Nationalism in Colonial Africa

by THOMAS HODGKIN.

(Frederick Mueller, 10/6)

Basil Davidson

People’s Party, according to its statutes, is “to support the demand for a West African Federation and of Pan-Africanism by promoting unity-of-action among the peoples of Africa and of African descent. And on 22 October, 1955, in the Belgian Congo, among the peoples of Africa and of African descent. And on 22 October, but not at that time.

Nationalism has had a bad press in recent years; and with reason. The intellectuals have had good reason to distrust it. Didn’t Franco invade and crush the Spanish Republic in the bauleal name of “the national idea”? Wasn’t nationalism the last-ditch defence of the Establishment against the working categories of bourgeois thought, and refused to overthrow its quarrels and unite? We saw the League of Nations driven headlong on the rocks of fascism and war; we saw the dictators, one by one, fish out their silly sodden symbolism of “young nations” and “old nations”, and go about to smash half the world for this or that nationalist lunacy. Who could fuse to overleap its quarrels and unite?

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Of course, this point can be pushed further and further into a limited nationalism; and it remains to be shown how and when they will reverse their tracks.

For the truth is that this crystallisation toward nation-states is not simply a choice, a fashion, a passing political tactic. On the contrary, it is the product of all those many factors which have combined, these many years, into the African awakening of our day. It is the product of Imperialism. It is the product of the gradual disintegration of tribal society, of the undermining of old chieftaincies, of the colonial power’s own agricultural experiment, of the passing of tribal land tenure. It is the product of the growth of towns and cities, up and down Africa, into which the dreams and the aspirations of many millions of Africans have forced an entry into the modern world. But they have brought with them not only their avid thirst for a shining multitude of ideas and things, but also the terrible exploitation of the forests and savannahs could not give them. They have also brought with them the strong vessels of their own
indigenous culture, their African consciousness, their sense of distinction and originality: and it is into these specific- al spheres that they pour the sum of human wisdom. And it is here that the onlooker, deafened by this cataract of African energy and African ally African vessels that they pour the ideas with our ideas, this nationalism in Africa — this mingling of their ideas with ours, this nationalism in Africa — will not be a poor thin copy of what others have already done. The apolites of superiority may lose their way in myths and mysticism; it remains true that the nation-states of Africa will make their own original contribution to the sum of human wisdom.

Which is as much as to say, no doubt, that Africans will take their own way towards independence. One could allude to some examples. In the Belgian Congo, the diligent and autocratic Belgians have long been labouring at the task of building "an African middle class": by which they mean a more or less numerous body of Africans who would "side with them" in exchange for social, economic, and perhaps even political privilege. Yet it turns out that the nationalist movement in the Belgian Congo — perhaps one should say "proto-movements", for they are still at an early stage — have recruited their most solid adherents precisely from these "privileged strata". The dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples to name only two of the Congo's leading tribes: or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty — whether history will demand him to give his loyalty — to a Bakongo or the Baluba peoples or to "side against them":

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pon to be used against the Marxian theory of value in a powerful critique of incidental features of capitalist economic crises (a critique which the New Welfare theorists of today are trying desperately to blunt the edge of); but their attack on capitalism was ethical rather than positive. The critics are accused of making not ‘Capitalism is self-destructive’. Keynes's critique of capitalism was much more effective in this genre; but, being based upon short-period analysis, it was open to the objection that the two evils which were referred to by socialists were ‘only’ short-termed effects which would be eliminated in the long run.

It would be untrue to say that Mrs. Robinson provides a critique of capitalism. Her work is too soberly analytical for that. But some of its implications are disturbing for the supporter of things as they are.

