the large number of slaves prosecuted in Virginia for poisoning attempts at masters and their families, and of those tried for conspiracy and insurrection in the postrevolutionary epoch. Most were hanged; some were sold outside the state. He shows, too—and this is most unusual—that the African-imported slaves “took many legal assumptions with them” (18).

The second chapter examines carefully and critically “Jefferson and the Law of Slavery.” The main author of the Declaration of Independence owned about two hundred slaves at any given time and “thus became a slaveholder of major proportions” (40). Jefferson, like all owners of slaves, suffered especially from the flight (or attempted flight) of the people he owned. Schwarz observes that “virtually every person who escaped from him was initially retrieved but almost everyone ultimately proved to be uncontrollable, and often ran away again, sometimes permanently” (44).

One of these uncontrollable slaves, named James Hubbard, escaped from Thomas Jefferson in 1805, but was caught. He ran away again in 1812 and again was caught. Jefferson wrote a friend:

I had him severely flogged in the presence of his old companions and committed to jail. The course he has been in . . . and all circumstances convince me he will never again serve any man as a slave. The moment he is out of jail and irons off he will be off himself.

The author of the Declaration of Independence is correct; James

Hubbard “absconded” again in 1812 and seems never to have been retaken (44–45).

What a flood of illumination this throws upon the history of the United States!

Figures on the execution of slaves were kept incompletely, but Schwarz believes that 567 were hanged between 1706 and 1784. Incomplete records show that 635 slaves were hanged in Virginia from the end of the Revolution to the end of the Civil War; the author thinks the correct number was probably about 945. Slaves executed outnumbered whites suffering that fate in this period by more than twelve times.

A friend of William Wirt, a leading Virginia lawyer and biographer of Patrick Henry, wrote quite casually in 1809 of the recent hanging of four of his slaves after they were convicted of killing their overseer. The heads of two of these martyrs were displayed in public; in the cited letter the hanging is called “a trifling matter” (89).

At times, for various reasons, intractable slaves were “transported” (sold out of Virginia, usually to the West Indies). Available records show that from 1800 to 1805, 935 slaves were transported, rather than executed; it is questionable which fate was preferable.

Schwarz has only one brief reference to “marauding maroons” (83) but makes no effort to describe this phenomenon. Probably he does not know my study of “Maroons within the Present Limits of the United States,” published almost sixty years ago in the *Journal of Negro History* (24 [April]: 167–84, 1939). This article demonstrates the existence of violent runaway slaves, who created colonies of their own and threatened the stability of the slave order from the sixteenth century to the close of the Civil War. Another relevant omission is the purchase of freedom by African-American people. This recurred, despite extreme difficulty. It was treated at length by me, and again reference is missing. Indeed the only notice of my work is to *American Negro Slave Revolts*, and the reference (207) is to the original 1943 edition—no note is taken of later editions, particularly that of 1993, which includes significant additional material. (Further, the publisher cited for the 1943 edition is incorrect; it actually was

Columbia University Press, not International Publishers. With the Cold War and my notoriety, Columbia gladly sold the rights ten years later to International Publishers.)

It is a rather remarkable fact that the name of Carter G. Woodson is missing from this study of slavery in the United States and I found but one reference to the *Journal of Negro History*, a quarterly Woodson founded that produced literally scores of studies relevant to his work.

Of significant value in the book are the pages devoted to the assistance of fugitive slaves offered by free Black people and, importantly, by white men. A table is offered (145) on "persons incarcerated in the Virginia Penitentiary for offenses involving fugitive slaves, 1860." This lists fifteen such people, who suffered long years of imprisonment. Eleven of the fifteen were white men, all but two of them Southerners. They all were working people, especially blacksmiths. This is new and strikingly informative; the data emphasize a point developed in my *Anti-Racism in U. S. History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), which showed opposition to racism widespread among white people (especially women) prior to the Civil War.

Schwarz's work on flight by slaves is extensive and important. He correctly concludes, "no matter how the government tried, it never caught up with the determination, ingenuity and intensity of fugitives and their allies" (145).

On the whole, despite the criticism offered, Schwarz's book is an important addition to the growing literature illuminating the reality of life for Black people from the colonial period to the end of the Civil War.

Children and poverty

Important is Patrick T. Murphy's *Wasted: The Plight Of America's Unwanted Children* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997, \$22.50). The author, an attorney and Public Guardian of the county including Chicago, writes: "What was beginning to happen in the inner city in the cities in the 1960's and early 1970's was mild compared to what occurs now" (18). Many occupants of the inner cities are "beaten down and ultimately sapped of hope"

(19). The torment of these human beings is so graphically described that it is difficult to persist in reading.

Murphy writes that “each of us down deep knows we are ignoring, avoiding, or at most ineffectually touching the real issues and problems” (87). The root of the abomination springs from “our blighted history of slavery, segregation, and employment discrimination; we ought to . . . try to do something about” this reality (95). And that reality is intensifying: “between 1983 and 1996 the number of children in child welfare systems has just about doubled” (106). The book provides only description, however; it lacks analysis. It never touches the basic socioeconomic reality creating the horrors described.

Of course, as the author quotes a Harvard professor, required are “loving parents able to raise children in a nurturing environment” (161). And how is that environment to be achieved? No answer can be found in this book. The problems cry out for socially induced remedy, never hinted at here. We are thankful for the authoritative description, but in addition, remedial action on a nationwide scale is needed. To bring that about requires an effective, massive *radical* power. With that power, if organized and determined, the horrors depicted in *Wasted* could be overcome.

