

# THE PEASANT REVOLUTION

## SOME QUESTIONS

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### 1. *The new revolution*

A FEW years ago there began to be great hopes of a new wind of change blowing through the Third World, a fresh impetus to socialism from the backlands. They were inspired by the Cuban success, following on the Chinese, and by Maoist revolutionary preaching; together these seemed to constitute a still more potent version, a New Testament, of Marxism, which having lost its way in Europe was having a rebirth outside.

But no Marxism can work magic; and in some hopes of these last few years there was a flavouring of the miraculous. Many western socialists were the more easily impressed by these prospects because of frustration in their own countries, where labour movements have fallen into narrow parochialism and the left wing has been as much in a blind alley politically as the backward lands economically. It has at times, as a result, seemed inclined to wait for political salvation to come from the wilderness, from eruption of volcanoes that in the West seem extinct. It was almost a new stirring of the old European dream of the noble savage: humanity uncorrupted by the fleshpots of Egypt was to arise from the Andes or the Mountains of the Moon (even, it appeared at times, from Harlem) to accomplish what a degenerate western working class no longer cared to attempt. Blueprints could be got from China for revolution in any social conditions from Stone Age onward. Wishfulness of this kind had shown itself, in fact, even before Maoist doctrine came to endorse it. One foretaste can be recognized in the counsel of despair that made the Indian Communists defeated in 1948 in their strongholds look to border hillmen for new recruits. Today the Naxalite sect of the fragmented C.P.I. is reported to be, with a stiffening now of advice from Peking, seeking support afresh in remote tribal fringes.

Revolution was made in China, and is being made in Vietnam, by a peasantry in the true sense, a solid, settled, close-packed mass of cultivators; a peasantry which is not so often met with outside Asia. Border hillmen, tribal minorities, are as different from it as peasants are from townsmen (and often, as in Vietnam before socialism came, on as bad terms with it), and there has been too much tendency to lump them all together in a common primitiveness. The day of the

true primitive, the Mongol or Berber nomad who used to overturn effete kingdoms, has long gone by. In remote jungles of the Amazon or Congo it may be fairly easy to start a fight which could smoulder for years without presenting any serious challenge to a government. Elsewhere there is every gradation between the "true" or Asian peasantry and the primitive tribe. But most peasants of all sorts are miserably poor, and there are vastly more of them than there were industrial workers in the West when these could be thought of as the grand revolutionary force. Daydreams and extravagances apart, many found it easy to believe that the tale of the civil war in China was going to be repeated in the whole backward world: revolution infiltrating and then inundating the countryside, until the towns and industrial centres should be isolated and at last swallowed up in the flood.

Yet tangible results have been meagre. Here and there, in Tanzania for instance, there has been modest progress of a less explosive character. Actual peasant revolt, like working-class revolt before it, has often not come when it might have been expected, and when it has come has most often failed, as the Hukbalahap rising in the Philippines did. Much of the globe, including large areas of Africa and Latin America, has remained as barren of general progress as the developed countries—those of Communist Europe among them—of political progress.

## 2. *Some antecedents*

A glance back at earlier history shows us the peasantry of some European and Asian countries, like France or Russia or China, in a state of insurrection against monarchy and landowners for centuries on end: that is, there was nearly always an outbreak bigger or smaller in one province or another. None of these was successful by itself; the biggest, like the German peasant war of 1524–25 or the Taiping rebellion in China in the mid-nineteenth century, had some urban affiliations, though they too failed. Real success came when peasant revolt coincided with (and did not collide with) movements of other class forces, which did not exist outside Europe before our day. Bourgeois revolution was scarcely possible without peasant backing, as in France in 1789. It might be said that the German peasants failed in 1524–25 because the middle class in the field at the same time was too weak; and, conversely, that the German middle class failed in 1848 because the peasant movement then in the field was too weak. It might further be conjectured that socialist revolution, in turn, failed to come about in the western countries for lack of a big, mutinous peasantry to reinforce the working class; in Germany for example in 1919. At any rate there has been no successful socialist revolution without a massive peasant revolution running alongside working-class militancy, as in

Russia in 1917 (just as in 1789 it ran parallel with bourgeois ambitions). In China, peasant revolt guided by socialist ideas and cadres actually superseded the working class. But there was a very special combination of factors in China, too easily overlooked: a peasantry accustomed for ages to anti-feudal revolt, a national spirit, a foreign invasion, and finally a world war that brought the revolution to the brink of success. The Russian revolution had been made possible by the First World War, and the Cuban almost caused a third.

A mass outbreak must either propel the mass forward, or push it mentally, historically, back; and in the past the effect was oftener retrograde than not. Resistance to revolutionary France and Napoleon pushed the peasants of south Italy and Spain further back towards the middle ages; the great Indian uprising against European domination, the Mutiny of the peasant soldiery in 1857, was in many ways atavistic, and so was its Chinese parallel, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. Like the Boxers, Burmese peasant rebels three decades later pinned their faith to magic charms and bullet-proof talismans,<sup>1</sup> and some of the Mau-mau insurgents in Kenya even more recently must have belonged equally to the past. This mental blindness has gone with the style of peasant fighting, which has not often been a modern guerrilla style. The Spanish peasants of 1808-14, who fought on guerrilla lines, only fought in their own districts, and were effective chiefly as auxiliaries to a foreign regular army, Wellington's. Rustics fighting on their own in small bands have been apt to deteriorate and become hardly distinguishable from brigands, which some of their members may indeed have been. But as a rule, the instinct of peasants defying authority has been either to make a sudden brief local tumult, as in France in 1789 or Russia in 1905, or else flock together in unwieldy masses, imitation armies, as in Germany in 1524 or China in 1900. Numbers promoted confidence, a delusive confidence that expressed itself aptly enough in faith in divine protection or magic charms. Small groups need more positive ideas, to keep on fighting and not lose sight of their purpose, as much as they need adequate weapons. Not only political ideas, but proper organization and tactics, must be brought from outside to a peasantry, by men with a better knowledge of the enemy's strength and how it can be combated. True guerrilla warfare is a quite recent and sophisticated development, dovetailing old feeling with new thinking. Recent history shows that the combination is possible, but very far from easy.

A complicating factor is that peasant populations have normally been stratified, in one degree or another, and in many areas, notably in parts of India, this is now deepening. Under older feudal conditions the better-off peasant was often the most rebellious, as in England in 1381, Germany in 1524, France in 1789. Long after hatred grew be-

tween richer and poorer peasant, as in tsarist Russia, the countryside as a whole might continue rebellious. But most old-time outbreaks were fairly brief, sudden flockings together of rioters into bands that any peasant might join in, with one motive or another, including plunder.<sup>7</sup> A modern guerrilla struggle, carefully organized and long sustained, is a very different thing, and may require more united sympathy than can be expected from a peasantry divided into strata or classes, the richer ones well aware of the menace of communism to them as well as to the rulers. It was a vital factor in China and Yugoslavia that there was foreign invasion to draw them together.

### 3. *Latin America and Guevarism*

In the theory of peasant revolution Latin America has had a prominent place. Cuba's leaders have seemed at times to value their own achievement only as the spark to kindle a continental blaze; like Lenin making his seizure of power in 1917 with Europe, rather than Russia, as his hoped-for prize. Wide areas of Latin America may well be thought as incapable as any in the world of any peaceful reform, because of the semi-feudal modes of exploitation that have come down from the past, no longer historically "necessary" or rational, but very hard to shake off. Their vested interests are part and parcel of a ramshackle social structure that its custodians, including those in Wall Street and the White House, are afraid of tampering with for fear of the whole thing collapsing. On the other hand the same state of affairs may have the same paralyzing effect on socialist reform or revolution.

As against any more cautious forecasts, the revolutionary thesis, or messianic vision, has been that devoted bands of volunteers should start armed struggle at once, in the backlands where authority is feeblest, confident that once the fight begins and the sound of guns is heard the population will be drawn-in, first the few and then the many, until the people's army becomes irresistible. Impatience with anything less bold is understandable after caution has so often ended in failure, an abrupt snuffing out of reform either by the local army with its equipment from the U.S. or by the U.S. itself, the policeman of the New World as the tsars once were of Europe. It was to prove this vision that Guevara made his heroic but tragic attempt in Bolivia.

