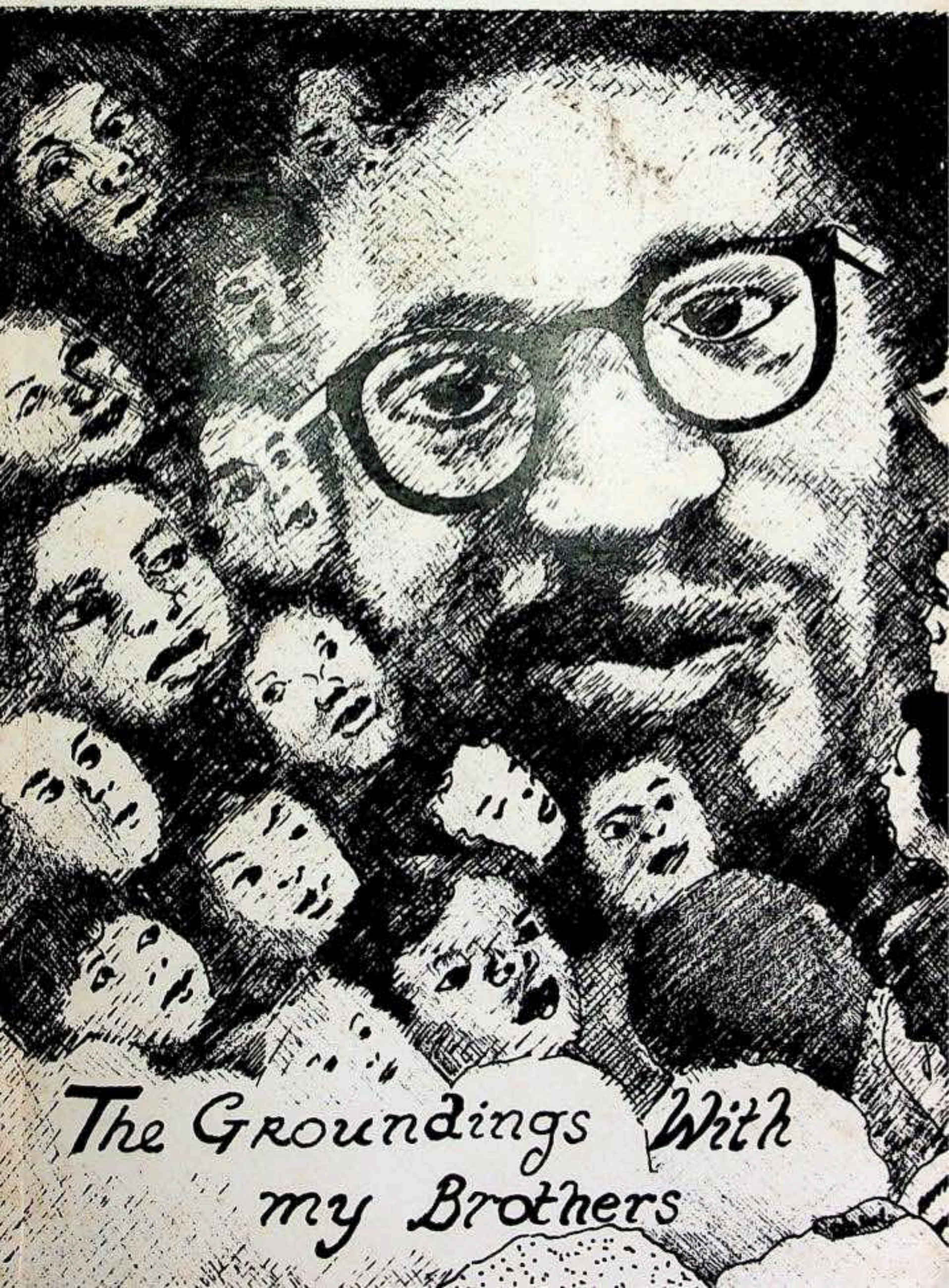


Walter Rodney



*The Groundings With
my Brothers*

Walter Rodney was assassinated by agents of the Burnham government in Guyana on the 13th June 1980.

Walter Rodney returned home with his wife and three children in 1974 after spending seven years as lecturer of African History at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Up to the time of his murder he was prevented from taking up an appointment with the University of Guyana on the intervention of the government.

While in Guyana Rodney became a member and later a leading spokesman of the Working People's Alliance in opposition to the ruling party in the government.

On the 11th July 1979, Walter, together with seven others were arrested following the burning down of two government offices. He was later charged with arson. An international campaign in support of the struggles against the repressive Burnham government followed during the years 1979/1980. At the time of the murder he was still awaiting trial.

Walter Rodney was the author of many papers and articles published in magazines and journals throughout the world. His most well known works include *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972) *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-1800* (Monthly Review Press, 1981) *A History of the Working People of Guyana* (Heinemann, 1981)

The Editor, Ewart Thomas is, at present, a Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Stanford, California, U.S.A.

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The Groundings with my Brothers

by

WALTER RODNEY

(23rd March 1942–13th June 1980)

with an introduction
by Richard Small

and a new introduction
by Omawale



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Groundings with my Brothers, now in its fifth edition, is reissued at a time when the last chapter in the life of the author was written on the 13th June 1980, after being assassinated by agents of the Burnham government in Guyana.

Throughout Walter Rodney's political life his activities have somehow been bound up with ours, first as friends, prior to the formation of Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications and subsequently as publishers and activists.

For this reason we wish to take the opportunity of recording, however briefly, for our readers and for posterity the highlights of that relationship.

We first met Walter through his brother Eddie during the early 1960's, Walter, a full time research student, ourselves working and studying in London and continuing our interest and involvement in overseas Caribbean politics.

Walter expressed a keen interest in the political developments of Guyana during the 1950's in which we participated and we spent endless sessions with Eddie, Buddie Poole, and others discussing Guyana and Caribbean politics. John LaRose and Irma LaRose were present at most of these sessions and it was at their home in North London where we met and talked.

During the years 1962 to '64 the situation in Guyana deteriorated, partly due to the electoral politics pursued by both the Peoples Progressive Party led by Cheddi Jagan and the Peoples National Congress led by L. F. S. Burnham. These policies helped fan the flames of inter-communal conflict and violence.

The defeat of Jagan in 1964 and the installation of a pro-CIA-British Government backed Coalition (Burnham-D'Aguiar) aroused considerable concern among Guyanese in particular and other Caribbean peoples living in Britain.

Our main concern was to find a way out of the straight-jacket of ethnic electoral politics which the two major parties had locked our politics and to chart a way forward.

With this in mind it was decided to organise a Symposium on Guyana. A number of contributors, among them being Walter Rodney, Norman Girvan, Bertram Abrams (deceased) were invited

to present papers. Eric Huntley, one of the organisers of the symposium also presented two papers.

The Symposium held at the Africa House, Earls Court, London (1965) was an important historical event for many of us who participated in the Symposium and others came together and independence movements of the 1950's and to explain the existing stalemate.

Three years later Walter completed his doctoral thesis and accepted an appointment with the History Department of the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

After spending less than a year in Jamaica, he was banned from re-entering after attending a Black Writers Conference in Toronto, Canada, in October, 1968.

The news of the ban had its reverberations not only on the streets of Kingston, Jamaica, but also in London. Many of us who had participated in the Symposium and others came together and organised protest action against the ban. Walter, aware of our activities in London left with the group a number of papers while en-route to Tanzania to take up his appointment. These papers consisted of talks which he gave in Jamaica.

In London, a Committee, comprising, Richard Small, Locksley Comrie, Dale Saunders, Fitzroy Griffiths, Chris LaMaitre, Earl Greenwood, Jessica Huntley and others continued to meet at the latter's home in South Ealing. One of the aims of the committee was to inform public opinion concerning the true reason for the government's decision to ban Walter.

At first we began by duplicating one of the talks under the title *Walter Rodney Speaks*. It was only after successive discussions that the decision to raise funds and print the collection of talks in its entirety was taken. The title *The Groundings with my Brothers* was suggested by Ewart Thomas who edited the papers.

Walter and all the members of the Committee were exceptionally thrilled with the final product. Walter regarded the book as a contribution to the historic setting up of an Independent Black Publishing House and the wider activities in which we as a part of the Black community were involved.

Later, many others were to express their commitment to the work in which we were engaged by donating manuscripts and other types of assistance. Among those who donated Manuscripts were Phyllis and Bernard Coard. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications continues to be indebted to Andrew Salkey whose contributions and commitment have been inestimable.

By 1971, when Rodney's major work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was completed in manuscript, a black independent publishing house, though in its infancy, already existed and it was to us Walter turned, in conjunction with Tanzania Publishing House.

Three years later, Walter's decision to return home again called for political mobilization, when the government of Guyana recinded the decision of the University to offer him a Professorship. We convened and helped in organising meetings and pickets of protest against the ban.

Over the years we were not only involved in building an exciting new Publishing House but we were also participating in wider activities involving the black community when we helped in the formation of the Black Parents Movement in 1974.

We later became part of a broader alliance of the Black Parents Movement, Black Youth Movement and the Race Today collective. It was this alliance which helped form the Committee Against Repression in Guyana and forged the struggles in London and other parts of Europe during 1979/1980, when the working people of Guyana stood firm against the repression of the Burnham Government, eventually leading to, first the arrest, Court trial, and later murder of Walter Rodney on 13th June 1980.

Our relationship with Walter Rodney who we regard to have died in active combat could be seen to have continued through four reprints of *The Grounding with my Brothers*, four reprints of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, as well as during the most active and formative of his political life covering a period 1964-1980.

At each crucial juncture we were expected and did in fact rally much needed, personal and political support. With his assassination we not only mourn the passing of an author, but also a friend and comrade.

Jessica Huntley

Eric L. Huntley

Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications Limited, London. 1983.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE 2

It is more than merely adhering to editorial tradition that we add a Publisher's Note to this fourth printing of *The Groundings with my Brothers*.

Indeed, we think it's fairly well known that the founding of Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications was based on a corporate decision to make a total break with the usual tradition of publishing: that of Black people passively providing the human material to be written up and published by other people.

So, putting tradition aside, we wish to thank those sisters and brothers who, from our early beginning as a small group in search of a new alternative in publishing, gave us confidence and courage, and who, by their continuing support, have made it possible for a hopeful cultural idea to become a living reality and community example.

We particularly wish to thank Sybil Phoenix, Babara Joseph, Elizabeth Furlong, Iotha Williams, Phyllis Coard, Ewart Thomas, Andrew Salkey, Richard Small, Gus John, Charles Patterson, Donald Rodney, Errol Lloyd, Bernard Coard, Sililio Ndebele, Cecil Rajendra, Sam Greenlee, Linton Johnson and Firdous Aly.

The text of *The Groundings with my Brothers* appears with its original Preface and Introduction; but we have added a new Introduction that is a succinct analysis of the crucial social and political developments which have taken place throughout the Caribbean, since the book was first published, seven years ago.

Jessica Huntley

London
1969

NEW INTRODUCTION

Most of the voluminous political literature, published daily, has an apparently natural tendency to age with time; subsequent events seem to overtake their positions and statements. It is therefore heartening and instructive that Walter Rodney's *The Groundings with my Brothers* represents an outstanding exception to this general trend. The six years, since its first printing, have, as it were, vindicated the book's earlier political statements. As a consequence the Black revolution, and through it the world mass revolution, has been taken a step closer to realisation. But this is no mere accident, because *The Groundings with my Brothers* was analytical. Since it was based on objective considerations of historical facts, time and subsequent events could only provide supporting evidence for the political theories developed from such an analysis.

Today, some people suggest the Black Power movement has lost importance as a slogan in Caribbean society. If this is true, the reason can be found in its entrenchment as a concept in the political culture of the region. Of course, these values have, in part, been adopted by the political leadership, but they really arise from the consciousness and action of the masses. Walter Rodney was correct in attributing to this mass consciousness, the politicians' new found respect for Paul Bogle and Marcus Garvey. In the same way, we can understand their recent adoption of shirt-jackets, non-alignment and support for African freedom fighters. In reality, their involvement with those symbols and struggles is as skin-deep, opportunistic and contradictory as the belated support for Paul Bogle and Marcus Garvey. Therefore when Rodney traces *bourgeois* oppression of the Blacks and the poor from post-emancipation vagrancy laws to the ganja 'suspicion' law (p. 13) he was also anticipating the Gun Court law.

Shortly after the events of October 1968 in Jamaica, Black Power, at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, was to confront Canadian racism in full dress. The myth of the tolerant neighbour of racist U.S.A. was once and for all shattered; so too was the computer that the property-loving state apparatus sacrificed in order to brutalise the Black students who were in occupation. More important was the blatant and unashamed connection between the racist Canadian imperialists and their political deputies in the Caribbean. One after the other, most of the West Indian governments persuaded their nationals, who were involved, to plead guilty; in return, they paid the fines and saw the students deported in disgrace. The master's interests had been served.

In Britain, the situation is remarkably similar. There, Black people are engaged in a colonial war for freedom, like that

initiated some years ago by their Black sisters and brothers in the U.S.A. The youths are refusing to do the 'shit work' for which their parents were recruited, back home, by the likes of London Transport. The workers themselves, including the women, are showing a militancy that is uncomfortable for the local establishment. But, in the midst of all this, the High Commissions for Caribbean Governments are either refusing to support their nationals or reprimanding them in the interests of the state. Thus, the Jamaican High Commissioner in London recently 'advised' Black youths on proper (bourgeois) ways of dressing and behaving. But, perhaps, this is a blessing in disguise. For the confrontation in the U.K. between Black and white is so urgent as to conceal the associated class nature of racist oppression. Perhaps, the people will recognise the High Commissioner and that type, as the class associates of the white oppressors. But throughout the Caribbean, Black Power has been transformed from slogan and concept into political force and reality.

When the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) of Trinidad and Tobago expressed sympathy with Sir George Williams University students, the population rose to support them. NJAC and other revolutionary groups identified the local forms and faces of imperialism (white and black-skinned) and the masses took to the streets acknowledging facts of which they had daily experience. Ironically, Eric Williams formally declared a state of emergency in February 1970. In reality the masses of Trinidad and Tobago were experiencing a grave emergency for years before and it was only the *bourgeois* state that made the sudden discovery; the regime panicked as their means of oppression crumbled amidst the popular army revolt that coincided with the mass demonstrations. It is largely immaterial that the establishment succeeded in containing that situation without the support of the U.S. marines, Venezuelan submarines and the regional regiments who were waiting for the S.O.S. The masses had started the freedom march, and even the massacre of young guerillas in 1972 and 1973 could not stop them. Such intimidation could not prevent the power, oil and sugar strikes of 1975.

The thread weaved through the other islands, as Eric Gairy directed the murder and the maiming of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) which was grounding with the Grenadian masses. In Dominica, Patrick John rushed through legislation for the summary assassination of the Movement for a New Dominica (MND). Never since Hitler have a people been so calmly identified for instant death. Everywhere the story was similar and indicated that the Caribbean masses were challenging imperialism. This has produced two types of reaction. On the one hand, chiefs of police are meeting to plan strategies for suppressing dissenters; but, on the other hand leaders are scurrying to and fro between

China, Socialist Europe and Cuba, hoping to confuse the masses back home. The tactics are new but the strategies are old. In Guyana and Trinidad, for example, the old racial divisions were strategically maintained (when not actively promoted) by the leading political parties, in and out of office. As a result, the membership of each consisted of a virtual racial monolith of widely differing class interests. But the contradictions of classes are antagonistic and cannot be accommodated. Those contradictions that led to racial divisions were essentially non-antagonistic and are being resolved in the course of the class struggle. In Guyana, the land movement of 1973 attested to this. In Trinidad the synchronised strikes of Indian sugar workers, along with African electricity and oil workers, are also a strong testimony. In 1970, Eric Williams declared the state of emergency, when Indian sugar workers agreed to join Black Power marches on Port of Spain. The march to unity and liberty is expressing itself in political and industrial action. In Guyana, Bookers-McConnell hastily handed over land to the Burnham Government in the face of mass unity, at the time of the Afro-Indian Land Movement. There, too, simultaneous action from African and Indian workers (mainly in sugar and bauxite) and the emergence of a multi-racial Working People's Alliance are indications of things to come: Black Power in the Caribbean.