As a footnote, see the brief article “No Place Like Home” by Eric Brosch in the April 1998 *Harper's*, in which are described the brutal policies adopted by Orlando, Florida, in tormenting and criminalizing its impoverished. An ACLU suit has forced Miami to stop arresting the homeless for publicly conducting “life-sustaining” activities—such as sleeping and eating—unless the city provides shelter!

“Free World” indeed!

On Nathan Glazer and multiculturalism

For some decades Nathan Glazer, a sociology professor at Harvard, has been an influential spokesman for a so-called moderate approach in dealing with social problems. His consequence is certified not only by this prestigious academic position, but also by his collaboration in the authorship of books, and his

service on significant government commissions. Glazer was coauthor, with David Riesman and Reuel Denney, of the influential *Lonely Crowd* (1950), and with Daniel P. Moynihan (now a U.S. senator) of *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1970). Influential in its day was his critique of affirmative action as unnecessary and even harmful, since racism was of declining significance and, he projected, on its way to total elimination.

It happens that I debated Glazer in the 1970s on affirmative action at Temple University in Philadelphia. There I emphasized the momentous reality of racism in the United States and insisted that a *strengthened* commitment to affirmative action was desperately needed in view of existing intolerable injustices. Glazer took an opposite position on every point—a position summed up in the title of his book *Affirmative Discrimination* (1976). I recall vividly that, at the conclusion of this debate, an elderly African American woman came to the speakers' platform, briefly complimented me, and then turned quite aggressively upon Glazer, telling him he was wrong and that he was serving, in effect, as an apologist for intolerable conditions.

Whether Glazer recalls this encounter or not, it must be said that now—after more than twenty years—he admits error and laments the persistence of awful conditions for most African Americans. Alas, however, in admitting past error, he compounds present failure by, in effect, seeing the persistence of racism as intractable. He calls his latest book *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997; cloth \$19.95), but on the matter of African American oppression he urges only some form of admittedly inadequate melioration. What a sad ending and what a commentary on the impotence of the Glazer-Moynihan strategy of camouflage!

Analytically, his present book is as weak as was his past policy. He attempts an analysis of racist historiography without mentioning Du Bois, Herskovits, Klineberg, Weltfish, or even the NAACP! Of course his area is sociology, but he undertakes to pronounce on what Blacks “have always wanted,” which, he writes, was “integration into American life” (137). He has no comprehension of what the struggle against racism sought and

seeks. This is not “integration,” in a passive sense, but rather *alteration* of a racist society—that is, the ending of discrimination. The African American struggle seeks to *purify* the existing order, not simply to *join* it. By eliminating racist practice, the struggle aims to *basically change* the society. That was and is the goal.

The African American liberation movement, from the days of slavery to the present, has been one to free themselves and thus to *transform* the U.S. social order. Not to join, but rather, in joining to transform. Thirty million African American becoming part of the U.S. social order as fully liberated means a social order that is egalitarian—that is, *transformed*.

Glazer’s analysis is reinforced by his absurd reading of U.S. history. He writes without irony of “our democratic and open society” (59) and insists that “consensus and harmony have played a larger role in U.S. history than conflict and dissent” (61). One understands that Glazer’s professorship is not in history, although he writes of it with supreme confidence.

History *is* basically a study of conflict; that is its dynamic, its main content. That is what our beginning as a nation (our revolution) is about; that is what Jefferson versus Hamilton means; that is what the so-called Missouri Compromise fails to compromise; that is what the history of slavery is; that is the nature of the Civil War, the heart of Reconstruction and its destruction; that is the point of Populism, of Haymarket, of Debs, of the enfranchisement of women. It is what made Roosevelt’s New Deal new; it is the glory of the Lincoln Battalion; of the defeat of Japanese imperialism and of Hitlerism. This is the heart of the present continuing struggle to cleanse the United States of racism.

Glazer thinks that in the United States “a substantial measure of justice already exists” (48). With that view Glazer’s tenure at Harvard has been and is secure. But it is a view that is as false of our present as of our past. He adds that “the sphere of justice is constantly expanding.” But what measure of justice exists has been achieved by struggle against dominating forces and it will be expanded only through that struggle.

Glazer closes his volume with this: “When it comes to the divisions of blacks and others, they reflect a hard reality that none

of us wants, that all of us want to see disappear, but that none of us knows how to overcome” (161).

This is absurd mysticism. Racism has existed because rulers of this society have promulgated it to help them rule and to intensify exploitation. The effort to eliminate racism is part of an effort to fundamentally alter the present system. This does not mean a resort to mysticism; it requires basic commitment to an egalitarian, a just social order.

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Book Reviews

Marxism in Its Founders' Time and Ours: A Review Essay

Howard L. Parsons

Marxism: A Living Science. By Kenneth Neill Cameron. New York: International Publishers, 1993, 245 pages, paper \$9.95.

How can we create a world free of inequality, poverty, sexism, racism, pollution, violence, and war—a world of peace, prosperity, and justice for all? The author of this book has proposed a path, a method of thought and practice, to answer these questions. It is the path and method first laid down by Marx and Engels for the 1840s onward. But while these same social troubles then prevailed under the system of a nascent industrial capitalism, since then the sufferings and inequities have become greatly aggravated and our knowledge of nature and society has vastly increased. So the author has undertaken to expound, evaluate, revise, and update the Marxist description and to prescribe what is to be done now. As he clearly elaborates the basic notions and argument of that system, Cameron spells out its inadequacies and offers his own corrections and additions.

To this task he has brought the skills of a distinguished scholar in the field of Romantic English literature, particularly the writings of Shelley. Here, as a natural sequel to his first book, *The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical* (1973 [1950]), he

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endeavors to show that the genesis of Marx and Engels was a lively radical community in London—Chartists and Owenites of considerable strength, all of whom admired and adored the revolutionary Shelley. The two young men were also in touch with militant trade unionists, reformers, and agitators like William Cobbett.

