Popular protest and class struggle in Africa: an historical overview

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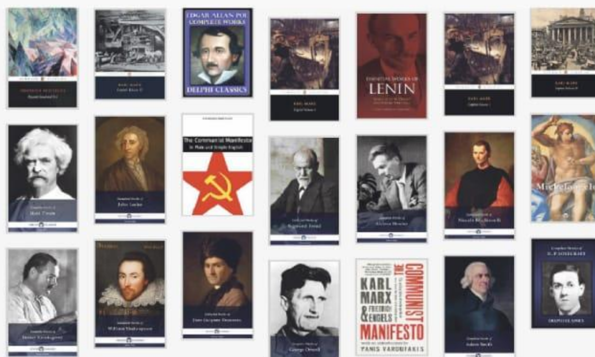

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1. Imperialism and class struggle

Under imperialism, capitalism expands and develops on a world scale, subordinating pre-capitalist modes of production and associated social formations to its demands, ensuring both their transformation and the establishment of a global capitalist political economy (1). This process is historically combined and uneven, and "there are crucial distinctions to be made between the 'classic' form of capitalism that developed in Western Europe, and the forms of capitalism which imperialism imposed on the underdeveloped periphery of the world economy (2). In Africa, the forms of capitalism that exist today are the outcome of a long and distinctive historical process that requires careful consideration and analysis. Eurocentric preconceptions as to what 'should be' the path of capitalist development and therefore what 'should be' the progressive forms of class struggle in Africa – with which the literature is be-devilled – must be set aside to enable us to consider the actual history of capitalist development and class formation in Africa – both of which have been the result of popular struggle as well of changes in the material conditions within which these struggles took place.

This chapter, therefore, has a historical focus. It demonstrates – through a condensed overview – that popular protest and working class struggle shaped the various paths of capitalist development in Africa from the earliest times to the immediate post-independence period (3). It emphasises the complexity and contradictions of capitalist development in Africa, and underlines the fact that, for better or worse, the African people have made their own history, although certainly not under conditions of their own choosing.

2. Early capitalist intervention

Slavery and the slave trade

In the classic model of capitalism, the central contradiction or class conflict is between the bourgeoisie – the private owners of the means of production who employ wage labour for profit - and the proletariat – a class of workers 'free' to negotiate the sale of their labour as a commodity in the market. Yet, historically, labour under capitalism has never been entirely 'free', it has always been coerced or constrained in some way.

Slavery existed in Africa from early times and the mediaeval trans-Saharan trade involved slaves as well as other goods. Until the European scramble for Africa, however, slavery was a part of a world of distinctive pre-capitalist social formations; the majority of those traded became domestic slaves for the rulers and urban elites of the Ottoman empire. Although in some cases (eg Egypt) they were also employed as labourers in agriculture and other sectors, it was not until the 19th

century that the trans-Saharan trade was directly linked, through the employment of slaves on the cotton producing estates of Egypt and the Sudan, to the demands of European industrial capitalism. From the 17th century onwards, however, long before labour was ever employed for profit in Africa itself, it was shipped to the 'new world' and set to work under conditions of slavery to produce the raw materials for emerging capitalist industries in Europe and North America.

It can be argued that "the Third World's first 'proletariat' was nurtured in the plantation economies of Brazil, the Caribbean islands, and the American South" (4). But it was born from the reserve army of labour created in Africa. At its height, in the 1840s, more than 100,000 slaves were exported from Africa each year; over the centuries, some 20 million men and women were forced to 'migrate'. The impact of this trade extended far into the interior, where the European demand for slave labour was filled by local rulers, who waged war on each other to secure slaves for sale. As Marx observed, "the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of Black skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist accumulation" (5). Slavery has endured some 300 years as part of the history of capitalist development in Africa; for, although it was formally outlawed in both British and French colonies in the second half of the 19th century and was increasingly replaced by other forms of labour coercion and control during the first half of the 20th century (see below), slavery continued to exist as an integral feature of rural class structures until well after independence in many parts of Africa (6). That slavery is entirely compatible with capitalism can be seen from the fact that it can be found today, particularly in West Africa - the UN estimates that 200,000 children are traded and work as slave labour in West Africa, mainly on plantations in Ivory Coast and Gabon, producing cash crops (mainly cocoa) for export – and in Sudan.

While we know something of the forms of resistance, 'hidden' and overt, individual and collective, practised by the slaves of the 'New World', we still know relatively little of those adopted initially by the peoples of West Africa and the Sahel in response either to indigenous slavery or to the European (or Arab) slave trade, apart from hiding or running away. For later periods, when slavery had become more deeply integrated within the colonial regime, we know more; that there were periodic slave revolts is certain, but generally the forms of struggle tended to be muted, either by the extreme forms of repression and violence used by the slave-owing classes on plantations and other relatively large-scale enterprises, or by the highly personalised relationships involved in the indigenous forms of slavery (7).