With the elimination of *direct* white domination, the anti-imperialist nature of the Black Power philosophy emerges in full bloom. It is the only way we can understand the posturings of the Black *bourgeois* establishment.

The Sixth Pan African Congress in Tanzania was a forceful reminder of this treachery. The active revolutionary, anti-imperialist political workers of the Caribbean were excluded from the Sixth Pan African Conference at the request of the regional governments. This alone was an indication as to which side the leaders were on and how dirty was the linen they had to keep from international laundering. Characteristically, Julius Nyerere made a strong opening speech defending the rights of these groups to be included. But we must remember that the Congress was held in *his* country and organised under the supervision of *his* Foreign Affairs Minister. It was gratifying, however, to find the revolutionary Black representatives from the U.S.A., Canada and Britain speaking out at the Sixth Pan African Congress against these contradictions. Their standing ovation for Owusu Sadaukai recorded their appreciation of the inevitability and dimensions of anti-imperialist struggles at home; they applauded the references to Marx, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi Minh, Fanon and Cabral as being appropriate sources of revolutionary theory for the Pan African Struggles. They agreed that the best support for Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and

Azania was a blow struck against imperialism in their own countries. Finally, they joined in his protest over the exclusion of the true Caribbean revolutionaries. This is the kind of understanding we require. The fight is against capitalism in all forms, white or black-skinned. The house slaves of today cannot shed their Black skins but we can still see them for what they are; servants of the white master. These puppets do not act in Black people's interests and they must be swept aside together with their manipulating bosses. The Vietnamese and Cambodians, recently, did this, because of ideological clarity. So too must we in the Caribbean break with all forms of capitalism and racism before real independence is achieved.

Interestingly, this fourth printing of *The Groundings with my Brothers* coincides with events that have taken Walter Rodney full circle. Back home from Tanzania, he is prevented from working in his own national university which eagerly appointed him Professor of History. This high-handed government action needs to be viewed in the context of the revolutionary political development of the Caribbean masses, and in this case, especially, in the context of the development of the Guyanese masses. Revolutionary intellectuals like Walter Rodney are faithful allies of the workers and peasants who are constantly growing in awareness, resoluteness and strength. The 'Rodneys' are products of the Guyanese and Caribbean societies. The bankrupt political leaderships realise the danger in an interaction between the 'Rodneys' and the masses. This is why with *bourgeois* short-sightedness they hope to drive him away by withholding what they consider a prize job. But already the more intelligent in their midst are trying to point out the futility of such tactics. They are caught between the frying pan and the fire. They talk, with fire, about revolution and Pan Africanism, so they will have to burn in it or fry in the revolutionary oil of the mass movement in trying to avoid self-immolation.

The groundings were about Black Power and revolution. The years in between have added rich evidence for a clear analysis of our position as Black people in a white-controlled world. To read *The Groundings with my Brothers* is to understand what we already experience. To understand our experience is to be equipped for battle, be it in Guyana or the Pacific Coast of Colombia, in London or Paris, in New York or Nova Scotia; for that matter anywhere that Black faces mask white hearts. Some say we are experiencing a repetition of the 1930s in the Caribbean. The similarities are clear but one difference remains. We are entering a period of decisive struggle that will involve an alignment of revolutionary forces with ideological clarity never before seen in the region. **BLACK POWER to PEOPLE'S POWER!**

Omawale.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

The present human condition of black people relative to that of white people is appalling. We, black people, having realised this, demand from the white people economic and political power commensurate with our numbers. The achievement of these legitimate demands is requiring a struggle both at the national and at the international level. This struggle is reinforcing the polarisation of the world into the two camps, black and white, and, therefore, it is imperative that every black man become aware of this split and recognise his belongingness to the black camp.

Many black people have already reached this position, but all of us have not. Although the validity of our position has been established (by black men such as Paul Bogle, Marcus Garvey, or Eldridge Cleaver), its acceptance by all black people will not be immediate, for the process of awakening from unawareness to awareness is a psychological one, not a logical one.

We need not be detained at the outset by what is meant by 'black' and 'white', because it should be sufficient to say that these words are *abstractions* of the colour names. 'Black' refers to those people in the world who lack economic power and who do not control their own destinies, i.e. the oppressed; and 'white' refers to the oppressors. Within this category of 'black' people there is a sub-category of people whose skin colour is 'black', who are visibly African and who are easily identifiable (by the oppressors!). It is to these people that these lectures are dedicated in the first place.

Therefore, our starting point is the realisation that it is necessary 'to uproot numerous historical myths which have been implanted in the minds of black people, since they can act as a drag on revolutionary action in the present epoch'. This leads us to study, on the one hand, ancient African history and culture, and, on the other, the history and social effects of slavery. Such historical activity 'must be directed solely towards freeing and mobilising black minds, though it is to be seen as secondary to the concrete tactics and strategy necessary for our liberation'.

During the process of awakening it is important to distinguish

between two forms of activity. The first type of act is that which is to be understood by examining the subjective logic and psychological needs of the individual, such as the need to be recognised or the need to assert himself — this is the existential act. The second type of act is one, the purpose of which stems from a consideration of the external world, in our case, one for which the purpose is to achieve Black Power. This act can be called revolutionary because it implies that the black is conscious of his identity as a black man, and of the aspirations of his black brothers. The existential act can, therefore, be seen to occur in a transient phase of the process leading from the questioning of our present human condition to the revolutionary act. Through this distinction it can be seen that while certain forms of undirected violence are inevitable and understandable in personal terms, they do not represent the most efficient form of activity (because of their entirely personal nature). However, it is certain that without the awareness and mental freedom which are associated with the existential act, revolutionary action would be impossible. It is towards a creation of this awareness that the simple, clear, resolute and, above all, convincing words of Walter Rodney are directed.

'If there is to be any proving of our humanity it must be by revolutionary means.'

The job of editing these lectures was made trivial by the help and direction of Richard Small and Mrs. Jessica Huntley.

Ewart Thomas, May 1969

INTRODUCTION

Walter Rodney is 27, of average height, articulate, gentle, quiet at times but with strongly held views, and has an unassuming presence. He is Guyanese, and went to the U.W.I. campus in Mona, Jamaica whence he graduated in 1963 with first-class Honours in History. He then came to Britain and after researching in London and Portugal he wrote his thesis on 'A history of the upper Guinea coast, 1545-1800', and was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1966.

He quite naturally went to Africa, to Tanzania's University College where he lectured in History, and then he was invited to return to the Mona campus in Jamaica. There, from January, 1968, he taught in the History Department and at the beginning of the academic year 1968-1969 he launched a new course in African History. On October 15, 1968, he was banned from re-entering Jamaica after attending the Congress of Black Writers in Montreal.

Very soon after returning to U.W.I. he started giving open lectures on African History on the University campus and was soon asked to go and to talk to various 'respectable' clubs and groupings of people on this subject.

Jamaica is a society of predominantly black people, but slavery and the present social structure have meant that the consciousness of being black and a knowledge of, or even an interest in, African History has been actively discouraged or, alternatively, only lip-service has been paid to its desirability. On the other hand, Jamaica became independent in 1962; it got a flag, a national motto, a national anthem, flower, fruit, and even a national bird. But what has been most lacking has been a national consciousness, a sense of where Jamaicans came from, what we have done, and to what we should look forward. To examine these questions could be subversive of 400 years of the colonial viewpoint *and* the colonial relationships on which the present society is based. And this can be seen in the story of Walter Rodney.

Now all along in Jamaica, in spite of official hostility to the consciousness of being black, there have been from the earliest days of slavery a powerful undercurrent towards an identity of blackness. Every incident of rebellion has carried with it

the alliance around the fact of being black, the one real powerful *fact* around which people both have been repressed and have rebelled, the *fact* that has had to be liberated in order that the Man can be. In a slave society and in a post-slavery society in which advancement has so far been determined by how non-black the blackest of men can be, a sense of yourself as being black has to be achieved before a sense of yourself as being a full man can ever be approached. Freedom and black consciousness, therefore, go together. The first cannot exist inside your being without the second.

Various people in Jamaica have come in effect to that conclusion by various routes, but the indisputable fact is that in the present epoch, in the present search for national identity, there is little that the official society, the social clubs, the establishment commentators, the educators, the politicians have discovered about a sense of national identity that has not been posed before by the very groups that they consider outside the scope of national expression.

It was to poor, dis-enfranchised black people that the living Marcus Garvey was a prophet and leader, when to 'The Gleaner' and the sugar owners he was a demagogic and dangerous thief, writer, politician and leader.

It was to the Rastafarian movement and its predecessors that Africa was our spiritual homeland and that our 'sojourn' in Jamaica should be used to develop her traditions and civilisation as far as was possible in the 'Babylon' that is Jamaica. That that was the only way in which Black men could find themselves.

It was the disinherited of Jamaica, encouraged to migrate to Britain, who showed by their support of their culture in the sounds of mento and Ska that there was a market abroad and which led to the Government promotion and exploitation of an expression that only a few years before was dismissed as 'gardener-boy music'. Since that time, the singers themselves have broken out of the confines of Ska into Rock Steady and Reggae and the seriousness of their development can be judged by the growing list of banned records.*

Garvey is now a 'National Hero'. The older Rastas are feted, Haile Selassie is invited to Jamaica. The official society had to make Garvey the hero but they used it to their own

* Banned in the same 'tradition' of the slave master banning the African slave's drum and Tom-Tom when they could not control the message.

ends — those, who had condemned, now praise. They invited the Emperor and the population literally took over the welcoming ceremony. They wanted to make the Mulatto, William Gordon, a National Hero and then they had to give in to the demand that it was the Black Paul Bogle who was the real hero of the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion. So, they tried to use the honouring of Bogle, like that of Garvey, to their own cause. All government officials in their speeches insisted that what Bogle did he had to do, but what he did no longer must be done because everything he fought for had already been won.

In their feverish attempts to discover their true national identity they find that they have to follow paths already traced. They are caught in a bind. Conceptions that they have had to move towards they find are highly subversive of the life they have lived. This happened in a vivid way with the Walter Rodney episode. He went to the middle class clubs (groups of people, each searching for an identity) and he spoke about Africa. Within a few weeks the news of a man who knew about Africa, who would talk to anybody who wanted to hear him, spread. He spoke to the 'less respectable groupings' all over the urban area, in the villages and towns outside Kingston. In his message from Canada Rodney himself describes his experiences and what they meant to him. This response to the history of Africa and the achievement of the black people throughout the world was not born from an academic curiosity. It sprang from a people who used it for themselves.

This question of Blackness comes to the fore every time we attempt to come to terms with our condition, and sometimes it takes strange forms. It may be the pining for the Africa that our forefathers actually knew; the slave uprisings determined to end the bondage and return; the call of Bogle to 'join your colour and cleave to the Blacks'; the internationalising and organising of those sentiments by Garvey; the religious beliefs of the Rastafarians; the pride in a Black Governor-General, or in its opposite, the contempt for self and the catalogue of self-inflicting jokes.

But if these appear to be only cultural manifestations then that is only the appearance. They are all that and something else. Underlying all of it, and even more so today, are questions of the greatest political and social significance. The vision of the Rasta of yesterday is transformed to the realisation today that Jamaica herself must become the Paradise that was sought in Ethiopia. However powerful the desire for identification

with Africa it was not that alone that brought people out into the streets in October. What was aimed at was what existed in Jamaica and the targets and scars will leave no doubt about that. What it raises are Jamaican issues, what is at stake is present Jamaican society — the repression by the Government and the vacillation of the Opposition shows that they, at any rate, understand that very well. What is in question is the road that Jamaica should take. In fact, the question is not just Jamaican, it is Caribbean. It is the spread in recent times of the slogans, and the thinking accompanying it, of Black Power, Young Power and political consciousness.

In Barbados the concepts are being expounded by a former boxing promoter, Eric Sealy. "Sealy comes from the working class. (He walks barefooted. He has always done so.) Last August he travelled around the West Indies and decided to give up the hand-to-mouth promotion of boxing in Barbados to start some action. He says, 'I could not stand what I saw and heard and had to do something'. He began holding meetings at street corners and at squares (he still does) around September speaking on Black Power, but in a Caribbean context. The response, he said, amazed him — 20, 50, 100, 200 people, sometimes 300 came to listen." That was written privately in January 1969. We cannot give a more up-to-date account because West Indian newspapers do not report that kind of activity.

In Trinidad out-of-work 'educated' and 'uneducated' youth are part of this ferment. Independently of student activity the Young Power movement was launched, and now sections of the St. Augustine campus are busily engaged in the social issues of Trinidad and West Indian society.

The Antigua Workers Union have not only been able to call a general strike to force recognition of their union but it is their organisational activity and the temper of the times which made it possible to have 8,000 people (one-eighth of the population) out on the streets at a few hours' notice to demonstrate against British troops using Antigua as a base against the Anguillans.

The Anguillans speak for themselves.

If in all this the personality of Walter Rodney and the particularity of the events of October in Jamaica get lost it is because what took place there is Jamaica's contribution to the repetition of the Caribbean history of the 30's that is taking place before our eyes. The danger of Anguilla to the West

Indian leaders is that any kind of rebellion in any part of the Caribbean is a threat to their own existence in their own islands. 1937-1939 can repeat itself at any time now.

It is in that belief, therefore, that we publish the main speeches that Walter Rodney made over that nine-month period when he was in Jamaica.

The two specifically on Black Power are the ones that set off the great response. The nine pieces on African History are summaries of the open talks that he gave on Sunday mornings at the Wembley Sports Ground. Like Eric Sealy in Barbados, Walter Rodney could expect to be speaking to 200 or 300 people on these occasions.

'Statement on the Jamaican Situation' was presented to the Congress of Black Writers a few days before the events of October 16. Rodney and Bobby Hill, the other speaker from Jamaica at the Congress, thought that the situation in Jamaica was at such an important stage that they prepared this special report. It therefore serves as the best introduction to what took place.

'African History in the Service of Black Revolution' is the address delivered to the Congress of Black Writers on the morning of Sunday, October 13, 1968. 'The groundings with my Brothers' consists of excerpts from his speech in Montreal on Friday, October 18. It was first published in full in Jamaica by African Youth Move.

Rodney has said in an interview in Montreal that what he said to the middle class audiences is the same that he said to the meetings in the gullies. He spoke mainly about Africa's past, the qualities of her civilisation, who were her personalities. But the difference was that when he was speaking out in the open he was speaking to fertile ground — people who from their conditions in Jamaica had already arrived at the conception that Africa has a history and they only required the illustration of that belief. People who believe that exist all over the island. Rodney did not organise them. They existed there before. More today, it is true, and that is because of what Walter Rodney taught and what was done to him.

Richard Small

March 1969

CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE JAMAICAN SITUATION

In 1938, exactly one hundred years after the supposed Emancipation of the Black Man in Jamaica, the masses once again were driven into action to achieve some form of genuine liberation under the new conditions of oppression. The beneficiaries of that struggle were a narrow, middle-class sector whose composition was primarily brown, augmented by significant elements of white and other groups, such as Syrians, Jews and Chinese. Of late, that local ruling elite has incorporated a number of blacks in positions of prominence. However, irrespective of its racial or colour composition, this power-group is merely acting as representatives of metropolitan-imperialist interests. Historically white and racist-oriented, these interests continue to stop attempts at creative social expression on the part of the black oppressed masses.