It was a time and place for widespread revolutionary upheaval. On the continent, the hurricane of the French Revolution had passed, leaving in its wake the Metternich reaction and the ongoing class struggle between the old feudal classes and the new bourgeoisie. But England had accomplished in the seventeenth century its own bourgeois revolution against feudal absolutism; the hereditary landed gentry and the powerful merchants had wrested control of parliament from the king, and the Protestants had won their freedom. The economy was already well advanced into the Industrial Revolution, and England offered geographical haven and a measure of civil freedom for the two young radicals. Had they remained on the continent, they would probably have wasted their energies in weaker workers' movements and longer jail sentences.

A major merit of Cameron's book is his picture of Marx and Engels living and working in this urban setting of crowded and filthy slums; factory smokestacks; the "dark Satanic mills" with a twelve-hour day for men, women, and children (more than one-half of working-class children died before age five); and the struggles of workers, led by Chartists, for unions, the vote, and the socialism of Robert Owen. The grand theory of Marx and Engels of social change and a workers' revolution in the making under the boot of capitalist exploitation no doubt burgeoned in the soil of their personal contacts in the springtime of budding ideas and hopes.

But in drawing this picture, Cameron passes over the French Revolution and the radical philosophical ideas within and derivative from it—ideas that were the original genetic materials of the newborn revolutionists. Cameron is partial to demonstrating the intimate bond between Marx's theory and British working-class practice: "Marx could not have formulated the basic tenets of Marxism without Engels conveying to him the experiences and

views of the British proletariat” (13). Indeed, “the basic roots of Marxism lay—and had to lie—in the British proletariat” (198, n. 9). True, historians and philosophers have concentrated on the continental philosophical roots of Marxist thought, and some have neglected practical social influences.

Cameron is not quite accurate about the facts, however. In 1843 and 1844 in Paris, Marx had first got the idea of the proletariat in history; there he became friends with radicalized workers and through the writing of Lorenz von Stein discovered Babeuf’s Conspiracy of the Equals, with its appeal to the poor working class against the rich. Marx lived in Paris almost a year before he talked with Engels about the latter’s 1844 study of the working class in England.

Cameron declares that the roots of this thought, like any system of thought, were “primarily social”—not “cultural (e.g., Hegel)” (1). But Marx’s social influences had essentially formed him before he emigrated to England. Important elements in those influences were the works of English economists and German philosophers like Hegel, whom Cameron faults for “mysticism and abstractionism” (146). Hegel had elaborated the principle of *dialectic*—the idea that every thing and event in the world is a process, created, changed, destroyed, and transformed into a new creation by interaction with opposite processes. It is in continuous interchange, ever separated from other processes and ever united with them. Hegel viewed this whole world process as the spiritual activity of God, leading the world on to eventual fulfillment. But Marx and Engels, close students of Hegel’s work, saw that the dialectical process is an actual, material, historical movement working through the conflict of economic classes and defining the rise and fall of social systems. Locked in mortal combat on the battleground of the economy, classes contend for survival and dominance. Thus Marx and Engels understood that in their day the source of all true and useful social theory must be the lives and struggles of workers and their families; the “roots” of effective theory must be such practice. But we must add that all scientific theory has intellectual roots as well. Marx and Engels were well aware of their own rootage in, and indebtedness to, a long intellectual history.

Cameron minimizes Hegel's influence on Marx and Engels in favor of an Anglicized portrait of them. Yet if Hegel's dialectical method was of such slight moment in the foundation of their philosophy, why not conclude that socialism (the Chartist version) on its own, quite apart from Marx and Engels, would have carried forward the torch of the socialist revolution through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Yet arguing that a vital condition for the development of Marxist socialism was the conscious organization and struggle of the British workers, he forgets Lenin's key observation that "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." Marx and Engels formulated the foundations of that theory. It is this theory that, elaborated in various ways, for better or for worse, has shaped the thinking and practice of virtually all revolutionists and socialists for more than a century. Such thinking in fact became the task of Lenin and others in a predominantly feudal Russia, concluding with the necessity for a worker-peasant alliance. Cameron accepts this theory and offers his own revision of it. What then does his revision add to this growing body of theory?

1) Cameron simplifies history, the interpretation of which, he believes, Marx and Engels had mistakenly complicated. Instead of a succession of stages with gradual and then sharp transitions—savagery (hunting and gathering), barbarism (agriculture), slave civilization, feudalism, capitalism—history has been a single continuous process. The exploitation of the many poor by the few rich began with the transition from later farming society to feudalism (the exploitation of a mass of peasants by a powerful landowning class). By the time the first civilizations emerged in Sumer and Egypt, the system of feudalism was well developed: whatever the system of production (agricultural, manufacturing, industrial) or exchange, the owning class extracts from the producers a "surplus" of what they produce, and the system of this appropriation does not change until new productive forces (axe, hammer, spinning wheel, loom, steam engine, etc.) are introduced to force the social relations of the two classes to give way and change. Essentially, says Cameron, only two major economic systems have existed in prehistory and history—feudalism and capitalism. Commercial capitalism and then industrial capitalism did not seriously threaten feudalism until modern times.