One important concept in her scheme is that of a ‘Golden Age’ — a period of history in which, to use her own words, ‘technical progress is . . . proceeding steadily . . . the competitive mechanism working freely, population growing (if at all) at a steady rate and accumulation going on fast enough to supply productive capacity to the labour force at the rate of output, the rate of profit tends to be constant and the level of real wages to rise with output per man. There are then no internal contradictions in the system; it develops smoothly without perturbations. Total annual output and the stock of capital . . . grow together at a constant proportionate rate compounded at the rate of increase of the labour force and the rate of increase of output per man. Much of her analysis is devoted to elucidating the conditions under which a ‘Golden Age’ can occur, and, more menacingly, the consequences of these conditions not being fulfilled. The implications of this are that Golden Ages are of rare occurrence (perhaps the nineteenth century in Western Europe was one: perhaps the eighteenth century in the United States will turn out to be one — it is too soon to say) and that in the absence of Golden-Age conditions we may expect falling real wages, unemployment, inflation, balance-of-payments difficulties, and various other evils. This is under capitalism, defined as an economy in which ‘property’ is owned by a small number of individuals who hire the labour of a large number at agreed wage rates and organise their work (directly or through hired managers). The excess of the product over the wages bill then appears as income from property.

Orthodox economics has often been referred to by the Marxists as capitalism apologetics*. In a sense this is unfair. Economics is a description and an analysis: it neither praises nor blames. But in another sense the accusation is true. Every newspaper editor knows the propaganda value of selection. If merely deciding what is relevant and what is not, given elements, can be portrayed in a form which is purely descriptive — every word of it may be true — and yet it makes a definite emotional impression upon the reader. So with orthodox economic theory. The ‘rules of the capitalist game’ are referred to often. It is shown that in the absence of Golden-Age conditions there were ‘only’ short-termed defects, which would be eliminated in the long run.

The ‘Golden Age’ concept was of special importance here. The ‘Golden Age’ is a period of history in which “property is as an economy in which ‘property is

Evils. This is under capitalism, defined as an economy in which ‘property is...towards full employment, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary.

But this state of affairs is changing. Either because the awkward facts of capitalism imperatively demand recognition, or because economists are no longer drawn almost exclusively from the comfortably-off classes, academic economics is beginning to range much more freely over the economic phenomena. Since Keynes, the subject of booms and slumps is no longer segreg-
ated into a sort of ghetto called ‘trade-cycle-theory’ or ‘economic fluctuations (note the implication of those titles), but is being studied from a new angle. It is likely to engage one’s sympathies for the form of society that has evolved it. The same hypothesis of unconscious bias explains the obstinacy with which the orthodox economists postulated that the economy tends spontaneously to full employment, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary.

I have said, Mrs. Robinson’s axioms and postulates are those of a ‘capitalistic’ society (as described by her); she does not concern herself with the economics of a socialist society. But much of her analysis is applicable mutatis mutandis to a socialist economy. The fundamental and technical hold good under socialism as under capitalism. Even if wages and profits, considered as class-incomes, disappear, there will remain the ostensible income and the surplus that is retained by the planning authority for social purposes. And the relation between consump- tion (including social services) and capital-accumulation is not utterly different from that in capitalism. There is no doubt that Joan Robinson’s brand of economics, although it is not socialist economics, is a very sound foundation upon which to build a workable system of socialist economics.

There are no explicit references to Marx in this book. Nevertheless, Marx’s spirit hovers over it. Many of the categories that Mrs. Robinson works with are closely akin to those of Marx. Her concept of social classes is very like the Marxian: wages and ‘quasi-rent’ play a similar part in her analysis of the distribution of income and surplus-value in Marx’s; The schema of production and simple reproduction with which she starts are very like Marx’s; so is her treatment of accumulation and of what Marx calls extended reproduction. Many of her categories and concepts have emerged from Marx; in many points at which the sociological economics of Marx has deeply influenced Mrs. Robinson. This, in the reviewer’s opinion, is as it should be. Marxism as a social science is still sterile, but Marx’s outlook and methods, interpreted with intellectual flexibility and in the light of recent history, can enormously enrich and stimu- late our social and economic studies of today.

THE TORMENT OF SECRECY
by Edward Shils
(Wm. Heinemann, 15/–).