It was only natural that imperialism and its local lackeys should have intensified the oppression of our black brothers. But, paradoxical as it may appear, they have been forced to create as a psychological prop to their system of domination the myth of a harmonious, multi-racial national society — 'Out of Many, One People', as the National Motto pretends. In this way they are hoping that the black masses will never organise independently in their own interests. Today that system of domination and its justificatory myth are faced with serious challenges and reverses. For a new phase is beginning in the epochal march forward of the Black Humanity of Jamaica.

The break-up of the myth of a harmonious, multi-racial society has been rapid and has assumed numerous forms. Firstly, the regime has been forced into carrying out a crude manipulation of the symbols of national black pride. Marcus Garvey and Paul Bogle were enshrined as 'National Heroes', when the methods and achievements of these Black Liberators point the way ever more clearly toward Black Resistance today. Their example violently contradicts the hypocritical claim of the state regime to be representative in any way of the Black Masses.

The most profound dilemma of all faced by a regime of alien class elements is that posed by the existence of the numerically

powerful Rastafari Brethren, who have completely and inexorably broken with Jamaican society and its values, and who have chosen a faith and a culture based on Ethiopian Orthodoxy. At no time was this dilemma better demonstrated than when the local political bosses were forced into accepting a visit by His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie, and then literally had to stand back while the population thrust forward enthusiastically to pay homage to the Ethiopian Monarch.

More recently, and at a time when the Black Liberation struggle taking place against white racist American society is fiercest, these same political bandits felt sufficiently threatened by the power of the example of struggle to carry through the banning of Brothers Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown and James Forman. Even more damning has been their prohibition of the liberation literature of Carmichael, Malcolm X and Elijah Mohammed, at a time when the world is celebrating International Human Rights Year piously sponsored by the Jamaican Government.

The local lackeys of imperialism have long had to admit the existence of tremendous social injustice — the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' as they put it — but they asked the nation to live with the illusion that things were bound to improve. Now the 'have nots', who are the mass of the black people, know that things have been getting worse. The unemployed, numbering some 30 per cent of the potential work force, are understandably desperate and the whole repressive machinery of the State has been brought to bear on them.

The administration of the law has become more vicious and partisan. The number of charges imposed on black people for the possession of ganja (marijuana) are astronomical, and the government has decreed that the minimum sentence on conviction must be 18 months. A charge of 'suspicion' has now been entered into the law books, and to be black and poor is to invite this charge in much the same way as the vagrancy laws operated in the period immediately after Emancipation. The quality of justice dispensed by the legal system still depends on skin colour.

Since 'Independence', the Black police force of Jamaica have demonstrated that they can be as savage in their approach to black brothers as the white police of New York, for ultimately they serve the same masters. The Prime Minister has not concealed his determination that the police should be used to maintain the present system of social oppression, and he has given

them full authority to utilise whatever brutal methods they think necessary to carry out this mandate. Shortly after taking office last year, Prime Minister Shearer told the police, 'I make no bones about it gentlemen. I want all Jamaica to get the message that the police force under this Government is not reciting Beatitudes to anybody'. He later added that the police whenever confronted with 'criminals', should not stop to find out what distance was between themselves and the criminals before 'setting them alight'. In eight months between August 1967 and April 1968 there were at least 31 people who were set alight by police guns, 16 of them dying on the spot. Other incidents of police brutality are too numerous to mention. Yet one of the most significant strikes in recent times was that carried out by the Jamaica police force, demanding higher wages. That strike was not so much a part of the movement of the black working class, but a part of the breakdown of the system of oppression, for the local political lackeys have shown their incompetence in every direction.

The stagnation in the rural areas has reached a stage of crisis. Marginal sugar estates continue to go out of production leaving hundreds of workers jobless and prospects for the banana industry are just as bleak. Apart from their inability to raise the living standards of the black masses they have failed to make provision for increased water consumption and for drought, they have failed to modernise telephone communications and they have failed to make allowance for the increased need for electrical power. Consequently, in recent months, the ramshackle nature of the neo-colonial structure has been cruelly exposed, and it was the very middle class who have benefitted from '1938', who recently complained most bitterly when they suffered simultaneously from water rationing, extensive electricity power cuts, a limping telephone service, and no police protection for their property.

What matters above all else on the contemporary Jamaican scene is the action of the black masses in their various capacities. Their activities are in part responsible for the atmosphere of decay which surrounds the present administration, and at the same time they provide an indication of the shape of things to come. The *racial* question is out in the open, in spite of all the efforts to maintain the taboos surrounding it. The Rastafari Brethren have been joined on this question by large numbers of other black people — many of them influenced by the struggle and example of black brothers in the U.S.A.; while culturally,

there is a deepening interest in things African. Of the greatest significance are the effects at self-expression among black people — pamphlets, newsheets, and the like. These independent efforts are essential because of the complete control which imperialism and its local puppets maintain over the various established news media.

Meanwhile, the two reactionary trade unions, which are the most important social bases of the two reactionary political parties, are also facing the challenge of the workers. Not only has there been a wave of strikes without the complicity of the unions, but there is emerging an independent worker movement concerned with the unity of workers in their place of work or within a given industry. The large unemployed sector lacks organisational forms, but there is a widespread reappraisal taking place among unemployed black youths, who have recognised the farcical nature of the present two-party operation, and self-defeating role which they themselves played so recently in 1967, when they gunned each other down on the orders of the political bandits of the two parties. Whether or not black youths have participated in violence on behalf of the oppressors, they have all suffered from police brutality, and they have seen recently the middle-class members of the 'gun clubs' coming forward to volunteer their services in suppressing the people while the police were on strike. Throughout the country, black youths are becoming aware of the possibilities of unleashing armed struggle in their own interests. For those who have eyes to see, there is already evidence of the beginnings of resistance to the violence of our oppressors.

CHAPTER 2

BLACK POWER, A BASIC UNDERSTANDING

Black Power is a doctrine about black people, for black people, preached by black people. I'm putting it to my black brothers and sisters that the colour of our skins is the most fundamental thing about us. I could have chosen to talk about people of the same island, or the same religion, or the same class — but instead I have chosen skin colour as essentially the most binding factor in our world. In so doing, I am not saying that is the way things ought to be. I am simply recognising the real world — that is the way things are. Under different circumstances, it would have been nice to be colour blind, to choose my friends solely because their social interests coincided with mine — but no conscious black man can allow himself such luxuries in the contemporary world.

Let me emphasise that the situation is not of our making. To begin with, the white world defines who is white and who is black. In the U.S.A. if one is not white, then one is black; in Britain, if one is not white then one is coloured; in South Africa, one can be white, coloured or black depending upon how white people classify you. There was a South African boxer who was white all his life, until the other whites decided that he was really coloured. Even the fact of whether you are black or not is to be decided by white people — by White Power. If a Jamaican black man tried to get a room from a landlady in London, who said 'No Coloureds', it would not impress her if he said he was West Indian, quite apart from the fact that she would already have closed the door in his black face. When a Pakistani goes to the Midlands he is as coloured as a Nigerian. The Indonesian is the same as a Surinamer in Holland, the Chinese and New Guineans have as little chance of becoming residents and citizens in Australia as do you and I. The definition which is most widely used the world over is that once you are not obviously white then you are black, and are excluded from power — Power is kept pure milky white.

The black people of whom I speak, therefore, are non-whites — the hundreds of millions of people whose homelands are in Asia and Africa, with another few millions in the Americas. A

further subdivision can be made with reference to all people of African descent whose position is clearly more acute than that of most non-white groups. It must be noted that once a person is said to be black by the white world, then that is usually the most important thing about him; fat or thin, intelligent or stupid, criminal or sportsman — these things pale into insignificance. Actually I've found out that a lot of whites literally cannot tell one black from another. Partly this may be due to the fact that they do not personally know many black people, but it reflects a psychological tendency to deny our individuality by refusing to consider us as individual human beings.

Having said a few things about black and white, I will try to point out the power relations between them. By the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the capitalist division of the world was complete. It was a division which made capitalists dominant over workers and white people dominant over black. At that point, everywhere in the world white people held power in all its aspects — political, economic, military and even cultural. In Europe, the whites held power — this goes without saying. In the Americas the whites had committed mass murder as far as many 'Red Indian' tribes were concerned and they herded the rest into reservations like animals or forced them into the disadvantageous positions, geographically and economically, in Central and South America. In Australia and New Zealand, a similar thing had occurred on a much smaller scale. In Africa, European power reigned supreme except in a few isolated spots like Ethiopia; and where whites were actually settled the Africans were reduced to the status of second-class citizens in their own country. All this was following upon a historical experience of 400 years of slavery, which had transferred millions of Africans to work and die in the New World. In Asia, Europe's power was felt everywhere except in Japan and areas controlled by Japan. The essence of White Power is that it is exercised over black peoples — whether or not they are minority or majority, whether it was a country belonging originally to whites or to blacks. It is exercised in such a way that black people have no share in that power and are, therefore, denied any say in their own destinies.

Since 1911, White Power has been slowly reduced. The Russian Revolution put an end to Russian imperialism in the Far East, and the Chinese Revolution by 1949 had emancipated the world's largest single ethnic group from the white power

complex. The rest of Asia, Africa and Latin America (with minor exceptions such as North Korea, North Vietnam and Cuba) have remained within the white power network to this day. We live in the section of the world under white domination — the imperialist world. The Russians are white and have power but they are not a colonial power oppressing black peoples. The white power which is our enemy is that which is exercised over black peoples, irrespective of which group is in the majority and irrespective of whether the particular country belonged originally to whites or blacks.

We need to look very carefully at the nature of the relationships between colour and power in the imperialist world. There are two basic sections in the imperialist world — one that is dominated and one that is dominant. Every country in the dominant metropolitan area has a large majority of whites — U.S.A., Britain, France, etc. Every country in the dominated colonial areas has an overwhelming majority of non-whites, as in most of Asia, Africa and the West Indies. Power, therefore, resides in the white countries and is exercised over blacks. There is the mistaken belief that black people achieved power with independence, e.g. (Malaya, Jamaica, Kenya), but a black man ruling a dependent State within the imperialist system has no power. He is simply an agent of the whites in the metropolis, with an army and a police force designed to maintain the imperialist way of things in that particular colonial area.

When Britain announced recently that it was withdrawing troops from East of Suez, the American Secretary of State remarked that something would have to be done to fill the 'power vacuum'. This involved Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Malaysia. The white world in their own way were saying that all these blacks amounted to nothing, for power was white and when white power is withdrawn, a vacuum is created, which could only be filled by another white power.

By being made into colonials, black people lost the power which we previously had of governing our own affairs, and the aim of the white imperialist world is to see that we never regain this power. The Congo provides an example of this situation. There was a large and well-developed Congolese empire before the white man reached Africa. The large Congolese empire of the 15th century was torn apart by Portuguese slave-traders and what remained of the Congo came to be regarded as one of the darkest spots in dark Africa. After

regaining political independence the Congolese people settled down to reorganise their lives, but white power intervened, set up the black stooge Tshombe, and murdered both Lumumba and the aspirations of the Congolese people. Since then, paid white mercenaries have harassed the Congo. Late last year, 130 of these hired white killers were chased out of the Congo and cornered in the neighbouring African State of Burundi. The white world intervened and they have all been set free. These are men who for months were murdering, raping, pillaging, disrupting economic production, and making a mockery of black life and black society. Yet white power said not a hair on their heads was to be touched. They did not even have to stand trial or reveal their names. Conscious blacks cannot possibly fail to realise that in our own homelands we have no power, abroad we are discriminated against, and everywhere the black masses suffer from poverty. You can put together in your own mind a picture of the whole world, with the white imperialist beast crouched over miserable blacks. And don't forget to label us poor. There is nothing with which poverty coincides so absolutely as with the colour black — small or large population, hot or cold climates, rich or poor in natural resources — poverty cuts across all of these factors in order to find black people.

That association of wealth with whites and poverty with blacks is not accidental. It is the nature of the imperialist relationship that enriches the metropolis at the expense of the colony, i.e. it makes the whites richer and the blacks poorer.

The Spaniards went to Central and South America, and robbed thousands of tons of silver and gold from Indians. The whole of Europe developed on the basis of that wealth, while millions of Indian lives were lost and the societies and cultures of Central and South America were seriously dislocated. Europeans used their guns in Asia to force Asians to trade at huge profits to Europe, and in India the British grew fat while at the same time destroying Indian irrigation. Africa and Africans suffered from the greatest crimes at the hands of Europeans through the Slave Trade and Slavery in the West Indies and the Americas. In all those centuries of exploitation, Europeans have climbed higher on our backs and pushed us down into the dirt. White power has, therefore, used black people to make whites stronger and richer and to make blacks relatively, and sometimes absolutely, weaker and poorer.

'Black Power' as a movement has been most clearly defined

in the U.S.A. Slavery in the U.S. helped create the capital for the development of the U.S. as the foremost capitalist power, and the blacks have subsequently been the most exploited sector of labour. Many blacks live in that supposedly great society at a level of existence comparable to blacks in the poorest section of the colonial world. The blacks in the U.S. have no power. They have achieved prominence in a number of ways — they can sing, they can run, they can box, play baseball, etc., but they have no power. Even in the fields where they excel, they are straws in the hands of whites. The entertainment world, the record-manufacturing business, sport as a commercial enterprise are all controlled by whites — blacks simply perform. They have no power in the areas where they are overwhelming majorities, such as the city slums and certain parts of the Southern United States, for the local governments and law-enforcement agencies are all white controlled. This was not always so. For one brief period after the Civil War in the 1860s, blacks in the U.S.A. held power. In that period (from 1865 to 1875) slavery had just ended, and the blacks were entitled to the vote as free citizens. Being in the majority in several parts of the southern United States, they elected a majority of their own black representatives and helped to rebuild the South, introducing advanced ideas such as education for all (blacks as well as whites, rich and poor). The blacks did not rule the United States, but they were able to put forward their own viewpoints and to impose their will over the white racist minority in several states. This is a concrete historical example of Black Power in the United States, but the whites changed all that, and they have seen to it that such progress was never again achieved by blacks. With massive white immigration, the blacks became a smaller minority within the United States as a whole and even in the South, so that a feeling of hopelessness grew up.

The present Black Power movement in the United States is a rejection of hopelessness and the policy of doing nothing to halt the oppression of blacks by whites. It recognises the absence of black power, but is confident of the potential of black power on this globe. Marcus Garvey was one of the first advocates of Black Power, and is still today the greatest spokesman ever to have been produced by the movement of black consciousness. 'A race without power and authority is a race without respect', wrote Garvey. He spoke to all Africans on the earth, whether they lived in Africa, South America, the

West Indies or North America, and he made blacks aware of their strength when united. The U.S.A. was his main field of operation, after he had been chased out of Jamaica by the sort of people who today pretend to have made him a hero. All of the black leaders who have advanced the cause in the U.S.A. since Garvey's time have recognised the international nature of the struggle against White Power. Malcolm X, our martyred brother, became the greatest threat to White Power in the U.S.A. because he began to seek a broader basis for his efforts in Africa and Asia, and he was probably the first individual who was prepared to bring the race question in the U.S. up before the U.N. as an issue of international importance. S.N.C.C., the important Black power organisation, developed along the same lines; and at about the same time that the slogan Black Power came into existence a few years ago, S.N.C.C. was setting up a foreign affairs department, headed by James Foreman, who afterwards travelled widely in Africa. Stokely Carmichael has held serious discussions in Vietnam, Cuba and the progressive African countries, such as Tanzania and Guinea. These are all steps to tap the vast potential of power among the hundreds of millions of oppressed black peoples.

Meanwhile, one significant change had occurred since Garvey. The emphasis within the U.S. is that black people there have a stake in that land, which they have watered with their sweat, tears, and blood, and black leadership is aware of the necessity and the desirability of fighting white power simultaneously at home and abroad. Certain issues are not yet clear about the final shape of society in America. Some form of co-existence with whites is the desired goal of virtually all black leaders, but it must be a society which blacks have a hand in shaping, and blacks should have power commensurate with their numbers and contribution to U.S. development. To get that, they have to fight.