2) At the same time, Cameron observes that the main conflict between the owning class and the working class, taken alone, is not adequate to explain how society works. Courting, sexual reproduction, family life, child care, male and female social groups, ceremonies surrounding death and grieving, and aesthetic sense and expression are in their “essence” universal, independent of economic factors, anchored in the biology of reproduction (33, 151), and (we add) in the necessity of social reproduction. Furthermore, in a class society like ours, social decisions are made not by any one leader or circle but by many people in a thick texture of interweaving strands, a “network” of economic, social, cultural, educational, religious, journalistic, and other interest groups, each with its particular view of the issues, but all subordinate to the authority and ruling interests of the big bourgeois groups throughout the society. In arriving at a decision, which is both conscious and unconscious, these groups must “delude” the working class to believe that the decision is in its own interest. Thus the ideology of a given society does not simply reflect the interests of the ruling class; it is a “vortex,” a “mixture of class elements”—some old, some new, some conservative, some liberal, some radical (139). We have seen this recently in the United States in the struggle over a national health-care system. Beneath the complexity of competing forces, all classes (including the working class when it is deluded) acquiesce in the premises of the capitalist system and follow the bourgeois party line.

3) If in the Marxist view ideas and ideological forms—legal, political, religious, aesthetic, philosophical, educational—are determined by the material economic base, are dependent on it, and “reflect” it, in what sense are these forms free to detach themselves from it, to understand that determination, to act back on it, and to change it? Marx and Engels believed that thought can achieve a degree of freedom, but did not work out the idea. Cameron points out that, as Marx and Engels said, these ideological forms “correspond” to the antagonisms between classes already existing in society, and so, conscious or not, forms of thought are already engaged in ideological struggle. They held that ideas and other parts of the “superstructure” interact with the

socioeconomic “base” and act as semiautonomous forces within the social process. Thus the role of the liberal ideologist (intellectual) is to mediate class conflict and to “counsel the bourgeoisie on the degree of concession needed to survive” (139). Of course conservative and reactionary intellectuals give different counsel. The fact that ideas vary within classes suggests that ideas are not rigidly bound to their external causes and circumstances.

Moreover, thoughts and action tendencies are formed by internal, biological forces. Evolutionary, innate dispositions—family affection, cooperation, etc.—are universally human and independent, to some degree, of class conditions. Just as family values cut across class lines, Cameron argues, so certain “emotional responses and general aesthetic frameworks” recur in works of art common to all generations regardless of time, place, or class (149). All lovers recognize themselves in *Romeo and Juliet*; all workers can identify with the revolt of Aeschylus’s Prometheus against despotic authority; all women can feel kinship with Lysistrata’s sexual rebellion (152). At the same time, Cameron abundantly illustrates the Marxist thesis that all art and philosophy reenact (usually unconsciously) in symbolic form the class antagonisms of their culture—from the author of the *Gilgamesh Epic* and Homer, Confucius and Buddha and Aristotle, Cicero and Lucretius, Dante and Lady Murasaki, through Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Balzac, to Shelley and “Marxist creative writers and other artists” like Neruda, O’Casey, Brecht, Shostakovich, and Sholokhov.

Cameron tries to answer with this approach those Marxists who have argued that the human being at birth is a virtual unreality, a blank tablet, and that therefore our thought and behavior are entirely determined by the social environment. (This view, as old as Duns Scotus and John Locke, was advanced by Rousseau and others of the Enlightenment who believed that by education and other social influences malleable human beings could be improved if not perfected.) Marx and Engels, and their associates and followers, share the optimism of this viewpoint, laying stress on both an objective process of historical progress and conscious economic and social guidance of that process. A

number of Soviet social engineers took the simplistic position that changing material conditions and institutions must be the first priority, and that personal subjective changes must be conformist and catechetical rather than individual and creative. But this was not the tenet of Marx, who in correcting the doctrine that “men are products of circumstances and upbringing” wrote in the *Theses on Feuerbach* that “it is men who change circumstances and . . . the educator must himself be educated” (1976, 7).

Further, Marxists generally have not recognized the innate structures that set limits to healthy individual development and militate against the emergence of a socialist society—for example, tendencies to subjective thought, egocentricity, social dominance, and social submission. In socialist societies, especially those with an authoritarian tradition, such tendencies when realized have proved obstructive to the development of egalitarian and democratic behavior.

4) Cameron holds that for Marxism to be a “living science,” it must be a seamless whole that does not dichotomize human beings from themselves as “body” and “mind,” or from non-human nature. The demand for such a unitary concept is twofold. The first demand is theoretical. All the knowledge yielded up by the physical and biological sciences in this century (in full form unknown to Marx and Engels) indicates that our human species, interdependent with the ecological environment, evolved from prehuman species that in turn evolved from prior life forms; and that the first life forms emerged in the evolution of the earth, the sun, and the physical universe itself. We are the descendants of star stuff. Each of us is a unique concatenation of various amounts of some twenty different kinds of atoms, the creature of billions of years of cosmic, terrestrial, and genetic evolution, swept along in a material, dialectical process. (“Material” means formed energy—actual, objective, independent of “mind”; “dialectical” means dynamic, oppositional, changing, interactive, creative, destructive.) Moreover, the human species is one stage in the evolutionary line of multicellular organisms with nerve cells whose electric messages govern sensory and motor action. In our brain twenty billion nerve cells are concentrated with “virtually infinite” connections (176).

The second demand for scientific understanding of nature and society is practical. Much religion still preaches a supernaturalism that flees our material and evolutionary nature, diverting believers from everyday struggle to understand and control their lives. Some contemporary sociobiologists, noting the genetic determination of certain human behavior and the similarities between animal and human societies, have taken a reactionary view of human beings. Cameron notes that in opposition, some Marxists have denied altogether the role of inheritance in human nature. He believes we share with our close evolutionary relatives like birds and apes many genetically determined patterns of action—cooperation, rejection of the alien, social hierarchy, territorial claims, ritual, gender differences, play, communicative signs, courtship, mating, song, and dance—and that social interaction brings out and modifies these dispositions (180–81).

