

**Subject: Re: [Fwd: [Fwd: message problems]]**

**Date:** Fri, 27 Aug 2004 21:29:43 +0100

**From:** "Adrian Leftwich" <al23@york.ac.uk>

**To:** "magnus" <magnus@intranet.ca>

**CC:** "adrian Leftwich" <al23@york.ac.uk>

Dear Mag

I agree with your point that: The problem as I see it was more the idea that as whites one could never really fight, suffer, sacrifice the way blacks. It is true that some - handful - of whites did suffer, of course. But the overwhelming thrust was not that. Even committed radicals like First and Fischer, and others still alive, always seemed to live just on the edge of the EXPERIENCE, able to have a gin and tonic after the meeting. I think the CP identified in terms of a much larger struggle - with a cause, a movement of history, a tide of progress - rather than with the existential experience of blacks, whose suffering was evidence of the need for change and whose suffering could be transformed into the agency of change.

I don't think Randolph or Peter B (or you or me?) were like that; certainly not Neville, and I know not Eddie.

It's a hard one to pin down, I agree, but there is something there that will not go away. I'm not sure what it means or its implications, but let's keep the discussion going.

Pity about Neville. I always felt he hated the fact that I succeeded him at NUSAS or that ANYONE succeeded him.

I have not heard from Lyn either, silence after I sent her a copy of my GRANTA piece. I don't think she approved of it.

No further word of Watson, eh? Stephanie Kemp (I am in regular email contact with her) says many people still think he was MI6 or Brit Army Intelligence. I don't. What's your final judgement on that?

Did you ever speak to Milly McConkey (Sp?)

Hope all well with you.

Best

Adrian

----- Original Message -----

From: "magnus" <magnus@intranet.ca>

To: "Adrian Leftwich" <al23@york.ac.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, August 03, 2004 5:57 PM

Subject: Re: [Fwd: [Fwd: message problems]]

> Dear Adrian,

> As usual an apology for delayed reply to yours of July 13. You put me to shame

> by your prompt replies. But then you were always a superb correspondent and you

> always knew how to prioritise (sp??) something I still struggle with, I can be

> so easily side-tracked--lately spent a week on Freud because of a brief article

> I read which convinced me I need to know more. Why? God knows and won't

tell.

>

> I agree with much of what you say about identification but again I wonder too.

> Surely at least the core CP people did identify successfully with the Africans

> and blacks generally (by the way on religion the christian whites did have > something in common with blacks who were and to a degree still are v religious

> as opposed to soppy Liberal spirituality). So did the Vigne's and Browns ( you

> know Peter just died). But the issue is how we define identification not

> necessarily how few people did so identify with the oppressed. If you mean that

> only people who have experienced poverty, tribal rituals, beatings by police,

> humiliation at pass offices, self destruction because one could not be a real

> man, fear for one's family, humiliation by the missus and master etc then

> clearly we never were able to identify in that way but neither could the CP

> members eg like Ruth Slove with her perfect hair and make up,

> Yet clearly people like Peter B and Alan P and Randolph V etc did express the

> longings and thoughts of at least some blacks and fought for them. So my rather

> obvious point is that identification takes many forms and has different layers.

> Perhaps its more an issue of role adoption or role playing than identification.

> The problem as I see it was more the idea that as whites one could never really

> fight, suffer, sacrifice the way blacks did. At the level of generalities this

> has some intuitive appeal tho empirically it is confounded by whites who did

> suffer etc and blacks who did not and sold out the same way most of the whites

> did. I think, rather than people being indelibly stamped and irrevocably shaped

> by their environments which inherently limits how far they can go, the truth is

> that people do at certain stages of their lives develop a functional autonomy

> from their environmental socialisation which permits them to transform

> themselves into revolutionaries who to a large degree can overcome the biases

> that shaped them in early life (like adopting a revolutionary ideology) . That

> was our job in NUSAS to create leaders who would then shake people out of their

> early socialisation as much as possible.

> Have I come to grips with what you wrote, not really, but it has forced me to

> think hard about this issue. If I can Ill write more on this in the future esp.

> if I do "the book"

>

> Re Neville someone who knows him well said to me recently that N is "the most

> envious" person he has ever met.

> No reply from Lynn tho my email got thru to her in Feb, I wanted to drive to see her. Suspect she is just fed up with the NCL stuff.  
> Sorry dont know Naomi Wise.  
> Did you know that Theresa Kerry was at Wits between 56 and 59. She says she took part in marches, The only march we had was the big open thry JHB in 57 or 58 which I helped organise and led ( with Mike Kimberly). Wish I had dated her--she seems a hottie.  
>  
> Adrian Leftwich wrote:  
>  
>> You're right about the class identification in revolutionary situations - I was not clear. I meant ethnic,religious, cultural dominant groups. People  
>> move across class barriers more easily - within the same culture.  
>>  
>> The problem of identification is a huge one. For a start we were not black;  
>> we seldom spoke any of the major African languages; our broad cultural orientation was European in the continental sense; our religions, where we had them, were of European provenance; and we were not oppressed in any material sense, or political sense; our domestic and kinship cultures were different - and so on. The really tough question thus is this: whose struggle was/is it? I can see where the PAC and some Africanist bits of the ANC were coming from. And I'm pushing the argument to extremes to make the point. Empirically, how many whites, of the 4 million to 1990, went the distance and became involved fully to the extent of, in effect, giving their/our lives over to it? About 100? 200? More? Less? 50?  
>>  
>> I'm not arguing that the fight for democracy or equality was wrong - on the contrary. My question is could whites identify in full and participate in full with the struggle? Could they be part of a movement or only helpers?  
>>  
>> Why did so many liberal/radical white people leave? Rational choice theory  
>> would predict that the costs of staying were higher than the benefits of leaving. Few blacks had that option. I dont like these issues but in retrospect they need to be faced.  
>>  
>> I'm truly sorry about Neville. I think you are right: any threat or quiver of jealousy in him gets amplified. I can't see why he'd see your article as a threat? I suppose the fact that he was not actually IN IT makes him feel an outsider, so he needs to put the whole operation down as rubbish. Oh dear.  
>>  
>> Be well

