

## FROM THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH TO THE DEFENCE OF THE WEST: AN ESSAY ON LEFT DISENCHANTMENT IN FRANCE

Jean-Pierre Garnier & Roland Lew

"There is no such thing as imperialism. There never has been. . . The only places where I have come across it are the Eastern bloc countries and the totalitarian countries of the Third World.' This ironic description of one of the major features of the 'cultural revolution', brought about by the French intelligentsia in the seventies, comes from the authors of a study of audio-visual media in the age of transnational capitalism: 'A complacently ignorant Third Worldism has given way to a convinced Westernism which is steeped in rhetoric.'" And it is indeed a striking contrast.

Just over a decade ago, the French Left was full of enthusiasm about the Third World. Progressive intellectuals believed that the Third World's struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism was a world-wide struggle and that its liberation would signal the world revolution. The 'proletarian nations' which had for so long been excluded from a history that went against them, had now entered history in spectacular fashion and taken the torch from the 'bourgeoisified' working classes of the industrialized world, from classes which had been seduced by the delights of 'consumer society' and betrayed their mission of emancipation.

According to the self-styled Marxist theoreticians of the Latin Quarter, the epicentre of political revolution had shifted from Europe to the 'storm zone' and it would not be long before a tidal wave would flood the Old World and sweep away a system of exploitation which had had its day. Major feats of arms appeared to justify this prophetic messianism: Dien Bien Phu, the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam, the triumphal entry of the *barbudos* of the Sierra Maestra into Havana. . . An incandescently lyrical and militant literature set alight the imagination of French academics and journalists and artists of the French Left. The writings of Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Mao Tse Tung were sparks starting prairie fires in the small world of Parisian publishing and journalism; Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* is a typical example.

The wind blowing across the decadent capitalist West was from neither the East nor the West; it came in gusts from the South, from the lands of the wretched and starving 'periphery', from the vast rebel camp that was besieging the citadels of the 'centre' and the final ramparts of 'the existing order of things'. The destruction of that order would soon be a reality.

But the *Internationale* did not unite the human race. The vast majority of the population of the Third World still lives in misery and is still oppressed. What has changed is the 'world view' of those who once thought that the Third World was a redeemer which could save not only itself but the whole of mankind. The fraternal warmth and exaltation of the past has given way to scorn, hostility and even hatred; at best to indifference. Famines and scarcity rage in Africa, Asia and Latin America, but the only response in the West is a fatalistic sort of pity. The exactions of corrupt and repressive governments trying to maintain order in the various 'backyards' of the 'free world' no longer provoke the individual protests and the mass mobilizations of the sixties; nor does our own government's support for their discredited elites. As for resistance and rebellion on the part of the victims, they are now seen as minor skirmishes in the battle between East and West; as side effects of the sinister manoeuvres of the Soviet 'Empire of Evil'. 'Totalitarianism' is equated with 'communism' and 'North-South' struggles, and struggles between dominators and dominated in specific countries, are accordingly seen simply as a projection of East-West relations. With very few exceptions, the leaders and ideologues of the French Left, far from rejecting both 'liberal' capitalism and state capitalism (which they mistakenly equate with 'actually existing socialism'), have resolutely taken sides. They are, that is, on the side of the West which, for the purposes of the moment, they refer to as 'Democracy'. From now on, 'Democracy' is the model for the Third World. As one of the new crusaders who has forsaken his *gauchisme* and rallied to capitalism puts it: 'There is nothing beyond democracy. If the peoples of the Third World are to become themselves, they must become more Western.'<sup>2</sup>

How are we to interpret the process whereby most of the French Left has moved from 'blind enthusiasm to systematic denigration'?<sup>3</sup> We could of course follow the usual pattern and justify their change of heart in terms of the post-victory vicissitudes of the revolutionary process. How could anyone not be disappointed, sickened or disgusted with the retreats made by the regimes that emerged from the liberation struggles? Then we could listen to the self criticisms of an intelligentsia which allowed itself to be blinded and which lived in a dream rather than in the real world. And we could end by joining in the celebrations as the same intelligentsia congratulates itself on its decision to have done with 'mobilizing myths' and 'mystifying ideologies'. Having got over its illusions and its infantile dependency on ideology, the intelligentsia is now ready to take a 'new look' at the real world and its 'complexity'. Its watchword is now 'lucidity'.

There is, however, another way of analysing why yesterday's Third Worldists decided to set off on a new crusade, this time beneath the banners of the capitalist West. We can, that is, *relate their ideological*

*trajectory to the political and social trajectory of the social group to which they belong.* That group has abandoned the fight for socialism in defence of a neo-conservatism decked out in all the trappings of 'modernity'. Third Worldism was a phenomenon found throughout the Western world, but it was at its most extreme in France, as is the unrestrained Westernism which has succeeded it. France is exemplary in that the features of similar movements in other advanced capitalist countries can be found there in almost caricatural form. But 'French-style' Third Worldism is also exemplary in that it is highly specific. France differs from other advanced countries in that, for a time, progressive opinion put revolution on the agenda once more, both as a political demand and as an immediate practical demand. We therefore have to ask two questions. What was being projected in a desire for 'revolution' that was both aroused and satisfied by Third Worldism? And which social group was projecting itself in that 'desire for revolution'?

We may well live in an age of disenchantment, but what was it that enchanted people in the heyday of radical Third Worldism? Who fell under the spell? Of course hopes have been frustrated. But which hopes? And whose hopes? It is common knowledge that any discourse on society has something to do with the position one occupies in society, even if we often feign ignorance of the fact. The theoretical or practical positions we take are not entirely unrelated to the positions we occupy in the social field. Like any other ideological production, the discourse of Third Worldism has, then, to be related not only to the social reality it constituted as an object, but also to its *social subject*. If, in other words, we want to understand the underlying reasons why the French intelligentsia converted to Third Worldism and then converted back to Westernism, we have to look at what was happening in the centre and especially in France itself, rather than at what was happening on the periphery.

### *1. Origins of the problematic*

#### *An Uncomfortable Encounter*

The 'Third World', which has been known by a variety of names at various times, has always been seen through a blurred and shifting image, if not an imagery. Without going back to the **Ark**, it is obvious that East-West relations have for centuries been hampered by misunderstandings, misconceptions and even non-perceptions. 'The East', a generic term meaning 'non-Western', usually referred to the Islamic world, although the focus sometimes shifted to China or India. For the pre-capitalist West it was an object of fear and a realm of imaginary demons. Sometimes, however, it did become a more edifying model, as when the kings and emperors of the enlightenment began to take lessons from Asian despotism and the wisdom of the **sages**.<sup>4</sup> Islam took a somewhat disdainful view of the West, but in fact knew very little about it.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between

the two was never easy and was often based upon mutual suspicion, if not hatred. Even those who took a more kindly view knew little about the distant countries they tried to describe.