Guevara seems to have thought in terms of a Cuban situation repeated everywhere, a people nearly unanimous against a discredited dictatorship and only waiting for a bold lead. But every revolution is likely to hinder repetition of itself elsewhere by putting the other side on its guard. Besides, Cuba was a very special case, like China, as in fact every country capable of revolutionary pioneering must be. It was small and compact; a plantation economy had produced a semi-proletarianized peasantry; and there were old ingrained habits of

resistance. Except in the superficial form of upper-class faction-fighting, these habits have never had much hold on Latin America either on the national or on the agrarian level. Under Spanish and Portuguese rule the continent was curiously quiescent, thanks partly to the conquered and conquering races each serving as a check on the other. It got its independence in the end too easily. Against Spain indeed sanguinary wars had to be fought, but mostly by a landowning Clite making use of a cannon-fodder of half-wild gauchos and llaneros, half-Indian horsemen of the plains, to which they then returned. The U.S. had to do its own fighting for independence, and it was the British who employed alien—German—soldiery against it. Of later times it must be said that there has been more grumbling and oratory about Yankee overlordship than real effort to throw it off. Cuba had the great, if painful, advantage of being kept under Spanish rule to the end of the 19th century, and going through a long series of slave revolts and then of battles for independence; altogether a toughening education.

On the agrarian plane likewise Latin America's record is not striking; and other things being equal, villages like nations are likelier to be ready for revolt today if they have been long familiar with revolt in the past—as Russian or Chinese peasants were, German peasants after 1525 were not. One grand cause of rustic passivity in Latin America has been, again, the mixture of discordant races. In many regions, particularly some of those like Bolivia where hill and jungle favour guerrilla operations, the peasantry is closer historically to the African level than the European. It is still mainly or largely Indian, of many diverse stocks, with the addition of mixed groups that may be on bad terms with both the "pure" races. In the stagnation of most of the South American interior racial blending or integration has gone on slowly, as in India where millennia after the Aryan occupation there are still big pockets of unassimilated aborigines, as well as the vast number of those whose ancestors were turned into "untouchable" helots.

A kind of passive resistance by the Amerindians to plantation and urban labour led to their replacement in the developing coastal areas by African, Chinese, East Indian coolies; active struggle by such a population, sullenly withdrawn or relegated (again as in India) to the wilds, is another matter. Its forefathers had little share in the wars of independence, except to some extent in Mexico where their involvement was the starting-point of a long-drawn social revolution that has put Mexico ahead of most of the other republics. In other countries they were often drawn, or rather dragged, into inter-state wars, and displayed, in Paraguay above all, some of the military virtues in an astonishing degree. But they were only conscripts, made use of by ruling Clites as gauchos and llaneros had been; and it may be ques-

tioned whether "martial races" moulded by organized, disciplined warfare, like the Germans or modern Turks, are (whether as peasants or as workers) good material for rebellion. The well-drilled serf conscript of the old Prussian army had qualities the opposite, except for courage, of what guerilla warfare calls for.

Compared with most Africans it is a handicap of the Amerindians that they have been for centuries under White domination, physical and—through the Church, so far as it reached them—mental. By contrast with the Cubans, face to face with a foreign-backed ruling clique before their revolution, these Amerindians, whose linguistic boundaries do not coincide with existing political frontiers, have no country, and only form the bottom layer of a society meaningless to them. They can neither strike out a path of their own nor identify themselves with any "national" feelings, even with the anti-U.S. feeling so strong in the towns. Bolivia has been through innumerable "revolutions", that Indians did well to keep clear of for fear of being—quite literally—roped in to fight for one faction or the other. To this day a backwoods Indian seeing a white man firing his gun, even if it happens to be a Guevara, must be expected to react in the same way. One may, in short, be left wondering whether the leaders Amerindia needs today are not men of the school of Gandhi, or Ambedkar, or Danilo Dolce, instead of the school of Guevara.

#### *4. Neo-colonialism and Portuguese imperialism*

How explosive peasant discontents may be depends a good deal on the political cauldron that holds them. In the old imperial territories this has grown in recent years much less rigid, and its elasticity has helped to reduce the internal pressures. Except in a few African areas direct colonial rule has almost disappeared; imperialism has handed over administration to the most conservative local leadership available. Nothing need be lost by such handing over except the salaries of colonial administrators, formerly in British India and French Africa and so on, a very important consideration, and to the Portuguese middle class, it may be, even now, but in general nowadays a triviality. In return for this small sacrifice the foreign capitalist is able to withdraw safely out of sight, and the most tangible incentive to unrest is removed. Rebels, unlettered ones especially, need a vivid, personal image of what they are to fight against. To rise against an invisible overlord might be like rebelling against the law of gravity.

To depict the change as merely formal, or a mere conjuring trick, as communists<sup>3</sup> and nationalists have often done, is too simple. Easy optimism about the capitalist leopard changing its spots is wrong, but so is the dogma of Lenin or Mao that it can never change, except in outward disguise. Socialists underrated for too long after the last world

war the immense resilience of capitalism, when faced by stiff competition from socialism, as a productive system; and it would be another mistake to ignore its mental or political adaptability—no doubt much smaller, but still appreciable. It has changed, and under sufficient prodding and pushing can change further. "Neo-colonialism", its present phase in relation to the undeveloped regions, has all kinds of shades, depending on the energy of local leaders, the extent of foreign interest in local resources, and other factors. At the lowest it must be regarded as an advance on the old colonial methods; it loosens things up, makes further advance possible, though far from certain. It might be compared with the emancipation of the serfs in Russia in 1861, which solved nothing permanently, but did signalize a new epoch in Russian history; most obviously it brought a lull of some decades in agrarian conflict.

Portugal is a very backward corner of western Europe, and its empire an anachronism, a clinging to methods that others have been leaving behind. It was the first western empire to begin, premature and therefore more parasitical than most, and it is the last to end. In its early years it sprinkled Africans with baptismal water, in its last it sprinkles them with napalm; in between it has bestowed very little else on them. By keeping them backward and illiterate it avoided any serious opposition from them until a few years ago; and at home it has been strengthened by a dictatorship of many years' standing, which has prevented any loud criticism such as all the other colonial powers, and now the U.S., have had to face. The dictatorship has made life worse for its subjects both at home and in Africa. Yet without some outside agency to serve as a link, any combination of the two against it is hard to foresee. No such combination ever emerged effectively in any of the other empires, even where, as in Britain or France, there was freedom of speech in the ruling country. It is enough to recall the lamentable record of the British Labour Party on India. The British people had been for too long tutored into a belief that its prosperity depended on India; the Portuguese people has been taught that its prosperity (such as it is) depends on the African possessions being kept.

There is also, as influential and less vulnerable to calculations of profit and loss, national pride. Portugal's explorations and conquests of bygone days were remarkable, even if their results fell before long into miserable decay; Portuguese ships were harvesting the wealth of Asia when English seamen were content to haul a few fish out of the North Sea. Memories of that past have been cherished, and remnants of empire hung on to, because in modern times Portugal has had too little to feed its self-respect. Spain hung on to Cuba and the Philippines to the last gasp for the same reason, as well as for the revenue they brought in. France fought to keep its empire after 1945 partly to wipe

out the ignominy of German occupation, while victorious Britain could afford to show more sense and liberality.