Although Cameron contends the social is basic, he says nothing about how such interaction works, and he is inclined to accept uncritically the findings of the geneticists. We do not yet know the nature and strength of the genetic coding for behavior or the subtle interplay between genetically determined disposition and social factors. For example, “separation anxiety” appears in the infant six to eighteen months old—but how strong is it, and how much and what kind of care is needed to diminish or extinguish it? We know that in socialist societies with an authoritarian history the disposition to conform to hierarchy has emerged as a primary obstacle to the advance of democratic initiative and autonomy. While Marx thought that the human being has an “essence” (*Wesen*) or innate structure of dispositions, he and Marxists generally, along with liberals, have not adequately recognized the limits that this essence (reality, nature, character) imposes on the process of education and the need to deepen and improve education.

5) Cameron acknowledges Engels’s view that men exploit women in personal relations (wife-beating, rape, sodomy, incest, abuse, and “excessive child-bearing”) and in institutional relations (dowry, bride-price, prostitution, mass slavery, church terrorism—as in witch-hunting, abortion, venereal disease, “psychological destruction, and social ostracism”) (134, 132). But

he thinks that Engels, not having the worldwide historical data, was too narrow in his grasp of the problem of the exploitation of women; and that in saying *all* oppression of females is oppression by the male “we obscure the social causes of such oppression and can hamper the struggle against it” (134). The struggle calls for improvements both in personal relations in family and workplace and in the institutional framework of the economy, law, politics, the media, religion, etc.

Engels had concluded that group marriage prevailed in preclass societies and that some societies were matriarchal. Monogamy, he wrote, arose with the creation of private property owned by the individual male wanting to insure the inheritance of his wealth by *his* offspring and not a rival's. Cameron thinks modern anthropological research shows all this to be untrue. He paints a broader and more optimistic picture, arguing that in gathering and early farming societies, monogamy was the norm and “women had roughly equal economic and social status with men.” Women began to lose that power with “the rise of the male professional potter and weaver and the coming of war” waged by males in the battle for land (127). As he briefly sketches the history of prostitution, concubinage, and the constant pregnancy and grief of women over their infants' deaths and the loss of their men in war, Cameron records also the victories of women—their revolts and their achievements, and the “unprecedented historical advance” of women in the Russian Revolution (135) and progress that followed in East Europe, China, Cuba, and elsewhere.

How can we forget this? The lesson is that this great stride forward for women came not as an isolated reform in capitalist society, but as a struggle integrated into a march of the people toward the liberation of the whole of society. The temporary setback of socialism in some of these countries is not cause for moaning that the quest for equality was a total failure and thus unworthy of our effort. The gains in the face of the long-standing and endemic failures of capitalism are proof that socialism is the *only* cause worthy of that effort.

6) On this question Cameron agrees. He maintains that in their forecast of the course of history, Marx and Engels were correct: growing monopoly; wars between the great powers of capital that

would bring on revolution; the creation of socialist states uniting on a worldwide scale; and the dictatorship of the proletariat advancing through two phases—first, the socialist phase of distribution based on work performed “with considerable wage differential,” and second, the communist phase of distribution based on human need (107, 111, 110). He thinks that the USSR realized the first phase and that although it had only one political party of a “comparatively small membership,” it organized a successful revolution, won a civil war, built a large industrial economy on a planned basis, and “on the whole acted in the interests of the proletariat” (111–12).

Although Cameron overlooks or minimizes the grave internal obstacles, miscalculations, and crimes that accompanied this process of construction, his study has the value (unpopular today as for so long in past history) of putting on the historical scales of justice the genuine human and hard-won achievements of Soviet socialism: a “planned and balanced” economy; steady though slow economic development, eliminating crises, unemployment, and extremes of rich and poor; inexpensive housing for all; virtually free health care, social services, and education; women with full legal rights at work in the trades and professions; minor wage differences; no millionaires or paupers; state-owned productive facilities and collectivized agriculture; and production for necessities and not luxuries (110).

7) What about the failures of this strenuous and often agonizing incarnation of socialism, carried forward in the teeth of fierce and ongoing antagonism from enemies and obstacles inside and outside the country—physical devastation from an international war; civil war; intervention by foreign armies; subversion, propaganda, blockade; ostracism from the world community; the Western refusal of collective security against fascism; the Nazi invasion and mass destruction of farms, factories, cities, and people; the Cold War; the budget-crushing arms race; and the escalating threat of nuclear exchange, of genocide, and of omnicide? What ought to astound us is that the people of this nation survived and did as well as they did under the pounding and punishment of this seventy-year ordeal.

But Cameron does not fully address the pressing issues and questions. He mentions only briefly the purges of the late 1930s, explaining that they “were called forth by massive antisocialist sabotage.” He argues that Joseph E. Davies, the U.S. ambassador, “believed that most or all of the accused leaders were guilty,” and that “Stalin in the following years had overwhelming popular support” (112). On the extent and duration of the arbitrary detentions and executions under the Stalinist cult of personality, Cameron has no comment. However, to affirm the existence of many constructive achievements and “the great conspiracy” to destroy this system does not logically require that we deny mass suppression, obedience, surveillance, and murder. Most societies throughout history have been tangled textures of good and evil. History has been not only the history of class struggles; it has been the history of the struggle of justice against injustice between classes and within classes.

8) Why did the Soviet Union and eastern European socialist economies collapse? The “most serious deficiency” Cameron regards as “slackness and absenteeism” in labor productivity (112). But *why* were people slack workers? During the building of the industrial and agricultural base in the 1920s and 1930s, the years of the Great Patriotic War, and postwar reconstruction, masses of people devoted to the socialist system of their Motherland labored until near exhaustion.