Whatever East-West relations may have meant in the past, for 'the conscious and systematic Eurocentrism of the nineteenth century. . . the only conceivable meaning of universality was the wholesale adoption of the European model'.<sup>6</sup>

The nineteenth-century revolutionary tradition in the West was not, however, entirely unambiguous when it came to the East, a term which now applied to those vast areas of the world which were threatened by a vigorous process of colonization. In its attempts to come to terms with the colonial question, the Second Socialist International (1889) had to reconcile its universalist discourse and its Eurocentric tendencies, not to mention the colonialist tendencies of a considerable number of its members, base and leadership alike.

The long-awaited marriage between the movement for social liberation and the peoples who wanted liberation from the colonial yoke did not take place, either theoretically or practically. In practical terms, there was not sufficient mass action on the part of the colonized, and in conceptual terms, the European socialist movement was simply unable to comprehend the vast size of the non-Western world.

Prior to the establishment of the Third International in 1919, meetings between East and West usually took the form of violent imperialist expansion. The values and specificities of the colonial and semi-colonial world were brutally suppressed and subordinated to the white man's imperatives, which were themselves governed by the demands of an expanding capitalism.

The intrusion of modern colonialism was a new challenge and a powerful stimulus to change in the non-Western world. The balance of power was, however, in the West's favour—to an extent which has probably never been equalled, either before or since—and it is that which explains the colonizers' ability to impose their will and the absence of any rapid response, with the possible exception of Japan.

For a long time, neither colonists nor progressive militants, however well intentioned, had anyone to force them to modify their views of the colonized or their behaviour towards them. Indeed, their views were reinforced by the fact that the notion of the white man's superiority was actually shared by old civilizations like China which had once been convinced of their *own* superiority. The West was not seen simply as a cruel and unwanted master, but also as a fascinating pedagogue.

It was only with the Third International that relations between East and West took on a more positive look. The International inherited an actively anti-colonial minority trend from its predecessor. At its second congress in 1920, it did devote a lot of time to discussing the problems of

the East and the colonial countries and readily agreed to give the anti-colonial struggle a major role in its revolutionary strategy. A definite majority, however, led by Lenin—argued that the major issue was the revolution in the West and rejected the Indian Communist Roy's thesis that the heartlands of the world revolution now lay in the colonial sphere.

The Russian Revolution soon had repercussions in the East. The East responded to the anti-colonial call that came from the West, particularly in so far as those intellectuals who wanted to modernize their societies saw the Russian Revolution as a simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the West. The victory of Bolshevism seemed to prove that it was possible to take the best that the West had to offer and turn against it; its 'best' being a fraternal call to prepare for world revolution and break with the egotistical interests which had previously dominated East-West relations.

In the various countries of the Third World, a number of men and women, most of them intellectuals, were carried away by an intoxicating hope. They dreamed of nothing less than a merging of civilizations in which the anti-imperialist West and the insurgent East would be on equal footing, of an era in which the people would gain their social and national liberation, in which their creative potential would at last be unleashed. Initially, their vision found its incarnation in Russia, the natural mediator between East and West. The intellectual and anti-imperialist upsurge of the May 4 Movement in China was a powerful expression of this ethos. The country's modernist intellectuals and the leaders who launched the May 4 Movement—at once a patriotic movement and China's first cultural revolution—moved rapidly from liberalism to Bolshevism. For them, Bolshevism was the final proof that a backward country could rebel against its backwardness ('the weight of the feudal past') without necessarily falling prey to the appetites of the imperialists.

The marriage between East and West was not a success. There were to be many disappointments, but there were also some positive gains. The intellectuals had good reason to be disillusioned: the meanders of Soviet policy, which was rapidly dominated by Stalinism, left little room for dreams about the merging of civilizations. It was more a question of manipulating the struggles of the East. In China, the intellectuals who had been radicalized by the May 4 Movement thought that their country was about to undergo a renaissance and were at the same time looking for a road to communism. But before long they had to begin a painful apprenticeship in realism and become accustomed to manoeuvres between great and small powers, to the ruses of militant struggle and to the tortuous tactics of class warfare.

Despite all these misunderstandings, Bolshevism did, even in its Stalinist form, make a decisive contribution. It helped to introduce a new practice of political struggle into what had yet to become known as the Third World, and that was much more important than grandiose theories about

the merging of civilizations and the advent of world socialism. It made it possible to combine the anti-imperialist struggle with avant-garde practices. The terms are so familiar and so hackneyed that it is easy to forget how novel they once were and to forget that they lie at the very heart of radical Third Worldism. To take the example of China, which played such an important role in the emergence of anti-imperialism and then Third Worldism: once the universalist fever of 1919 had died down, the radicalized intellectuals became Party militants and learned to harness the anti-imperialist potential of the masses. There were of course many reversals, culminating in the counter-revolution of 1927, a disaster for which their Soviet mentor was certainly largely responsible, but a small minority of activists did learn to mobilize the broad masses. That was the vital discovery which was to inform the triumphant Third Worldism of the fifties and sixties. The disinherited masses of the Third World had to be mobilized and could be mobilized, provided that the impetus came from an organized centre, provided that the avant-garde was organized as a party that could stir up the masses. The formulae are now so familiar that it is difficult to remember how novel they once were.

The disinherited masses can and must be mobilized. Nothing could have been less obvious than this conception—the result of a rapid but painful process of maturation on the part of the intellectuals of the crisis-ridden colonial and semi-colonial countries. Nothing could have been more unexpected or more dangerous than this sudden appeal to the broad masses. The threat must indeed have been serious for the intellectuals to contemplate calling for a popular armed uprising—a process which is by definition difficult to control. That they did so was in a sense an admission of defeat rather than a positive decision. The 'normal' forces of modernization were conspicuous by their absence from the scene. The appeal to the people was addressed to the poorest and most populous sectors. It was even addressed to women, to a social category that was 'less than nothing' rather than 'half of heaven' in a country like China. It was not addressed to modernist social forces: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were either simply not there or too embryonic and too irresolute to transform society and respond to the imperialist threat.

Ever since its origins in 1927, Maoism has always meant the mobilization and utilization of millions of impoverished peasants by a small number of militants, most of them from the towns or at least educated in the towns. Beggars who were simply oppressed rather than in revolt were transformed into active revolutionaries because they were acted upon, and they acted in the name of a cause which, the agrarian question aside, escaped them.

The essential elements of the Third World problematic thus emerged long before the Second World War. On the one hand, Stalinism led to serious errors and to the most serious defeats ever inflicted upon the

proletariat. On the other hand, the huge conglomerate of countries which came to be known as the Third World were subjected to immense social strains which prevented them from being stabilized even when there was no solution to the crises affecting them. The ravages of Stalinism were powerless to hold back social upheavals which did in some cases lead to great revolutions, like the Chinese Revolution of 1946-49. Moreover, the weight of backwardness and the premature decay of the local bourgeoisie allowed—or forced—the small urban petty bourgeoisie to lead the national struggle.