Black Power as a slogan is new, but it is really an ideology and a movement of historical depth. The one feature that is new about it as it is currently exercised in the U.S. is the advocacy of violence. Previously, black people prayed, we were on our best behaviour, we asked the whites 'please', we smiled so that our white teeth illuminated our black faces. Now it is time to show our teeth in a snarl rather than a smile. The death of Martin Luther King gave several hypocritical persons the opportunity to make stupid remarks about the virtues of non-violence. Some of the statements made in the Jamaica press

and on the radio and TV were made by individuals who probably think that the Jamaican black man is completely daft. We were told that violence in itself is evil, and that, whatever the cause, it is unjustified morally. By what standard of morality can the violence used by a slave to break his chains be considered the same as the violence of a slave master? By what standards can we equate the violence of blacks who have been oppressed, suppressed, depressed and repressed for four centuries with the violence of white fascists. Violence aimed at the recovery of human dignity and at equality cannot be judged by the same yardstick as violence aimed at maintenance of discrimination and oppression.

White Americans would certainly argue the moral and practical necessity of their participation in the First and particularly the Second World War. What is curious is that thousands of black people fought and died in these wars entirely in the interest of the white man. Colonialism is the opposite of freedom and democracy and yet black colonials fought for this against the Fascism of Hitler—it was purely in the interests of the white 'Mother Countries'. Slaves fought for American Independence and for the North in the American Civil War. Black oppressed Americans went in thousands to fight for justice in the world wars, in Korea and in Vietnam. We have fought heroically in the white men's cause. It is time to fight in our own.

Violence in the American situation is inescapable. White society is violent, white American society is particularly violent, and white American society is especially violent towards blacks.

Slavery was founded and maintained by violence and in the 100 years since the 'Emancipation' of slaves in the U.S. the society has continued to do black people violence by denying them any power or influence (except for the occasional individual). Their interests are therefore ignored, so that thousands of black babies die each year because of lack of proper food, shelter and medicine; while hundreds of thousands are destroyed emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination. This is the worst sort of violence, and it is accompanied by many acts of individual violence carried out by white citizens, police and sheriffs against blacks.* Most incidents of rioting in recent years arose spontaneously out of

* See S. Carmichael and C. Hamilton, *Black Power, the Politics of Liberation in America*.

self-defence and out of anger against brutality. When black Americans react to meet force with force this should surprise nobody, because even the most harmless animal will finally turn in desperation against its hunters. It is useful to know that this is the conclusion arrived at not only by Black Power leaders, but also by the official committee of the U.S. Senate which was appointed to investigate the racial situation.

Apart from local violent protest (riots), U.S. society faces the possibility of large-scale racial war. The book *Black Power*, written by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton (and now banned by 'White Power' Jamaican government) stresses that its aim was to present an opportunity to work out the racial question without resort to force, but if that opportunity was missed the society was moving towards destructive racial war. In such a war, black people would undoubtedly suffer because of their minority position, but as an organised group they could wreck untold damage on the whites. The white racists and warmongers cannot drop their bombs on black people *within the U.S.A.*, and whatever damage is done to property means damage to white property. We have nothing to lose for they are the capitalists. Black people could not hope to, nor do they want to, dominate the whites, but large sections of the black youth realise that they cannot shrink from fighting to demonstrate the hard way that a 10 per cent minority of 22 million cannot be treated as though they did not exist. Already the limited violence of the past few years has caused more notice to be taken of the legitimate social, economic, political and cultural demands of black people than has been the case for the previous 100 years. The goal is still a long way off, for it is not only in a crisis that the blacks must be considered. When decisions are taken in the normal day-to-day life of the U.S.A., the interests of the blacks must be taken into account *out of respect for their power*—power that can be used destructively if it is not allowed to express itself constructively. This is what Black Power means in the particular conditions of the U.S.A.

CHAPTER 3

BLACK POWER — ITS RELEVANCE TO THE WEST INDIES

About a fortnight ago I had the opportunity of speaking on Black Power to an audience on this campus.* At that time, the consciousness among students as far as the racial question is concerned had been heightened by several incidents on the world scene — notably, the hangings in Rhodesia and the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King. Indeed, it has been heightened to such an extent that some individuals have started to organise a Black Power movement. My presence here attests to my full sympathy with their objectives.

The topic on this occasion is no longer just 'Black Power' but 'Black Power and You'. Black Power can be seen as a movement and an ideology springing from the reality of oppression of black peoples by whites within the imperialist world as a whole. Now we need to be specific in defining the West Indian scene and our own particular roles in the society. You and I have to decide whether we want to think black or to *remain* as a dirty version of white. (I shall indicate the full significance of this later.)

Recently there was a public statement in *Scope* where Black Power was referred to as 'Black supremacy'. This may have been a genuine error or a deliberate falsification. Black Power is a call to black peoples to throw off white domination and resume the handling of their own destinies. It means that blacks would enjoy power commensurate with their numbers in the world and in particular localities. Whenever an oppressed black man shouts for equality he is called a racist. This was said of Marcus Garvey in his day. Imagine that! We are so inferior that if we demand equality of opportunity and power that is outrageously racist! Black people who speak up for their rights must beware of this device of false accusations. It is intended to place you on the defensive and if possible embarrass you into silence. How can we be both oppressed and embarrassed? Is it that our major concern is not to hurt the feelings of the oppressor? Black People must now take the offensive — if it is anyone who should suffer embarrassment it is the whites. Did black people roast six million Jews? Who exter-

* the U.W.I. campus.

minated millions of indigenous inhabitants in the Americas and Australia? Who enslaved countless millions of Africans? The white capitalist cannibal has always fed on the world's black peoples. White capitalist imperialist society is profoundly and unmistakably racist.

The West Indies have always been a part of white capitalist society. We have been the most oppressed section because we were a slave society and the legacy of slavery still rests heavily upon the West Indian black man. I will briefly point to five highlights of our social development: (1) the development of racialism under slavery; (2) emancipation; (3) Indian indentured labour; (4) the year 1865 in Jamaica; (5) the year 1938 in the West Indies.

Slavery. As C. L. R. James, Eric Williams and other W.I. scholars have pointed out, slavery in the West Indies started as an economic phenomenon rather than a racial one. But it rapidly became racist as all white labour was withdrawn from the fields, leaving black to be identified with slave labour and white to be linked with property and domination. Out of this situation where blacks had an inferior status in practice, there grew social and scientific theories relating to the supposed inherent inferiority of the black man, who was considered as having been created to bring water and hew wood for the white man. This theory then served to rationalise white exploitation of blacks all over Africa and Asia. The West Indies and the American South share the dubious distinction of being the breeding ground for world racialism. Naturally, our own society provided the highest expressions of racialism. Even the blacks became convinced of their own inferiority, though fortunately we are capable of the most intense expressions when we recognise that we have been duped by the white men. Black Power recognises both the reality of black oppression and self-negation as well as the potential for revolt.

Emancipation. By the end of the 18th century, Britain had got most of what it wanted from black labour in the West Indies. Slavery and the slave trade had made Britain strong and now stood in the way of new developments, so it was time to abandon those systems. The Slave Trade and Slavery were thus ended; but Britain had to consider how to squeeze what little remained in the territories and *how to maintain the local whites in power*. They therefore decided to give the planters £20 million compensation and to guarantee their black labour supplies for the next six years through a system called appren-

ticeship. In that period, white society consolidated its position to ensure that slave relations should persist in our society. The Rastafari Brethren have always insisted that the black people were promised £20 million at emancipation. In reality, by any normal standards of justice, we black people should have got the £20 million compensation money. We were the ones who had been abused and wronged, hunted in Africa and brutalised on the plantations. In Europe, when serfdom was abolished, the serfs usually inherited the land as compensation and by right. In the West Indies, the exploiters were compensated because they could no longer exploit us in the same way as before. White property was of greater value than black humanity. It still is — white property is of greater value than black humanity in the British West Indies today, especially here in Jamaica.

Indian Indentured Labour. Britain and the white West Indians had to maintain the plantation system in order to keep white supreme. When Africans started leaving the plantations to set up as independent peasants they threatened the plantation structure and therefore Indians were imported under the indenture arrangements. That was possible because white power controlled most of the world and could move non-white peoples around as they wished. It was from British-controlled India that the indentured labour was obtained. It was the impact of British commercial, military and political policies that was destroying the life and culture of 19th century India and forcing people to flee to other parts of the world to earn bread. Look where Indians fled — to the West Indies! The West Indies is a place black people want to leave not to come to. One must therefore appreciate the pressure of white power on India which gave rise to migration to the West Indies. Indians were brought here solely in the interest of white society — at the expense of Africans already in the West Indies and often against their own best interests, for Indians perceived indentured labour to be a form of slavery and it was eventually terminated through the pressure of Indian opinion in the homeland. The West Indies has made a unique contribution to the history of suffering in the world, and Indians have provided part of that contribution since indentures were first introduced. This is another aspect of the historical situation which is still with us.

1865. In that year Britain found a way of perpetuating White Power in the West Indies after ruthlessly crushing the revolt of our black brothers led by Paul Bogle. The British

Government took away the Constitution of Jamaica and placed the island under the complete control of the Colonial Office, a manoeuvre that was racially motivated. The Jamaican legislature was then largely in the hands of the local whites with a mulatto minority, but if the gradual changes continued the mulattoes would have taken control — and the blacks were next in line. Consequently, the British Government put a stop to the process of the gradual takeover of political power by blacks. When we look at the British Empire in the 19th century, we see a clear difference between white colonies and black colonies. In the white colonies like Canada and Australia the British were giving white people their freedom and self-rule. In the black colonies of the West Indies, Africa and Asia the British were busy taking away the political freedom of the inhabitants. Actually, on the constitutional level, Britain had already displayed its racialism in the West Indies in the early 19th century when it refused to give mulattoes the power of Government in Trinidad, although they were the majority of free citizens. In 1865 in Jamaica it was not the first nor the last time on which Britain made it clear that its white 'kith and kin' would be supported to hold dominion over blacks.

1938. Slavery ended in various islands of the West Indies between 1834 and 1838. Exactly 100 years later (between 1934-38) the black people in the West Indies revolted against the hypocritical freedom of the society. The British were very surprised — they had long forgotten all about the blacks in the British West Indies and they sent a Royal Commission to find out what it was all about. The report of the conditions was so shocking that the British government did not release it until after the war, because they wanted black colonials to fight the white man's battles. By the time the war ended it was clear in the West Indies and throughout Asia and Africa that some concessions would have to be made to black peoples. In general, the problem as seen by white imperialists was to give enough power to certain groups in colonial society to keep the whole society from exploding and to maintain the essentials of the imperialist structure. In the British West Indies, they had to take into account the question of military strategy because we lie under the belly of the world's imperialist giant, the U.S.A. Besides, there was the new and vital mineral bauxite, which had to be protected. The British solution was to pull out wherever possible and leave the imperial

government in the hands of the U.S.A., while the local government was given to a white, brown and black petty-bourgeoisie who were culturally the creations of white capitalist society and who therefore support the white imperialist system because they gain personally and because they have been brainwashed into aiding the oppression of black people.

Black Power in the West Indies means three closely related things: (i) the break with imperialism which is historically white racist; (ii) the assumption of power by the black masses in the islands; (iii) the cultural reconstruction of the society in the image of the blacks.

I shall anticipate certain questions on who are the blacks in the West Indies since they are in fact questions which have been posed to me elsewhere. I maintain that it is the white world which has defined who are blacks—if you are not white then you are black. However, it is obvious that the West Indian situation is complicated by factors such as the variety of racial types and racial mixtures and by the process of class formation. We have, therefore, to note not simply what the white world says but also how individuals perceive each other. Nevertheless, we can talk of the mass of the West Indian population as being black—either African or Indian. There seems to have been some doubts on the last point, and some fear that Black Power is aimed against the Indian. This would be a flagrant denial of both the historical experience of the West Indies and the reality of the contemporary scene.

When the Indian was brought to the West Indies, he met the same racial contempt which whites applied to Africans. The Indian, too, was reduced to a single stereotype—the coolie or labourer. He too was a hewer of wood and a bringer of water. I spoke earlier of the revolt of the blacks in the West Indies in 1938. That revolt involved Africans in Jamaica, Africans and Indians in Trinidad and Guyana. The uprisings in Guyana were actually led by Indian sugar workers. Today, some Indians (like some Africans) have joined the white power structure in terms of economic activity and culture; but the underlying reality is that poverty resides among Africans and Indians in the West Indies and that power is denied them. Black Power in the West Indies, therefore, refers primarily to people who are recognisably African or Indian.

The Chinese, on the other hand, are a former labouring group who have now become bastions of white West Indian social structure. The Chinese of the People's Republic of China

have long broken with and are fighting against white imperialism, but *our* Chinese have nothing to do with that movement. They are to be identified with Chiang-Kai-Shek, and not Chairman Mao Tse-tung. They are to be put in the same bracket as the lackeys of capitalism and imperialism who are to be found in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Whatever the circumstances in which the Chinese came to the West Indies, they soon became (as a group) members of the exploiting class. They will have either to relinquish or be deprived of that function before they can be re-integrated into a West Indian society where the black man walks in dignity.

The same applies to the mulattoes, another group about whom I have been questioned. The West Indian brown man is characterised by ambiguity and ambivalence. He has in the past identified with the black masses when it suited his interests, and at the present time some browns are in the forefront of the movement towards black consciousness; but the vast majority have fallen to the bribes of white imperialism, often outdoing the whites in their hatred and oppression of blacks. Garvey wrote of the Jamaican mulattoes—'I was openly hated and persecuted by some of these coloured men of the island who did not want to be classified as Negroes but as white'. Naturally, conscious West Indian blacks like Garvey have in turn expressed their dislike for the browns, but there is nothing in the West Indian experience which suggests that browns are unacceptable when they choose to identify with blacks. The post-1938 developments in fact showed exactly the opposite. It seems to me, therefore, that it is not for the Black Power movement to determine the position of the browns, reds and so-called West Indian whites—the movement can only keep the door open and leave it to those groups to make their choice.

Black Power is not racially intolerant. It is the hope of the black man that he should have power over his own destinies. This is not incompatible with a multi-racial society where each individual counts equally. Because the moment that power is equitably distributed among several ethnic groups then the very relevance of making the distinction between groups will be lost. What we must object to is the current image of a multi-racial society living in harmony—that is a myth designed to justify the exploitation suffered by the blackest of our population, at the hands of the lighter-skinned groups. Let us look at the figures for the racial composition of the

Jamaican population. Of every 100 Jamaicans,

76.8% are visibly African
0.8% European
1.1% Indian
0.6% Chinese 91% have African blood
0.1% Syrian
14.6% Afro-European
5.4% other mixtures

This is a black society where Africans preponderate. Apart from the mulatto mixture all other groups are numerically insignificant and yet the society seeks to give them equal weight and indeed more weight than the Africans. If we went to Britain we could easily find non-white groups in the above proportions* — Africans and West Indians, Indians and Pakistanis, Turks, Arabs and other Easterners — but Britain is not called a multi-racial society. When we go to Britain we don't expect to take over all of the British real estate business, all their cinemas and most of their commerce as the European, Chinese and Syrian have done here. All we ask for there is some work and shelter, and we can't even get that. Black Power must proclaim that Jamaica is a black society — we should fly Garvey's Black Star banner and we will treat all other groups in the society on that understanding — they can have *the basic right of all individuals but no privileges to exploit Africans* as has been the pattern during slavery and ever since.