Professor Shils’ book is a study of McCarthyism. Other eminent scholars have written on the prevalence of witch-hunt- ing in the United States, mainly from the angles of constitutional law or of classical liberal theory. Such attacks on McCarthyism have mainly been by those who see its clear infringements of legality and who deplore the use of political and economic blackmail to suppress individuality and enforce conformity. Professor Shils’ book is not concerned with these aims of such allies in the cause of decency, but would, I think, disagree with them in their analysis of the problem.

Professor Shils sees McCarthyism as a natural product of certain strains in the American democratic tradition, especially in the manner in which that tradition treats the idea of class. Here “class” must be understood not in the simple terms of capitalist-proletarian position but in the more complex and subtle terms in which the term is used by sophisticated American and British sociologists. Professor Shils is a prominent American sociologist, but he knows as much as we do about the British academic sport of naming the barricades to repel the jargoners of transatlantic social science. He has lived with us; he knows us well; he can’t be said to love us to excess or to approve our snobbery, lack of initiative and our acceptance of undemocratic social mores. But in comparing McCarthyism with whatever it is we have in England, we come out best. The “old boy” con- clusional attitude and the subtle flattery that won away the poli-

Party members of our political world to the world of deference, the joint com- mittees, the dining clubs, the senior com- mon rooms, from the Commons to the Lords and Boards and beyond — all this — when added to the actual and largely accepted hierarchical structure of our political and social world, and to the fact that administration is efficient and pol- icially apolitical, forms a climate in which there is little profit and little power in the business of patriotism in this country. In America McCarthy could terrorise the army, blackmail shipowners and insist that what the President said
American populism, the traditional leaks to the Press meant that of all to the security of the American Republic, on the contrary, his hectoring attitude towards the government departments and University front benches. In contrast the Congressman is, in the popular mind, and sometimes in fact, an ill-educated bigoted time-server, who if he had any real talents would not be wasting them on the unedifying and unprofitable profession of flattering constituents, getting himself cheap rides and press publicity, and reading high school poems on “America” into the Congressional Record. For nearly one hundred years Congressmen have had something of this reputation, and so for most of this time have civil servants. But with the New Deal a new type of civil servant appeared in Washington — young, sophisticated, interested in theories, despising Congressmen quick to answer under questioning, well educated, often at the Harvard Law School and frequently enough Jewish to arouse the anti-Semitism latent in all professional super patriots.

Status anxieties (and the frustrations and aggressions resulting from them) are now an important rival to the constitutional theories of Freud in the literature of American psychology. In respect of the desire of Congressmen to injure the government departments in the arts, the status thesis is not unhelpful; here it is brilliantly handled by Professor Shils. Scientists suffered at the hands of McCarthy because they are (a) intellectualists, (b) Congressmen have their own internal standards of judging facts and men, and (c) because they are the guardians of secrets. Secrecy, whether or not it is warranted drives the McCarthyites mad. Like all others they are intrigued by knowledge the value of which are incensed that the government will not turn them over for safe-keeping to Congressmen, so they probe into every possible (and impossible) aspect of the lives and thought of those who have the secrets in their keeping. For the sake of publicity they will sell truth or falsehood with equal even-handedness. Democracy, they declare, both in their public and total secrecy — and the easiest road for them is via total conformity. Security on the other hand demands neither total secrecy, total publicity or total conformity. McCarthy contributed nothing to the security of the American Republic, on the contrary, his hectoring attitude towards the government departments, his character assassination and his leaks about the future of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was loudest.

What is the fundamental cause of all this? In Prof. Shils opinion it is native American populism, the traditional desire to form all Americans in the image of the folksy, patriotic, Christian, rural or petit-bourgeois average Anglo-Saxon who dislikes the foreigner abroad and the thinker at home. Professor Shils pleads for the development of a genuine pluralistic community in which individuality is not under continual suspicion, and in which institutions like the Universities can tell State governments and Congressmen, and indeed the public, sympathetically heard over here. In American terms it is a plea for conservatism and in consequence this is a book which the Left here will find both stimulating and provocative.

RICHARD PEAR.

