



Along the Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Jamaica: Failures of Black Socialism

Throughout most of Africa and the Caribbean since World War II, the phrase "socialism" has frequently represented the democratic hopes and economic aspirations of Black people. As a social slogan, Third World Socialism has meant redistributive justice, the reallocation of wealth from the affluent classes to the homeless and dispossessed, and the implementation of universal healthcare and educational programs. As an economic platform, it theoretically embraces the call for land reform, trade unionization, the empowerment of working people at the point of production, and the restructuring of the whole economic order by placing the interests of human beings ahead of corporate profits.

But in the past decade, and particularly since the tragic collapse of the Grenada revolution in 1983, a rethinking of "socialism" as a political concept has occurred throughout the Black world. What is the relationship between "Socialism" and those traditional democratic rights — freedom of press, free speech, trial by jury, strict limits on police surveillance and investigative activity, etc. — which are the legacy of the Western, white countries, but which in turn had also institutionalized slavery and colonialism? Is the responsibility of any socialist party in the Caribbean and Africa to defend the interests of the common people over and above those prerogatives of the state?

Turning to different countries for appropriate models, one is constantly frustrated by the vast and seemingly unbridgeable gap between rhetoric and reality. In Ghana, the initial popular support which erupted with the revolt catapulting President Jerry Rawlings in power nearly six years ago has nearly disintegrated. Ghana's ruling elite, the Provisional National Defense Council, claims an affinity for socialism. But in the past year, it has conducted a destructive campaign to harass, imprison and even eliminate opposition leaders in the Trade Union Congress, a federation of seventeen national unions. This June, the government arrested a group of university student leaders on the spurious charge of "subversion." When students boycotted classes to protest undemocratic procedures, hundreds of police shut down campuses.

Several left-wing organizations, the New Democratic Movement (NDM) and the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards, have challenged the government to restore parliamentary democracy, to protect an independent judiciary, and to address economic problems. The Rawlings regime responded by sending thugs from its secret police force, the Bureau of National Investigation, to arrest its critics. Kwame Karikari, the Chairperson of the NDM, was arrested without charges; the general secretary of the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards was also imprisoned.

A less repressive situation exists in another African socialist country, Zimbabwe. Under the leadership of Marxist intellectual Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe has managed to develop a strong economy, despite the constant subversion of neighboring white South Africa. However, ethnic minorities led by opposition leader Joshua Nkomo have been harassed and politically underrepresented within the parliament. "Zimbabwean socialism" has produced few tangible gains for the African masses. A survey of the country's leading corporate executives and managers shows that less than 5 percent are Black. White-owned country estates haven't been seized and given to the former-guerrilla fighters and their families. Out of Zimbabwe's 4,500 large commercial, private farmers, only 350 are African. In short, white supremacy still exists in economic relations, and the pace of internal social and educational reforms has been far too slow.

If African socialism has faltered because it has not emphasized democratic rights, left-wing parties elsewhere have failed because they have lost faith in the power of social justice and fundamental economic reforms. A classic case in the Caribbean is provided by former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley and the People's National Party (PNP). Back in the mid 1970's, the PNP advanced a bold and uncompromising economic and social agenda. Thanks to active destabilization by the U.S., Manley was defeated by Reagan-apologist Edward Seaga.

But now, after seven years of disastrous economic policies, the PNP will undoubtedly with the next general elections in late 1988. However, Manley is clearly singing a different tune. He has purged a number of socialist intellectuals and radical trade unionists from the PNP leadership. Manley promises to support private foreign investment, with the exportation of profits from Jamaica. He's even gone to the Reaganite-Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., requesting assistance for the PNP to develop plans for promoting entrepreneurship. Trade union veterans and younger activists in the party are confused and disillusioned with the leadership's retreat to the ideological center-right.

I know Manley personally, and have many friends inside the PNP, so the retreat from the vision of social justice inside Jamaica's left is particularly striking to this observer. It's clear that the Black political world needs to find a new path for economic and social development which learns from these errors. Democratic rights and civil liberties must be preserved, yet fatal compromises with the far right's bankrupt and repressive economic and political agenda must be avoided at all costs. No effective program of Third World liberation exists which falls victim to either contradiction.



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A Victory for South African Miners

Even in the midst of continued state-imposed violence and oppression, there was victory. Sweet victory. Even the South African mine-owners had to admit it. For 19 days 340,000 Black mine workers went on strike, shutting down 44 mines, and bringing to its knees an industry that is the very foundation of the racist South African regime.

The Black miners struck even though hundreds of them were arrested, even though scores were injured and some were killed. They struck even though it could have meant total destitution for them and their families.

This was not just a strike for better wages, though that was certainly one intent. After all, Black miners earn only \$200 a month, while white miners make five times that amount. It was not only a strike for safer working conditions, though about 600 Black miners die every year in South Africa's mines. No, this strike involved more than that. It was a test of solidarity and a show of increasing political strength. On both those scores the Black National Union of Mineworkers was a clear winner. As Newsweek noted: "The miners proved their ability to challenge South Africa

at its industrial heart — and confirmed black unions' place at the center of the struggle against white rule."