The present government knows that Jamaica is a black man's country. That is why Garvey has been made a national hero, for they are trying to deceive black people into thinking that the government is with them. The government of Jamaica recognises black power — it is afraid of the potential wrath of Jamaica's black and largely African population. It is that same fear which forced them to declare mourning when black men are murdered in Rhodesia, and when Martin Luther King was murdered in the U.S.A. But the black people don't need to be told that Garvey is a national hero — they know that. Nor do they need to be told to mourn when blacks are murdered by White Power, because they mourn everyday right here in Jamaica where white power keeps them ignorant, unemployed, ill-clothed and ill-fed. They will stop mourning when things

* As the non-blacks in Jamaica. Editor's note.

change — and that means a revolution, for the first essential is to break the chains which bind us to white imperialists, and that is a very revolutionary step. Cuba is the only country in the West Indies and in this hemisphere which has broken with white power. That is why Stokely Carmichael can visit Cuba but he can't visit Trinidad or Jamaica. That is why Stokely can call Fidel 'one of the blackest men in the Americas' and that is why our leaders in contrast qualify as 'white'.

Here I'm not just playing with words — I'm extending the definition of Black Power by indicating the nature of its opposite, 'White Power', and I'm providing a practical illustration of what Black Power means in one particular West Indian community where it had already occurred. White Power is the power of whites over blacks without any participation of the blacks. White Power rules the imperialist world as a whole. In Cuba the blacks and mulattoes numbered 1,585,073 out of a population of 5,829,029 in 1953 — i.e. about one quarter of the population. Like Jamaica's black people today, they were the poorest and most depressed people on the island. Lighter-skinned Cubans held local power, while real power was in the hands of the U.S. imperialists. Black Cubans fought alongside white Cuban workers and peasants because they were all oppressed. Major Juan Almeida, one of the outstanding leaders of Cuba today, was one of the original guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra, and he is black. Black Cubans today enjoy political, economic and social rights and opportunities of exactly the same kind as white Cubans. They too bear arms in the Cuban Militia as an expression of their basic rights. In other words, White Power in Cuba is ended. The majority of the white population naturally predominates numerically in most spheres of activity but they do not hold dominion over blacks without regard to the latter's interests. The blacks have achieved power commensurate with their own numbers by their heroic self-efforts during the days of slavery, in fighting against the Spanish and in fighting against imperialism. Having achieved their rights they can in fact afford to forget the category 'black' and think simply as Cuban citizens, as Socialist equals and as men. In Jamaica, where blacks are far greater in numbers and have no whites alongside them as oppressed workers and peasants, it will be the black people who alone can bear the brunt of revolutionary fighting.

Trotsky once wrote that Revolution is the carnival of the masses. When we have that carnival in the West Indies, are

people like us here at the university going to join the bacchanal?

Let us have a look at our present position. Most of us who have studied at the U.W.I. are discernibly black, and yet we are undeniably part of the white imperialist system. A few are actively pro-imperialist. They have no confidence in anything that is not white—they talk nonsense about black people being lazy—the same nonsense which was said about the Jamaican black man after emancipation, although he went to Panama and performed the giant task of building the Panama Canal—the same nonsense which is said about W.I. unemployed today, and yet they proceed to England to run the whole transport system. Most of us do not go to quite the same extremes in denigrating ourselves and our black brothers, but we say nothing against the system, and that means that we are acquiescing in the exploitation of our brethren. One of the ways that the situation has persisted especially in recent times is that it has given a few individuals like you and I a vision of personal progress measured in terms of front lawn and of the latest model of a huge American car. This has recruited us into their ranks and deprived the black masses of articulate leadership. That is why at the outset I stressed that our choice was to *remain* as part of the white system or to break with it. There is no other alternative.

Black Power in the W.I. must aim at transforming the Black intelligensia into the servants of the black masses. Black Power, within the university and without must aim at overcoming white cultural imperialism. Whites have dominated us both physically and mentally. This fact is brought out in virtually any serious sociological study of the region—the brainwashing process has been so stupendous that it has convinced so many black men of their inferiority. I will simply draw a few illustrations to remind you of this fact which blacks like us at Mona prefer to forget.

The adult black in our West Indian society is fully conditioned to thinking white, because that is the training we are given from childhood. The little black girl plays with a white doll, identifying with it as she combs its flaxen hair. Asked to sketch the figure of a man or woman, the black schoolboy instinctively produces a white man or a white woman. This is not surprising, since until recently the illustrations in our text books were all figures of Europeans. The few changes which have taken place have barely scratched the surface of the problem. West Indians of every colour still aspire to European

standards of dress and beauty. The language which is used by black people in describing ourselves shows how we despise our African appearance. 'Good hair' means European hair, 'good nose' means a straight nose, 'good complexion' means a light complexion. Everybody recognises how incongruous and ridiculous such terms are, but we continue to use them and to express our support of the assumption that white Europeans have the monopoly of beauty, and that black is the incarnation of ugliness. That is why Black Power advocates find it necessary to assert that **BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL**.

The most profound revelation of the sickness of our society on the question of race is our respect for all the white symbols of the Christian religion. God the Father is white, God the Son is white, and presumably God the Holy Ghost is white also. The disciples and saints are white, all the Cherubim, Seraphim and angels are white—except Lucifer, of course, who was black, being the embodiment of evil. When one calls upon black people to reject these things, this is not an attack on the teachings of Christ or the ideals of Christianity. What we have to ask is 'Why should Christianity come to us all wrapped up in white?' The white race constitute about 20 per cent of the world's population, and yet non-white peoples are supposed to accept that all who inhabit the heavens are white. There are 650 million Chinese, so why shouldn't God and most of the angels be Chinese? The truth is that there is absolutely no reason why different racial groups should not provide themselves with their own religious symbols. A picture of Christ could be red, white or black, depending upon the people who are involved. When Africans adopt the European concept that purity and goodness must be painted white and all that is evil and dammed is to be painted black then we are flagrantly self-insulting.

Through the manipulation of this media of education and communication, white people have produced black people who administer the system and perpetuate the white values—'white-hearted black men', as they are called by conscious elements. This is as true of the Indians as it is true of the Africans in our West Indian society. Indeed, the basic explanation of the tragedy of African/Indian confrontation in Guyana and Trinidad is the fact that both groups are held captive by the European way of seeing things. When an African abuses an Indian he repeats all that the white men said about Indian indentured 'coolies'; and in turn the Indian has borrowed

from the whites the stereotype of the 'lazy nigger' to apply to the African beside him. It is as though no black man can see another black man except by looking through a white person. It is time we started seeing through our own eyes. The road to Black Power here in the West Indies and everywhere else must begin with a revaluation of ourselves as blacks and with a redefinition of the world from our own standpoint.

CHAPTER 4

AFRICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

I

Every human society has a history and a form of culture, and this includes Africa. Africans in the West have been *deliberately* kept ignorant of African achievements by the white men for centuries. The purpose of their policy was to build up a picture of a barbarous Africa, so that we Africans who had been removed from our homes and made into slaves would be afraid to admit even to ourselves that we were Africans. In the West Indies, names like 'Bungo' and 'Quashie', which refer to Africans, are names which most black people hate, and our knowledge of Africa is got from reading Tarzan comic books.

We are the only group in the world who deny ourselves, preferring to be known as 'Negroes' rather than Africans. In order to know ourselves we must learn about African history and culture. This is one of the most important steps towards creating unity among Africans at home and abroad.

Africa is the home of mankind. The human being came into existence on the African continent nearly two million years ago; and human society and culture reached great heights in Africa before the white men arrived. We must learn something about the following African kingdoms and empires.

- (a) On the River Nile there was Egypt and Meroe (Sudan). These kingdoms flourished on earth before the birth of Christ, and Egypt in particular is recognised as having contributed greatly to the modern world. Its huge pyramids and sculptures are still considered as wonders, and mankind has never re-discovered some of the technical skills which the Egyptians possessed, such as the art of preserving the dead body. Europeans have long refused to accept the simple geographical fact that ancient Egypt (like modern Egypt) was an African country, and even though some of its culture came from Asia, its achievements must go to the credit of Africa.

Meroe produced a culture very similar to Egypt, and also ruled over Egypt for a long period. The Egyptians were Africans of a light complexion, while the people of Meroe

were dark-skinned.

- (b) In ancient Ethiopia there was the kingdom of Axum, forerunner to the Ethiopian kingdom. The written language of Axum was called Ge'ez, and it is still used within the Ethiopian church today. Axum, along with other parts of ancient Ethiopia, is famous for its architecture, especially its tall and finely carved stone pillars and its churches carved out of solid rock.
- (c) In West Africa, some of the most powerful political states in Africa began to develop some 1500 years ago and their period of greatness lasted for more than 1200 years. These kingdoms bore the names of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kanem; and they all arose near the great Niger River. They were noted for their agricultural production, their learning and their commerce, especially in gold. These states also encouraged the religion of Islam (while Ethiopia, of course, was the centre of Christianity).

II

Apart from the states of Egypt, Meroe, Axum, Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kanem, which have already been mentioned, there were many others in different parts of Africa which achieved greatness before the arrival of the white man and before we were snatched away as slaves. On the West African coast, the states of Benin and Oyo were famous, in Central Africa we can take as examples Kongo and Monomotapa (Zimbabwe), and in East Africa two of the oldest kingdoms were those of Bunyoro and Buganda. All of these are strange names because we have never been taught anything about them. If we want to call ourselves conscious Africans, then we must know the map of Africa, we must remember the names of these great African states, and we must find out as much as possible about them.

However, the majority of Africans lived in small societies and these must also be seriously studied. Sometimes, it is felt that only in large political states one can find civilisation and culture, but this is wrong, and in the great political states of Europe and America today many human values have been destroyed; while even the smallest African village was a place for the development and the protection of the individual.

Certain things were outstanding in the African way of life, whether in a small or large society. These distinctive things in the African way of life amount to African culture. Among

the principles of African culture the following are to be noted: hospitality, respect (especially to elders), importance of the woman (especially in cases of inheritance), humane treatment of law-breakers, spiritual reflection, common use of the land, constant employment of music (especially drums) and bright colours. Some of these principles are found in many different human societies, but very few are encouraged in the present white capitalist world. Even in Africa itself, European slave trading and colonisation have destroyed many aspects of African culture. But culture is not a dead thing, nor does it always remain the same. It belongs to living people and is therefore always developing. If we, the blacks in the West, accept ourselves as African, we can make a contribution to the development of African culture, helping to free it from European imperialism.

What we need is confidence in ourselves, so that as blacks and Africans we can be conscious, united, independent and creative. A knowledge of African achievements in art, education, religion, politics, agriculture and the mining of metals can help us gain the necessary confidence which has been removed by slavery and colonialism.

Marcus Garvey always preached the value of African history and culture. He wrote that 'For many years white propagandists have been printing tons of literature to impress scattered Ethiopia, especially that portion within their civilisation, with the idea that Africa is a despised place, inhabited by savages and cannibals, where no civilised human being should go'. After dismissing that propaganda as completely false, Garvey continued: 'The power and the sway we once held passed away, but now in the twentieth century we are about to see a return of it in the rebuilding of Africa; yes, a new civilisation, a new culture, shall spring up from among our people.'

III

On the physical side, man is an animal, but is different from other animals in several important ways. The three most outstanding physical qualities are the following:

- (a) Man walks upright.
- (b) Human hands are adapted to making and handling tools.
- (c) Man's comparatively bigger brain allows for higher thought, and man is referred to as *homo sapiens*, which means 'thinking man'.

Homo sapiens first came into existence on the African con-

continent. This fact has been established by archaeologists (people who study the material evidence of past society, usually by digging into the ground), by paleontologists (people who study the ancient climate and structure of the earth), and by other scientists who can find out the age of bones and rocks that existed millions of years ago. What these scholars say is that nearly two million years ago, man evolved in Africa, long before he came into existence elsewhere. Numerous remains of early human types have been found in eastern Africa, and a place in Tanzania called Olduvai Gorge is especially famous.

Man in Africa (like man everywhere else) adjusted to his physical surroundings to produce human society and culture. The first form of society came about when individuals got together to hunt in groups.

Probably the most important development in human history was the invention of agriculture. Strange as this may seem today, there was a time when the idea of growing crops and rearing animals did not occur to man. When the idea came about, hundreds of years were spent in collecting wild grasses and roots, which were brought into the service of man. Wild animals such as the cow and the horse were also tamed and used by man. It was in the Middle East that agriculture started about 10,000 years before the birth of Christ, because that region was well supplied by nature with grasses such as wheat and barley. Agriculture spread rapidly into Africa by way of Egypt. In the grasslands of Ethiopia and West Africa, certain new grain species were first brought into human use from the wild variety. Those grains form the millet family. Africa was also the home of certain varieties of rice, yam, beans, fruit, etc. Agriculture meant food to support a growing population, and people settled down to build a stable society.

All over the world, the greatest challenge to man was his environment or physical surroundings. Man in Africa learnt to overcome the problems of his own environment. Advanced methods of agriculture developed in Africa many hundreds of years before Europeans went to that continent. Irrigation, terracing and crop rotation were all practised.

The other basic aspect of material culture is concerned with the working of metals and the making of metal tools. Here again, metal working spread into Africa from the Middle East, became widespread long before the European arrival, and in some cases the metal technology was highly developed. Africans in the Congo were famous for mining copper and those in the

Sudan famous for their iron. Apart from tools and weapons, metals were used for ornament, and here gold played its part. What all of the above really mean is that *ancient Africa was in the mainstream of human history.*

IV

Apart from the material aspect of culture, man has always produced things of the spirit. In fact, the development of religion, literature and art is associated with higher forms of culture and civilisation. In all of these fields Africa can be proud of her achievements. Take, for example, the art of Africa. European books on the early development of man always praise the paintings and engravings made by man long ago in France, Germany, etc. There are similar paintings all over Africa, placed on huge rocks and showing the great variety of animals which are found on the African continent and which were hunted by Africans. The paintings and engravings, like man himself, appeared at a much earlier date in Africa than in Europe. As man progressed, he moved from simple rock paintings to sculpture. *African sculpture* in wood, copper, bronze and iron is recognised by the whole world both for the remarkable skill with which the sculptured objects are produced and for their expression of beauty, dignity and other human spiritual qualities.

Black Africans have developed in the same way as all mankind and have made their own contributions to humanity, because we are simply a part of a single species — *homo sapiens* or 'thinking man', as mentioned before. *Skin colour by itself is insignificant.* Some black Africans have given birth to white albino children (known in Jamaica as 'dunduss'), but these children are really no different from their parents. In man's physical make-up, one of the most fundamental things is the type of blood; and blood groups do not conform to skin colour. In other words, an African is physically closer to a European with the same blood group than he is to another African of a different blood type.

Colour has become important because the white men found it convenient to use racialism to exploit the black peoples of the world. As Africans, we will use the question of race to unify ourselves, and to escape from the oppression at the hands of white men and their black lackeys. *So long as there are people who deny our humanity as blacks then for so long must we proclaim and assert our humanity as blacks.* That is

why our historical and cultural heritage is so important, and that is why we must proceed to live our culture because culture is a way of life. We must recover what was taken away from us and we must adapt in order to survive and keep on growing as a section of humanity.

Here it is very important to notice the question of technology. Europeans accuse black people of not inventing the wheel. They claim that our culture never included the construction of machines which work on the principle of the wheel — e.g. mills and wheeled transport. This is partly true, but all that can be said is that we never borrowed the principle of the wheel, for it was invented in China and borrowed by Europeans. Where our history and culture lack certain things there is nothing wrong in borrowing. His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor Haile Selassie, was the first African to realise the importance of the European invention of aircraft, and sought aeroplanes, not to be like Europeans but to protect Ethiopian culture by strengthening it with something new. **AFRICANS (ESPECIALLY YOUTHS) MUST LEARN NEW SKILLS.**

V

The Nile Civilisations. The Nile is one of the great rivers of Africa and of the world. One branch, the Blue Nile, starts in Ethiopia, while the White Nile starts in Uganda. They come together in the Sudan and then flow through Egypt to the sea. Few sights are more spectacular than the Murchison Falls on the White Nile and the Tisisat Falls on the Blue Nile; but the Nile is famous not just because of its length and great beauty, but because it is the cradle of ancient civilisations.