Then, in the postwar era, after the death of Stalin in 1953 and the reforms of Khrushchev (1958–1964), the generation born during and after the war matured without the commanding loyalty to socialism, and to the nation, the party, and its leaders that had propelled their parents and grandparents to so many deeds of heroism and sacrifice. The members of that generation belonged to a new, large, and rapidly growing urban labor force, workers of diversified abilities who, in comparison with the prewar peasants and first-generation workers, were more inclined to think for themselves, having both the education, the leisure, and the urban culture that stirred them to do so. Yet this new freedom, generated on a mass scale by industrialization and urbanization, conflicted with the benefits and restrictions of the social system.

The persons of this new generation were the heirs and beneficiaries of a system of production and distribution that the older generations had created, defended, and preserved, outlasting the hardships of poverty, the rigors of a totalitarian order, the desolation of war, and the arduous trials of reconstruction. For the young, society now provided education and a job for everyone, and guaranteed all the necessities of life from conception to the grave. Educated and productively employed individuals, while free to think and evaluate their world, could not easily express their independent views in a public way; they found an outlet in “kitchen talk.” Integrated into the social system, they took for granted their productive work and their consumption; and they took them as separate and unrelated. Secure within a centrally planned and administered economy, they ceased to connect the skill and discipline of hard, effective work to their wages and to the goods and services they could buy. In fact, the “social fund,” hidden from view, would pay for one-third or more of their necessities.

Other factors contributed to this sense of social security and psychological caution. First, under the impartial system of “levelling” of labor and the maintaining of only “minor” wage differences, the system itself did not organically reward good work with increased pay. It did not say in practice, “From each according to one’s abilities, to each according to work performed.” Second, parents and grandparents, doting on their offspring, were determined that the children would not suffer as they had suffered and would better themselves materially and culturally. The young generation therefore grew to expect more from society. Third, at the same time, during the Brezhnev prosperity (1964–1982), their taste of the fruits of an improved consumer economy seemed to promise the fulfillment of their expectations, thus raising the level of consumer demand. The consumer revolution racing through the capitalist world reinforced these expectations; news of it reached them through the new global media of print, radio, cinema, and television. Cameron is correct in observing that Khrushchev and Gorbachev had attempted to appease this demand. But he does not assess the effects of the new consumer mentality on labor productivity. (Of

course, poor planning, technological lag, bureaucratic inefficiency, military spending, and other forces slowed productivity.) Whereas in recent decades of U.S. capitalism, the “affluent society,” the creation and manipulation of consumer wants and the profits therefrom have driven production (reversing the traditional relation), in the USSR production simply did not keep pace with consumer demand. The result was growing discontent and “slackness and absenteeism,” compounding the demand and the discontent.

The Brezhnev administration, riddled by a black market and bureaucratic corruption, did not stem the consumer demand. In fact, by its collusion in graft, crime, greed, and payoffs, it helped to poison the ideals of some of the most faithful and to produce what Vladimir Pozner has called a generation of cynics and skeptics. In an odd way, Cameron agrees with Pozner on the power of Stalin, who for most Soviet citizens was the exemplar of socialist discipline, the personification of the people’s heroic labors and achievements. “When Stalin left, so did the will of iron that held the country together,” writes Pozner in *Parting with Illusions* (1990). Terror and ideals were the cement of this bond. Cameron claims that “the USSR under Brezhnev was fundamentally a socialist society” (215). But at that time the spirit of cooperation and its idealism were fast weakening under the infection of a selfish cynicism toward social controls and individual responsibility.

For a time the policy of *perestroika* rallied the people, arousing fresh energy and hope. But lacking central organization and direction, it faltered and lost momentum; and after the 1991 attempted coup to replace Gorbachev and to restore the party bureaucracy, the Yeltsin coalition of the old privileged elite—managers, professionals, administrators, technicians, intellectuals, and military cadres—seized power, bearing aloft the borrowed and soiled banners of their Western backers: “private property,” “free market,” and “democracy.” But “shock therapy,” the Western prescription for their ills, has proved disastrous.

Searching for the cause of collapse in the class nature of socialist society in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and for “class struggle,” Cameron indicts the defection of the large “professional” class who, while needed to run a complex economy and

its social services, followed Khrushchev's lead and began to "invade" and undermine the proletarian power. Khrushchev gave new freedom to the cultivators of private agricultural plots, dismantled part of the central economic system provided incentive for individual plant production and profit, and encouraged a cultural "thaw." Gorbachev then expanded Khrushchev's policies, openly opting for "individual-firm-profits" and "a capitalist market" to replace socialist planning, as he enjoyed the support of a "powerful professional class" and "U.S. and other imperialist powers" (11, 214–15).

What is not made clear is the extent to which Gorbachev intended to maintain overall social, democratic regulation of the economy and major social "guarantees" for individuals—health care, education, job training, employment, pensions, etc. Nor does Cameron discuss any of the positive and negative results of *glasnost*. Yet it is true that because of Gorbachev's lack of a clear and practical plan, the opposition within the *nomenklatura*, his weak political base, his vacillation, and the years of erosion of independent, creative thought among so many who clung to the old ways, he became a premature reformer. He did not marshal the forces to maintain a middle course, steady and progressive, toward a more productive and democratized socialism, avoiding both the slippery slope toward market disorder (the present situation) and a return to the rigid central control (the object of the coup plotters). Meanwhile, his deal with the West for nuclear disarmament would destabilize a highly militarized economy already in trouble.

