

September 25, 1962

Dear Friends:

PRESENCE AFRICAINE has asked me to write an article for them on African and American socialism. Naturally I do not know whether they will accept the article as I will write it, nor have I gotten written yet. But, because of the fact that sometimes rough notes is more stimulating than the "finished product", especially as aspects of it parallel some of our projects --both the pamphlet on 100 Years of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Young Marxist-Humanist Bulletin*-- I thought it may be a good idea if I submitted these rough notes to you:

AFRICAN AND AMERICAN SOCIALISM: WHY NOT A NEW INTERNATIONAL?

One thing African and American socialism share in common: the indigeneness of its roots are questioned by "all others."

The African Revolutions, having written the most exciting page in post-war world history, have given African socialism a great advantage over the American both in deed and in the recognition of its philosophy. ~~Some~~ Independence has made the views of African spokesmen for socialism "official." In capitalist America, on the other hand, Marxism is still treated as a "foreign doctrine."

My recent trip to west Africa was, in great part, motivated by a different question: what is African socialism? It is not that I was unacquainted with the writings of the African leaders-- Azikiwe, Nkrumah, Senghor, Touré have all written voluminously and ~~with~~ some of their aspirations, as well as writings, ~~which~~ were known to me long before their fame and their ~~vast~~ victory ~~has~~ reshaped the map of the world. It no doubt also helps, ~~and~~ after power has been gained, to establish an in-person relationship and hear views ~~which~~ elaborated then, but the main point for the visit ~~was~~ to see the country and the people, to get to know the thought of the man on the street, and in the bush, at this critical juncture of history. The point of affinity between African and American Marxist-Humanism is the present, not as it relates to the past, but the future--the world developments, the unfinished revolutions brought to a conclusion on an international scale.

*I saw some quite stimulating letters on that Bulletin from Eugene, which I assume are being circulated, and which I assume Eugene is developing further for inclusion in Bulletin. It is good to see the preoccupation with the Humanism of those Early Essays of Marx, as well as with the African, especially Gambian development presently. Birchism, however, is not related to the international development (except insofar as it is an outgrowth of the cold war and the inherent counter-revolution in it) but an internal, strictly American, strictly middle-class putrefaction of state-capitalism which has fastened upon the youth precisely because the American youth is the most revolutionary and least tradition-bound aspirants for a new world.

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The question mark over the relationship of African socialism to Marxism relates, not as it does in America, to the fact that it is hard to hear the voice of the second America over the atomic din of the established authorities, the State Administration, but rather out of the contradictory statements of the African socialists themselves. I do not mean that the voice of American socialism is one voice. Far from it. But the differences are shouted and emphasized and over-emphasized. In Africa, on the other hand, the contradictory statements are said with the same breath as affirmations of unity, Pan Africans all, though they have divided into two blocs--Monrovia and Cassablanca; into separate countries, and I do not mean independent and dependent, or even just old country, whether that be Senegal or Guinea, Nigeria or Ghana, not to mention within each country, even when as sharply divided as Azikiwe and the Nigerian Youth Congress. Nevertheless all insist they stand for Pan-African socialism. Unfortunately, all this only means that Pan-Africanism, far from illuminating what African socialism is, helps more to confuse friends than enemies.

Perhaps, some African leaders do believe that it is this "unity" which shock up both nuclear titans--United States and the USSR-- so that, instead of being poised to destroy the world, they are vying instead for influence over this new, third, uncommitted world.

But the ideology, the Freedom NOW, which elicited the elemental creativity of the masses that reshaped Africa, and thus the world, in less than a decade, will surely need ^{greater} content for the forward movement of humanity. Or so I felt as I daily met Africans who were concerned with new human relations, new world relations, a totally new human dimension. In the Gambia, for example, new world relations meant, not government to government, but people to people. The Young workers Movement asked me to speak on socialists the world over, specifying the freedom riders in the United States as well as the zengakuren in Japan, the Socialist Youth of Great Britain as well as the Nigerian Youth Congress. Here is a country, the last of the British colonies in West Africa, that was just in an election first to win self-government, that looked up to independent Africa and yet admitted that Pan-Africanism has become "an umbrella, a cover," for a contradictory variety of independence movements, and, they added, they hoped that just because they were the last to gain freedom, they would learn at once not to separate Black Africa from American and European and Russian and Oriental to make a world "on truly human beginnings."