The history of Egypt of the Pharaohs is well known, and it should not be difficult to obtain a good book (with photographs). White people are quick to deny that ancient Egyptians were Africans, by which they mean that Egyptians were not black. The ancient Egyptians usually portrayed themselves as 'red', and their empire included black subjects from further up the Nile. Red intermarried with black, and for many years a line of black kings ruled Egypt. There is no evidence to show that racial discrimination was part of their culture. Yet, according to the white men's way of seeing things, the red and the black populations of Egypt would have been classed as 'coloured' or 'Negro'. Christ was a member of the Essene group of Jews from Egypt. Were he alive today he would suffer from racial discrimination.

One of the Nile kingdoms which is much less known than Egypt is that of *Kush* (sometimes called Meroe, which was the capital city for a long time). Kush was situated in the northern Sudan, whose population were black Africans. It was at one time a province of Egypt, but achieved its independence, and built up a society that was scarcely inferior to that of Egypt. In fact, 800 years before the birth of Christ, Kush was powerful enough to invade Egypt and take over the throne of the Pharaohs. Their rule in Egypt came to an end more than a hundred years later, when Hittite armies invaded from Syria armed with superior weapons.

The people of Kush were famous for their manufacture of fine pottery, beads, jewels, ornaments; and they were an important source of gold in the ancient world. The first capital city, Napata, and the second, Meroe, were international trading centres, in touch with Africans in every direction, especially Egypt to the north and Ethiopia to the south-east. Beyond the shores of Africa, they were in touch with Syria, Persia, Rome, Greece and India.

Women played an important part in the political structure of Kush, and this is something found in most parts of black Africa. There were many great Queens of Kush, and it is felt that Candace, mentioned in the Bible as Queen of Ethiopia, may really have been a Queen of Kush.

Kush was not as magnificent as Egypt in the building of pyramids and temples, but in one respect Kush surpassed even the glories of Egypt, and that was in *the manufacture of iron*. Up to today the hills of 'slag' or waste material from iron smelting are still to be seen near Meroe in the Sudan. Meroe was an industrial centre in the heart of Africa, helping to spread the techniques of iron smelting and iron working to other peoples of the continent.

THE NAMES OF KUSH AND MEROE ARE PART OF OUR HISTORICAL HERITAGE AS AFRICANS.

VI

The early history of Ethiopia (part 1)

The area of Ethiopia is 395,000 square miles, which is about ninety times the size of Jamaica. One-third of the area is high land, and it is in highland Ethiopia that most of the early historical developments took place. This highland was a natural defence against invasion and also a barrier to easy communications with the rest of Africa. In fact, within Ethiopia itself, steep valleys divide the mountains and make it difficult to get from one place to another. The Abai or Blue Nile separates the northern highlands of Amhara and Gojjam from those of Shoa to the south.

The isolated hilltops or *ambas* as they are called were often used as mountain fortresses or as monasteries, such as those of Debra Libanos and Debra Tabor.

Ethiopia is a land of diversity. Many different factors came together to form the Ethiopian empire and culture. There are several different peoples, with different languages, different ways of making a living and different religions. Among the principal



groups we find the Amhara, Asau and Galla. The Amhara speak a language which is called 'Semitic' (related to the Jewish language), while other peoples speak languages related to Arabic or to other African languages such as the Nilotic.

On the fertile highlands, the farmers grew the varieties of millet contributed by Ethiopia to Africa and the world. On the grasslands we find 'pastoralists'—individuals who specialise in the rearing of cattle; and from early times fishing was of importance in the lakes and rivers. Naturally, modern Ethiopia has many other kinds of workers and skills which were not present from the earliest days.

Many people are surprised by the diversity of religion which still exists in Ethiopia today. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is supreme within the state, but there are large numbers of Muslims and animists (Africans following the old religion of their forefathers), and there are even a number of Jews. All of these people, in spite of different languages, religions, etc., are subjects of the same government, which is today under H.I.M. Emperor Haile Selassie I.

Ethiopians can differ in skin colour from light-brown to jet black, but none of them are really different from the black Africans outside Ethiopia. White propaganda likes to suggest that the achievements of Ethiopia are not the achievements of Africa. Marcus Garvey knew about this lying propaganda and made it look ridiculous. He wrote as follows:

'Professor George A. Kersnor, after describing the genius of the Ethiopians and their high culture during the period of 750 B.C. to A.D. 350 in middle Africa, declared the Ethiopians were not African Negroes. He described them as dark coloured races showing a mixture of black blood. Imagine a dark coloured man in middle Africa being anything else but a Negro. Some white men, whether they be professors or not, certainly have a wide range of imagination.'

Ancient Ethiopia before the coming of Christianity. In the Ethiopian highlands in ancient times the main group of people were the Agau. Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ many people from the Yemen and Arabia crossed the Red Sea into Ethiopia. These were known as *Sabeans*, and they brought the language of Ge'ez which is still used in the Ethiopian church.

The Sabeans were interested in trade, and they set up a number of trading ports and towns on the Eritrean coast of the Red Sea and in the nearby mountains. By far the most

important of these towns was *Axum* in the highlands of Tigrea, and Axum was the foundation upon which the Christian empire was later built. Axum (and its Red Sea port of Adulis) were centres of international trade, exporting perfumes, incense, ivory and gold to Egypt, Persia, Syria, India and throughout the Greek and later the Roman empire. As such Axum was also a centre of culture, and one of its early kings, Zoscales, spoke and wrote Greek perfectly.

Above all, Axum and similar centres created the first elements of a special Ethiopian culture. The Sabeans became Ethiopians. The relations between the newcomers and the previous inhabitants produced the Amharic language and produced a special form of architecture not found anywhere else outside of Ethiopia. A strong kingdom grew up which spread from Tigrea further into Ethiopia and also across the Red Sea into Yemen and Arabia. Less powerful rulers had to pay tribute to the king of Axum, so that even before the coming of Christianity the king of Ethiopia was a 'king of kings'.

VII

The Development of the Ethiopian Church and Amharic Culture

Just before the coming of Christianity to the empire of Axum there were three different forms of religion — (i) Animist (traditional) beliefs and reverence for ancestors, (ii) Belief in the Gods of Arabia, such as Mahrem, the God of War, (iii) The Jewish faith.

Conversion began in the province of Tigre which was the centre of the ancient empire of Axum. The Christian nature of the Ethiopian kingdom is traced back to the union of Solomon and Sheba, and is recorded in the *Kebra Nagast* or 'the Glory of Kings'.

Many Europeans consider the *Kebra Nagast* and the account of the union of Solomon and Sheba as nothing but a fable with no truth whatsoever. They claim that Sheba was in Arabia and not in Ethiopia, and that Christianity entered Ethiopia for the first time 330 years after the birth of Christ. There are Greek documents which say that about the year A.D. 330, Azana, the king of Axum, was converted to Christianity by Frumentius, a Syrian bishop sent by the Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt.

On the question of the relations of Solomon with Sheba, it must be remembered that Ethiopia ruled large parts of

Arabia, so that even if Sheba was in Arabia, the 'Queen of Sheba' would still have been one of the titles of the Queen of Ethiopia. Furthermore, even if it is impossible to prove the matter historically one way or another, the *Kebra Nagast* still remains a vital cultural document, which correctly emphasises the ancient nature of the link between Ethiopia and the Hebrew world before the birth of Christ. This document is a symbol of Amharic culture, for that culture developed out of the relations between Africa and the Near East.

The presence of the *Falashas* or 'Black Jews' in Ethiopia is a very important fact. Some authorities consider them to be one of the ten 'lost tribes' of Israel, and they were among the earliest inhabitants of Ethiopia. This is proved by the fact that their beliefs and system of worship go back to the pattern set by Moses, and they had no knowledge of the more recent developments in the Jewish faith such as the *Talmud* (the Bible of the modern Jews).

Ethiopia was a major centre in the 'Biblical world' — along with Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. It is clear that Christianity must have begun to spread in Ethiopia from the earliest days of Christ's teachings. What probably happened is that there was a struggle until Christianity gradually became the official religion, and Ethiopia became part of the structure of the international church.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has certain special features:

- (a) It is a church based on the people and their way of life. Even when converting 'animists' to Christianity, it respected their previous culture and adopted part of it. For example, while the Western church always tries to suppress African music and any popular music, the Ethiopian church worshipped and celebrated to the sound of drums and other instruments of the people.
- Similarly, while the common people of Europe were spoken to by priests in the unknown tongue of Latin, the people of Ethiopia used their own languages (Ge'ez and Amharic) to express themselves inside and outside of the church.
- (b) Some of the ancient Hebrew practices of the Ethiopian *Falashas* were also respected, such as the ban against the eating of pork.
- (c) The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has preserved many of the features of the early Christian Church, and many of the books in their worship are considered to be 'apo-

cryptal' by the Western church. According to the Western church of Europe, the books of Enoch, Jubilees, Ecclesiasticus are not authentic, but these Biblical books which the Ethiopians have today were translated into Ge'ez long before the Western world was familiar with Christian writings.

- (d) The Ethiopian Church has a strong tradition of monasticism. Individuals withdrew from the daily life of society to become monks or hermits in isolated places on the *ambas* or mountaintops. This was due to the influence of the Eastern church, for as part of a world religion, the Ethiopian orthodox faith had international connections. Ethiopian tradition explains that Frumentius or *Abba Salama* was important because he was the first man with authority to ordain priests in Ethiopia under the Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt. Up until 1948, the *Abuna* or Archbishop of Ethiopia was consecrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria.

The Ethiopian church has survived for centuries in spite of many dangers. The first threat came from the 'animist' Agau peoples. In the 10th century, the Agau under their Queen Ester, defeated the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. For 133 years the Solomonic line was deposed by a royal dynasty called the *Zagwe*. However, some of these Zagwe rulers were zealous Christians and kept the Christian empire alive. The most famous Zagwe was called Lalibala. He ruled at the end of the 12th century and built 11 of the remarkable rock churches of Ethiopia. (They were carved out of solid rock.)

When the Solomonic dynasty returned in A.D. 1270, they had to fight against the Jews (*Falashas*) and the Muslims. The important thing to notice is that when the Jews and Muslims were overcome militarily, they still had a place in the social, political and economic life of Ethiopia.

VIII

The Western Sudan

Today, the name 'Sudan' is given to the independent African nation which has borders with Egypt and Ethiopia. In earlier times, the whole of Africa south of the Sahara Desert was called in Arabic *Bilad es Sudan*, which means 'Land of the Blacks', and the term 'Western Sudan' referred to an area which today includes the independent states of Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Upper Volta and Chad, along

with the northern part of Nigeria. This is an area of the greatest importance in the development of African history and culture.

The Western Sudan was an area of grassland and woodland, which had great advantages over the desert country to the north and over the thick forests to the south. It was possible to make rapid progress in agriculture, and this region of Africa produced several new grains suitable for human consumption — three of the most widely used being sorghum, penneisetum and a species of rice which grows in flooded fields.

The Western Sudan was also quick to borrow and master the technical skills of mining and refining iron, after these skills became known in Egypt, Meroe and North Africa. Using iron tools, the inhabitants of the region produced a supply of food which allowed the population to expand.

Apart from food crops they also brought into use a certain variety of cotton. Skilled workers were engaged in the manufacture of iron, cloth and pottery, and through the exchange of goods over long distances there arose the need for professional traders. The society had therefore become specialised in its economic operation.

The fact that people could move about easily in the open countryside meant that there were constant contacts between the different sections of the Western Sudan. For instance, this was one of the few areas of Africa where it was possible to use horses in large numbers. It means that there was a reasonable degree of unity where things such as language and religion were concerned. It means, too, that there were numerous little things (such as the way people dressed, the way they cooked their meals and the way they greeted each other) which were all done in the same way. There was, therefore a common culture or way of life in the Western Sudan — a culture that was part of the broader African pattern, but which had certain special features, as we have seen in the case of the Amharic Ethiopian culture.

One of the distinguishing features of the Western Sudan was the fact that it kept producing large kingdoms and political empires. From the earliest centuries of the Christian era right up to the arrival of European colonialists in the last century, the Western Sudan has not lacked complex political states covering huge areas of territory.

It is necessary to conclude the discussion on the Western Sudan, and on the empire of Mali in particular.

Its founder was Sundiata Keita, a political and military

genius. Modibo Keita, the first head of state of the republic of Mali, is a descendant of Sundiata Keita. Obviously, this is a source of pride and confidence for the inhabitants of that part of Africa, but we too can share those feelings.

Another famous name in the history of Mali was Mansa Kankan Musa, who was noted both for his military skill and his devotion to Islam. He made a famous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, carrying 100 camel loads of gold, most of which was spent in Egypt and caused dislocation of the Egyptian economy. Mansa Kankan Musa became a legend not only in his own country but also in Egypt, Italy and Arabia, for after his pilgrimage all world maps clearly and accurately included the country of Mali.

That sort of journey had great economic and cultural consequences. It was followed by the exchange of diplomatic missions, and by the arrival in Mali of architects, craftsmen and Muslim teachers. Most foreign visitors went to the city of *Timbuctu*. In the English language 'Timbuctu' is often used in the sense of 'the most backward place on earth'. Yet, as long ago as the 14th century, when Europe was emerging from its own 'Dark Ages', Timbuctu was the largest city in West Africa and one of the most famous in the world as a centre of gold trade and as a city of learning. There were numerous schools at all levels, using the Arabic language; and the Sankore mosque was the home of a University producing theologians, lawyers, linguists and geographers. A visitor to Timbuctu about 450 years ago wrote as follows: 'In Timbuctu there are numerous judges, doctors and clerics all receiving good salaries from the king. He pays great respect to men of learning. There is a great demand for books in manuscript, imported from Barbary. More profit is made from the book trade than from any other line of business.' In a city which was renowned for its trade in gold, there was more profit to be made from books than from any other line of business! In other words, learning was valued more highly than gold!

IX

The West African Coast—On the coast the conditions did not permit the growth of huge empires, for the thick forests limited agriculture, population and movement. Nevertheless, there were places where even the serious disadvantages imposed by nature had been partly overcome. Populations had grown large and settled enough to allow big political states to come into existence.

The two most important areas of development were the western section of Nigeria and the mouth of the River Congo.

As in the Western Sudan, the small states of Western Nigeria and lower Congo had grown until they controlled other small states on the basis of family relationships.

The Yoruba—In Western Nigeria there was a single culture and language which is called Yoruba. The Yoruba were established at Ile-Ife by about the 12th century A.D., and shortly afterwards they set up another centre at Oyo. In fact Oyo became more important politically, militarily and economically, but Ile-Ife remained the spiritual and constitutional head of Yorubaland. Yoruba traditions spread eastwards to the Edo of Benin at the mouth of the River Niger and westwards into what is now Dahomey, where the kingdoms of Allada, Whydah and Dahomey were established in the 16th century.

The Yoruba and the Edo of Benin had a very stable political system and a well organised economy, but they were famous above all for their sculpture. They produced sculptures in wood, ivory, terracotta (a red clay) and in metals such as iron, bronze and brass. Today, the finely fashioned heads and wall-plaques of Ife and Benin are the wonder of the museum world. When the first examples were discovered by Europeans in the 19th century, they argued that the work was not done by Africans. Perhaps the Greeks or Carthaginians had visited Nigeria a long time ago, they said — or perhaps the sculptures were done by early Portuguese travellers. But slowly the undeniable truth dawned on everyone, and the art treasures of the Yoruba and Edo had to be accepted as examples of African culture.

Africans everywhere (including Haiti and other parts of the West) have shown their tremendous talents in the 'plastic' arts — those which have to do with carving and moulding. The art of Ife and Benin is typical of all Africa in many respects. The really different feature is that it was done in metals, which survive over centuries, while the wood sculpture of other parts of Africa has been the victim of termites, rot, breakages, etc. We know that before the birth of Christ there was a civilisation in Central Nigeria which made terracotta figures similar to those which Ife and Benin were to make in metals from the 12th century onwards. There is little doubt that a developed society flourished in that region throughout the centuries after the birth of Christ.