### 5. The rebellion in Portuguese Guinea

Cuba as the first American country to reach socialism owes much to its having been the last to escape from European imperialism; one of the last African countries to escape from it may prove the first to reach full socialism. This is Portuguese Guinea, a mere dot on the atlas, but one that deserves very close attention because it concentrates in its narrow limits many problems to be seen elsewhere on a bigger, more amorphous scale. It deserves attention also because its struggle is led by one of the most remarkable men that modern Africa has produced; and because there is a remarkable book about it, written from first-hand knowledge gained by painful tramping and canoeing through jungle and swamp, and in the light of wide knowledge of Africa's past and present and its place in the world: *The Liberation of Guiné*, by Basil Davidson.<sup>4</sup>

"Violence is the essential means of imperialist domination", writes Cabral, and therefore any serious resistance to it must include willingness to resort to force.<sup>5</sup> Guerrilla fighting has been going on since 1962, and a large proportion of the interior has been cleared, or nearly cleared, of the Portuguese. This has been accomplished with means as scanty, from a starting-point as humble, as could be found almost anywhere in today's Dark Continents. Guiné has under a million inhabitants, with no genuinely urban element, half a dozen languages, and a range of social systems from the primitive democracy of the village to a semi-feudalism that some areas (typical it may be of Africa as a whole) have been moving into in recent times. Some of the Fula tribal chiefs or petty feudalists aided the Portuguese conquest, while the free villages resisted it, and today it is these villages that supply the readiest recruits for the struggle, while the chiefs are again on the Portuguese side, as the Indian princes were on the British, and try to hold their people back. It was only in the late 19th century that most of the interior was conquered, and it would be instructive to know how many stories of the resistance have lingered in popular memory, and helped to inspire that of today.<sup>6</sup>

Davidson's account makes it clear, and this is one of its most important points, that the rebellion was anything but spontaneous. Resentment and hatred of the foreigner were strong, but they were not dry tinder to blaze up into revolt as soon as a single spark fell on it. "The terrors of guerrilla warfare can be accepted, can be justified", Davidson writes, "only when they are suffered as part of a necessary self-defence. This is a hard lesson that has nothing to do with revolutionary verbalism."<sup>7</sup> That resistance was a necessity was something that villagers

could only be convinced of, first in one district, then in another, by slow, patient political preparation, long discussion carried on through supporters native to each area. The guiding party (P.A.I.G.C.) was founded in 1959 by Cabral and five others; it was three years before it felt able to start armed action. In this sense the Portuguese might well repeat the stock complaint of conservatives, that all the trouble has been due to a few "agitators", the handful of educated Africans who took the lead.

Between a man like Cabral and his peasant followers the cultural gap must be about the same as between Guevara and an Aymará Indian of Bolivia. Cabral had, as Davidson says, to re-Africanize himself before he could comprehend and be comprehended by the villagers. Guevara could scarcely Indianize himself; and that revolutionaries of his school have failed even to grasp the need to get inside the skin of the peasant, especially the Indian, in order to win his confidence, is a criticism that Cabral (who has visited Cuba and talked with Cubans in Africa) seems inclined to stress. There is indeed a startling contrast between the years of patient preparation in Guiné and the Guevarist vision of South American peasants flocking to the sound of guns in the hands of liberators whose language, even, they might not understand. A shade of difference may be perceptible even in Cabral's and Guevara's conception of the proper relation between guerrilla bands and peasantry. Cuba had from the first some non-peasant elements ready to begin a fight and carry it on, seeking and winning peasant recruits but retaining a certain separateness from the peasant mass, as of Crusaders from ordinary Christians.<sup>8</sup> Guiné had scarcely anything to count on except its peasantry; guerrilla bands could emerge only from within it, and have remained an organic part of it, responsible to democratic criticism."

There could be no clearer demonstration than Guiné provides of the importance of the idea. In such a situation also the man who brings the idea has exceptional freedom to lead in one direction or another. Instead of seeking reassurance from old-world magic, like so many peasant rebels before them, these in Guiné, to all appearances as deeply buried in the past as any of them, are being guided by civilized leadership towards modernity and rationality. Given this orientation, stress of conflict makes the process a rapid one. Davidson quotes a remark of Cabral that the villagers are losing their old dread of the forests, those haunts of demons and evil spirits, because today these forests are their shelter from Portuguese bombing raids.<sup>10</sup> Guerrilla warfare—of the modern species—means continual movement, as Davidson says, "movement in the mind even when you are sitting still".<sup>11</sup>

In all this the question arises of whether Guiné must be looked on as a brilliant exception, or whether it can serve as a model for other

regions in or outside Africa; beginning naturally with the other Portuguese colonies where revolts are going on, Angola and Mozambique. The most obvious discrepancy is of size. It remains to be seen whether a movement like Guiné's, based on very close-knit, intimate contact between leaders and local cadres and ordinary men and women, can be reproduced in a territory of much greater extent. A similar question is whether Guiné may be better able than the other two colonies (and many other African countries) to acquire a sense of national unity, as the P.A.I.G.C. leadership hopes it will. Hitherto Guiné has never been anything remotely like a nation, that odd entity which, with all its defects, was indispensable to modern Europe's progress and seems indispensable to progress in newly-developing regions now. All the triumphs of socialism have been nourished and sustained by patriotism. Bolshevik power was consolidated by the Allied intervention; the Chinese revolution drew as much on anti-Japanese as on anti-Kuomintang or anti-landlord feeling; Yugoslavia came to socialism by fighting Nazi invasion, Cuba came to it more quickly under threat of Yankee invasion; Vietnam is continuing a millennium of struggle for independence.

For Guiné to dream of nationhood might seem preposterous, even by comparison with some other African countries. Still, it has never been easy to say precisely what a nation is, except by reference to what it does. If most African countries have come by their frontiers accidentally, there has been more accident and less destiny in the history of all nations than their historians like to admit; and history may now, aided by conscious intention, be able to recapitulate in a few decades what formerly took centuries of blind evolution. To fuse Guiné's peoples there is the presence of the white man, the foreign enemy, on their soil. They may be supposed to share a common philosophy of life, and mode of living, as those of India did before they became a nation. Guiné like India got from foreign rule a small intelligentsia of modern outlook, and a lingua franca, though Guiné got not much else. Like Cuba it is small enough to see itself easily in the mirror of today's events.

Its first national institution is a party, its second a miniature army. It was a landmark in the struggle when the leadership was able to form a mobile force willing to fight anywhere, as distinct from the local militias willing to defend their own homes. This has been a difficult stage in other revolutions too. The parliamentary army in the English civil war was such a mobile force, detached from local allegiances; a fact that must have assisted its later drift into a professional army divorced from, and disliked by, the public. There must be some risk of this happening in any rising now; it may have happened in some measure in Algeria. China has taken precautions against it, part of

Mao's all-round purpose of keeping the revolution, and making the nation, totally democratic (or, what may not be quite the same thing, egalitarian). Guiné too is making a democratic society its goal, the virtues of the old rural fraternity combined with those of modernity. Its leaders are aiming, in other words, at something very different from the condition of those many other African lands where (as in India) there was no long, transforming struggle for freedom, and power was transferred to a small élite class. Here again no doubt vigilance will be required, and the principles of the "cultural revolution" in China will be relevant. Yugoslavia is a warning that even a wartime leadership of the most genuinely popular origin can to some extent harden in peacetime into an élite.

If this can be avoided, so simple a society, purged by the war of its feudal ingredients, should be free to set up a State almost as if making a social contract in the style of the old philosophers. Cabral and his friends, already thinking of problems of reconstruction, view agricultural growth as the chief objective, with radical decentralization to release local initiative, even abolition of anything like central ministries." Ministries and their sweets of office are the honeypots in which once progressive politicians in many new countries have stuck fast; and real democracy may be impossible without real decentralization. Sheltered by friendly neighbours, Guiné might actually be said to be embarking on a direct transition from primitivism not only to socialism, but to anarchism, or the withering away of the State—or rather, it will never have known the State, except as an alien imposition. Even as a nation, it will have been formed by consent, instead of by the slow work of time, and should be able to avoid the excessive nationalism so dangerously mixed with the socialism of Russia or China.