The difficulties of the anti-colonial struggle thus created the conditions, which were admittedly highly specific, that allowed the petty bourgeoisie and especially its urban fraction to take historical revenge. It was able to lead the struggle rather than remain subordinate to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, which were both larger and more important in terms of the industrial process. The weakness of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, combined with the inertia of the peasantry, which was interrupted only by sporadic revolts, gave the radicalized petty bourgeoisie an un hoped-for historical opportunity. It also provided an effective, if unexpected, solution to what looked like a social impasse.

The radicalized intelligentsia, a group representing a tiny fragment of the nation, underwent a metamorphosis. Traditionally, the intellectuals had been scribes or scholars who were dependent on a traditional centre of power—or in the case of the mandarins of China, part of the ruling class of the past—and they now became modern intellectuals, often faced with a loss of class status and almost always threatened with losing their privileged relationship with power (and wealth). As a group they were both aware of the general social crisis and alert to the fact that they were in the uncertain position of being rejected both by those who traditionally held power and by the colonial authorities. They were in a transitional position, midway between their old and new roles, but they were also conscious of the effects that stagnation was having on their countries. They increasingly realized that there was no obvious solution and that they could not function as an organic group of intellectuals simply because no new and dynamic class was emerging. In a very short space of time they were forced to explore new practices and intellectual conceptions (just think of the last years of the nineteenth century or the first years of the twentieth in China, Vietnam or Latin America) and began to be autonomously active in a way that would have been inconceivable in the West. The process culminated in the emergence of a revolutionary avant-garde party, a party of militant intellectuals with a popular social base. By the twenties and thirties, the major components of Third Worldism had already appeared in the Third World itself; on the one hand, the Party militant, who was often an intellectual who feared for the future, on the other, a vague entity known as 'the people' rather than differentiated

classes. And between the two, the upheavals of a society in crisis.

*Radical Third Worldism in the Third World*

The vogue for Third Worldism is of course a post-war phenomenon, as is the term itself. The term's popularity might seem surprising, given its many and vague connotations. It is in fact more current in the West than in other parts of the world, where terms such as 'the movement of non-aligned countries' and 'the tricontinental movement' tend to be used instead. The term 'the Third World' was coined by the economist Alfred Sauvy in an article which appeared in 1952. It referred both to a sort of worldwide third estate which was nothing and wanted to be something<sup>7</sup> and to a Third World which was neither capitalist nor socialist. Some countries within the Third World, however, either already belonged to a markedly Stalinist socialist camp or were about to join it; others were undeniably capitalist. Although the concept of the Third World was vague and encompassed a variety of themes and referred to a number of very different national realities, it did also refer to a key idea and to a force which was so powerful that the volcanic metaphors often used to describe it are not entirely without foundation. The process of national and anti-colonial liberation meant both a world in eruption and its irruption on to the world scene.

It is the very extent of the phenomenon that explains the success of a qualifier which in fact qualified very little indeed. The word does, however, accurately pinpoint an essential aspect of the emerging ideology of Third Worldism, namely the notion of a proletarian nation or even a proletarian continent. The disinherited majority was identified with the nation itself and the nation became synonymous with the unity of the insurgent people. The Third World struggle was seen as the key to all the problems facing the nations and continents which had rebelled against colonialism. At the same time, an inverted missionary spirit meant that it would also be seen as the solution to the problems of mankind as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

The proletarian nation took the place of the proletariat in Marx's theory; it was both its own liberator and the liberator of the entire human race. The messianic universalism of the West was still there, but the direction of the flow had been reversed. As Fanon put it in 1961, 'The Third World today faces Europe like a colossal mass whose aim should be to try to resolve the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers.'<sup>9</sup> His book ends with an exhortation: 'For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.'<sup>10</sup>

The way in which the problematic was identified and displaced did much to popularize a term which was in itself vague. The vagueness of the concept had the further advantage of concealing the identity of the small

group that promoted this populism. For Third Worldism is also a phenomenon with a very localized base. The term refers to the convergence of a broad and irresistible movement for national liberation and a social force with a very narrow base. The radicalized intelligentsia, that is, used and harnessed the broad movement. The Bolshevik heritage was too remote from the realities of the Third World to be used as it stood and was therefore adapted in a variety of ways to suit a very broad mobilization which often ignored class barriers. By doing so, the intelligentsia could mobilize considerable social forces without being subordinated to them. The Leninist heritage had to be modified because the rapid process of Stalinization had destroyed Bolshevism's last vestiges of internationalism and had subordinated it to the national interests of Russia and its new rulers.

The changes can also be explained in terms of the difficulty of applying the concept of class struggle in developing countries where classes were ill-defined and where neither enemies nor allies could easily be fitted into the 'orthodox' nomenclature. Matters were further complicated by the fact that the driving force was an avant-garde party which preached a populism that did little to clarify the precise basis on which the battle was being fought. The slowness with which new classes matured encouraged the survival of older social relations, especially amongst the peasantry, and the vitality of traditional forms of communal solidarity made it possible, if not essential, to use the concept of 'the people' as an overall structure rather than that of class.

Third Worldist populism—according to which the only groups which are not part of the people are the local *compradores* and the direct agents of colonialism—was not the artificial creation of a group that was so small that it had to work in concealment. On the contrary, Third Worldism was a real solution to real problems (a low level of class differentiation, amongst other things) and used real materials: the nationalist and anti-imperialist radicalization of broad sections of the nation. The radicalization was often uncontrolled and had neither a clear sense of direction nor a clear content; the massive upsurge required a unitary structure capable of replacing ineffective structures (traditional elites, state or dynastic power). In some countries, the intelligentsia was obviously destined to lead the movement, as in China, where the mandarin intellectuals had formed a ruling elite for centuries. But even in countries where that was not the case, the concrete experience of two or three generations pointed to the urgent need for a new solution. It also suggested where that solution might be found. The path that had been cleared with such difficulty had to be one that the intelligentsia could take; it had to be adapted to its needs.

The very scale of Third Worldism and the huge range of experiments that derived from the same matrix prove that the solution was neither artificial nor simply a flash in the pan. But the complexity of Third World-

ism and the variety of forms it took in practice also prove that the general concept of the Third World was not adequate to the variety of terrain in which it had to be applied. Nor should it be forgotten that the original meaning of the term—a third world which is neither capitalist nor socialist—is illegitimate.

Even so, both the 'non-aligned movement' and the 'tricontinental movement' of the fifties did express a definite desire to find a third way. It took a variety of forms, ranging from a search for an alternative to both capitalism and communism to an attempt to find a specific revolutionary path equidistant from both Soviet Russia and Maoist China.