At Nok, the Africans mined and smelted tin. They imported copper from Takedda, a place in the Sahara; and with the

copper and tin, they were able to make bronze. They lacked zinc which is required to manufacture brass, but they imported brass all the way from the Middle East, which shows how far the Yoruba were able to extend their trade and culture contacts. Probably, this is why some Yoruba still insist that their ancestors came from the Middle East.

The Yoruba manufactured iron, copper, glass beads, cloth and other everyday items such as pottery. The skilled craftsmen were grouped together in guilds, which is exactly the way that skilled workers were organising themselves in Europe at that time. The guilds in western Nigeria were under the control of the rulers of Ife, Oyo and Benin, but they served the interests not just of the royal family but also of the powerful religious societies. Even though these cultures were neither Christian nor Muslim they were religious.

CHAPTER 5

AFRICAN HISTORY IN THE SERVICE OF BLACK REVOLUTION

One of the major dilemmas inherent in the attempt by black people to break through the cultural aspects of white imperialism is that posed by the use of historical knowledge as a weapon in our struggle. We are virtually forced into the invidious position of proving our humanity by citing historical antecedents; and yet the evidence is too often submitted to the white racists for sanction. The white man has already implanted numerous historical myths in the minds of black peoples; and those have to be uprooted, since they can act as a drag on revolutionary action in the present epoch. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to direct our historical activity in the light of two basic principles. Firstly, the effort must be directed solely towards freeing and mobilising black minds. There must be no performances to impress whites, for those whites who find themselves beside us in the firing line will be there for reasons far more profound than their exposure to African history. Secondly, the acquired knowledge of African history must be seen as directly relevant but secondary to the concrete tactics and strategy which are necessary for our liberation. There must be no false distinctions between reflection and action, because the conquest of power is our immediate goal, and the African population at home and abroad is already in combat on a number of fronts.

If there is to be any proving of our humanity it must be by revolutionary means. The Cuban revolution has already demonstrated in this hemisphere the role and achievement of black people as participants in a people's war against imperialism. They were a despised minority in the period of U.S. hegemony, but the dignity which they have achieved in the process of the Cuban revolution is itself eliminating the initial necessity to draw distinction along the lines of race and colour. Interest in the African revolution, in African plastic arts and drama and in the history of Africans in the New World, is cultivated in Cuba today at a level that is far above that of neo-colonialist Jamaica, which is 95 per cent black. In Jamaica, a recent proposal to teach African history and an African

language in the schools was turned down by the 'black' Prime Minister. The conclusion is clear — Jamaican freedom fighters will read some African history in the course of preparing for an engaging in hostilities; but the struggle will not wait until the re-education of the mass of the black people reaches an advanced stage.

In response to the demand for more black culture and history, the national bourgeoisie of the U.S.A. has adopted a technique different from that of their neo-colonialist puppets in the West Indies. Having that security which comes from the possession of capital, they feel confident in making certain concessions to black culture in their educational institutions and media of public communications. As always, they concede the lesser demand to maintain the total structure of white capitalist domination, hoping to siphon off young blacks into a preoccupation with African history and culture divorced from the raw reality of the American system as it operates on both the domestic and international front. That gambit must not work. Imagine the juicy contradictions — Rockefeller finances chair on African history from the profits of exploiting South African blacks and upholding apartheid! Black revolutionaries study African culture alongside of researchers into germ warfare against the Vietnamese people!

We blacks in the Americas have missed the opportunity when a more leisurely appraisal of our past might have been possible. It is nearly half a century since Garvey remarked that 'the white world has always tried to rob and discredit us of our history', and in that period far too few blacks made the effort to enrich themselves and brothers by acquiring a knowledge of African history. In 1929, Norman E. Cameron, a black man from Guyana, wrote the first volume of *THE EVOLUTION OF THE NEGRO*, in which he sought to revive the pride and confidence of Africans in the New World by pointing to the achievements of African States in the period prior to the European advent; and the work of Richard Moore has been similar in content and purpose. Now the work of self-revaluation in terms of our African past is taking place within a milieu of social upheaval, and the mechanics of upheaval have first priority on the energy of black people.

African Civilisations

Only after the above preliminary remarks is it possible to engage in discussion on African history as such. It is the purpose of this paper to suggest that emphasis on the highlights of

ancient African civilisations should be complemented by an examination of African culture and history in the same pre-European period. Scholars interested in African history have exhibited a pre-occupation with the highly developed political state, which has led to the casual treatment of the smaller states or the so-called 'stateless societies', where there is no politico-economic entity wider than the family. This means that the present written history of the continent does not touch on the lives of millions of Africans who lived outside of states such as Egypt, Kush, Ethiopia, Ghana, Benin, etc. Even within those kingdoms the historical accounts often concentrate narrowly on the behaviour of elite groups and dynasties; we need to portray the elements of African everyday life and to comprehend the culture of all Africans irrespective of whether they were resident in the empire of Mali or in an Ibo village. In reconstructing African civilisations, the concern is to indicate that African social life had meaning and value, and that the African past is one with which the black man in the Americas can identify with pride. With the same criteria in mind, it is worth noting the following aspects of African social behaviour: hospitality, the role and treatment of the aged, law and public order, and social tolerance.

Numerous reports attest to the hospitality of African communities. Within any village or chiefdom, the codes of hospitality and a spirit of charity prevented the extremes of poverty and abandonment which one finds in richer and supposedly more mature societies. The African extended-family was in itself an agency for mutual aid and welfare; and the family connections led to the clan, where a similar pattern unfolds. The common ancestor shared by all clan members is a very vague figure on the borders between history and legend, many generations distant, but a clan brother is a brother. He was welcomed, housed and fed if he turned up at the compound of another clan member whom he had never seen before. The greater the status of the individual, the greater his obligation to have an open house for all, although he did get something in return, for the reciprocal exchange of gifts was a common practice.

Africans approached their earliest European acquaintances in the same hospitable and charitable manner that was normal in dealings among themselves. They called the white men 'honoured guests', they gave them protection and love, they plied them with gifts; and it took Africans some time to realise

that Europeans worshipped strange gods called Money and Profit. African society did not prove immune to those gods, but right up to the present one finds comments on the warmth of African hospitality, emerging from the whole social conscience and not just from unusually well-disposed members of the community.

Because of the extended-family system and the universal hospitality, the aged were fortunately free of the problems of sustenance. They played self-fulfilling and socially satisfying roles within their communities. While old age was a liability in a New World plantation and throughout the capitalist world, in Africa advanced age brought honour, increased respect and authority. The gerontocratic bias of African society meant that a great deal of power and authority was based on seniority in age. An elder was learned and wise because he had had maximum exposure to life in that society, as well as to all of the formal education which was available. As a young man he had spent several months in the 'Bush School', where he had received instructions prior to initiation; later he had graduated from successive age-groups or through several levels of a fraternity, where secret knowledge was revealed at each stage; and finally an elder would himself be a teacher. In a state system, elders tutored the prospective ruler and advised the ruling king; while in 'stateless societies' they were the sole repositories of historical, spiritual and legal knowledge. In both sets of situations they had to be informed and alert because of their responsibilities.

In the great empires of the Western Sudan, Berber and Arab visitors from North Africa never failed to be impressed by the security afforded to goods and persons, even when movement over long distances was involved. The movement of traders along the 'paths' in Akan country was equally safe, and these conditions existed in much more humble African societies. The Senegalese Djola, long resident in lineage groups in the Casamance region, were described by Mungo Park as 'barbarous', but he found that he could leave his personal possessions among the Djola for months on end without suffering any losses. This public order was maintained not by an extensive police force, but by the constraint of the community as a whole. Of course, crime did exist in the society, and it was dealt with by a complex code of customary laws, which in recent years have become the subject of scientific enquiry and scholarly treatises. The basic principle of justice was resti-

tution — the object of the legal judgement being to help the wronged party rather than inflict punishment on the offender. It is significant that one hears of nothing resembling a jail within indigenous African society, nor is there any evidence of stocks, fetters and the like. European visitors to West Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries were struck by the mildness and humane nature of the laws. Capital punishment, for example, was rare, being completely absent from some societies.

The attitude of the law suggests an attempt to put into practice the concept of tolerance towards human frailty. Tolerance operated in a number of spheres, religion being the most important. Yoruba religion through Voodoo and Shango, has had a strong impact on the life of Africans in the Caribbean. One scholar who has delved deeply into Yoruba religion has this to say: 'I admire Yoruba paganism first and foremost for its tolerance. It is a religion which provides satisfaction for many different kinds of human temperament. Everyone can worship the divine forces in his own fashion, and there is no rivalry or prejudice between different cults. But there is more than religious tolerance, there is human tolerance. Here the cripples, albinos and other deformed persons have a special god to look after them. They occupy a special position at his shrine, and thus, people who elsewhere are laughed at, are here needed and respected.' African traditional religions are by nature non-imperialistic. Unlike the universal revealed religions, they do not set out to show others light, so that there is no possibility of domination in this sphere. African systems of dynamic belief allowed Islam to exist peacefully for centuries, they allowed the first Christians to enter without demur, and above all the various African religions never waged the religious wars which were so much a part of the history of Europe. Even Christianity in Africa, as represented by the Ethiopian Coptic Church, took on a different and more tolerant aspect. Western Christians mocked the Ethiopian Coptic faith, largely because they despised its syncretisms and its coming to terms with the divergent elements of culture within Ethiopia.

It is to be stressed that while some of the above considerations apply to African society today, they are to be cited in a much earlier historical context. They were noted by Europeans in the 15th century, and were obviously in operation long before then. In other words, while the citizens of Songhai, Ife, Kongo, Monomotapa were creating the conditions for

living in large territorial states, other Africans were not steeped in darkness.

That, after all, is the great myth which we are still struggling to discard from the minds of our own brothers and sisters here in the Americas. Their fear is that the Africa which they left is one of primordial savagery; they visualise ape-like blacks swinging from tree to tree; and hear the licking of cannibal chops. To dispel this myth it is invariably necessary to begin by pointing out that Africa, too, had great buildings and great states similar to those which emerged in the history of those countries where our white oppressors and denigrators reside. Both to complement and to transcend that type of instruction, we have also to base ourselves solidly within the culture of Africa.

It is possible to compare the Western Sudan between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries with Europe in the Dark and Middle Ages, and the comparison is advantageous to Africa on many points. But from there it is possible to fall into the trap of believing that the political state is the only meaningful form of social development and to feel bemused as a black man because Europe pursued that form to the full in succeeding centuries, while Africa did not. Quite apart from the fact that stagnation in the 'Third World' was causally related to advance in Western Europe, the argument about civilisations leads into a cul-de-sac when we do not reject European cultural egocentricity. In this instance, the whites have merely selected a facet of their own culture which is outstanding — namely, the ability to bring together millions in a single political unit — and they have then used this as a universal yardstick for measuring the inherent worth of cultures and races. (The classic example of this cultural egocentricity is the statement that 'the black man never invented the wheel'.)

What is most fundamental is an attempt to evaluate the African contribution to the solution of the problems posed by man's existence in society; and hence the stress placed in this paper on matters pertaining to social relations: codes of hospitality, processes of the law, public order and social and religious tolerance. In each of those areas of human social activity, African norms and practices were given a high value by Europeans themselves. They often reflected that the hospitality they saw in an African village was lacking in their communities; that the security of goods and persons in Africa stood in marked contrast to brigandage and depredations in Europe; and that

the restraint of African law with respect to capital punishment was to be set off against the fact that dozens of offences were still punishable by death in Western Europe up to the 16th century. On the other hand, African norms were frustrating to capitalists. For instance the whites resented the polite formulae of African greetings since they were lengthy and could delay business for a whole day. One European denounced African hospitality in the following terms: 'The law of hospitality is obstructive of industry. If there is provision in the country, a man who wants it has only to find out who has got any, and he must have his share. If he enters any man's house during his repast, and gives him the usual salutation, the man must invite him to partake. Thus, whatever abundance a man may get by assiduity, will be shared by the lazy; and thus they seldom calculate for more than necessities. But the laws of hospitality are not restrained to diet. A common man cannot quietly enjoy a spare shirt or a pair of trousers. Those who are too lazy to plant or hunt are also too lazy to trade.'

The above is a beautiful set-piece of the moral terminology of capitalist accumulation — the 'assiduous' and the 'industrious' who will inherit the earth, while those who do not share grace are the ones who were 'lazy'. It pointedly illustrates the difference between the African and European cultures. A lot is known about the dialectical development of European society, but very little about that of Africa prior to and immediately after it was drawn into trade relations with Europe and the Americas. However, the few studies which exist suggest that the two continents were fundamentally different in ethos and were not moving in the same direction. Even within the empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, the explosiveness of class contradictions was lacking, as Diop stresses in his *Nations Negres et Culture*. In the states of Ashante and Dahomey, whose growth was contemporaneous with European mercantilism, there was no concept of the 'market' in the sense of supply and demand, and the social redistribution of goods made accumulation impossible. The most pronounced line of growth was not economic but cultural. There were a few nuclei representing distinctive ways of organising life, and these were spreading — the Mande, Akan, Yoruba and Hausa being among the best-known from West Africa. European commerce (and the slave trade in particular) deflected the course of their historical advance.

The difference between African and European historical formation made the white men 'superior' in the operative

sense, for they were able to establish hegemony, due to the technology and class dynamic of capitalism. The consequences for Africa were disastrous. Economies were disjointed and oriented externally; anarchy, injustice in the realm of the law, internal slavery and exploitation replaced public security, the human operation of the law and the solidarity of the family. But, apart from the measurable negative effects, one must also consider that a fantastic amount of physical and social energy went into the defensive task of sheer survival. We did survive not only in Africa, but on this side of the Atlantic—the greatest miracle of all time! And every day black people in the Americas perform the miracle anew.

Needless to say we do more than just survive. Anguished New World blacks, in the search for dignity, usually ask for elements of unquestioned grandeur in their African past. These can be perceived in the Ife/Benin sculptures, the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa, the carved rock churches of Lalibela, and in a great deal more. But, after all that, we would still lack the understanding that ordinary African life had meaning and value. That is one of the weakest aspects of our perception of the African past; and it is that chink which allows the white propaganda machine to suggest that contemporary distortions in African society represent pure atavism. Congolese and Nigerian problems in particular have been successfully projected among black people as the breaking out of the ancestral savagery of tribalism, once the restraining hand of white civilisation was removed. Of course, in reality these tragic contemporary situations are consequences of neo-colonial forces impinging on African colonial society, just as colonialism in its mercantilist and imperialist phases had earlier deformed traditional Africa.

The foregoing remarks should be sufficient to substantiate the proposition that an overall view of ancient African civilisations and ancient African cultures is required to expunge the myths about the African past, which linger in the minds of black people everywhere. This is the main revolutionary function of African history in our hemisphere. Some individuals envisage that this knowledge is a stepping-stone to the active regeneration of an African way of life, but this is far-fetched, except in the case of the African continent itself. For instance, President Nyerere, in his policy document, *Socialism and Rural Development* defined a new Socialist agrarian formation, the *Ujamaa* village, after reflecting on the nature of African

traditional society and the direction in which it was already being transformed within the colonial era and the first years of independence. That exercise by the leadership of the people of Tanzania was regional rather than broadly 'African', and it was as much an exploration of the present as a recovery of the past. Applied to New World blacks, this means in effect that the history nearest to revolutionary action will be the history of Africans in their new American environments.

CHAPTER 6

THE FOUNDINGS WITH MY BROTHERS

The Government of Jamaica, which is Garvey's homeland, has seen it fit to ban me, a Guyanese, a black man, and an African. But this is not very surprising because though the composition of that Government — of its Prime Minister, the Head of State and several leading personalities — though that composition happens to be predominantly black, as the Brothers at home say, they are all white-hearted.