Orthodox Marxism would query whether such a community, a federation of hamlets, could properly be called socialist, when it would have no heavy industry, no big towns, little of a working class. It might also ask whether rural communes left to their own devices will not stagnate, as they are apt to in India under the plan of leaving many things to the *panchayats* or local councils. Guiné will be relying on momentum gained in the war, and on the activity of individuals thrown up everywhere by it. With these assets, and luck, it may not be too sanguine to think of Guiné growing into an African Denmark, instead of a new Liberia, with a more strongly cooperative economy, profiting from agricultural science and making arrangements with other African countries for some of its industrial needs. Iceland lives well, with nothing to sell but fish. Aldous Huxley speculated years ago about a Utopia where every household would have a gadget on the roof to provide solar power, and all the Birminghams and Pittsburgs would have faded into

bad dreams. Big industry is, after all, increasingly engaged in producing useless or noxious things that nations and private consumers have to be hypnotized into thinking they want.

Here we stray into the realm of fancy, and it may be well to recall that Guiné is not yet fully liberated: further, that it is not clear how it can be expected to complete its liberation, by its own efforts alone. Portugal is a relatively weak opponent; but any occupying force with modern weapons may be able to hold on to positions like the coastal settlements of Guiné indefinitely. The Vietnamese can raid big American bases, but scarcely capture them; in Saigon the population has not risen against the occupying forces, and it does not seem to be anticipated that the population of Bissau, the Guiné capital, will. Anachronistic rule like Portugal's infects, rather than transforms, the urban section of a subject people, the one most in contact with it; and every long conflict corrupts and demoralizes some sections, while it purifies others. Guerrillas have seemed at times—often in Algeria, occasionally in south Vietnam—to be resorting to indiscriminate terrorism against towns, as if indulging peasant rancour against townsmen, or trying to coerce the town into joining the countryside. That townsman and rustic have been natural enemies all through history is a fact with an important bearing on all peasant-revolution prospects. Guevara condemned indiscriminate terrorism, restricting it to punishment of prominent enemies of the people, and Cabral's principle seems to be the same.<sup>13</sup> But this leaves the Portuguese still in Bissau.

#### 6. *Guiné, Portugal, Britain*

In Guiné Davidson saw "Soviet artillery, Czechoslovak automatics, Cuban-made uniforms of Chinese cotton."<sup>14</sup> Britain could have been helping the cause of freedom there in other ways, and ought to help, but has not helped. It is not for want of asking: Cabral came to London in 1960 and 1965 to put his country's case, and his party asks for political support from any country, African or other. He complains with good reason of a "*wall of silence* built around our peoples by Portuguese colonialism",<sup>15</sup> which has close links with other western capitalist interests, and whose forces are free to use N.A.T.O. military supplies in Africa. Morally its African wars are a joint west-European and American responsibility. Britain has had the closest and oldest links with Portugal, and by its conduct over Rhodesia it has incurred lately a fresh debt to Africa.

If anything like the feeling that has been aroused in the West by the Vietnam war could be directed against Portugal's colonial wars, the government at Lisbon would be seriously embarrassed, and its own critics encouraged. More voices have been lifted there lately against the increasing burden and shame of the wars, besides protests by Portu-

guese in exile,<sup>16</sup> and it is easy to believe, with the precedent of the Vietnam war and America, that a good many young Portuguese have gone into hiding or fled abroad to escape military service. It ought to be possible for progressive opinion to influence Western governments towards putting some pressure on Lisbon. From the up-to-date capitalist standpoint an actual colonial war is worse than a crime, it is a blunder.

But if the long-suffering peoples of Portuguese Africa and of Portugal are to be rescued from a murderous and futile conflict, allowance must also be made for Portuguese national feeling; and Britons are still close enough to their own imperial past to be able to appreciate this. Golden bridges must be built over which the Portuguese can retire "honourably": a branch of diplomacy that China used to excel in, but that Maoism totally neglects, or rather rejects. The problem to be solved here is harder than a simple transition from imperialism to neo-colonialism, out of the question after years of armed strife. Power has to be handed over now to revolutionary, not reformist, leaders, in GuinC at least committed, more deeply than the Algerian leadership was when France gave up the struggle, to socialism.

Whether there is any room in GuinC for compromise must depend partly on the attitude of these leaders towards the future of the small Portuguese settler population, and towards some form of continuing connexion with Portugal. To keep both these might be to Guiné's economic advantage, besides facilitating a settlement. No doubt there would be difficulties about including a white minority in a new nation anxious to avoid class divisions. But Brazil has shown that Portuguese colonists, when the perversions of empire are removed, are capable of entering into a national, even racial amalgam, with Africans among others.<sup>17</sup> They might help, more willingly than British settlers in Kenya or Zambia, to build a multiracial society. On the side of language and culture, Portugal like France might attach more value to a "cultural presence" in Africa than utilitarian Britain or America would. Whether or not Camoens and Portuguese culture have meant as much to the small GuinC intelligentsia as English and French literature to many educated people in former colonies, GuinC must have some medium of intellectual contact with the world, and at present pidgin Portuguese is the only lingua franca or "national language" in sight.

Britain and other western countries could assist towards an arrangement, diplomatically and by offering financial aid to both Portugal and GuinC to smooth the transition. They might invite GuinC, through the U.N.O. or the Organization of African Unity, to offer guarantees to Portuguese settlers wishing to stay, possibly with a U.N.O. observer on the spot, a sort of Ombudsman, to hear complaints. There would be a precedent in the obligation assumed (though not always fulfilled) by the new States in Europe in 1919 to be answerable to the League

of Nations for the good treatment of minorities. Success, especially if a negotiated settlement in Guiné led on towards others in Angola and Mozambique, would provide a basis for a new and better connexion between two continents and societies, all the more valuable when various European countries, notably Britain, have themselves become multi-racial communities and must learn to solve similar problems of their own.

### *7. Eastern aid and Western progressives*

Contrary to all socialist prophecy, the capitalist world camp has come to be more united and harmonious than the socialist camp. It confronts the backward regions in the shape of vast corporations, acquiring a steadily more "multi-national character";<sup>18</sup> it has arrived, in other words, at a stage not unlike the "ultra-imperialism" that Kautsky foretold long ago, and Lenin ruled out. Further expansion of socialism in either the advanced or the undeveloped regions seems to depend on the emergence of a combination of forces, an intercontinental united front to challenge that of capitalism. It does not seem likely to be brought about by the peasantry alone, any more than by the working class alone, to say nothing of any of the lesser forces that have been hopefully thought of, like the intelligentsia or the student movement. Any single class by itself has limited horizons and ambitions. Progress in Europe was always brought about by a combination of classes. But today, thanks to the world market and its division of labour, some regions have a working class with hardly any peasantry, others a peasantry with hardly any working class; while various groups, like the Negroes in the U.S., stand outside the main class structure of their countries.

For progressive forces to join hands round the globe is harder than for coupon-clippers. Intransigent Maoism rejects any cooperation, either with Russia or with Western progressive opinion. And this opinion, in relation to the obscure wrestlings in the backlands, often seems scarcely to exist, except as a figure of speech. It has done about as little for the black inhabitants of southern Africa as the white man's liberalism for Negroes in the U.S. By contrast aid from the socialist countries looks prompt and vigorous.

The comparison is not in reality altogether so much in favour of the socialist countries, quite apart from the deplorable dissensions among them. It is an unlucky fact that socialism could only gain a foothold in the world, and survive, by winning control of one or two States big enough to defend themselves against capitalist aggression; but any big State is compelled to think of its frontiers and strategic concerns in ways that have nothing to do with any ideology. This is as true of China as of Russia. Maoist revolutionism, besides defects

due to Peking's ignorance of the outside world, has been blended all along with Chinese interests, real or imaginary (great-power interests have always been a bizarre mixture of the two), the result being at times a foreign policy of transparent opportunism. A right-wing military government in Pakistan has received fraternal embraces, rebels in Guiné have been cold-shouldered because they were receiving help from Russia.<sup>19</sup>

It would be naïve to fancy that aid programmes enjoy much backing of public goodwill in any of the communist countries. Demonstrations in Peking of sympathy with suffering peoples far away are really anti-American demonstrations; it is, unfortunately, much easier to hate foreigners than to sympathize with them. Both in China and in Russia the sensation of being looked up to by weak peoples as patrons and protectors is liable to feed a national self-complacency already far too strong in each of them. Russia's satellite States have not even this satisfaction, in return for what they have to spend. There cannot have been systematic debate in any of them about the principles at stake. But in Czechoslovakia, and no doubt in the rest, and probably in the U.S.S.R. itself, there have been two currents of dissent. One was a feeling among many Party intellectuals that it was wrong to supply aid, especially arms, to régimes like those of Egypt or Iraq which kept their own socialists in jail. The other was a general impatience among workers and ordinary men and women at being made to give so much, out of scanty resources, to far-away people whom they knew nothing about. If Yugoslavs of the industrial north grumble at their government for investing capital to develop the backward south, it is not surprising to find a joke current in Poland that the average Polish worker has five dependants to maintain: one wife, two children, one Arab, and one Vietnamese. Cynicism like this can hardly be good for the prospects of socialism in eastern Europe.