In practice, Third Worldism has been identified with every possible variety of socialism and capitalism. It is true that the very nature of the mobilization and the difficulties of the struggle often forced it to take radical, or apparently radical, forms which did lead to social upheavals (China, Vietnam). It also led to more or less militant forms of anti-imperialism (Nasser's Egypt, Algeria). The former identified with 'real socialism' and the latter with a real state capitalism that evolved sooner or later into private capitalism. But there was no question of a third way. The near caricature of Stalinism that China exhibited at the time of the Bandung conference'' or after the long 'interlude' of Maoism; Cuba's support for the Soviet Union in 1968 and, conversely, the pro-Western position of certain Third World countries, all point to the impossibility of locating the Third World in any specific place and to the impossibility of any coherent discourse or any practical solidarity between its countries.

It is the most radical and dynamic forms of Third Worldism that reveal its component elements and its internal chemistry most clearly; and which did most to feed the fervour of Third Worldism in the West. If we restrict the argument to those forms, a number of features emerge, both during the years of struggle and after the victory.

The first and the most fascinating feature is the very strength of the movement. Ludicrous as it may seem in terms of our traditions, the mobilization of the broad masses by a small number of militants was effective. A few thousand radicalized intellectuals did mobilize millions of individuals. Radical Third Worldism combined a certain kind of class struggle (anti-feudalism, anti-capitalism) with the millenarian aspirations of the whole people.

The emergence of a leading bloc is equally striking. A group of radical intellectuals which was too small to assume all the functions of leadership on its own incorporated certain sections of the population. The intellectuals themselves underwent a major transformation and became militant cadres who rejected the temptation to become critical or universalist intellectuals. The transformation of radical intellectuals into a ruling group is inseparable from the destruction of the critical function of the intellectual, who is by definition distanced from or opposed to the ruling

powers. This confusion between the intellectual—a member of a social group with specific interests—and the intellectual function—which has no specific social site—lies at the origin of many misinterpretations of the real evolution of the intellectuals. It also explains the common failure to understand what happened when they became practical militants and began to perform ignoble tasks that were far removed from the envied status of the 'great intellectual'. As Mao well knew, the intellectuals had to be forged anew, with all the energy and force that a blacksmith puts into forging iron. Both processes are at once creative and destructive and they presumably both mean working at a very high temperature. The transformation which allowed a loosely knit group to become leaders of a social movement and finally a potential ruling class or group, also legitimized a social group which was not 'naturally' (in the sense that new relations of production define the 'natural') a ruling class. In this context, the state was an essential staging post in the long march to power. Initially, the party-state centralized the impulse towards mobilization and homogenized the contradictory tendencies which coexisted amongst the people. It then became responsible for ensuring industrial accumulation; accumulation was either inadequate or even non-existent and capitalism itself was not in a position to generate it. The party-state became a strong state. Anti-imperialist nationalism became a state nationalism that was quick to take offence and a mystical exaltation of the nation. The basic characteristics of many forms of Third Worldism soon became obvious and the great speeches of the past were often jettisoned and replaced by empty rhetoric. Their other features—and there were many other features—derived from the ethos of specific nations and civilizations, from the role played by religious traditions in Third Worldist mobilizations—or demobilizations—and from traditional values which were recovered and adapted to nationalism as and when required.

Sometimes, however, the emphasis is placed on terms with more modern connotations; hence the popularity of the term 'socialist', even though it is devoid of its true content and demands. Some new terms, like 'African socialism' were used to refer to realities that were far from new. Others referred to realities that had been constituted elsewhere: Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese 'socialism' means nothing unless it is related to the Soviet model.

What initially looked like a shapeless movement did, then, produce specific if variable results. One of its most unexpected accomplishments often goes unnoticed, but it has had lasting effects in the Third World and an ephemeral effect in the West itself. A small group of radical intellectuals came to power, even though they probably never expected that their universalistic rhetoric and militant practices would transform them into a ruling class in the strict sense of the term or would forge very statist societies which corresponded to their social being. The historical

merit, and therefore the legitimacy, of their accomplishment is all the more remarkable in that the task was far from easy. These states emerged in a world that was dominated by a Stalinism that was both counter-revolutionary and chauvinistically national and by an imperialism which may have been weak in the sense that it was losing its colonies but which was at the same time developing into a powerful imperialism which did not need actual colonies. Internally, the peasantry was in revolt, but it often remained passive and was in no sense revolutionary, whilst the embryonic proletariat took a not unambiguous view of foreign interests and at times tried to take command of the movement itself. They were caught up in the rivalry of the great powers and had to rely on the sometimes dubious friendship of their allies, the former colonial countries. They indulged in a rhetoric of purification and at the same time had to adapt to the realities of the balance of power and the opportunities open to them. In the midst of all these difficulties, a relatively new social group succeeded in forging the destiny of nations and in facing up to some of the challenges of the age in which they lived. In its own way, it performed some of the tasks that should have been incumbent upon others, notably the bourgeoisie. The universalism which was sung so lyrically by Fanon and then echoed so brilliantly by Jean-Paul Sartre and Régis Debray did not, however, survive the successes and failures of actual existing Third Worldism and actual active capitalism. It was at this point that a relationship begun so enthusiastically began to break up. The outcome was the anti-Third Worldism we see today.

## ***2. Third Worldism in the West: The French Example***

France was the classic home of Third Worldism. There are a number of good reasons as to why that should have been the case, but some of the most important are rather less than obvious. Decolonization was obviously not specific to France alone. But the chaotic conditions in which it took place and France's reluctance to give up its colonies meant that the country was involved in two of the major events in the Third Worldist odyssey: Dien Bien Phu, which was the final outcome of seven years of war in Vietnam, and then a further seven years of war in Algeria. And when the Americans took over in Vietnam, the French could hardly remain indifferent to what was happening in a former colony which, by the end of the sixties, had become the last great Third World cause.

France came a long way between 1945 and 1975. Third Worldism was of course very widespread in the seventies, but colonial attitudes were equally widespread, if not more so, in 1945 when the nationalist revolt in Constantine was crushed with such brutality.

There were few anti-colonialist protests to be heard when the French army came to blows with Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh in 1945. And during the Algerian war—at least until 1960—public opinion was largely in favour

of Algeria remaining French or at least of a continued French presence in Algeria.

The subsequent strength of Third Worldism was initially the result of a bad conscience and a moralistic rejection of a colonial reality that had previously been accepted by the majority of people in France. On the Left, it also derived from a somewhat belated rejection of social democracy's commitment to colonialism and from the recantations of the **Parti Communiste Français**, whose anti-colonialism had always been luke warm. After all, the PCF did describe the Constantine revolt as fascist and had watched the rebels being bombed into submission, just like the rebels in Madagascar. The PCF was in the government when war broke out in Vietnam. In 1956, it voted special powers to Guy Mollet's socialist government to help it increase the repression in Algeria.

