

conscious no doubt, but directed against the indifference of Los Angeles whites, cocooned in their self-contained communities north of Pico Boulevard, and even driving over the ghetto on the Harbour Freeway while almost oblivious to its existence. The violence was cathartic, as Fanon has stressed in another context: an attempt at the destruction of a relationship. It *will* also bring relief: jobs, remedial education, housing, which will far outweigh the damage. The effects of the damage fell, for the most part anyway, on white property-owners who saw their stores burnt only on the television screens.

VIOLENCE IS STILL, then, a major method of domestic interest articulation. But, as such, its nature varies. In Watts the violence was political only in its repercussions and its long-term causes. For the most part it was anarchic, the concert of its actions held together only by homogeneity of experience. Leaders, if there were any, could only have come from the gangs of restless youths whose contempt for the laws was pathological. It was violence quite distinct from any of the recent South African manifestations: the intellectualised or quasi-revolutionary sabotage of respectively the ARM and *Umkhonto*, or the semi-organised terrorism of Poqo.

This violence also poses the same problems for the American desiring social change as for the South African opposition. Should it be approved or disapproved . . . or what intermediate shades of attitude can be adopted? "Tragic but inevitable". "Tragic but necessary". "Tragic but desirable". And is disapproval, like most pacifism, not simply an implicit desire not only to preserve a privileged position but to enjoy it in peace? Or as Martin Luther King, echoing in reverse a remark of Goethe's, put it in his famous letter from Birmingham jail "I have almost reached the conclusion that the Negro's greatest stumbling block . . . is the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to 'justice'; who prefers the negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice . . ."

Which leads on to a question harder to answer, and which the social context of American violence hardly even poses. Here, for most, it is a question of approval or

disapproval. For the South African opposition there is the further dilemma of passivity or initiatory action. If violence is inevitable is not inaction implicit disapproval? "Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters" said Frederick Douglas over a hundred years ago.

Yet the wish is not the act. Instrumental violence can only be undertaken successfully by certain groups in any social context . . . through them and with them if not by them: this was the lesson of the failure of Blanquism. The vectors of conflict indi-

cate not only the necessary means of change but suggest who should, who can, undertake the change.

The Watts outbreak left the Towers untouched. The glossy booklets are still for sale; one quotation extracted from the taciturn and self-contradictory Rodia asserts "I wanted to do something for the United States because there are nice people in this country." A recent *New Yorker* article by Calvin Trillin records some less patriotic remarks of Rodia's; but in the last resort we must presume that Rodia, like the citizens of Watts, and like those who will change South Africa, created for *themselves*, in self-realisation, as human beings. ●

To the Editors

Kenya's African Socialism

SIRS,—Miss Harris's intriguing interpretation of Kenya's African Socialism paper suffers from the conceptual vagueness and confusion which increasingly limits the usefulness of most writing on African Socialism, including the Kenya paper. A number of questions need much more precise and detailed examination than they are now receiving.

What is the distinction between *African Socialism* or social democracy in Africa? To what extent are there common ideological, institutional, and programme elements among the policies of African and socialist states e.g. Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Congo-B which respect the title African Socialism? Those states e.g. Nigeria, Cameroun Republic which lay claim to African (or pragmatic or Ahidjoist) Socialism but hardly seem to meet any normal set of Socialist or social democratic criteria?

What, if any, are the relationships between Socialism or social democracy and a Welfare State? Is not the position of the Kenya paper that state expenditure must be concentrated on productive investment *not* a welfare state one of its most socialist stands? Surely the structure of ownership—or at least of economic control—rather than the level of welfare services is the

appropriate test of the presence or degree of African (or any other) Socialism?

Is acceptance of the need for foreign investment funds properly equated to acceptance of substantial private foreign investment? The bulk of international capital transfers are public sector or private loans not direct private investment.

In any event, is the critical choice whether or not to seek private *foreign* investment? In principle at least, such investment can be controlled, phased out, isolated from domestic politics and income distribution patterns. Is not the more crucial issue whether or not to encourage the growth of a large scale *African* private sector? If such a sector is to be encouraged—as Kenya is doing—*how* is it possible to avoid increasingly sharp class differentiation?

Is satisfaction from accumulation properly equated with control over means of production? Socialist states accept accumulation of consumer durables (including homes), insurance and retirement claims, bank accounts and government bonds (on which interest is paid) as who desire to accumulate for—to use President Nyerere's terminology—power instead of use. Indeed, neither individual, family, nor co-operative farms or firms (nor reinvestment by them) are inherently incompatible with Socialism (much less social democracy) so long as they do not depend on non-member labour.

Until a more critical and precise set of concepts and criteria is developed and standardised, writing on African Socialism is likely to remain in that curious realm of Alice in Wonderland in which words mean what the author wishes them to mean at the moment and have no stable objective correlatives.

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