The alternative argument, that socialist countries can do most for socialism by building it successfully at home, looks egotistic, and is denounced by Peking as "goulash socialism". Building socialism however does not mean only providing more pudding, but a new civilization, a new kind of humanity. Police socialism can make no appeal to prosperous countries, and realists may be mistaken (as they so often are) in assuming that poor countries do not care about such matters as civil rights. Russia may indeed have something to learn about grass-roots democracy from Africa. But as things are, with the working class reduced to the same political indifference by communist rule as by capitalist affluence, aid depends on government decision; it is one more aspect of communist bureaucracy, and gives it one more pretext for continuing, and for suppressing criticism. This applies above all to the most expensive form of aid, military supplies in large quantities not to

rebels but to governments, such as Soekarno's in Indonesia, most of which has been either a dead loss, or worse.

Where rebels are in action arms are the prime requisite, and these can only come from the "East", but they will seldom be enough by themselves. What progressive westerners can do to help is far less clear, even nebulous. Broad support can be gathered only for limited, reformist aims, which the all-or-nothing philosophy of Maoism repudiates; it has to be sought from a medley of liberals, wanting to bring capitalism under decent control, and socialists, wanting to get rid of it. But what they can do, although inadequate, has the merit of being voluntary instead of bureaucratic, inspired by true civic sense, by recognition that the world cannot be healthy while large parts of it, with which the advanced countries have multiple ties—economic, historical, moral—are left unhealthy.

Being voluntary it is harder to mobilize, as well as more heterogeneous. Even communists in the west have been inclined to think of colonial issues as marginal, and belonging to the sphere of philanthropy; whereas what has to be learned now is that they are vital to all our own chances of progress—that only by involvement in events and movements outside our own frontiers can we hope to get on the move once more, whether as socialists or as liberals, against the juggernaut of monopoly capitalism. In a way this is harder to grasp now than earlier, because of the abandonment by Britain and most others of direct colonial rule. By turning itself into an anonymous network of cosmopolitan corporations, exchanging the plumed helmet of the governor for the bowler hat of the stockbroker—by reverting, so to speak, from Empress of India to John Company—imperialism has lost its glamour, its romantic attraction; but it has also blunted the sense of responsibility for colonial welfare that a minority formerly felt, while sales of stocks and shares swell the number of its campfollowers. Nevertheless, today's new generation has a strong bent towards internationalism, and could find a better outlet for it outside Europe than in the Common Market, which has made some appeal to it. There is a growing intelligentsia that could find many points of contact, more freely than any political party, between the west and the "third world". There are smaller countries apter to give a lead than unwieldy Britain; in Sweden the Socialist Party has given money to rebels in Portuguese Africa, and a long campaign has been waged to prevent a big company from taking part in the construction of a dam for the Portuguese in Mozambique.

Hitherto only sensational happenings, at Suez or in Vietnam or Ulster, have been able to rouse the same widespread interest that floods or earthquakes do. A dull steady grind of injustice far away in South Africa or Bolivia, or even as close at hand as northern Ireland, has

touched only a few consciences. It seems a necessary preliminary to any real change that some heads should be broken, as in Ulster in 1969. By itself violence may accomplish much, or little, or nothing, according to circumstances; but it may have the effect, as we have seen student demonstrations do, of galvanizing outside interests in favour of reform, and frightening authority into accepting it. General Booth's maxim was that sinners would not repent until hell fire was flashed before their eyes, and it is much the same with sinful governments and respectable newspaper-readers. But a fright, by itself, is more likely to throw them into a fit of reactionary hysteria. It is here that enlightened opinion can play its vital part, by persuading the public at large to draw the right moral, to move forward instead of back. The bigger and more permanent the volume of opinion that can be mobilized, the less violence will be needed as a spur to change.

### 8. *The test case: South Africa*

It is in Africa that hopes of revolution and of more peaceful progress confront each other most distinctly, and yet may prove to be each necessary to the other's success. There are three Africas, besides colonial territories; one of these, the Muslim north, is likely to go its own way, increasingly preoccupied with the Middle Eastern conflict and drifting in Egypt's wake towards a military-bureaucratic socialism. All Islam has lived ever since it began under what might be called army rule; and the primacy of the soldier is bolstered today by the feuds with outsiders in which most Muslim countries are involved: Arabs with Israel, Pakistan with India, Turkey with Russia. At the opposite point of the compass South Africa has been taking shape as a State unique in the modern age, something like what the southern Confederation would have been if it had won the American civil war, but with far more modern dynamism, a capitalist edifice reared on a primitive base of racial domination. It is the "black Africa" in between whose nature and future are most enigmatic. An impressive recent study depicts it as on the whole inert, now that the glow of independence has faded, and in danger of remaining stagnant and subservient to the West, because it lacks the driving force of any sufficient class division and tension, within the peasantry or between it and any other class.<sup>20</sup> To gain ground economically it needs joint planning; but this calls for a high measure of political agreement, still more elusive.

On this view, the sole force capable of setting black Africa in motion might be common hostility to South Africa. This was already strongly expressed in the "Charter of Unity" signed at Addis Ababa in 1963 by thirty governments, with several northern ones as well;<sup>21</sup> fortunately we have an opposite alignment here from the one in Latin America, where nearly all governments fawn on the United States. Hitherto

most of those of black Africa have been too busy with their own doings, or with doing nothing, to take very much notice of the freedom struggles against Portugal. They will all be faced with an inescapable challenge if, as many predict, South Africa moves further out from its own limits and draws Portugal and Rhodesia into an aggressive alliance.<sup>22</sup> Those who welcome the prospect will trust to a rallying against the white front to give a fresh, more urgent meaning to the old gospel of African unity. It would be a recapitulation on a vaster scale of the coming together of scattered tribes against the white man in Guiné.

Intelligent observers have for several years warned western conservatism of such a prospect, with the unwelcome addition of a great expansion of Chinese influence. "The Chinese are gambling heavily on the correctness of their analysis that Africa is ripe for revolution", a journalist wrote in 1964, and he thought that before long they might be proved right.<sup>23</sup> Five years later another drew an alarming picture of guerrilla training by the Chinese, soon to be followed by an influx of munitions along the Tanzania-Zambia railway they are building, to feed a war against white rulers all over southern Africa.<sup>24</sup> Peking may be assumed to regard this confrontation as the best thing that could happen to speed Africa's slow evolution, and, of course, to strengthen its own position. One may wonder how far it would really achieve either of these results. There would be a situation, with China taking the place of Russia, like that of the Middle East, the Arab countries confronting Israel. This has gone on for a long time now, and while it has stirred up a vast amount of excitement among the Arabs, it might not be easy to say what good it has done them otherwise. The binding force of a common hatred can be stimulating, but, like other drugs, also stupefying. In Africa, where race would be the substitute for the shared language and religion of the Arabs, black racialism would be lamentably deepened, as religious fanaticism has been among the Arabs. Israelis and South African whites are both small intrusive elements, but both firmly established and far more efficiently organized than their opponents can be for a long time to come. Russia all this time has been making an immense investment in the Middle East in the form of arms, for very precarious political returns, and China might fare no better in Africa.