Coercion and resistance

Colonialism in Africa always involved violence (8). From the very earliest European interventions, there was widespread and often protracted resistance. If the interests of capital, and of empire, were to be satisfied, then this resistance had to be quelled – and it was, usually brutally. Some of the earliest collective resistance was in west Africa (9), where the Atlantic slave trade first provided the 'mode of articulation' (10) of capitalism with indigenous pre-capitalist social formations. But resistance was encountered subsequently all across the continent, as Africa was subjected to the uneven advances of European imperialism and colonialism.

Usually, this resistance was orchestrated by local chiefs and tribal leaders (where they existed) or by prophets and demagogues (where these emerged), even if it was ordinary Africans who fought and died in countless skirmishes, battles and wars against Portuguese, Spanish, French, Belgian, Dutch, British, German and Italian intervention. In more marginal areas, local warlords and 'primitive rebels' (11) operated on a semi-permanent basis; and there were periodic attacks on the merchants, missionaries, military outposts and settler communities that constituted both the forefront and the outposts of European imperialism. Even after the initial 'pacification' of African states and societies, there continued to be uprisings or rebellions against European rule. That broader popular protest at growing European intervention could develop, however, is shown by the 'Urabi movement of 1880-82 in Egypt (12). Resistance to European colonial penetration and the initial 'pacification' of the indigenous population continued in some parts of Africa (eg in the Sahara) until the 1930s (13). But, increasingly, as colonial rule was established and entrenched, many local leaders adapted and collaborated in the subordination of their people, becoming a part of the colonial administrative apparatus and a subaltern fraction of the new colonial ruling class.

Forced labour

In Africa, early European rule was widely accompanied by violence and coercion, often by the state, and by the oppression and exploitation of 'unfree' labour. In some parts of Africa (eg South Africa, Uganda), indentured labour from the British Empire in Asia (India, Malaya, etc.) was imported to work on plantations and in other sectors (some 40,000 indentured labourers were brought into East Africa from India between 1895 and 1922 (14). But the coercion of indigenous labour was far more widespread. The lack of comprehensive labour legislation or effective implementation of international labour conventions allowed for the systematic use of forced labour throughout sub-Saharan Africa right up until the Second 'World War', and afterwards (15).

In the Belgian Congo, forced labour, introduced in the 1890s, became an integral part of the colonial system. In 1923, the Permanent Commission for the Protection (sic) of the Natives accepted as 'necessary' a maximum of 60 days' forced labour for every male adult, although it mentioned cases where Africans 'had to work for 90 or even 104 days' (16). It was not until 1954 that forced labour was officially abolished (17). The term *chibalo (or chibaro)* was common in Central and Southern Africa from the late 19th century onwards to describe a variety of oppressive forms of labour introduced by the Europeans. The Portuguese in Mozambique stipulated that all adult males had to perform *chibalo* for six months a year. Commonly used for compulsory labour service on large colonial plantations in Mozambique, *chibalo* was also applied to the forced cultivation of particular crops by small producers on their own land. Conditions on plantations in Mozambique were so bad that many preferred to migrate to South Africa to work as contract labour in the gold mines. Forced labour was still widespread in Portugal's African colonies in the early 1960s (18).

In French Africa, between 1927 and 1936, thousands were conscripted to work on the Dakar-Niger railway and to improve the navigation of the Niger river; this involved three years' service, hard work and low pay. In 1935 alone, 3.3 million people were subjected to 28 million days of compulsory labour, with 7 million days redeemed only by cash payments; another form of forced labour, in lieu of military service, provided 12.5 million workers a year. Although in 1936 the Popular Front government in Francetried to end forced labour, the planters and timber-men refused to comply; in the Ivory Coast the Lieutenant-Governor was actually dismissed for attempting to enforce these new measures. The legal basis for compulsory labour was not removed until 1946. In British East and Central Africa, various forms of compulsion were used; there, private employers set the pace and the colonial administration followed suit. In Nigeria, the administration itself introduced forced labour: Sir Frederick Lugard encouraged it, arguing that "among primitive tribes, a measure of compulsion through their tribal chiefs, in order to obtain labour for railway construction and other important works, is justifiable" (19). Colonial Office pressure ended legally compulsory labour in Southern Rhodesia in 1900 (20). Despite earlier efforts to outlaw forced labour in Natal and British east Africa (21), extensive use of compulsion was not in fact discontinued until the 1933 Forced Labour Ordinance, and even then exceptions permitted under the International Forced Labour Convention (and originally inserted because of pressure from the colonial powers) were extensive through British Africa. Forced labour for public works, porterage and agriculture was being used as late as 1958 in Nigeria, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Bechuanaland (22).