President Senghor, who was kind enough to grant me an interview and arrange other meetings with both trades union leaders and those concerned with planning the economy, tried to play down the differences between the African blocs. "The difference is not serious. What is serious is the division between the US and the USSR,"

This is certainly true if one is concerned with the work power struggle. I was, however, concerned with relations among socialists as well as with world ramifications of the development in the theory of African socialism. I had been especially attracted to his singling out Humanism in the Marxian theory above the "economic aspects." His statement about the affinity of Russian

Communism and American capitalism was both true and hilarious.

"The program of the 22nd RCP is all frigidaires and TV." But the follow-up at that moment from economics as production relations to economics as "materialism" vs. the "spiritual" in "Negritude" ~~He pointed to a painting on his wall...*~~ This certainly was no answer were an evasion of the problem of crucial importance to the Senegalese masses--peasants as well as urban workers who hungered for a fundamental change in his conditions of life and labor which he had not yet witnessed, though now politically independent.

On the contrary, it only brought back to my mind that his speech, "African Socialism," so full of poetry, profundity, and destiny--"A nation that refuses...."

Nevertheless, when it came to the concrete, contained an attack on the French proletariat whose standard of living rose "only at the expense of the standard of living of the masses in Asia and Africa" which entailed an apology for De Gaulle France.

This, to me, is the tragedy of the African revolutions. So weighted down are its leaders by consciousness of the technological backwardness of the country, the need to industrialize it, that they turn for aid to the powers--that be instead of to the proletariat in those technologically advanced lands. Let me make it clear at once that I am not in the least opposed to accepting aid from whatever source, be that De Gaulle France or JFK's America. Western imperialism has plundered Africa for centuries, plundered it both of its natural resources as well as its manpower, and it is time some of this African wealth returned to the country of its origin. Nor do I think it is wrong to take aid from Khrushchev's Russia, whether or not, it too has ulterior imperialist motives.

This, however, is not the point at issue for socialists. The point at issue is the relationship, first of all, to one's own people, the very ones who made independence possible; secondly, to the underlying philosophy of freedom which is not to be degraded to a ~~flexible~~ changing tactic, dependent on the relationship of forces with the enemy, and, thirdly, to the world proletariat which is equally desirous as the ^{capitalistic} American, to put an end to the crises-ridden world that is presently hell bent for nuclear destruction.

It is true that, apparently, all there is in America is ~~this~~ the present atomic power. There are more reactionary laws on the books against the American worker than against the "foreign enemy." From the Taft-Hartley Law to the Smith and McCarran Acts anything that remotely resembles independent thought is classed as "subversive", and "unAmerican". One can be sure that in the present celebration around the 100th anniversary

**The dots and star refer to sections within in the letters on Africa or in the Afro-Asian pamphlet, ~~xxx~~ which, for ourselves, there is no point in quoting.

Thus we see that, while the old radicals, be they/Communist or Trotskyists*, continued their own sectarian, allegedly vanguardist ways, the masses of workers, especially Negroes, have continued along their own elemental, creative ways to "realize socialism" and "by their right instinct", as Marx put it in CAPITAL when he deals with the struggle for the shorter working day "arrived at the same conclusion as he.

Socialists,

Truly Marxism is not merely in books but in the/lives ^{daily} ~~and aspirations~~ of the people aspiring to freedom. 1956 brings about an entirely new era. Just as the Freedom fighters in Hungary ~~brought~~ the struggle against totalitarian tyranny with the "struggle ~~with~~ for Humanism, ~~xxxxxxx~~ and decentralized Workers Councils, so the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which began with one Rose Parks refusing to the back of the bus, developed into the self-activity of a whole people that fought not only against discrimination in travel but for a different method of travel altogether. (M&F) Verily Marx had written that the greatest act of the Paris Commune was "its own working existence."

coupled

Not only that. ~~It was promptly "copied"~~ It was promptly "copied" as far away from home base as Johannesburg, South Africa. In turn, the developing struggle for "Freedom NOW" from what was the Gold Coast and was to become the first of the new independent African Republic, Ghana, the Freedom Riders ~~came into~~ this time, white and Negro, came into the South to fill its jails --and then commemorate its struggle with a "Freedom NOW" button.

It is this exciting period, 1956-62, where the Negro struggles parallels both the Hungarian and African freedom fight, especially the latter.