South Africa compared with Israel has the asset of a large territory, the drawback of a large hostile population within its own borders. The flashpoint might come with a rising of the black proletariat there; and this too is a thing that some progressives have looked forward to because of the absence of a big proletariat anywhere else in the continent.<sup>25</sup> It requires strong nerves to hope for a rising that the whites would meet with all the courage, and all the ferocity, of the British

suppressing the Indian Mutiny, or of the Nazi armies in eastern Europe. There are degrees of brutality among reactionary régimes and their troops, as Guevara *observed*,<sup>24</sup> racial indoctrination carries it to its worst extreme. If things do come to this, enlightened opinion will not be altogether unprepared. A consultation of the World Council of Churches on May 24, 1969, endorsed economic sanctions against racist rule, and support for armed revolt when all else failed. But western enlightenment is still very limited. In a full-scale war of race the bulk of British and American sympathy would be with the whites, and there would be reactions against coloured minorities at home. It would be so all the more if there were any direct Chinese participation. Without this it is hard to see the war ending in victory; with it, hard to see how it could end without destroying the country, and with it the continent's biggest industrial base. After all, somehow it must be made possible for both black and white to live in South Africa.

Slow, piecemeal reform of the prison-fortress of South Africa is an unheroic choice compared with revolution, yet one to be preferred if there is any ray of hope for it to be brought about by gradual sapping and mining, by a combination of pressures internal and external. In this theatre conservative interests are not all united. For world capitalism the big settler population makes South Africa a profitable but perilous salient; Boer racialism is to it a silly nuisance, like the same aberration in Alabama; the industries its investments are creating will require markets all over Africa. In the sight of Mammon, as of God, skin colour does not count. Inside South Africa there is a pallidly liberalizing, conciliatory tendency, diverging from the high and dry doctrine of the race *maniacs*.<sup>27</sup> World capitalism can be induced to back and strengthen this faintly better tendency; but not by the light of reason alone. There must be something to scare it into a sense of urgency; this something can only be an imminent danger to its large investments—a realistic threat, if not the actuality, of revolution within and war from without, assisted by foreign arms on a grand scale. Already the threat is near enough to make some far-sighted westerners lament their governments' failure to offer Africa any *alternative*.<sup>28</sup>

Western progressives ought to be able to profit by this impending crisis to put much heavier pressure on these governments. Here would be a specimen of the only kind of collaboration now practicable between them and the "East"—actively parallel but separate, uncoordinated, and perhaps the more effective for being so. Given a spreading sense of urgency, behaviour such as the sending of English cricket teams to South Africa, which give aid and comfort to the white die-hards there, would come to be recognized as not merely callous or frivolous, but in the fullest sense criminal. We live in a world where sport is an important matter, and an initiative like that of the American

Negro athletes in threatening to boycott competitions where British athletes appear, so long as they refuse to boycott South Africa, may lead quite far. In much wider ways, participation in these issues might have a significance for American Negroes in their own struggle, and be a fresh basis for cooperation between them and white liberals, which both may find easier at present abroad than at home. Brazil, under any less reactionary government than it has now, could be expected to take a hand in southern African affairs. India has a minority of its own in South Africa; and having entered various corners of the continent in former times as Britain's jackal, it owes Africa something, as some Indians are aware.

### *9. Independent Africa: peaceful ways forward?*

Even without race war as a tonic, it is open to us to take a less pessimistic view of possibilities of progress in the middle Africa between north and south. "Everything of importance in Africa has changed", Davidson wrote not long ago, ". . . so far that everything now seems possible where little or nothing seemed possible before."<sup>29</sup> In his more hopeful picture of the scene a ferment of ideas, a crescendo of discussion not only among the literate but in village and marketplace, takes a prominent place. This is a phenomenon of our modern world, where ideas can travel at a hundred times their former speed, like bullets outstripping arrows, and can overflow from one material level to another. Labourers in Andalusia learn from the cinema to envy Americans with refrigerators, and to feel that they ought to have better wages, and if these are not forthcoming may go and work abroad, leaving their masters to get on without them. Educated Russians before the Revolution used to suffer from the contrast between their country and Europe, the sensation of being, or being thought by others, a "dark people". In our day awareness of such contrasts can spread far down.

Cabral is evidently interested in Marxist theory as well as practice, and one of his observations is that if we think of history in terms of class conflict, many parts of Africa must be said to have no history. He suggests that the driving force there, but not only there, has been "the level of productive forces at any given place and time."<sup>30</sup> It is a suggestion that calls for further elaboration. But, looking from Africa's present to its past, we can find many evidences of how lofty a superstructure of social organization or cultural achievement may rise upon a scanty material base. Davidson has remarked on its elevated philosophical-religious conceptions,<sup>31</sup> such as ancient India too produced out of very simple materials. Or one may recall the high praise bestowed by a contemporary European expert on the Zulu military organization, even though "the Zulu weapons were those of savages".<sup>32</sup> But

if old Africa had a history with only an invertebrate class structure, new Africa may make history likewise. Decaying ideas have often kept their hold for ages after losing any real validity; what Mao and his revolution have shown is that, conversely, progressive ideas can take hold of men's minds even before the material situation is ripe for them. In Africa there should be fewer barriers to overcome, in the absence of rigid ideologies such as highly organized religions represent, and the complex social structures that have grown up with them, rather than given birth to them.

Clearly however the obstacles are many and great. One is that most of the mass media in the "third world" are controlled by anti-progressive interests, native or foreign.<sup>11</sup> Hence Guiné's demonstration of how Marxism can lend guidance to elemental discontents may have a significance far wider than its own borders. As Davidson says, nearly all progressive movements nowadays in backward regions (or movements that want to be thought progressive) label themselves "Marxist", but their Marxism acquires vitality only to the degree to which it can adapt itself to new conditions and grapple with new problems. In Guiné there has been a reshuffling of orthodox conceptions of the classes and their rôles, with increased emphasis on those that are, more than others, the bearers and propagators of ideas. The party has owed much to what it calls a "petty-bourgeoisie" of literate, declassed individuals:—precisely those whom Marxism has been too apt to belittle, as "waverers", by contrast with the solid proletariat.

This party is well aware that peasants do not go to war for the sake of ideas in any abstract sense. But the word **idea** has manifold meanings; and the methods learned in Guiné of arousing mass feeling, bringing it to consciousness, through intensive village discussion and the forming of firm local groups, ought to be more readily applicable to the politics of reform and progress than to insurrection. It may be doubted whether in the vast area of Africa already independent, insurrection can be the normal remedy for unsatisfactory government. Single-minded Maoists sometimes appear to see it as the cure for every political ailment, much as the old Spanish doctor in *Gil Blas* treated every bodily ailment with bleeding and hot water; or to welcome any and every breakdown of government, as giving socialist forces a chance to seize power. But too frequent internal conflict would give the world, and Africa itself, an image of Africa as incapable of orderly self-rule. The troubles in Chad, leading to French intervention, in 1969 are an example. Something similar might be said of the problem of getting rid of an entrenched Communist bureaucracy without shaking things to pieces. In Africa, where existing régimes are less deeply entrenched, it may prove easier to get rid of unsatisfactory ones, by means of new-style political parties with, as in Guiné, realistic programmes and

close-knit local organizations. They are needed equally as props to progressive governments. For want of such a party to support him—and to criticize him—Nkrumah fell. The T.A.N.U. party in Tanzania may be learning to fulfil the need.