JIM LARKIN: THE RISE OF THE UNDERMAN
by R. M. Fox

(Lawrence and Wishart 18/-)

When Sir Lewis Namier said that there were "two dozen Irelands" in nineteenth-century Europe, he meant national minorities of us on this island think of the "Irish problem" as a national one which found its "solution" in Home Rule. Mr. Fox's book reminds us helpfully that the gathering tension in Ireland before 1914, which made the future of the United Kingdom seem as insecure as that of the Empires of the Hapsburg or Romanov, had social as well as national ingredients: that linked with the struggle for self-determination went the fight for life of a labour movement, inspired on its political side by its connection with the cause of national freedom, and on its industrial side by the desperate poverty of the Irish workers.

The story in which nationalist and socialist aspiration were inextricably tied up with each other is clearly illustrated by the career of the labour leader, Jim Larkin (1867-1947). Although his Irish Transport Workers Union earned the reproaches of Sinn Fein leaders for concentrating on industrial rather than patriotic agitation, Larkin himself, in his book Larkin's Labour movement in 1913 by wilfully misinterpreting the Dublin strike as a nationalist demonstration and sending troops to stir up trouble between Orange and Green factions of the working class; there is no evidence for this, and it seems at least as likely that the civil and military authorities assumed out of sheer obtuseness and force of habit that the Dublin disturbances had nationalistic causes, and reacted in their traditional way.

Mr. Fox tries to take a wide view, so that his eulogistic tribute to Larkin succeeds in re-creating something of the atmosphere of the period; it is all here, the violent oratory at mass meetings, the brawls between strikers and blacklegs, the law-courts hopelessly prejudiced against labour leaders, even such titbits as the revealing assertion that the police "always made a dead set at any musical instruments when the strikers marched to a band". On the other hand the purpose nowadays of a book like this — apart from entertaining the reader and performing an act of piety to a lost leader's memory — is not clear. The historian, even the social historian, will not have much use for it. And the times are surely past when the working class public, even the labour public, felt itself set apart from society in general and identified itself exclusively enough with the labour movement to form a market for this sort of book. In any case, the story of Larkin and now is life-stories of men with less social purpose and more societal appeal than Jim Larkin — of sports-stars, war heroes, and band-leaders. The story of Jim Larkin will appeal, naturally, to those who knew him and to those who have been permitted to the ideas he stood for, but a wider public can only be reached by the Labour Movement if it realises that the particular genre of propaganda for socialism has no future but as a part of Socialist Nationalist Movements among impoverished colonial peoples Larkinism* may have a new lease.

ROGER MORGAN,
African nationalism first emerged as a mass movement in the years after World War II as a result of wartime changes in the nature of colonial rule as well as social change in Africa itself.[7] Nationalist political parties were established in almost all African colonies during the 1950s and their rise was an important reason for the decolonisation of Africa between. Women in African nationalism. During the late 1950s and 1960s, scholars of African nationalist struggles have primarily focused on the Western-educated male elites who led the nationalist movements and assumed power after independence. The history of Nationalism in Colonial Africa. By Thomas Hodgkin. Reviewed By Henry L. Roberts. April 1957. In This Review. Nationalism in Colonial Africa. Nationalism in Colonial Africa. By Thomas Hodgkin. 216 pp, Muller, 1956. Purchase. This is a valuable short analysis of nationalist movements in Africa. While remaining concrete, it treats its subject as a whole and is not a collection of potted histories. The character of nationalist movements, the changing social conditions in Africa that produce them, and some of the forces that shape them are set out concisely, on the basis of a great Life In Africa Under Colonialism and Beyond. Life for the African people during colonization was difficult. Many of the ideologies behind imperialism were discriminatory in nature, using racist beliefs to justify harsh authoritarian leadership styles. Throughout the colonial period, the societies that had been established in Africa fought hard to fend off their European colonizers. However, due to the fact that European powers were disproportionately aided by the products of the industrial revolution, many former empires and kingdoms that had been present in Africa were at a disadvantage and I