Cameron says that Gorbachev's charge of "stagnation" during the Brezhnev regime was not true, although he admits that by 1979 a "decline" had set in because of the arms race with U.S. imperialism and the war in Afghanistan (215). He does not deal with the slow decline in morale among the Soviet people, a psychological crisis that over the postwar decades was dividing the populace between the die-hard loyalists and the doubters—between those who held their clear and firm view of a socialist future in spite of the failures before their eyes, and a growing mass of people, particularly among the young, who, confused and apathetic, had lost or were losing their belief in the future and

their zest for working selflessly for it. In his writings Gorbachev displayed a grasp of this psychological crisis, but his campaign to correct it was too little and too late. In the PBS “Conversations with Gorbachev,” conducted by Stephen Cohen, Gorbachev acknowledged that he did not involve officials in the reform, contending that “ambitious elites” and the “military-industrial complex” resisted the attempt to remove their power and privilege. Cameron does not seem to think there were any such problems. But setting aside all the Western falsifications about Soviet life for so many years, anyone who travelled to the USSR in recent years and talked to people could not fail to note a decline in morale. And given his emphasis on the power of the professional class over the working class, one must ask *why* the working class—a numerically dominant class holding 42.5 percent of the seats in the Supreme Soviet (214)—did not raise a greater objection to the bourgeois direction of the state.

9) Cameron’s *Marxism: A Living Science* was sent to press in 1993, and is the second edition of a book published in 1985, *Marxism, the Science of Society*. Presumably in the new book the author has brought all the changes in his thinking up to date. Two short Appendices have been added to the first edition: one, on the “upheaval” in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries, in which the author reiterates his thesis that a primary cause of this upheaval was the class struggle between the working class and the professional class led by Khrushchev and Gorbachev and supported by U.S. imperialism; and a second on the global ecological crisis.

In a concluding chapter, “Nature and Society,” Cameron reviews the claim of materialism for the unity of all forms of matter and energy, from elementary particles and atoms through life forms (among them, the human species) to “mind.” Tracing the history of imperialism from its beginning in early Greek thought, he shows how Marx and Engels, grounded in this tradition as it was developed by the French materialists of the eighteenth century (Diderot, Holbach), advanced to *dialectical* materialism. The philosophical and religious claims for *mind*, *spirit*, and *God* separate from this material-energetic process are illusions. While Cameron assembles and organizes many data from the sciences,

some of his interpretations of the data are not firmly warranted by the evidence and are still matters of dispute among scientists: his view that “neurological differences in human male and female brain structures” along with hormones “might explain psychological and mental differences between the sexes”; his view that the neurons of the brain, stimulated by other forms of energy, produce electrons that in turn produce “psychological reactions,” which are “nonconscious” in fish and birds but “conscious” in apes and human beings (he does not define *self*-consciousness); and his view that “we are almost certainly alone in the universe” (186, 177–78, 193). See Carl Sagan’s book *Pale Blue Dot* (1994), for another view of our status in space.

The vital and practical point of “Nature and Society” is our human interdependence with the rest of nature in our solar-planetary system. Cameron forcefully highlights the alarming increase of global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer, a sheath in the stratosphere protecting the earth against ultraviolet radiation. Such radiation causes skin cancer and the destruction of grain crops and the marine food chain of plankton-krill-whales. The former is caused by the human production of carbon dioxide, methane, and other gases (from the burning of fossil fuels and world forest destruction); the latter, by the chlorofluorocarbons from spray cans, foam products, solvents, refrigerators, and auto air conditioners. Since “the animating core of global destruction lies in the major corporate-capitalist powers,” the main task is “mass pressure on the corporate polluters” (225, 228). They must be compelled to adopt nonpolluting forms of energy like solar and wind power.

Except to mention “capitalist influences,” Cameron does not discuss why pollution was so extensive in socialist states (225). Pollution is a problem for all industrial systems. But he is correct to say that capitalism is incapable of fully replacing “the fossil-fuel-based corporate structure.” Within capitalism, he argues, we must press the point that a new energy base will create millions of new jobs, empower labor, and so build a base for progressing into socialism.

Cameron’s work is rich in ideas and in the exploration of how they can and do work out in social practice. As a bold attempt to

integrate new knowledge into the philosophy of Marxism, his thought raises fundamental issues of both theory and practice. A careful study of this work will repay the reader with a fresh perspective on the problems of our world and the contributions that a reexamined and reconstructed Marxism can bring to the project of understanding and changing it.

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ABSTRACTS

José Brendan Macdonald, “Reflections on Mammonism”—

Mammonism is the attitude and behavior affirming that the access to superfluous material goods is the supreme social manifestation of human achievement. The first one to consider it, although using another term, was Aristotle. The penchant for mammonism is as old as humanity. Its materialization, although not so old, dates from the dissolution of primitive society and the birth of civilization (cities, social stratification, the state, etc.). It always elicits discord and hence censorship of itself. It is closely related to the realm of sacred things, and the phenomenon of sacrifice is one of its values and consequences. The author goes into the relationship between mammonism and Marx’s theory of the fetishism of the commodity. Finally, since mammonism is entrenched in all historical periods in various degrees, one must consider its possible implication for the future.

Ernest D. Green, “Racial Images in Dutch Art, 1500–1900”—

This study explores racial images of blacks in Dutch art in relation to changes in the economic mode of production in Western Europe between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. It examines the changing delineation of blacks in four works of art, executed under a different modes of production, and assesses the meaning of these changes in relation to the dominant class. The depiction of blacks is dependent upon their use in economic production. Positive or neutral images of blacks prior to the slave trade (or under a feudal mode of production) turned to negative portrayals under a colonial/slave mode of production. Following the abolition of slavery and a move toward a wage-labor system of production (or under an industrial capitalist mode of production), racial images of blacks became more positive again.