#### *10. The peasant's two souls*

Maoism is biased towards the same belief in an inevitably *increasing misery* of the world's peasants, as older Marxism had in that of the proletariat. One may tentatively ask whether the new belief may not in the long run prove as fallible as the old one has done; or whether, in areas where misery does increase, it may not be chiefly due to population increasing. It has often been a conservative subterfuge to say that peasants like India's are poor because they are foolish enough to have too many children; still, even Communist China has reluctantly had to recognize the force of the argument. Many conservative governments can now claim to be doing their best, by spreading birth-control, to rescue the poor from their own folly; whereas in past times ruling groups and their ideologists—Hindu, Confucian, and so on—recklessly egged the poor on to increase and multiply, and so supply the rich with cheap labour. Governments are not unaware that unchecked population growth can be a menace to order, largely because it leads to a drift from the countryside to the towns and the piling up there of a pauperized class difficult to control—though also difficult for any opposition to organize. This has been happening on a massive scale in South America, and tilting the ratio of numbers against the peasantry to an extent that casts one more doubt on the possibility of a seizure of power by a peasant movement alone.

With regard to poverty caused by exploitation, classes whose wealth is drawn increasingly from industrial investment may scarcely need to squeeze agricultural producers more than now, or as much as now. Old-time governments in Asia all rested primarily on land-tax, but this has been coming to represent, in India for instance, a diminishing section of a revenue drawn from diverse sources. Important groups still depend on owning land and squeezing peasants, and it is these groups that have done most to cause agrarian unrest in Asia and Latin America. But nowadays even landlords, of the brighter or bigger sort, are feeling the superior attractions of commercial investment, and governments like those of Pakistan or Iran have been helping to shepherd them away from share-cropping into stocks and shares. Even the Ranas and princes of Nepal have lately been bought out of their feudal estates, and are running luxury hotels in Katmandu for American tourists.<sup>10</sup> Foreign investment is largely relied on in these cases to get industry going. Paradoxically, a socialist régime trying to build industry quickly out of its own resources might have more need to squeeze

its peasants, as happened in Russia, by way of primary accumulation. This would be unavoidable if there were a landslide to socialism over a large part of the "third world", since it would be beyond the economic resources of the Communist countries to give adequate aid.

As for imperialism, it too, with efficient food production at home and synthetic substitutes for various raw materials, may have only a dwindling need to exploit backward villagers, to wring from the hard hands of peasants their vile trash. Politically, it has had plenty of time in places like Vietnam to discover what dubious allies feudal landlords make. In Japan the American occupation carried out from special motives a land reform, non-socialist but far from meaningless; it appears that something on the same lines may have been done in Formosa. Modern capitalism has been learning to make life acceptable to its industrial workers and also to its own farmers; it may learn as time goes on to make life bearable for cultivators of the backlands as well, by promoting reformist measures, and selling or giving them the benefits of its formidable agricultural science, or by simply leaving them alone. For ideology, accompanied by welfare services, it can offer Christianity, as an army of American missionaries in Africa are doing.

Altogether, a competition has begun, and will spread further and further in the "third world", for the peasant's allegiance. We have often heard of the "two souls" of the peasantry, with its pre-bourgeois instincts of private property mixed in varying proportions with instincts of mutual aid and solidarity. This duality (which it shares with other groups of pre-industrial origin, notably youth) makes it a class that can be steered in either direction. Socialism can steer it, but to do so needs clearer thinking than it has often shown, about what the peasant wants, and what a socialist society wants from the peasant.

For both capitalism and socialism there is what may be called a maximal programme for the land, and also a range of compromise settlements where the two are less far apart. For capitalism the maximal programme is a fully capitalist agriculture. It was carried out only in a single country, the pioneer, Britain.<sup>20</sup> In later cases capitalism, recognizing it to be politically risky and economically not essential, was content in general to leave the cultivator with his own farm—or even give him one—while quietly using the mechanism of the market to make it a fief or appendage of big business. This strategy, which has a clear resemblance to the later one of neo-colonialism, may be said to have started in 1789. The French bourgeoisie then made use of the peasant as an auxiliary, promising him his land free from feudal exactions, with the tacit design of subsequently depriving him of it and turning him into a wage-labourer. But he proved so recalcitrant that this design was quickly dropped; the peasantry, or a great many

peasants, were left with their holdings. Satisfied, though mostly still very poor, they turned abruptly into safe conservatives, clinging to patrimonial scraps of land, however harsh the toil or wretched the yield, with a tenacity rooted in old ancestral feeling and in ignorant fear of life anywhere outside the native village.

Socialism has approached peasants with the same ambiguity of purpose. As Che Guevara stressed, they fight in order to get land: he regarded this as the mainspring of "third world" revolutionism.<sup>87</sup> (Yet the Bolivia that he chose to fight in was one of the few Latin American countries where a substantial land reform had already taken place.<sup>88</sup>) Having been aroused by this bait, they are then to be guided towards something quite different. Mao's revolution was, from this point of view, a gigantic feat of sleight of hand. With socialism the "maximal programme" for agriculture is full collectivization. This again was applied in the pioneer country, Russia; unlike the capitalist model it has been repeated in others. Everywhere it has had some unfortunate consequences. In terms of production it has shown (in Europe, if not in China) only mediocre results, whereas capitalist farming in Britain has been progressive at least technically, though socially the reverse. In political terms, to collectivize a peasant requires about as severe pressure as to reduce him to a wage-labourer; either must rest for a long time on coercion, and rule out government by consent. Between cultivator and soil there is an altogether different relationship, psychologically if not economically, from that between worker and machine. One benefit that Maoism counts on from armed struggle in the countryside is that it will generate sufficient heat to fuse the stubborn individualism of the peasant into the mould of collectivism. But if twenty years of revolutionary war in Vietnam have not done this, nothing will. And it seems they have not done so completely. Resentment at forced collectivization caused a crisis in 1956; in 1969 the Party chiefs were debating once more whether socialism could survive if full collectivization was not restored, in place of the actual system of co-operatives."

The argument of the extremists or maximalists presupposes that so long as the peasant is left with any vestige of his two souls, the egotistic one that affiliates him to capitalism will inevitably triumph over the good one that relates him to socialism. This means in effect that he can only be tricked or bullied into socialism; which in turn might be said to make nonsense of the whole idea of peasant revolution. But the assumption is surely too gloomy. Individualism is not identical with capitalism, whether in a cultivator or in an intellectual. In fact it has impelled the peasantry in western countries to strive, with more success than most groups of small producers or small businessmen, *against* capitalism—that is, against being steam-rolled by big business. The

modern peasant, evolving into the farmer, grows aware of how he has been daily, invisibly robbed by the market (as the undeveloped countries also are), and learns to protect himself and secure a share of the wealth that either capitalist or socialist industry can provide. He protects himself by organizing, as the workman does with his trade union, and by cooperative methods, of marketing and so on. How much real independence he can keep or win depends largely on his energy and his willingness to combine with his neighbours; much as an undeveloped country's freedom from neo-colonialism depends on its own determination to be free.

Of course the cultivator must be infected to a great extent by the mentality of a capitalist society round him. But he should be equally open to the influence of a socialist society, through education and diffusion of ideas, if it too is content with partial or indirect control over the land. Between the two systems there stretches a continuous band of possible forms, with greater or less emphasis on cooperation. Africa has often been thought of as ready to step straight into agrarian socialism. It would not be safe to trust too much to this; for if Africa has really been changing rapidly, whatever there was of primitive communism must also have changed, and may have become—as some tell us—a thing of the past.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless it is reasonable to expect there and in other parts of the "third world" a less rigidly individualistic temper than some European cultivators long since acquired, and fuller acceptance of cooperation.

### 11. *The outlook*

Everything in Africa's future, where influences and interventions from outside must count heavily, looks highly speculative. "The possible permutations and combinations of events and their likely timing are vast in number."<sup>41</sup> Africa does not stand alone; the whole world outlook appears very obscure, more than for a long time past, and Marxism, along with all other convictions that have given modern man a sense of being able to forecast and direct his future, has run into more complexities and perplexities than it bargained for. It is gazing into no crystal ball, but a muddy pool. One moral may be that it will be wise for some time to come to content itself with practical experiments here and there, like those of Cuba or Guine, and not try to magnify any of them into universal programmes of action. In the meantime theory, analysis of past and present societies and their trends, which Marxism has largely neglected, may be able to catch up with experience.