Though the Black union remained strong until the end, it received little support from the major U.S. trade unions. Missing, for example, was any show of support from the United Mineworkers Union or the AFL-CIO. Again we witnessed the usual racist double-standard. Unions in this country raised a loud hue and cry about the treatment of Lech Walesa and the Polish labor struggles. However, U.S. unions swathe themselves in resounding silence when it comes to South African labor leader Cyril Ramaphosa and the oppression of Black South African workers.

In this respect the unions follow the lead of the Reagan Administration. Even while Black miners were being brutally gassed and clubbed, news reports confirmed that the Reagan Administration had approved a plan whereby the South African government would train and equip the Nicaraguan contras. In exchange the United States was to provide intelligence on the South African and U.S.-backed rebels trying to overthrow the duly elected government of Angola.

There can be no further doubt about the true sympathies and the collusion between this administration and the oppressive government of South Africa.

Yet, in the face of disinterest by the U.S. labor movement, in the face of total non-support from the Reagan Administration, and in the face of the overwhelming might of South Africa's mining industry, the Black miners remained unified and were victorious. Let us join with our sisters and brothers of South Africa in supportive action. Let us lift our voices with theirs in the rallying cry of the liberation movement: "Amandla!" — Power to the people!



FREEDOM & SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY ALEXANDER R. JONES

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Religious Vision Leads to New Hope for Youngsters

Fourteen years ago, a miraculous thing happened to Dr. Mary Thomas. For seven days she experienced a moving religious vision which revealed methods to help learning disabled and emotionally disturbed children. Filled with excitement and determination, she took her newly-acquired knowledge and started Serene Community Homes, Inc., a treatment facility based in Sacramento, CA, which has since given many youngsters new hope and new lives.

Serene Homes stands as marvelous success story. This organization with its "Yes, we can!" motto is a shining example that children with problems can be effectively helped without the use of drugs. This, amid the increasing psychiatric practice of "treating" young school children by drugging them into a stupor with Ritalin (an amphetamine-like drug), is a major accomplishment.

The success of the center lies in Dr. Thomas's firm belief that any treatment "must address the body, mind and spirit." Thus, when the children come in, they are placed on a special diet designed to give their bodies good nutrition. They are constantly taught the value of love, respect, hard work, and other important principles. For their educational needs, there is a special school which gives the youngsters the care and attention they require. The children are even placed in foster homes to ensure they can live in a true family atmosphere.

Consequently, the children in Serene Homes improve dramatically. According to Dr. Thomas, "Kids who have come in on psychotropic drugs are no longer on them. Others are coming off of such drugs gradually. Many kids who were labeled mentally retarded are not now mentally retarded."

Dr. Thomas has done most of this fine work very quietly. Although the program is certified by the State of California, she has sought little publicity. Now, she feels she is ready to expand and let more people know of her methods, so careful documentation of her successes has already begun.

If you would like to know more about this innovative program, write to Dr. Mary Thomas, c/o Freedom & Social Justice, P.O. Box 2387, Sacramento, CA 95811.



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Apartheid: Burden of a Deepening Regional Crisis

by Mohulatsi Mokeyane

The human tragedy in Mozambique, which has received increasing media attention in recent weeks, is mirrored in other countries in Southern Africa. South Africa's engagement in support of armed rebels, destruction of homes and railways, and the sponsoring of subversive political activities against Mozambique is also carried out against Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The suffering that results is directly tied to the practice of apartheid in South Africa. The agony will not end until apartheid is abolished.

With majority rule in most of Southern Africa, opposition to apartheid has heightened within South Africa and in Namibia, which South Africa illegally occupies. As South Africa faces increasing pressures from its own Black population, it places the blame for these internal problems on its neighbors. The blame takes the form of economic, political and military attacks.

As in Mozambique, South Africa conducts commando raids and assassinations designed to terrorize and intimidate refugees from apartheid who have fled to neighboring countries. Nationals of the host countries have been killed along the way. South Africa also supports, finances and directs military activities of rebel groups such as RENAMO in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola, which directly target the citizen populations of South Africa's neighbors. More recently, South Africa has help up shipments destined for neighboring countries dependent on imported food supplies, sabotaged communications installations and utilities, and unilaterally expelled immigrant workers who escape growing poverty in their own lands by working in South Africa. These acts of South African aggression deepen the crisis of Southern Africa.

Between 1980 and 1985 South African aggression cost neighboring countries \$15-16 billion in defense spending, the total cost of these poor countries comes to between \$25 and 30 billion. UNICEF's recent study reports that war related deaths of infants and children between 1980 and 1985 exceeded 150,000 in Angola and 230,000 in Mozambique. The figures represent 45 percent of all deaths of children under age five in both countries during that period.

Angola now spends 53%, and Mozambique 42%, of their budgets on national defense. Zimbabwe, Zambia and other countries also have increased their defense budgets in response to the South African threat. Examples of their moves to defend themselves from South Africa and Zimbabwe's reported deal to buy 12 MiG-29 interceptors and Mozambique and Botswana's agreement with Great Britain for the training of their Defense Force units. Meanwhile, social service spending has been curtailed, adding further suffering to people already poor and under military attack.