Under these conditions, the rejection of anti-colonialism could only come from the gauchiste fringe and from outside the labour movement (the Christians). Anti-colonialism soon became combined with a virulent anti-capitalism when General de Gaulle came to power after a military putsch in 1958 and when a right-wing regime which refused to relinquish power established an increasingly authoritarian reign. In an attempt to reinforce their anti-capitalism, the Third Worldists of the sixties looked to the Third World for models to replace a socialism that had been discredited by its compromises with the bourgeoisie and a Stalinist 'communism' whose horrors had been revealed by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. A year after the great victory of Dien Bien Phu, the **Bandung** Conference proclaimed loudly that there was a 'third way', and that proved very attractive to certain groups among Christians who were becoming radicalized and to militants who were looking for an alternative to a bankrupt Stalinism. For those intellectuals who had already broken with Stalinism, there was a great temptation to abandon the 'orthodox' schema and to look overseas for a 'good' proletariat to replace a proletariat which had, under the leadership of the PCF, betrayed its revolutionary vocation.

The populist component—the notion that an upsurge amongst the wretched of the earth would purify the privileged Western world—fitted in perfectly with the search for a new catholicity and the celebration of the redeeming fraternity that was going to embrace the whole of mankind and set the whole of the world alight.

The lyrical power of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*—and the title itself—is a perfect expression of the pathos of an inverted universalism, of the belief that the East was going to enlighten the West. It also expresses the desire for a new historical subject to replace that of the socialist tradition with its belief that the new liberator would come from a humiliated world that had become a storm zone, and that the liberator was an entire people not just the proletariat. It is scarcely surprising that

this discovery should have turned new converts into proselytes. Initially, very few people felt they had a vocation, but they made up for their lack of numbers with their zeal, their courage—especially during the Algerian war—and their enthusiasm. When intellectual stars like Jean-Paul Sartre became committed and put their verve and their talents at the service of the anti-colonial struggle, Third Worldism became a real mass movement amongst the rising generations in schools and universities.

All this may sound very obvious and very familiar, but today's anti-Third Worldism makes it all too easy to forget that there were very good reasons for the rise of Third Worldism in France. It was slow to emerge, but if anything was all the stronger for that. The colonizers came face to face with the colonized and admitted that they too had their own existence and their own dignity, if not a superior essence. The day of arrogant Eurocentrism seemed at last to be over. The white man paled at the sight of colonized peoples who were bursting with life.

At a deeper level, however, the Third Worldist movement in France was more complex and was linked to the specific context of French society itself. The dazzling success of Third Worldism in France and the exceptional impact it had on the political life of the country can also be seen as a result of another encounter—although it was in fact largely mythical—the encounter between the intellectuals of France and their counterparts in the Third World. If we examine the milieu in which Third Worldism developed, we can in fact find certain analogies with the social groups which gave birth to the avant-garde leaders of the anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World. France, too, had its frustrated intellectual elite, the representatives of a modernist petty bourgeoisie whose increasing importance in demographic, economic and cultural terms was in contradiction with its marginalization at the political level. Although the dirigiste policies of the Fifth Republic speeded up the economic reconstruction that had begun after the Second World War, France was still an archaic country, both in terms of its institutions and its dominant values.

One of the specific characteristics of bourgeois hegemony in France, as compared with the forms of domination that existed in other advanced capitalist countries, was the survival of a class alliance with a traditional petty bourgeoisie that was still linked to earlier stages of social evolution: small peasants, artisans, small shopkeepers, the liberal professions and the heads of small firms. The alliance became more and more anachronistic as capital became increasingly concentrated, and it also became more difficult to maintain, given that the tendency towards monopolization implied the liquidation of traditional sectors which had, since the mid-nineteenth century, always been the traditional rampart against the 'dangerous' (working) classes. But rather than abandoning its traditional supporters and turning to the managers, technicians, teachers and social workers who were being secreted by the modernization of capitalism and

increased state intervention, the French bourgeoisie made the strategic mistake of trying to govern alone. Gaullism bypassed the representative instances of parliamentary democracy and exercised power in an authoritarian manner, combining the personal charisma of the Head of State with the efficiency of technocratic management. Furious at being ousted from the political responsibilities to which it was entitled as a class fraction destined for the task of conceptualization, control, supervision and legitimation, the intellectual petty bourgeoisie became radicalized. Its opposition to De Gaulle evolved into opposition to the regime established in 1958 and finally into opposition to capitalism itself. Its resistible rise had been blocked and Third Worldism became an ideological outlet for its aspirations.

The new petty bourgeoisie felt out of place in a society which was still living in the colonial past and whose official ideology was permeated with a reactionary ethos that was more appropriate to a disappearing rural world than to the new urban generations produced by industrialization. Its exasperation was all the greater in that there was no alternative; neither social democracy nor the practices of the PCF were acceptable to it, even though the latter had attracted a good number of intellectuals at the end of the war and in the immediate post-war period. The traditional Left was incapable of modernizing France and of bringing the essential process of decolonization to a successful conclusion. The formation of the PSU in 1960 and its subsequent development testify to the centrality of these questions. The PSU was to a large extent responsible for giving conceptual and sometimes practical shape to the aspirations of those affected by the modernist currents.

Neither state nor party structures could allow the French petty bourgeoisie to fulfil its ambitions and it was unable to integrate itself into society. It therefore chose to reject society. In its attempt to escape from a capitalist system in which it had no power—as might have happened in a country where it is the norm for social-democratic and conservative parties to hold power alternately—it looked to the Third World, not only to express its solidarity with the hopes of people who were fighting for their emancipation, but also to express its own hopes. Perhaps the most important aspect of its fascination with the Third World is the one thing that is never mentioned. The French petty bourgeoisie could not make a revolution in France, but by identifying with the revolutionary intelligentsia it could make a revolution by proxy. Being cut off from the French proletariat, it made itself the representative of the disinherited masses of the Third World, thus compensating at the level of fantasy for its feeling of isolation at home.

The lyrical illusion of Third Worldism was not, then, simply a phantasmogoria, a populist passion or the fantasy that divergent interests could converge in an upheaval that would create a new society. More

prosaically, it was a process of mimicry: the petty bourgeoisie of France wanted to imitate the intellectual elites of the Third World which, although they were in a minority, had finally taken power in progressive countries like China, Vietnam and Cuba.

From a strategic point of view, the Third World provided an adequate model for the seizure of power and proved that a minority which had no obvious historical destiny could create its own destiny and leave its mark on history. And that was a considerable consolation for a petty bourgeoisie that had been condemned to political impotence by the Gaullist France of the sixties.