There is little information available regarding resistance to forced labour, although undoubtedly many attempted to avoid being recruited in the first place, and some ran away (23). The extreme violence of the Belgian colonial authorities towards the indigenous population was certainly linked to their concern to prevent labourers from 'deserting'. Falling short of slavery, this was nevertheless a form of coercive labour that afforded few opportunities for orchestrated struggle. All of the 'hidden forms' of resistance (24) documented for later periods, were undoubtedly employed. For example, after 1903, the state in Nyasaland attempted in vain to seal the borders and curtail the emigration of thousands of workers to Katanga, Northern Rhodesia or Mozambique to ensure the availability of cheap labour to domestic plantations. The plantations were, nevertheless, able to expand as a result of the immigration of vast numbers (15,000-30,000 between 1900 and 1903 into one district alone) escaping from the coercion and brutality of the Campanhia do Niassa in Mozambique (25).

3. Class formation and class struggle under colonial rule

An overview

The development of capitalist class relations in Africa was specifically constrained by the interests of metropolitan and/or settler colonialism and the actions of the colonial state. As Mbeki pointed out, with respect to South Africa, "we must bear in mind that the capitalist class does not view itself solely as the appropriator of wealth in contra-distinction to our being the producers. The capitalist class is also heavily burdened with matters of state administration. It has taken on itself the task of ruling our country"(26). European capital, hand-in-hand with the European colonial state apparatus, ruled supreme. In most of Africa, the colonial state (serving the interests of metropolitan capital and, where settlers became more strongly rooted, of local settler capital) was at pains to inhibit the development of an indigenous African capitalist, or, for that matter, working class.

In some colonial states, particularly in north Africa, the indigenous landowning classes and urban bourgeoisie were able to survive as a subaltern fraction of the ruling class, transforming themselves in the case of the former into commercial farmers and in the case of the latter into mercantile and predominantly artisan-scale capitalists and then gradually turning to various more developed forms of manufacturing and to 'comprador' activities. This was, however, relatively uncommon elsewhere, except perhaps among traders in parts of west Africa. For the most part, despite the efforts of the colonial authorities to constrain the emergence of either an African capitalist class or a proletariat, the increasing demands of the colonial state for revenues to support infrastructural and other capital investment meant that the local population was subject to a variety of taxes

and levies. These, in turn, obliged rural producers either to increase sales of farm produce for the market, or to seek wage employment. The result was the gradual emergence of a class of *rural petty commodity producers* (often referred to even by left analysts as 'peasants') and of a smaller, but increasingly significant class of *migrant workers* working on plantations, estates (eg in Egypt, Sudan, Mozambique and Tanganyika) or, in progressively greater numbers, in town.

In many colonial states, despite efforts to root the masses on the land, there developed an increasing rural exodus and an associated system of internal labour migration, from which there emerged *a distinctive African working class*, initially strongly rooted in the countryside and reproduced there, but increasingly developing a different identity from those classes still based in the rural areas. This 'new' or emerging working class was usually highly heterogeneous, both 'vertically' (eg ethnic and tribal origins) and 'horizontally' (eg working conditions and pay). For some on the left, the heterogenity and internal differentiation of the African working class (eg into labour aristocracy, lumpenproletariat, etc.) in the colonial period (and even in the early years of the post-colonial period – see below) was a critical constraint on the development of 'progressive' class struggle, when this is in fact a characteristic feature of any emerging working class (27), and in any case (as we shall see) failed to prevent its involvement in widespread and protracted class struggle throughout the colonial period and thereafter.

Also, to degrees that differed significantly from case to case, there began to develop in Africa, during the colonial regime, what Poulantzas (28) called a 'new' petty bourgeoisie of small functionaries and public sector employees – clerks, teachers, nurses and health auxiliaries, soldiers, petty bureaucrats, and so on. Although some of these were recruited to maintain control in the colonial territories (police, soldiers, etc.), it was very often in young radicals and intellectuals from such social origins that the nationalist movements which played such a critical role in the early formation of the post-colonial states of Africa found their inspiration and leadership. Those who would see the history of class struggle in Africa in terms of a narrow definition of the working class must recognise the crucial (but often problematic) role played by the radical elements of the 'new' petty bourgeoisie in popular class struggles, during the colonial period and immediately after independence.