Unfortunately, it is also here that a certain division arises where they cannot contact the African directly for, having gained power, the African comes as a guest of government or, at best, the university or the labor bureaucracy, and remains as far removed from the Negro worker as if he still remained on a different continent.

I brought this fact to the attention of Governor-General Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe when I interviewed him. He admitted its truth and the difficulties presented to the African nations in this respect even as he admitted ~~the differences~~ both differences between the African blocs and the fact that the theory of African socialism has "not been systematized. It should be but... stressing at the same its "classless" character..."

At the same time he redefined the Nigerian view: * The opposition NYC was, however, based on the fact that this "welfare state" showed very little welfare in its citizens. Indeed at a rally they further stressed that Nigerian independence was "a mere change in Administration, rather than a revolution." But they likewise showed little concern for non-African socialists, refusing altogether to criticize the counter-revolutionary attack on Hungary. In this respect there was no difference from the view of Azikiwe who claimed not to have sufficient information on the matter to make a judgment.

Needless to say, the state of suspension would not have been changed to a trip to ~~Africa~~ Ghana, the one nation that at this moment seems closest, not merely in foreign policy, but internally to that totalitarian model/

I was shocked, in fact, to find quite a paternalistic attitude toward the Negro American on the part of the Ghanaian trades unions. "They are not Africans, do not have land here, do they? Yet Ghana has always fought for their full rights in the US." Also of kremenin cut was the vituperative language used by the organ of the AATUF, "The African Worker", which pictured Dakar as.....*

I did not get to Conakry to visit the French counterpart to this. But of all the African socialist leaders, Sekou Toure has long interested me both for the historic sweep of his deeds and the passion of his views on "full re-Africanization."

His little country's loud "No" to the mighty (but not almighty) D. Gaulle France had electrified the world both with its daring and its challenging, governing philosophy. I am not referring merely to such statements as that Guinea would rather be poor and free than rich and slave/ I am referring to such profound and ~~xxxxx~~ world-wide views of science as: "AA pamphlet)

(PRESENCE AFR.p.13)I am referring to such reliance on the masses as the election of village councils, and such visions of total democracy as to infuse even the single party state, at least his single party state, with a base totally different from the elitist Russian model.

I am referring to such views of affinity with the world proletariat as to give Africans priority only because they are proletarian peoples who personify the cause of social justice."

"The party intends to regard the people of Guinea as the brain responsible for conceiving every action which merits undertaking in the name of the Rep. of Guinea." (p.20)"In spite of the relative low standard in the technical and eco.fields, the Party wishes to be they, the people who determine the direction of their activities, even those of a scientific character. This amounts to saying that there is no longer any frontier, there is no longer any limitation to popular knowledge or the rights of the people--these rights in the future to be exercised by them with sovereign power in all fields of national life." (p.20)

And yet the particularism, rather than either the humanism or internationalism, predominates over all other aspects of the constant repetition of Africa as not only no extension of any other state but any other ideology! "Africa cannot agree, to the detriment of respect for her personality, her civilisation and her proper structure, to become an organic extension of any system of states or ideologies whatsoever." Here precisely lies the crux of the matter: why does the "rediscovery of the African personality" mean the exclusion of the Marxist theory? Why should the Paris Commune be placed on the side of ~~the Marxist theory~~ the "foreign" influence as if it were part of the "negative values knowingly injected (by colonialism that is,rd)into its (Africa's) life, thought and traditions" while chieftancy, which is certainly being fought and totally transformed by Toure, considered as if in its pristine stage, before it was used by imperialism for its ends, considered part of the African tradition the "communocracy" to be streamlined to 20th c. needs?

In much of what Toure says of adopting only those solutions which are "authentically African", in ~~Marx~~ his rejection of an "abstract philosophy" not because it is abstract but because the "needs" are "concrete" and therefore Marxism "has been amputated of those of its characteristics which did not correspond to African realities", the non-African Marxist begins to feel, neither that Africa, ~~xxxxxx~~ or at least Guinea, is committed to Marxism, nor even that Marxism is being made "African" but that both are being shorn of any underlying philosophy in order to deal with concrete needs ~~empirically~~ eclectically.