Basically, the lyrical illusion was the battle hymn of a group of intellectuals, most of them from the lower intelligentsia, who were convinced that they had found a way to gain an unheard of status as an intermediate class in an advanced capitalist country. They thought that they could oust the bourgeoisie and become the ruling class. It is not difficult to explain the appeal of Third Worldism. It seemed to provide a solution to all the problems. As suffering humanity liberated itself, a minority which was intellectual, dissatisfied and sometimes humiliated would find its own road to success. The Western model as such would no longer apply, but some aspects of it would be revitalized by the actions of the Third World peoples who provided the liberating dimension. A movement which had begun in the insurgent areas of the Third World would sweep away France's anachronisms. People have become excited about much less than that!

It is, however, also true that it took a great deal of verbal conjuring to conceal what was going on; it is not easy for a small group to lead a potential revolt and harness the energy of the masses. It was of course May '68 which detonated all the tensions in French society. It was then that all the constituent elements of Third Worldism came together to form an ideology for the West. May '68 was the moment for mass intellectual radicalization and for a search for radical solutions, simply because it was then that the frustration was at its height. In the heat of the moment and with intoxicating slogans like 'l'imagination au pouvoir', those whose job it was to imagine began to demand intellectual power. Like China, which was then in the throes of a cultural revolution, France was a blank page, and those whose function it was to write and think filled it with their writings and their thoughts. The slogan 'We were nothing but we will be everything' has to be taken quite literally; they wanted to be masters of everything in society. The Third World was a Western ideology and, more specifically, a French problematic.

### *The Morning After*

The dreams of May '68 have vanished without trace. And not even the most imaginative participants could possibly have foreseen how France and the Third World itself were to develop.

For some people, however, the balance sheet is not entirely negative. The demands of the modernist intellectuals have in part been met. 'Modernization'—by far the most fashionable slogan of the moment—has become a reality. The archaisms of rural France are disappearing and giving way to a society which is subject to the imperatives of a vigorous capitalism rather than to its traditional stagnation. France has become more open to the outside world, even if the 'outside' world does simply mean America and perhaps Japan. They are the new models for good capitalist housekeeping. Some of the demands of the new petty bourgeoisie have been met. It has got the recognition it wanted and even a place in the apparatus of power. All the excitement of May '68 has had a prosaic but tangible outcome, namely a new class alliance in which the new middle classes can make their voices heard and even negotiate for a share in power. Their central demand has not, however, been met and they have had to abandon one of the central elements of their Third Worldism: their ambition to become the ruling class. The world is dominated by capitalism writ large and not by the bourgeoisie writ petty. Modernization means that capitalism must finally penetrate every sphere of society. The valorization of bourgeois values (the market, profits, the firm) has become the dominant ideology and its praises are sung—or hammered out—by all the media. While there would be nothing new or unusual about this in a country like the United States, it is somewhat unexpected in France, where the identity of the Left has always been largely based on its rejection of capitalism. Being up to the minute has come to mean being competitive, being the most successful competitor in a world where everyone has to compete with everyone else. This ideological modernism has swept away the generous and altruistic impulses of Third Worldism. Capitalism has once more revealed its domineering temperament and its self-confidence. Like the rising capitalism described by Marx it has destroyed all pretence of 'living differently'. Instead it glorifies egotistical instincts and subordinates everyone and everything to economic laws which are made to look like immutable principles.

With capitalism in command, the modern petty bourgeoisie had to be content with a subordinate but far from negligible position. At best, it can become a subordinate group within the ruling class. But it has been generously rewarded for its loyalty and has been able to become the dominant group within the dominated group.

Because it occupies a position midway between the ruling class and the working classes, whose role is restricted to taking orders, the intellectual petty bourgeoisie is the mediating class *par excellence*. It is responsible for the training and supervision of the working classes, though most of its members sublimate their function into 'education', 'training', 'information', 'social work', 'youth work' and so on. The advent of the media society gives them an ideal opportunity to fulfil their vocation for

mediation.

In a society where the traditional mechanisms for reproducing the relations of production have a tendency to jam, 'communication' has to lubricate capitalist social relations, not least because the explosion of cultural industries and the state of the art technologies they produce are one of the main launching pads for a new process of accumulation. In Western societies which are now faced with an unprecedented structural crisis, the manipulation of public opinion has become one of the arts of government, and the intellectual petty bourgeoisie has an important role to play at this level too. It may not be able to take power, but it can do much to help the bourgeoisie retain power by making an imaginary assault on the powers it has been granted in the media. Those powers have encouraged them to give up their dreams of a world revolution and to adopt a new attitude of realism—the realism of those who have at last found their rightful place in the reality of capitalism.

This situation allows the new petty bourgeoisie to insert itself into society; it may well have been forced to accept its subordination to the capitalist social order and its masters (who tend to be more impersonal and anonymous than they used to be) but it also tends to dominate the dominated classes. To a certain extent, it is even trying to dominate society as a whole by taking control of ideology and communications. The importance of ideology and communications, that is, allows a section of the new petty bourgeoisie to climb higher in the power structure than it would otherwise be able to do,

In that sense, someone like Serge July, the editor of *Libération* and an active and prolific apostle of modernization, can be said to have fulfilled the old dream of becoming a member of the ruling class. Such successes are, however, the exception rather than the rule. The new petty bourgeoisie is still haunted by its traditional fear of proletarianization. Unlike the old petty bourgeoisie, it is usually salaried and is therefore threatened with being excluded and demoted by the harsh process of capitalist reconstruction.

It is of course unlikely to have to put on overalls and to be fully proletarianized, if only because the working class itself is shrinking. But there is no guarantee that it will not be impoverished or socially demoted. Such fears operate at the level of everyday life and are far removed from the dream of a new society or even a society tailored to the needs of the new petty bourgeoisie.

Ten years in a rapid evolution of capitalism have been enough to cast the new petty bourgeoisie out of heaven—which it stormed only in its imagination—and bring it down to earth and to the constraints of capitalism. The theme of modernization may well be very dear to this social group, but it has not opened up the gates to paradise. Indeed, some of its members live in a purgatory, but they are still a good deal more comfort-

able than those who are forced to live lower down. They live in a limbo midway between the hell of possible social demotion and the delights of upward mobility and joys of the capitalist El Dorado. A mirage for the many and a possibility for the few. But for almost everyone, this implies allegiance to their master and loyalty to the divine existing social order, come what may.

### *The Spell of Disenchantment*

Those who have become disillusioned with their Third **Worldism** have justified their disappointment so often that there is no need to listen to their litanies. An alibi is not an explanation.

According to the 'realist' vulgate which passes for a world view on the 'renovated' French Left, the decline and fall of Third **Worldism** is the logical outcome of the collapse of certain 'revolutionary myths'. The myths were shattered by the sombre realities of the post-revolutionary era, and the lyrical illusion could not survive the brutal revelation of the 'truth'. Everyone has a tale to tell about the disappointments they encountered on the painful road that brought the 'lost generation' of May '68 to the bosom of a society it once rejected.