We cannot put off trying to descry at least dimly the long-term prospects that may lie ahead, the lines of possibility of the coming decades. A great deal of active struggling against imperialism in one or other

of its shapes remains to be done, and this cannot exclude struggle by force of arms. Acceptance of force as the last resort leaves it to be decided when this last resort has come, or in other words the speed with which action should be embarked on. Marx and Engels fixed their eyes on distant goals, and Lenin turned away from the short-cut tactics of Nihilism to those of gradual, long-term preparation. These men were not in a hurry, because they could think of socialism as bound to come, though not effortlessly, and were joining hands with a class they believed to have a natural, organic affinity with socialism.

Few can now think of anything as so certain to happen, and Maoism cannot think of its chosen ally, the peasantry, as naturally socialist. Consequently it is more apt to think in terms of the tactics of surprise, of forcing gates open by attacking weak points here or there, of gaining power first and talking of socialism afterwards. Some uncomfortable doubts may creep in here about whether socialism is being thought of for the sake of progress, or progress for the sake of socialism; both these ideals must suffer if they are too far detached from each other. Apart from this, it may be the case that the phase of modern history that made socialism through peasant revolution pure and simple a possibility, is a limited phase only, and confined to special areas—just as the period of possible working-class revolution pure and simple was a limited one. It may follow that whatever opportunity there is must be seized while it is still with us; that Maoism is right to advocate audacity, to gamble on any chance, because there may be no other chance. Maoism does not of course admit that the time for peasant revolution may be brief, any more than Leninism recognized that the time for proletarian revolution was brief; but it has often argued as if this fear were in its mind.

For a long time to come there is going to be a capitalist and a socialist camp in the world, and the hopeful eye must search for what benefits can be found in this division. Each must be said to need the stimulus of criticism and rivalry from the other. It may even be that the historical transition away from the worst of our present bad world will be brought about by their competition, more than by either one of them—though the opposite prospect of their rivalry blowing the world to pieces is at least equally obvious. In the undeveloped continents they have a vast field for competition, which may be peaceful or violent. In some areas, beginning with the Middle East, there might even be agreement on cooperation as an alternative to violence, on programmes of joint aid. Togliatti talked of some such possibility at the Italian Party congress in December, 1962. It was, needless to say, denounced by the Chinese as a fresh disguise for neo-colonialism—all aid except from China is tainted; and Wall Street would be as prompt to see in it a new communist trick. Yet each camp genuinely

believes in the superiority of its own social-economic system, and ought to be prepared to let new countries have the material means to make a choice for themselves, or to work out new amalgams of the two. It is at any rate something that progressive opinion in the West might usefully advocate, on the ground that rich countries can grow richer by themselves, but the world can only grow more civilized—whether on a capitalist or a socialist foundation or on both—by moving forward together. Russia and America have not yet been able to agree even on a partnership to explore the moon. But that *may* come, *and* one kind of partnership *might* lead to the other.

Marx and Engels attached great importance to the solution of national problems like those of Italian or German unification, not because these had anything to do with socialism, but because they had to be got rid of in order to clear the way for socialism. Something like this might be said of many problems of the "third world" and of the kind of solutions that can be envisaged for them. These will not always, or even often perhaps, be revolutionary. But revolution itself is a word of manifold meanings, as the "cultural revolution" going on in China reminds us. Any historical process that rescues the peasant majority of mankind from ignorance and misery will be revolutionary. Its immediate outcome in the "third world" might be more to the benefit of liberalism than of socialism; in the West too, for wide feeling can only be mobilized against imperialism (as exhibited in Latin America, or southern Africa) if it is shown to be *unnecessary*, and if it is unnecessary its abandonment will not (as Lenin could hope) bring capitalism to the end of its tether. But fresh possibilities will come in sight for socialists. In the backlands they will have more freedom of action, at home they will have helped to discredit capitalism by showing what it has been doing abroad. Both should have a better chance to lead their countries in the direction of a goal deserving the name of socialism, if the magnetic attraction of socialism—both its ideals and its performance—is strong enough. The broader the front of advance, the more likelihood of socialism being established by majority consent instead of by dictation, and growing truly into what the Webbs thought they recognized in Russia thirty years ago, a New Civilization.

#### NOTES

1. See M. Collis, *Trials in Burma* (London, 1938), Chap. 7, Section 7.
2. See S. M. Dubrovsky, *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie v revoliutsii 1905-1907 gg.* (Moscow, 1956).
3. This is a blemish in the otherwise valuable *Introduction to Neo-Colonialism* by J. Woddis (London, 1967); see e.g. p. 50.
4. Penguin African Library, 1969.

5. A. Cabral, Foreword to B. Davidson, *The Liberation of Guink*.
6. A Nigerian writer has stressed the continuing psychological importance of the fact that Africa did resist conquest; see B. Davidson, *Which Way Africa?* (revised ed., Penguin African Library, 1967), p. 50.
7. *The Liberation of Guiné*, pp. 20-1.
8. See Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Penguin ed., 1969).
9. *The Liberation of Guink*, p. 113.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
13. Guevara, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 97; *The Liberation of Guiné*, pp. 60-1, 133.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
15. *Ibid.*, Foreword.
16. One protest to President Caetano by a distinguished group of Portuguese outside Portugal was discussed in *The Guardian*, 21 August, 1969.
17. Cabral (*loc. cit.*) points out some exaggerations in Freyre's eulogy of "Lusitano-tropicalism", or Portuguese adaptability to the tropics.
18. G. Arrighi and J. S. Saul, "Nationalism and Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa", in *Socialist Register*, ed. R. Miliband and J. Saville (London, 1969), p. 145.
19. *The Liberation of Guink*, p. 88.
20. Arrighi and Saul, *loc. cit.*, p. 172.
21. Text of Charter in Davidson, *Which Way Africa?*, pp. 185-201.
22. Davidson and other speakers at the Anti-Apartheid movement conference in London, 6 July, 1969, dwelt on how the various liberation struggles in southern Africa were now converging.
23. C. Legum, *The Observer*, 27 September, 1964.
24. P. Keatley, *Guardian*, 16 July, 1969, in one of a series of articles on "The Battle for Africa".
25. e.g. Arrighi and Saul, *loc. cit.*, pp. 174-5.
26. *Op. cit.*, p. 80.
27. See Arrighi and Saul, *loc. cit.*, pp. 149-51.
28. e.g. P. Keatley, in the last of the articles cited above, 21 July, 1969.
29. *Which Way Africa?*, p. 11.
30. *The Liberation of Guiné*, pp. 75-6.
31. *Which Way Africa?*, pp. 77-80.
32. Col. C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars. Their Principles and Practice* (3rd ed., War Office, London, 1906), p. 30. Empire-builders were studying guerrilla warfare, and how to counter it, long before anyone on the other side did so. Engels, the military expert of Marxism, had thought of well-drilled regular armies as the only useful forces.
33. Woddis, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
34. *The Liberation of Guink*, pp. 32-3, 48-52.
35. I owe this information to my friend Dr Harka B. Gurung, a member of the National Planning Commission of Nepal.
36. The uniqueness of English capitalist farming is well brought out in "Primitive Accumulation and Early Industrialization in Britain", by J. Saville, in *Socialist Register*, 1969.

37. *Op. cit.*, p. 16, etc.
38. As Guevara himself observed : *ibid.*, p. 130. See also on this A. Hennessy, "Latin America", in *Populism*, ed. G. Ionescu and E. Gellner (London, 1969), p. 46. The whole essay is illuminating, e.g. on the Populist tendency to idealize the peasantry, as Maoism too has done.
39. See articles by V. Zorza in *Guardian*, 10-11 September, 1969.
40. J. Saul, "Africa", in *Populism*, p. 146.
41. Arrighi and Saul, *loc. cit.*, p. 177.

Reference may be made generally to three important works that have appeared since this essay was written :

Amilcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea. An African People's Struggle* (London, 1969).

D. M. Abshire and M. A. Samuels (editors), *Portuguese Africa. A Handbook* (London, 1969).

Philip Mason, *Patterns of Dominance* (O.U.P., 1970).