There would be nothing wrong if Africa, not burdened down by outlived traditions of Marxism, restated it ~~xxxxxx~~ with such freedom, even abandon if you wish, that its Africanisation into an original whole meant it had found ~~xxxxxx~~ a new concrete universality that answered the problems of our age. ~~xxxxxx~~ No Marxist would then be under any chauvinistic compulsion and refuse welcome, to shout to the housetops, about this "restatement" of Marxism for the world in the manner in which Lenin "rewrote" ~~xxxxxx~~ Marx's "Civil War in France" as "State and Revolution" not alone ~~xxxx~~ as preparation for the Russian Revolution --but as a new world stage of consciousness with a new concrete universal to which the world's working class could hold on, before and after power, whether that was a ~~xxxxxx~~ lasting success or would soon be transformed into opposite and gets sucked ~~xxxx~~ into the ~~xxxx~~ whirlpool of the world market, ~~xxxx~~ return backwards ~~xxxx~~ towards to capitalism", that concrete universal -- "to a man" -- that the population to a man would run production and the state or there would be a

What is the new concrete universal? "Full Reafricanization" How can that apply to Africa, (1962) or the world?

Isn't it more likely that because Africa learned of Marxism after the Russian Revolution and studied Marx ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ if not "through" Mao Tse-tung, at least at the same time as Mao Tse-tung that we have this repetition of "classlessness" not only when the nation is as one in its united determination to throw out its imperialism, but also when industrialization and stratification has begun to differentiate between intellectual and worker as between ruler and ruled?

Don't you sense the warning in Marx's original humanism: "we must never again counterpose the state to the individual. The individual is the social entity." And again "communism is not the form of the new society" although it has been its "energizing force". Without the re-establishment of the unity of mental and manual labor within the individual, there will be no new society, no new human dimension.

Reagan What Guinea and Toure did with his daring "No" was re-establish the human factor as decisive. This, this and nothing else, was new in action and new in thought. This, and nothing else, was the humanism of Marxism, translated in Africa of the 1960s and ~~xxxxxx~~ of the world, even as Lenin of 1920 on both the National and Colonial Questions foresaw when he saw ~~xxxx~~ new ~~xxxx~~ beginnings that would embark on industrialisation "without going through capitalism" because the world had already experienced soviets.

This is what makes the "backward" American proletariat, unburdened by a party (Communist or labor bureaucratic)hungering "to lead", but full of the vigor of wildcatting against Automation and demanding, human, not automatized, production relations ready for something new.

This is what makes "backward" America with its continuously active ~~negro~~ "national minority", Negro, with its bus boycotts, sit-ins, Freedom rides, exposing the hollowness of American democracy, and its own ~~world~~ one worldness, ~~beginning with Russia and China~~ stretching out its hand across to Africa, as well as gaining succor from its original homeland making the whole world sit up and listen

"The self-determination in which alone the Idea is," wrote Hegel under the impact of the great French Revolution, and his encyclopaedic mind full of 5,000 years of history, "is to hear itself speak."

Speak, ^{independent} then/Africa, untainted by the two/^{world} power blocs fighting for world domination. You have gained your political self-determination and so you are free to express also the self-determination of the Idea, ~~as~~ the accumulated thought of centuries ^{fructified by the} ~~elemental~~ ^{elemental} creativity of the masses, the ~~plunge~~ ^{Revolutions of today} into freedom has made you the ~~first~~ ^{active} Marxist-Humanists of today even as the reach for freedom on the part of the Hungarian ~~Revolutionaries~~ ^{Humanists} has made them the theoretical Marxist-Humanists of those who had been raised on Marxist theory only to be betrayed by its powerful usurpers.

Even as the freedom riders in the USA, in speaking for themselves, * have ~~also~~ challenged the rulers of America and told the world of the second Am rica and its new beginnings.

Leave the old radicals and their static vanguardist conceptions "to heaven", ~~and~~ to borrow an expression from the Ghost in Shakespeare's Hamlet while we of today, to borrow an expression from the Gambian youth on the road to freedom, build a new International. ~~by the way~~

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I am sorry the above notes lengthened out to 8 pages and are quite in such an outlandish, rough-hewn form. But I trust that, when you assign someone to prepare an educational on it and she or he puts it into a dialectical order, it will be helpful

both on the theoretical and organizational fronts. This is the period when no article, for ourselves or for others; nationally or internationally; can be allowed to pass without seeing and stressing its organizational ramifications, in this case, a new International. And why not?

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