Many of them saw the Cuban experiment, for instance, as opening up the promise of a third way which could avoid the dictatorship of profit and that of bureaucracy. But when tens of thousands of people flooded into the gardens of the Peruvian Embassy to wait for their exit visas, they proved, if final proof were needed, that the only difference between Fidel Castro's tropical socialism and its Soviet counterpart was the weather.

Thirty years of struggle did nothing to turn Vietnam into an earthly paradise. On the contrary, the boat people were prepared to risk being eaten by sharks or murdered by pirates rather than to help construct the 'new man'. Their Cambodian neighbours were also being led to a glorious future by infallible leaders, but many of them fell by the wayside. They were not killed by the bullets and bombs of the American army, or even by a puppet army, but by their own liberators.

Our students and their academic mentors also placed great hopes on China, but the 'great proletarian cultural revolution' was found to have swept a lot of corpses along in its wake. It was a repetition (though fortunately only a partial repetition) of the demographic feats of the Great Leap Forward<sup>12</sup> which, only a few years earlier, had had the finest flower of the Parisian intelligentsia dancing for joy. It had not at that time finally recovered from the Twentieth Congress's revelations about Stalin's 'errors', but it later drained its cup to the last drop when it learned from Mao's designated—or self-appointed—successors that the Great Helmsman had indeed clung to the rudder come hell or high water, but in order to retain power rather than to guide his people into any safe harbour of prosperity.

And what can one say about the lesser divinities in the Third Worldist pantheon, the varieties of 'African socialism'? In terms of tyranny and incompetence there is little to choose between them, and the scorn and indifference they display towards their starving peoples almost rivals that of the old colonists.

It would of course be absurd to paint a black picture of all the actual non-existent socialist countries over which, according to the Third Worldists, the red flag once flew. With the exception of Cambodia and a few ephemeral dictatorships in Africa,<sup>13</sup> the record of governments which emerged from the liberation struggle is not as bad as our apostate Third Worldists like to claim; they are simply burning their old gods. In comparison with the fate of the workers and peasants of countries to the south of the Rio Grande, that of the Cuban proletariat is quite *enviable*.<sup>14</sup> Those who cheerfully reckon up the number of Cubans who have fled their country for the delights of the consumer society would do well to check the statistics for emigration from Puerto Rico, Mexico and Haiti.

Be that as it may, there is no society which has really freed itself from capitalist domination—state or private—or which can be taken as a model for mankind. In that respect, the Third World is not better qualified than the Old World to give anyone lessons in emancipation.

Besides, how could the Third World speak with one voice when it is internally divided by all kinds of oppositions and splits and when they are made serious by the internationalization of capitalism? The false debate between North and South, which has been promoted by incompetent 'experts' in geopolitics, should not be allowed to conceal something that the Third Worldists ignored for far too long: that the diversity of the Third World is greater than its unity. Although the term 'the Third World' is still used, no one would deny that it in fact refers to a host of very different situations. It includes 'new industrial countries' which are experiencing a rapid expansion of capitalism because the extension of market relations permits the super-exploitation of the proletarianized masses; African countries which have been abandoned by the multinationals and left to rot in poverty; 'Marxist-Leninist countries' in which the party-state uses centralized planning to accumulate capital; countries in which 'wild' capitalism suggested that an economic miracle was about to take place and which then went bankrupt. . . Countries with oil wealth and countries which have nothing but their deserts, countries which thought they were great powers and which cannot pay their debts (Brazil), countries which cannot fulfil their very modest ambitions. . . Virtually the only things they have in common are the persistence of dependency, hunger and poverty for the vast majority of the population, and repression of varying degrees of brutality. But neither the horrific realization that the revolutionary leaders led their countries into so many blind alleys when they finally took power, nor the fragmentation of what was once thought to be the

unity of the Third World can justify our turning our backs on it. Nor can they justify anyone going back there to play 'explorers', to look for the exotic and the picturesque and to claim that the worsening inequalities and injustices to be found there are simply expressions of the 'right to be different'."

First-hand knowledge of the realities of life in these countries does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of their position. Those who are now trying to proclaim 'the white man's innocence' often argue that it was easy to be mystified about the Third World precisely because it was so far away. And it is in fact true that it took a great deal of wilful blindness and crass ignorance to claim that the position of Chinese women during the Cultural Revolution showed how far their European sisters had to go before we could talk about women's liberation.<sup>16</sup> Increased opportunities for travel and the availability of charter flights may have allowed the Third World itself to test its preconceived ideas against concrete realities, but they have done little to overcome the mania for projection. The first contact with reality was of course something of a shock, but rather than analyze what they found in greater depth or lucidly coming to terms with their mutual ambivalence, the militants became travellers or even tourists, allowed themselves to be seduced by the exotica of poverty and used the poverty of exotica to compensate for their political disappointment.

After their 'purifying journey into the mythology of *gauchisme*' a number of May '68 militants abandoned their progressive baggage and decided to go back to the Third World and look at it anew, without 'the blinkers of dogma'. It was once more a matter of freeing people, but from the 'Marxist categories' which 'prevent us from seeing how people really live', rather than from capitalism. As a result, we now have a rash of demystifying travellers' tales. One of our intrepid globe-trotters, for instance, tells us a fundamental truth that was for a long time concealed by 'all the abstract grandiloquence about under-development' and our 'nice sermons about worldwide poverty'. He tells us that in fact the wretched of the earth live 'differently' but 'with dignity'.<sup>17</sup> Too bad if they don't live—or survive— too long.

#### *Something Stirs on the Western Front*

The anti-Third Worldism that is now so widespread would not have taken such a virulent form were it not that it is a component part of an ideological counter-offensive designed to legitimize the economic and political restructuring of capitalism at a time when it is becoming a transnational phenomenon. There is no need to dwell at length on the reactionary climate that has prevailed in France for the last ten years. The prevailing wind which blows through the intellectual milieu no longer comes from the South or the East but from the West, from the United States, which

has become a technological and cultural Mecca for a directionless intelligentsia which wants to tune into modernity. It has taken a major effort on the part of the intellectual leaders and the intelligentsia's spokesmen to disguise their enthusiastic conversion to the values of the market, profits and the **firm**, as a cultural revolution on the part of the Left. It was not enough to get rid of their past illusions. They also had to hold the past itself in contempt and exorcize it.

Third Worldism, with all its unspoken ambitions, was an expression of a desire for radical change. It did represent a vision of a society that would be different, even if it was ruled by an avant-garde which governed for and in the name of the masses. In its own way it was part of the critical traditions of the French intelligentsia. It was heir to a secular tradition of opposition to the established order and the intelligentsia now has to get rid of this embarrassing heritage. It has to do away with the explicit anti-capitalism which was the very basis of the French Left's identity. Hence the determination with which the 'new philosophers' and the spokesmen of the so-called 'New Left' try to deny the need to look for an alternative to capitalism and the very possibility of there being any such alternative. What they loathe most is not the errors, illusions or falsehoods of Third Worldism, but its demand for liberation, even though the latter did appear in a somewhat distorted form. Ultimately, the utopia of liberation and emancipation has to be both rejected and rendered literally unthinkable.

