

Forum

On failures of black socialism

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- 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 health-care 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 which catapulted President Jerry Rawlings into power nearly six years ago has almost disintegrated.

FROM THE GRASSROOTS By MANNING MARABLE

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 17 national unions.

Several left-wing organizations -- the New Democratic Movement, or 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.

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-ruled 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 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, known as the PNP. Back in the mid-1970s, 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 win 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, 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.

Dr. Manning Marable is chairman of the Black Studies Department at Ohio State University in Columbus.

Reader urges yes vote on bonds

To The Editor:

The good news from yesterday is that the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community foresaw that our local economy could not remain the same as in former times. We employed a nationally known planner, David Crane, to help us reposition ourselves for what the future would bring. And among many positive steps we've taken, we passed two bond referendums for much-needed improvements to our community.

Today there is still more that is needed to prepare us for the competition with our sister communities around the country for investment that will bring jobs to our people.

On Nov. 3, we will again have an opportunity to invest in ourselves. We can send a message throughout the land that Winston-Salem/Forsyth County intends to deal with temporary economic setbacks by providing, with public dollars, the necessary conditions to attract private investment to our community, or we can risk our position in a highly competitive environment for jobs-producing enterprise.

I don't feel we have a choice. Therefore, I urge the voters of the city and county to vote yes on all nine bond proposals on Nov. 3.

C. Edward Pleasants Jr.
President

CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

Pleasants Hardware Co.
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Racism: Still alive and well

To The Editor:

Racism appears to be alive and well in 1987. Personally, I don't feel that this is a revelation of earth-shattering proportions. However, people of all races have been lulled into thinking that it, racism, no longer exists.

Proof of racism's healthy existence was shown recently in the *Daily Tar Heel's* coverage concerning the events involving a black University of North Carolina School of Business student and various memos placed in that student's file. Now, I don't intend to address the ignorant contents of those memos, as their absurdity is without measure. The fact that they were written at all is my greatest concern.

It is unsettling to me that in this "Southern Part of Heaven," this lap of Academia, this hotbed of liberalism, Klan-like acts are practiced and to some extent tolerated. It further angers me to know that many will pass the incident off as a bad or tasteless joke, citing black

outrage as lacking a sense of humor.

One member has admitted that he and two others wrote the initial memo stating "Who Wants to See a Nigger Steal Bases?" Yet it's being passed off as "no one was supposed to see the statements." I learned long ago that jokes of an ethnic nature are pliable things; Polacks, Jews, Wops and Spics miraculously become niggers when I am out of the room. What galls me even more is the sickening feeling that my own black people won't learn anything from the experience, and more importantly, won't do anything to insist that those responsible be exposed and punished.

Contrary to popular belief, white folks have not come to love us as a people. The sooner we, blacks, realize that, the better.

Racism was, and still is, a practice with all the characteristics of a religion. People are baptized in racism's waters at an early age. Unfortunately, entering the hallowed halls of Carolina is not going to reverse years of inbred racist training. In light of the recent incidents at the UNC-CH School of Business, I hold these truths to be self-evident.

H.B. Renwick
Associate Dean

Brown

From Page A4

Braun organized Oakland Parents in Action (later to become Within You) and was joined by Linda Wiltz, an experienced Bay Area activist. Together they convinced the citizens in that area that something can be done.

Seifuddin Ali, you and the decent people on Bancroft Avenue and around this country can do the same. We can stop drugs. Together.

Go to the Western Black Publishers Association and the black press

individually; call Delvin Williams at Pros for Kids (1710 S. Amphlett Blvd., Suite 300, San Mateo, Calif. 94402, (415) 571-6726).

Contact the Rev. Amos Brown, the Buy Freedom expert in the Bay Area, at Third Baptist Church, 1399 McAllister St., San Francisco, Calif. 94115, (415) 346-4426, for help. I'm speaking there for him on Nov. 14. He's my main man.

And don't forget Within You and the police chief and all of the good people who will join our fight

for survival against drugs. Tell them I sent you, Seifuddin.

Seifuddin Ali and the decent people on a drug-infested street in Oakland, Calif., need our help. Call Seifuddin at (415) 532-7418.

And As-Salaam-Alaikum to you, Seifuddin Ali.

Tony Brown is a syndicated columnist and television host, whose program, "Tony Brown's Journal," appears at 1:30 on Saturdays on channels 4 and 26.

How 1 in 8 Americans reads.

For millions of Americans, the shape of a sign or a symbol is the only clue to its meaning. They are illiterate.

For one out of eight people, simple things like a menu, or an employee bulletin board have to be bluffed through. "Can you read this? I left my glasses home."

Just getting by from day to day is a constant struggle.

To help these Americans, Nabisco has committed substantial resources to Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS).

In September, Nabisco produced and sponsored "Bluffing It," which was telecast on the ABC Television Network. And this October, we're underwriting "A Job To Be Done," a presentation of The Public Television Outreach Alliance produced by WQED, Pittsburgh.

Both programs focus on the widespread rate of illiteracy within the workplace. And, equally, on the inroads being made to reduce it.

Nabisco Brands, together with the Black Press, urge you to join the Project Literacy bandwagon.

So that a few years from now, substantially improved literacy will be a sign of our times.

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