These men serve the interests of a foreign, white capitalist system and at home they uphold a social structure which ensures that the black man resides at the bottom of the social ladder. He is economically oppressed and culturally he has no opportunity to express himself. That is the situation from which we move.

There has recently, just tonight in fact, come to my attention a statement which is entitled 'Text of Statement' by the Honourable H. L. Shearer, Prime Minister of Jamaica, made in the House of Representatives on October 17, regarding the exclusion of Dr Walter Rodney. I, up till now, have not got reasons for the ban imposed on me and probably I shall make some reference to this document as I go along.

But first, let me indicate this, that the Government of Jamaica, in so far as it has attempted to stifle the aspirations of the masses and in so far as it believed that my removal from the scene is going to aid in stifling the masses, are making a serious mistake. This act in itself will not delay their day of judgement. Indeed, these fellows know this, they know the present state of affairs cannot go on forever, and this is what creates the atmosphere of fear, this is what allows them to take such stupid and panic-stricken measures.

First and foremost for the benefit of some West Indians who still refuse to appreciate that our society is racist, I would like to give a slight historical analysis of the problem. West Indian society is a veritable laboratory of racialism. We virtually invented racialism. Because it was in the slave system on the slave plantation that the fantastic gap between master and slave was translated into a feeling on the part of the white slavemaster that he had inherently to be superior to that black man who

was slaving out in the fields. It was the white plantation owner who produced a number of pseudo-scientific and theological theories attesting to the inferiority of the black man. Ours was the society in which modern racialism was engendered, and it has developed and intensified since then, assuming certain subtle but nevertheless vicious forms based on colour and based on a hierarchy which presupposes that black is the lowest natural colour of things, and that white is at the top. That is the society from which we come and the particular society has added a new dimension to the bag of tricks which racialists have. That dimension is to try to confuse the people.

It goes like this. They claim that in our society we cannot talk about black and white because we have these gradations of shades. We have many peoples, we are told. Ninety-five per cent of the Jamaican population is clearly black, the other 5 per cent is divided into these shades, and we are told we have many peoples. It is a harmonious multi-racial society, we are told. It is an integrated society, we are told. It reminds me of Ted Jones' poem, 'Integrated Nigger'. It is a myth of the ruling class, and it is a subtle myth, an important myth because it does in fact have a certain appeal. It talks about multi-racial and harmonious living which nobody on a theoretical level would oppose. This is what we are struggling for.

The lie is that harmony exists and the black people show it up to be a lie, sometimes quite spectacularly. This month, October, is Paul Bogle's month, that great black Jamaican patriot who marched and as he marched he said — 'Remember your colour and cleave to the black'. Marcus Garvey was also in the same category. Garvey's appeal was to all black men, whether they were in Jamaica or outside. And even when there were not great leaders present, the mass of the people have constantly been acting against this system. In our epoch the Rastafari have represented the leading force of this expression of black consciousness. They have rejected this philistine white West Indian society. They have sought their cultural and spiritual roots in Ethiopia and Africa. So that whether there is a big flare up or not, there is always the constant activity of the black people who perceive that the system has nothing in it for them, except suppression and oppression.

Now the Government is terribly afraid of the question of colour. This is something I've learned from living in Jamaica for a period of time. They would much rather you talk about Communism, so that they could tell country people, 'He is a

Communist, he wants to take your goats and chickens', and do those Jamaican peasants want you to take their goats? No man! And they are very right too, so what government men are afraid of is the question of colour. They are afraid of that tremendous historical experience of the degradation of the black man being brought to the fore. They do not want anybody to challenge their myth about 'Out of Many, One People' and a harmonious multi-racial society, and they show it in various ways. They will ban people from coming to the country like James Foreman, Stokely Carmichael. They will ban the literature of Malcolm X, Elijah Mohammed, Stokely Carmichael. The black Jamaican Government, in case you do not know it, have banned all publications by Stokely Carmichael, publications by Elijah Mohammed, all publications by Malcolm X. I hope Stokely does not go and write a book on Cookery or some such thing. It would be banned in Jamaica.

In my own case, to give you a small example, I went to the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation. I pre-recorded a programme on Black Power and the white power system said that they are not using that programme, when they saw what came out of it. A small example but a token of things to come, no doubt. Because the system does not want you to open the issues, they do not want anybody to articulate those grievances which the masses are talking about all the time.

Now, what is my position? What is the position of all of us because we fall in the category of the black West Indian intellectual, a privilege in our society? What do we do with that privilege? The traditional pattern is that we join the Establishment, the black educated man in the West Indies is as much a part of the system of oppression as the bank managers and the plantation overseers.

The system will give you a nice house, a front lawn, a car, a reasonable bank balance. They will say, 'Sell your black soul'. That is the condition upon which you exist as a so-called intellectual in the society. How do we break out of this Babylonian Captivity? I suggest three ways. I suggest first that the intellectual, the academic, within his own discipline, has to attack those distortions which white imperialism, white cultural imperialism have produced in all branches of scholarship. In fact what I was attempting to do in the Congress of Black Writers earlier was to talk about that sort of thing and its relationship to African History. Of course, the white press of Canada did not see fit to talk about those points. I think I

saw it only in the *McGill Daily*. They were more concerned with nice little juicy bits about violence. We will give them some tit-bits as we go along.

My second point is that the black intellectual has to move beyond his own discipline to challenge the social myth, which exists in the society as a whole. In other words, this myth about the multi-racial society. This is the sort of thing which we have a duty to perform to the black people from whom we came.

Thirdly, *the black intellectual, the black academic must attach himself to the activity of the black masses*. I shall not deal with point one on this occasion. I shall concentrate on points two and three. I shall try to exemplify my own role in the period while I was there in Jamaica.

I begin by stating first and foremost that the struggle was there long before I went and will continue long after I have left. I am simply trying to analyse that particular conjunction of forces as I saw them when I attempted to get in touch with the black people, to perform these two functions: attacking the myth, the various myths rather, and getting in touch, working with the people. On the first level, as far as Black Power was concerned, the response of the population was automatic because this is what they are doing, this is what they are talking about. They can tell you and I about Black Power, but I'll indicate this later on. You can learn from them what Black Power really means. You do not have to teach them anything. You just have to say it and they add something to what you are saying.

So the mass response was there, and the Government response was also clearly there. They in their panic were quick to come out against this new spectre, Black Power. For my own part, I was prepared to make these statements in public and around me there gathered a nucleus and a movement was born calling itself the Black Power Movement. Unfortunately I have not brought the aims along with me, but you will find them highly respectable even in the terms of the system. We went outside the University and we talked to Black Brothers and Black Sisters and this the society, this the system could not tolerate. Even more, let us talk about the activities. I lectured at the University, outside of the classroom that is. I had public lectures, I talked about Black Power and then I left there, I went from the campus. I was prepared to go anywhere that any group of Black people were prepared to sit down to talk and listen. Because, that is Black Power, that

is one of the elements, a sitting down together to reason, to 'ground' as the Brothers say. We have to 'ground together'. There was all this furore about whites being present in the Black Writers Congress which most whites did not understand. They do not understand that our historical experience has been speaking to white people, whether it be begging white people, justifying ourselves against white people or even villifying white people. Our whole context has been, 'that is the man to talk to'.

Now the new understanding is that Black Brothers must talk to each other. That is a very simple understanding which any reasonable person outside of a particular 'in-group' would understand. That is why we talk about our 'family discussions'. Now when I went out, as I said, I would go to the radio if they wanted me, I would speak on television if they allowed me. I spoke at the Extra-Mural Centre. Now these are all highly respectable and I would go further down into West Kingston and I would speak wherever there was a possibility of our getting together. It might be in a sports club, it might be in a schoolroom, it might be in a church, it might be in a gully. (Those of you who come from Jamaica know those gully corners.) They are dark, dismal places with a black population who have had to seek refuge there. You will have to go there if you want to talk to them. I have spoken in what people call 'dungle', rubbish dumps, for that is where people live in Jamaica. People live in rubbish dumps. That is where the Government puts people to live. Indeed, the Government does not even want them to live in rubbish dumps. I do not know where they want them to go because they bulldoze them off the rubbish dumps and send them God knows where. I have sat on a little oil drum, rusty and in the midst of garbage, and some Black Brothers and I have grounded together. Now obviously, this, first of all, must have puzzled the Jamaican Government. I must be mad, surely, a man we are giving a job, we are giving status, what is he doing with these guys. Shearer calls them all manner of names there in this paper, you know: 'criminals and hooligans'. What is he doing with them? So they are puzzled and then obviously after that suspicion, he must be up to something, as the paper will try to imply. But we spoke, we spoke about a lot of things and it was just the talking that was important, the meeting of black people. I was trying to contribute something. I was trying to contribute my experience in travelling, in reading, my analysis, and I was also gaining as I will indicate.

Now for the Government of Jamaica and this statement; I cannot go into it. I have a lot of ambiguous reactions to it. At one level I want to tear it apart, but there are reasons why I do not want to tear it apart. The first is that all the charges made here are either irrelevant, frivolous or vague, and I cannot put forward any defence against such. You know, it is like that trick question: a man comes up and asks you, have you stopped beating your wife; he makes the assumption that you are beating your wife, and asks you, have you stopped. So it is that sort of nonsense, they throw out a little thing and then get you to grab the bait; and there is another reason why I would not defend myself against this. People like this man here, the so-called, the Dishonourable H. L. Shearer, Prime Minister of Jamaica, this traitor to the Black Race, has no moral authority to lay accusations against me. What I will give instead is not a defence, it is an explanation. It is an attempt to make an analysis of what was going on in the hope that this has some meaning for other people who are either within the struggle today or would like to join the struggle. For the educated black man, as I said, the principles are clear. There are three possibilities open to him and it seems to me that if he does not follow every single one of those three, and perhaps some more that he can think of, he is not fulfilling any function as far as our people are concerned, except the function of oppressing them. Let me refer to another statement which I made which the white press found very irritating — that all white people are enemies until proved otherwise, and this applies to black intellectuals, all of us are enemies to the people until we prove otherwise. It is not just a question of student riots.

The students have demonstrated, which is good. They came out, they heard a University Lecturer was banned, they got no reason, which is the normal procedure of the Jamaican Government (it does not give reasons for things). They came out, they started to walk along the roads, the police started to tear gas them, they started to beat them with batons and night sticks and something flared up, relatively small, but it is a great advance I tell you. There is no more bourgeois campus in the world than the University of the West Indies. Yes, I was there, in my time this would not have happened: they might have demonstrated about bad food in the halls, or in solidarity with South Africans, you know, on quite harmless issues as far as the Jamaican Government was concerned. However, they moved, and that in itself is a good thing, but

there was more to it than that. The Black Brothers in Kingston, Jamaica moved against the Government of Jamaica. That is the point that must come home. Let us stop calling it student riots. What has happened in Jamaica is that the black people of the city of Kingston have seized upon this opportunity to begin their indictment against the Government of Jamaica.

Now, let us see what happened. As far as I can gather 50 buses were overturned and burnt. Fourteen major fires were started in different parts of the city; certain known enemies of the people were spat upon, dragged out of their cars and beaten, shop windows were wrecked. I gather that downtown Kingston looks as if Hurricane Flora has just passed through. Now let us get this abundantly clear — this did not happen as an isolated incident, that is part of a whole social malaise, that is revolutionary activity. It has only marginal significance as far as my ban is concerned. The significance is that the brothers see that I am a spokesman for their cause and the Jamaica Government is so brazen as to stop me from returning. That is the incident that triggered it off, but beneath that, there is a whole range of short-term and long-term considerations which we must take into mind. Take for instance the fact that those 50 buses were burned; that is not just coincidental for those who know Jamaican society. The J.O.S., which is the private company running transport in Kingston, is one of the most notorious companies in Jamaica. There is a strike there every other day. It is notorious from the point of view of its relationships with the workers and just recently it decided to hike the fares as far as the people were concerned. Now, imagine the poor people of Jamaica standing in the hot sun, waiting on the bus, having to pay increased fares and while they are struggling to find the 4d, for that is what the fares have gone up to, here is a whole set of guys flashing by in some cars longer than you can see out here in Montreal. You have to go to Jamaica to see long cars, you know. That little middle-class there, they love to show off. The bigger the car the better. A little petty city and they fill it up with American cars, and they jump around and they feel so pleased with themselves. And the black man is there and he has not got 4d for a bus fare. So when those 50 buses were burnt, it was that type of issue that was involved. The brothers who were in that struggle, unemployed, they have no housing, they have no education, they have no prospects in the society, save to go to what the Brothers call 'Must Pen' — May Pen Burial

Cemetery. They call it 'Must Pen', you must go there.

That is what has been going on in the society. So if we have to take a stand, we have to take a stand perhaps on the first issue, say the immoral, shameless conduct of the Jamaica Government in issuing this ban. But it is not the first and presumably will not be the last such action on their part. We also have to take a stand of solidarity behind those Black Brothers. We also have to recognise that three more martyrs have been added to the long list of Black Martyrs in Jamaica in recent days. We will have to find out their names. We will have to sing their praises.

This is not an issue which is isolated. In fact, as I speak here, I would like to feel perhaps that what I am saying in one form or another will reach the brothers and therefore it is a message both to you and to them. And above all, I would like to indicate my own gratification for that experience which I shared with them. Because I learnt. I got knowledge from them, real knowledge. You have to speak to Jamaican Rasta, and you have to listen to him, listen very carefully and then you will hear him tell you about the Word. And when you listen to him, and you can go back and read *Muntu*, an academic text, and read about *Nomo*, an African concept for Word, and you say, Goodness the Rastas know this, they knew this before Janheinz Jahn. You have to listen to them and you hear them talk about Cosmic Power and it rings a bell. I say, but I have read this somewhere, this is Africa. You have to listen to their drums to get the Message of the Cosmic Power.

And when you get that, know you get humility, because look who you are learning from. The system says they have nothing, they are the illiterates, they are the dark people of Jamaica. Our conception of the whole world is that white is good and black is bad, so when you are talking about the man is dark, you mean he is stupid. He has a dark mind. So that is what the system says. But you learn humility after you get into contact with these brothers. And it is really great. I am giving here now a personal reaction. I find my colleagues, my so-called peers, white people, black bourgeoisie all frustrate me and I get annoyed. I find it difficult to conduct a discussion. I am more likely than not to tell them a few bad words after a while. And by and large, I do not think it is good for the personality, probably makes you contemptuous, haughty and so on, that you have seen and they have not seen. But with

the black brothers you learn humility because they are teaching you. And you get confidence too, you get a confidence that comes from an awareness that our people are beautiful. Beauty is in the very existence of black people.

Now we have gone through a historical experience through which by all accounts we should have been wiped out. We have been subjected to genocidal practices. Millions raped from the West African continent, a system of slavery in the West Indies which was designed to kill people. The documents are there. White slavemasters used to conduct a discussion. They said, look we have some blacks, what to do with them? Is it better to let him grow old and work for us for an extended period of time, or should we let him work for a specified period of time, work him so hard and let him die, and buy a fresh slave? And the consensus of opinion was this, take a prime African black, work him to death in five years, and you make a profit. So the system aimed at killing us out!

Now not only have we survived as a people but the Black Brothers in Kingston, Jamaica in particular, these are brothers who, up to now, are every day performing a miracle. It is a miracle how those fellows live. They live and they are physically fit, they have a vitality of mind, they have a tremendous sense of humour, they have depth. How do they do that in the midst of the existing conditions? And they create, they are always saying things. You know that some of the best painters and writers are coming out of the Rastafari environment. The black people in the West Indies have produced all the culture that we have, whether it be steelband or folk music. Black bourgeoisie and white people in the West Indies have produced nothing! Black people who have suffered all these years create. That is amazing.

So these are things you learn when you are in contact with our people. And, therefore, it seems to me that there is something that we have to give. I tried to outline some of the things which I tried to give.