The horizons of the new petty bourgeoisie are now limited to their dream of a modernized capitalism. They are therefore satisfied with being a junior partner to the bourgeoisie, a sub-contractor who carries out the task of domination on its master's behalf. As a result, their secret dream that a revolution would allow them to become the ruling class has turned to scorn or even hatred for those who were more successful in other countries. In May '68, the petty bourgeoisie nourished the unrealistic hope of being able to use 'people's power' or 'workers' control' as a means to oust the bourgeoisie, and it now execrates the radicalized middle classes of the Third World who did, thanks to a specific combination of circumstances, become a state bourgeoisie and gained a privileged position which the intelligentsia could never hope to attain in an advanced capitalist country. In France, the petty bourgeoisie has been trapped into being a subaltern agent in the reproduction of the capitalist system, and when it trots out its grievances about the treachery of the ruling elites of the Third World, it is simply settling accounts with its own past.

Forgetting Third Worldism is not enough. Anti-Third Worldism itself is not enough, as it could easily look like hostility towards the countries and peoples of the Third World. The case against Third Worldism is therefore linked with an attempt to rehabilitate 'values' which are supposed to transcend 'outdated divisions' at the international level, just as they have transcended divisions at the national level. The values in question are 'freedom'

and 'human rights' and it is a mere coincidence that they should be the slogans on the banners carried by these new crusaders from the capitalist West.

Yesterday's anti-imperialism has already given way to a more positive view of Western domination, past and present. A triumphant capitalism has rehabilitated the Eurocentric moralism which once played its part in justifying the civilizing mission of colonialism. 'The white man's sobs' are now anathema to Gérard Chaliand, who is proud of having dispelled the illusions of Third Worldism in favour of 'an objective and non-complacent examination' of the balance of power in the modern world. He has lost no time in jumping on the human rights bandwagon and riding off with the knights of the free world as they go into battle against the 'totalitarian empire'. 'I think that the age of guilt is coming to an end', claims our strategic expert. Now that decolonization is over [sic] and that we can see the type of regime that can masquerade as 'socialistic', 'revolutionary' or 'progressive', there can be no more feelings of guilt. In this context, 'human rights' has to be seen as Western ideology's first serious counter-offensive against Marxism for decades. For the first time, the Western world is not under attack, but is actively fighting back and saying 'Listen, we too have values that are important, if only because you are incapable of living up to them.'<sup>18</sup> It is only a short step from that to justifying such neo-colonial adventures as the expansion of capital might require.

In France, the defrocked priests of Stalinism and Maoism have already taken that step. Bernard-Henri Lévy, for instance, can use the excuse of 'protecting people against their own states' and transcending ideological and partisan quarrels to proclaim that our states have a right to interfere and a legitimate and imperative duty to intervene in Chad, Cambodia and Grenada. But not, of course, in Chile, the Philippines or Gabon.

It might seem surprising that people with a progressive reputation should come out with the hackneyed arguments which have always served as an alibi for an internationalism that has nothing to do with the proletariat. But it would be wrong to put their ideological excesses down to naivety. On the contrary, their lucidity about their past commitments is rivalled only by their lucidity about their present commitments. They simply reflect a cynical acceptance of the fact that the interests of all privileged groups are inter-linked, that the interests of all exploiters are inter-linked, even if the petty bourgeoisie itself can hope for no more than crumbs from the table of the real exploiters.

Pascal Brückner deserves to have the last word. Having expressed his indignation at the fact that the UN does not regard anti-Westernism and anti-white racism as 'crimes against humanity', this worthy successor to Kipling goes on to issue a warning to the wretched of the earth who dare to rise against the West: 'There is nothing beyond democracy. If the

peoples of the Third World are to become themselves, they must become more Western.<sup>19</sup> Replace 'democracy' by 'capitalism' and we have it all. History is being rewritten by people who thought they were making history and then realized that they were being remade by history. For them, capitalism is the ultimate horizon of the modern world. And anti-Third Worldism is always there to liquidate the one thing that the 'new course' of history cannot tolerate in either word or deed: a mode of being Western which is not simply Atlanticist. For if the French Left had remained true to itself, it could have taken up the torch of revolution and shown that 'more Western' can also mean 'less capitalist'.

## NOTES

1. A. Matterlat, X. Delcourt and M. Mattelart, *La Culture contre la dkmocratie?* (Paris: La Découverte, 1983).
2. Pascal Brückner, *Le Sanglot de l'homme blanc*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1983).
3. Paul-Marie de la Gorce, 'Le Recul des grandes espérances révolutionnaires', *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 1984.
4. M. Rodinson, *La Fascination de l'Islam*, (Paris: Maspero 1981).
5. Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*.
6. M. Rodinson, *La Fascination*, p. 88.
7. Alfred Sauvy ends his article 'Trois mondes, une planète' with the words: 'The Third World has, like the Third Estate, been ignored and despised and it too wants to be something.' Cited, Yves Lacoste, *Unité et diversité du tiers monde*, (Paris: Maspero 1980), Vol. 1, p. 14.
8. 'The radical, virulent challenge of *The Wretched of the Earth* is still couched in the language of the colonizers and uses their code and their stated values.' Gérard Chaliand, *Les Faubourgs de l'histoire: tiermondismes et tiers mondes*, (Paris: Calmann-Levy 1984), p. 34.
9. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 253.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
11. 1955 was the year of China's first five year plan (which should have begun in 1953); it was a carbon copy of the Soviet five year plans.
12. Calculations based upon a 1964 census show that between 1958 and 1961, more than sixty million Chinese failed to answer the roll call. Thirty million of them had died of hunger and a further thirty million were not born.
13. The record for longevity amongst the African regimes which emerged in the former French colonies was until very recently held by the grotesquely brutal Sekhou Touré. For a time his regime too was popular with the anti-colonialists of the metropolis.
14. On the Cuban economy, see Joseph Cassas, 'De la médiocrité au décollage', *Le Monde diplomatique*, June 18, 1984, pp. 20-21.
15. Jean-Pierre Garnier, 'Les nouveaux explorateurs', *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 1980.
16. Claudie Broyelle first came to fame with her *Women's Liberation in China*, trans. Michèle Cohen and Gary Herman, (Harvester Press, Hassocks 1977), a hymn of praise to Maoist style women's liberation. Since then both she and her husband Jacques have begun a second career in moral rearmament. Their *China: A Second Look*, trans. Sarah Matthews, (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1980) shows

that they now believe that the only thing about the East that is red is the blood.

17. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Un Voyage vers l'Asie*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1979).
18. Gérard Chaliand, interview in *Libération*, 29-30 November, 1980.
19. *Le Sanglot de l'homme blanc*.

*Translated by David Macey*