> >  
> > Best  
> >  
> > Adrian  
> >  
> > PS 1 Have you heard of a Toronto tv docuemnatry maker called Naomi Wise?  
> > 2. Did you ever get a responsefrom Lynn?  
> > ----- Original Message -----  
> > From: "Magnus Gunther" <magnus@intranet.ca>  
> > To: "A Leftwich" <al23@york.ac.uk>  
> > Sent: Monday, July 12, 2004 9:45 PM  
> > Subject: Re: [Fwd: [Fwd: message problems]]  
> >  
> > > Dear Adrian,  
> > > Yes this is a difficult question--the issue of whites identifying with  
> > > a  
> > > black struggle etc Altho the CP did it quite sucessfully. And the ANC  
> > > was  
> > > receptive--after all Slovo did become Chief of Staff of Umkhonto.  
> > > Without  
> > > the CP, white and black, the ANC would have remained an organisational  
> > > shambles.The ANC solved the probelm with the artificial and rather  
> > > bogus  
> > > seperation of white and black into seperate organisations, at least  
> > > until  
> > > Morogoro. So, yes some seperaton had for tactical or theoretical  
> > > reasons  
> > > had  
> > > to be made.  
> > > I wonder if this is any different from middle class people who  
> > > supported  
> > > communist movements and who (especially intellectuals) were regarded  
> > > with  
> > > suspicion once the revolution had succeeded eg China at various times  
> > > on a  
> > > massive scale. Also various purges in E Europe like Czechslovakia and  
> > > Poland  
> > > in the 50s--where the main target were people of ypour "orientation"!!  
> > > No  
> > > doubt all bourgeois in background.  
> > > I not sure this gets us much further at this point but amany thanks  
> > > for  
> > > your  
> > > continverd willing ness to talk to me about all this. Ill have to look  
> > > at  
> > > the NUSAS docs of the 80s which became quite dogmatic about the role  
> > > of  
> > > whites in the struggle.  
> > > Your papers, particularly one of them on NCL tactics were not bad at  
> > > all.  
> > > You ae too hard on your self.  
> > > Neville. What can I say. I was very sad. But he can be impossible (   
> > > read  
> > > madly neurotic) when he becomes envious and feels threatened which in  
> > > this  
> > > case I think he was. So I certainly dont miss him any more.  
> > >  
> > > Re the book. I havent received a copy yet. Its edited by South African  
> > > Democracy and Education Trust. (SADET), Pub by Zebra Press. Title: The  
> > > Road

> > > to *Democracy in South Africa*, Vol 1 1960-1970. Was launched on June 28th I

> > > believe by Pres M himself.

> > >

> > > Keep well

> > >

> > > Magnus

> > >

> > > A Leftwich wrote:

> > >

> > > Dear Mag

> > >

> > > Yep, the message opened but funny form - do you use Word?

> > >

> > > By the way *WHERE* and *WHEN* is the article due out? Please let me know or,

> > > at least send me an off-print!

> > >

> > > 1 I think it was just tone and implication about the terrorism point. Given it's resonance today, the meaning may be misconstrued.

> > >

> > > 2 I also find it hard to deal with that issue that we were in it

> > > but not of it. I'm trying to think it through. It was true in a general

> > > sense of whites - true by definition. We were not oppressed, exploited

> > > excluded. That's the first point. So we were not fighting for our own

> > > liberation in that sense. We could not be. So it was a fight against

> > > injustice of which we were not the direct victims. I think that

> > > socio-psychological context must have made a difference. So I only have

> > > questions - why did so many liberals and liberalish people leave? I

> > > nearly did, Hugh nearly did - many others Neville, Shula Marks the Wits

> > > mob (Laurie, Martin B. etc), plus countless others, left. Some CP people,

> > > too, but not generally as many. I think, like religious people, they had

> > > a deeper ideological commitment. Was ours of that intensity?

> > >

> > > I can't think of another case historically when members of an

> > > objectively dominant class (whites in this case) identified with members

> > > and the cause of another dominated class, can you? So sociologically, it

> > > would be surprising. It is even more surprising when those of the

> > > dominant class have so many cultural-linguistic links with other

> > > countries and could so easily 'relocate' (Canada, UK, USA, Australia)

> > > and, in our cases, did.

> > >

> > > It's *HARD* to think through because of the implications, but I think

> > > there's something there that needs that difficult thought.

> > >

> > > On the social democracy issue, I just don't think there was enough

> > > discussion or understanding of the whole corpus of theory and

> > > understanding about state-economy relationships, problems of collective