Luis Fernandes, “Globalization and an Update on the National Question”—The new international relationships that are being associated with the concept of globalization are being

used by the imperialist powers to force the developing countries to dismantle the protective instruments necessary to defend their sovereignty. The term *globalization* is used to propagate the myth that “global capital” is detached from its state of origin. The author notes that accepting this myth, many on the left accede to the neoliberal demands for unfettering transnational activities from national constraints as historical necessity. Fernandes argues that the current global expansion is not a new stage of capitalist development, but is a continuation of the process of imperialist expansion already analyzed by Lenin. With the emergence of the United States as the principal political, economic, and military force, it is necessary to insert the national question into the program of resisting the neoliberal offensive.

Tetsuzo Fuwa, “Letter from Japanese Communist Party to Leaders of Countries Possessing Nuclear Weapons”—In the wake of the nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan, the head of the Japanese Communist Party calls upon the leaders of countries possessing nuclear weapons to take all necessary measures to eliminate nuclear weapons and prevent nuclear war.

From the Program of the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, 20 April 1997, “Socialism in the Soviet Union: Lessons and Perspectives”—The Congress program discusses the economic and political factors that led to the collapse of socialism in the USSR. It attributes the collapse to the emergence of two tendencies within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)—proletarian and petty bourgeois, democratic and bureaucratic. The top layer of the CPSU increasingly detached itself from the millions of Communists and working people. In this situation the attempts to redirect the economy and to democratize state and public life that were begun in 1983 could not succeed. Finally, the treachery of Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and others around them led to the destruction of the CPSU and the Soviet Union. The program then outlines strategies for the restoration of socialist development in Russia.

ABREGES

José Brandon Macdonald, « Des réflexions sur le mammonisme »—L'auteur examine l'attitude et le comportement de celui qui croit que l'accès aux biens matériels superflus est la manifestation sociale suprême de l'accomplissement humain. Bien qu'en d'autres termes, Aristote fut le premier à considérer cette religion pour laquelle le penchant est aussi ancien que l'humanité. Sa matérialisation, bien que pas très ancienne, date de la dissolution de la société primitive et la naissance de la civilisation (les villes, la stratification sociale, l'état, etc.). Elle arrache toujours la discorde et donc la censure d'elle-même. Elle se lie étroitement au domaine du sacré, et le phénomène du sacrifice se trouve parmi ses valeurs et conséquences. L'auteur examine les rapports entre le mammonisme et la théorie de Marx sur le fétichisme du matériel. En conséquence, puisque cette croyance s'implante dans toutes les époques historiques à divers degrés, on doit considérer son implication possible pour l'avenir.

Ernest D. Green, « Les images raciales dans l'art hollandais de 1500-1900 »—Cette étude examine les images raciales des Noirs dans l'art hollandais par rapport aux changements dans le mode économique de production en Europe de l'Ouest entre le seizième et le vingtième siècle. Elle examine l'évolution de la représentation des Noirs dans quatre œuvres d'art (chacune est réalisée sous un mode de production différent), puis elle évalue la signification des changements de ladite représentation par rapport à la classe dirigeante. La façon de représenter les Noirs dépend de leur fonction dans la production économique. Des représentations neutres ou positives des Noirs, antérieures à la « Traite » (ou sous un mode féodal de production), deviennent des portraits négatifs sous un mode de production esclavagiste/colonialiste. Après l'abolition de l'esclavage et une mutation vers un système de production basé sur les salariés, les images raciales des Noirs redeviennent à nouveau positives.

Luis Fernandes, « La mondialisation et une réactualisation de la question nationale »—Aujourd'hui les nouveaux rapports internationaux—associés au concept de la mondialisation—permettent aux pouvoirs impérialistes de forcer les pays en voie

de développement à démanteler leurs mesures de protection qui sont nécessaires à la défense de leur souveraineté. Le terme « mondialisation » sert à répandre le mythe suivant : les capitaux mondiaux transcendent les frontières. L'auteur souligne qu'en acceptant ce mythe, beaucoup de personnes de gauche admettent que les exigences néolibérales, qui impliquent que les transactions internationales passent outre les contraintes nationales, soient considérées comme une nécessité historique. Fernandes affirme que l'expansion mondiale actuelle n'est pas une nouvelle étape du développement capitaliste mais est une continuation du processus d'expansion impérialiste qui a été brillamment analysé par Lénine. Dans la mesure où les Etats-Unis se distinguent comme la principale force politique, militaire et économique, il est nécessaire d'insérer la notion de nation dans l'offensive néolibérale.

Tetsuzo Fuwa, « Lettre du parti communiste japonais aux dirigeants des pays possédant des armes nucléaires » – Suite aux essais nucléaires en Inde et au Pakistan, le Parti communiste japonais demande aux dirigeants des pays qui possèdent des armes nucléaires de prendre toutes les mesures indispensables pour éliminer ces armes et empêcher une guerre nucléaire.

Tiré du Programme du Quatrième Congrès du Parti Communiste de la Fédération de Russie du 20 avril 1997, « Le Socialisme en Union Soviétique : Leçons et Perspectives » – Le programme du congrès débat des facteurs économiques et politiques qui ont abouti à l'effondrement du socialisme en Union Soviétique. Il attribue cet effondrement à l'émergence de deux tendances au sein du Parti communiste de l'Union Soviétique (PCUS) : prolétaires et petits bourgeois, démocrates et bureaucrates. La strate dirigeante du PCUS s'est progressivement détachée des millions de communistes et de travailleurs. Dans un tel contexte, les tentatives qui visaient à réorienter l'économie et démocratiser les secteurs public et privé, commencées en 1983, ne pouvaient qu'échouer. Ainsi, les trahisons de Gorbatchov et Eltsine puis celles d'autres membres de leur entourage, ont engendré la destruction du PCUS et de l'Union Soviétique. Le programme souligne ensuite les stratégies pour la restauration du développement socialiste en Russie.