

24. Goran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and the uncaptured peasant, and No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective*, Heineman 1980 and 1983. For a critique see Nelson Kasfir, "The notion of an autonomous African peasantry", *Mawazo*, Vol. 5, No. 3, June 1984.
25. See Noam Chomsky, *Language and responsibility*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1977. There is a very important chapter in this book on the relationship between language and politics.
26. In the period 1977–1982 there were lively debates within the University of differing aspects of political economy and courses were being taught in the Department of Government and the Nairobi Institute of Development Studies. However, since 1980 the University has been one of the principal areas of opposition to the imperialist domination leading to constant confrontations with the police and University staff and students. For a chronology of the clashes, see *Weekly Review*, Feb. 15th, 1985, pp. 12–13.
27. For the past three years the course structure and content of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration in Dar es Salaam has been under review. The new emphasis has been on the areas of Public Administration and International Relations. Courses on Political Economy are so unimportant that of the more than 10 members of staff presently on staff development programmes overseas there is not one candidate specializing in Political Economy. A brief history of the priorities of the department up to 1980 is given in "A note on the development of the Political Science Department 1964–1980", *TAAMULI*, Vol. 10, No. 1, August 1980.

W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London, Bogle Onverture, 1972.

## Book Reviews

Communist Working Group: *Unequal Exchange and the Prospects of Socialism*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Manifest Press, 1986. 225 pp., notes, bibliography.

This is a timely book in many ways. For over a decade now, imperialism has dealt fatal blows to some of the promising struggles for socialism in oppressed nations. Chile comes to mind; so do Grenada and, to some extent, Mozambique. In the imperialist countries themselves, the elections and re-elections of ultra-conservatives like Thatcher, Reagan, Nakasone, Kohl, Mulroney and Chirac indicate that the prospects for socialism, for now, are not too bright. To be sure, the post-Vietnam period has seen impressive national liberation struggles and social revolutions (Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua being among the most prominent), but this has also been a period of profound difficulties for socialism globally, as imperialism has re-doubled its efforts to recover lost ground.

This situation raises several important questions: Why has the revolution not occurred in the imperialist countries? What are the chances of it occurring? What are the prospects for socialism in the oppressed countries in the face of mounting imperialist aggression and counter-revolution? What social forces remain revolutionary and can be expected to struggle for socialism? These questions require serious attention, if only for revolutionaries to learn the proper lessons from past experiences and prepare for the continuing gathering waves of social emancipation globally.

This book is devoted to these issues. It is made up of six chapters prefaced by Arghiri Emmanuel, whose controversial theory of unequal exchange (first propounded in the 1970s) is used as the theoretical starting-point. The first chapter explains a number of basic Marxist concepts and categories: the dialectics of theory and practice, dialectical materialism, base and superstructure, etc. It also provides statistics (not new) to show what we already know: that the "population of the world is divided into rich and poor". The second chapter describes the historical background of unequal exchange, and the third chapter explains the essential aspects of the theory of unequal exchange by its reference to wage differentials between "rich and poor countries". The final chapters, the most original parts of the book, consider the prospects for socialism in both imperialist and oppressed countries, and what actions must be put on the political agenda of communists in imperialist countries.

The entire book is based on the argument that the imperialist countries exploit third world countries through unequal exchange, as illustrated in wage variation, consumption differentials and trade imbalances in the world market. On the basis of this premise, the authors argue the thesis that the proletariat in the imperialist countries is better off materially than the people of the poor nations. Not only that: this proletariat constitutes a labour aristocracy that actually shares in imperialist exploitation. It cannot, therefore, be revolutionary. Indeed, it has time and again betrayed the people of the poor nations in their anti-imperialist struggle. We are told that, in the imperialist countries,



... there are no classes today which are objectively interested in overthrowing the imperialist system, because all classes in these countries profit by this system (p. 197)

Also, since the proletariat in these countries have a stake in imperialist exploitation, there is really no basis for expecting it to struggle for socialism which implies anti-imperialism.

The situation in the poor countries is different, the authors argue. In these countries, genuine and effective anti-imperialist struggles are possible and do occur, for "anti-imperialist mass movements are only found where imperialism means exploitation and impoverishment" (p. 198). The national liberation struggle taking place in these countries constitute.

the greatest threat to the imperialist system today. They do their share towards creating crises in imperialism. These crises are of crucial importance, if a revolutionary situation ever is to arise in the rich part of the world (pp. 198-9).

In other words, the "prime movers" (indeed, the prospects) for socialism are rooted in the poor countries.

What is to be done? Communists in the imperialist countries must support (materially) the anti-imperialist movements and struggles in the exploited countries. That is where the future is. There is no other.

There are a number of obvious problems with the premise, thesis, and conclusions of the book. First, the division of the world into simply rich and poor nations is conceptually limiting. Since the authors claim to be Marxists (Marx, Engels and Lenin are quoted profusely), the least we can expect from them is class analysis. In Marxism, imperialism is first and foremost a class (not simply a national) phenomenon. It is class exploitation. And, therefore, to say that an imperialist country exploits a poor country and leave it at that is to gloss over class differentiations in the poor countries at least. Not all classes in the so-called poor countries have a stake in defeating imperialism. The comprador class, for example, survives and thrives as a result of imperialism. It is this failure to undertake class analysis that leads the authors to assume that all "national liberation" struggles are by definition anti-imperialist. The experience of Africa, at least, sharply contradicts this.

There is also the characterization of the proletariat in the imperialist countries. Even if we were to accept the contention that this class is wholly constituted by a labour aristocracy, the burning question remains: does this make them imperialist? Is a labour aristocratic class, objectively, an imperialist class? Does it have monopoly capital with which it exploits? Obviously not. 'The authors' answer to this is that class is 'bribed' to support imperialism. But always successfully? And if there is no class in the imperialist countries that has an interest in overthrowing imperialism, what do we make of the popular struggles in those countries in solidarity with the Vietnam people, the Nicaraguan revolution, South African liberation, etc.? What do we make of the ever-mounting working class struggles in those countries against capitalist exploitation?

In all the imperialist countries today, there is ever-increasing unemployment, homelessness, poverty, hunger, etc. What stake do those who suffer most from these (i.e the working class) have in imperialism? Related to this, of course, is the obvious

question: if there is no revolutionary class left in the imperialist countries, in what social class are the communists upon who the authors call to support the national liberation movements? These are only a few of the issues not considered.

The book is undoubtedly very well-written and the authors show a good grasp of very basic Marxist concepts. It also represents the first effort to draw the political implications of Emmanuel's theory of unequal exchange. Its thesis is likely to receive considerable attention and may even appeal to some Third World progressives, if for no other reason than the psychological satisfaction that will come with being perceived as the most revolutionary force in the world. Beyond this, it is not likely to have much social liberating influence for, in the final analysis, there is something fundamentally flawed in a revolutionary organization that bids farewell to the oppressed classes of its own country.

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