Increases in the defense budgets have meant increases in the militarization of the region as well. As a result, prospects for regional peace and stability recede daily.

There is good reason for South Africa to fear these new nations of Southern Africa — although not the ones the South African government cites. These countries to the north of South Africa have provided positive examples of non-racial societies which are based on equality and respect for human dignity. Amazingly, some of these countries have achieved these results in less than a decade of independence.

The majority ruled countries of Southern Africa started off at independence with tremendous handicaps that were the legacy of colonialism. In Mozambique, for instance, the Portuguese colonialists denied education and experience to virtually all Mozambicans. At independence, in 1975, Mozambique did not have a single colonial-trained college graduate out of a population of 11 million; its 10 medical doctors were trained by the ten liberation movement, FRELIMO. Mozambique trained an additional 100 medical doctors within its first decade of independence.

The U.S. can play an important role in the development and stabilization of the countries of Southern Africa — and in the easing of the unspeakable suffering of the people there. It can increase its investment in these countries. It can back the unconditional implementation of U.N. Resolution 435 for the independence of Namibia. It can withdraw its unconscionable support for the South Africa-backed UNITA rebels in Angola.

These steps, however, if they are to make a difference to the majority-ruled nations of Southern Africa, must be combined with strict imposition of comprehensive economic sanctions on South Africa. The suffering of Mozambique's people, and those of her neighbors, will continue as long as apartheid poisons the region.

Letters to the Editor

Is the Media Obsessed With Black Crime?

Within the last few years we have been witnessing, in academic and journalistic circles around this nation, a sort of compulsive preoccupation with the notion of "Black" crime. What, indeed, is happening to, and in, Black communities? I do not for one moment contend here that the rate at which Blacks are criminally victimized in any number of inner-city neighborhoods is not a matter for urgent concern but what I find disturbing in the current debate is the underlying false premise that the phenomenon of Blacks victimizing other Blacks deserve a special analysis: an analysis that is separate and distinct from what, in general, causes "street" crime and other acts of wanton and indiscriminate violence in the broader American (sic) society.

The implied assumption is that there is something peculiarly insidious — which may or may not be innate — about Black life and Black society that naturally tends toward criminal self-destruction.

According to this line of reasoning, the cause and, ultimately, the responsibility for crime among Blacks should be placed squarely on the shoulders of the Black community. "Street" crime is thus seen as a Black problem, not a societal problem. This, I contend, is just another way of "blaming the victims"; an attempt to repackage an "old wine" in a somewhat newer, more believable bottle. (Not so long ago it was Black "short-comings" that were widely seen as the principal reasons behind the failure of Black to advance materially within the American (sic) society — failure to seize economic opportunities, lack of initiative, laziness, low I.Q., etc.)

I'm inclined to believe the danger with even posing the problem of crime among Black people in the United States in terms of "Black-on-Black" is that (1) it places the issue within an explicitly race-specific context, and (2) it tends to remove the problem of crime in America's (sic) urban ghettos (something Black people did not create, but in which a good number are forced to live) from its larger social and societal nexus.

The fact is crime and criminality are not in any way specific features of race and, ever since there was recorded human history, alienated groups have always tended to victimize their own members. Thus, El Salvadorans have, for varying reasons, killed (and are killing) other El Salvadorans; political tribalization and a type of clientelistic politics that prevail in countries like Jamaica cause Jamaicans to kill, in large numbers, other Jamaicans; and early Polish, Italian and Jewish immigrants who lived under slum conditions in Chicago, Boston and New York did violently victimize other Poles, Italians and Jews.

Even if one chooses to go to the somewhat more dubious, right-wing biological/hereditary route, which has recently been given new life by the likes of Richard J. Herrnstein and James Q. Wilson, the conclusion still is that so-called "crime traits" are randomly distributed in terms of race and ethnicity.

Crime and criminality are specific features of powerlessness, ghettoization and general destruction (or absence) of community. Street gangs mushroom and proliferate because of an absence of structured, meaningful alternative outlets. So that demoralized, "surplus" life — which is otherwise unfulfilled and unappreciated — finds perverse sense of fulfillment in the adventitiousness of the gang.

If through the process of institutionalized racism and economic marginalization, some groups — Blacks and Hispanics, for example — in the American (sic) society experience these conditions disproportionately, then it is only logical to expect disproportionate levels of crime, victimization, and gang activity in the communities in which these groups are confined.

There is, in short, no truth to the racist myth that "Black people just love to kill each other." That characterizes neither the history nor the cultural tradition of African (sic) people. Blacks as a group have been systematically segregated and compressed into America's (sic) ghetto "homelands"; they preponderantly become both victims and victimizers. Both are, in fact, inextricably locked in the deadly pursuit of survival.

Black leaders and opinion-makers must seek to articulate a more liberating understanding of crime in general.

Dr. Jamil Cherovee

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