Class struggle during the colonial phase of capitalist development in Africa was often couched in ideological terms that prioritised the division between the indigenous populations and the Europeans, despite the undoubted process of class formation within indigenous colonial society. The subsumption of class to national identity is understandable, given the hegemony of European capitalism and the

control they exerted, directly (as in settler states) or indirectly (as in the majority of colonial territories) through the colonial state apparatus. But class struggle, particularly on the part of African workers, was, from the outset, a subjective as well as an objective reality; those who deny this reality have not studied the history of early workers' struggles.

Early workers' struggles

In the early colonial period, the major employer of African labour was the state; and the earliest experience of organised class struggle in sub-Saharan Africa, whether in the form of popular protest or workers' action, was among public sector workers (notably dockers and railwaymen). One of the earliest strikes in Africa took place in Sierra Leone, in 1874, in Freetown harbour (29). This was only two years after the Congress of the International Workingmen's Association in The Hague, the culminating point in the development of the First International, which considered 'economic struggles' to be a pre-requisite (the 'lever') for the struggle of the working class against the political power of its exploiters (30). In Egypt, the first strike movement took place in April 1882 - after more than a decade of subjection to European capital and in the aftermath of the nationalist 'Urabi revolt (1880-82) - among coal heavers at Port Said and Suez on the Canal. This was followed in June by a massive urban uprising in Alexandria, which began after European troops fired at a crowd, and which left more than 250 Egyptians and 50 Europeans dead after the rioting which followed. The fact that Alexandria was now 'in the power of a mob' helped justify the occupation of Cairo by the British later the same year (31).

Another early strike was that in Lagos in 1897. In April, the governor of Lagos decided to cut the wage rate of public sector workers and to increase productivity by altering the structure of the working day. He foresaw trouble, but was confident (32). The governor deliberately set out to provoke a strike, smash it, and then dictate new terms and conditions of employment. In July, there was unrest in response to a preliminary tightening up on working practices and when, in August, the re-structuring of the working day was initiated, virtually all those employed by the Public Works Department went on strike. After three days, the governor was forced to come to terms. As Hopkins remarks, "the outcome must be counted a victory for the strikers, who returned to work on Thursday 'quite contented', and conveyed to the governor their satisfaction with the new arrangements" (33). This incident can be interpreted without exaggeration as marking the beginning of 'the emergence of a Nigerian working class' (34).

The early development of the Rhodesian mining industry was halted by the Revolt of 1896-97 – a widespread early protest movement – but wage labour was

employed from the 1890s onwards. Working conditions were appalling – even as late as 1910-1911, the Native Affairs Committee noted that families would sell grain or livestock to pay their taxes in preference to working in the mines. In the early days, worker resistance was strongly conditioned by prevailing cultural forms as much as by the actual relations of production. Thus, in the case of the Bonsor, one of the first of the 'large' mines to come into production (in 1898), labour troubles began in June 1899, when word spread that the mine was 'bewitched' (35). For a period of two months not a single African applied for work. This forced the management to turn to foreign labour. In October 1900, an attempt was made to recruit 500 workers from the Transkei, in South Africa, where demand for labour had fallen during the 'Boer' War. Only 300 were recruited and, as they demanded higher wages than the locals, these 'rural migrants' were considered 'unsatisfactory'; they were passed on to another mine, where they caused 'disaffection' among local workers. The Bonsor was eventually saved from closure by the recruitment of migrant labourers from Portuguese East Africa who also could not sell their labour in South Africa.

Gradually, across Africa, more developed forms of resistance to exploitation and oppression were adopted as the numbers and self-consciousness of the working class grew. This process was probably most rapid in the mining areas of central and southern Africa, although it was of significance also in parts of west Africa (eg Nigeria) and north Africa (eg Egypt). By the turn of the century, South Africa was a significant emerging capitalist economy. One consequence of this was a substantial and growing demand for labour, which was met from an early stage by migrant workers, often from other territories in southern Africa, establishing a characteristic structure of class relations across the region. In other regions, such as the 'Copper Belt', in present day Zambia, 'Franco-phone' west Africa and the Maghreb, long-distance labour migration across borders would develop during the colonial period, and even more so after independence, as a distinctive feature of African capitalism. The class consciousness of migrant workers, although frequently belittled by leftist analysts, was appreciable from the earliest days.

The avant garde in southern Africa

The black labour force in Southern Rhodesia had already grown by 1906 to over 17,000, and by 1920 it numbered over 36,000. van Onselen (36) has documented the early development of 'black' worker consciousness and the growth of the 'black' working class in the mining sub-sector of Southern Rhodesia in the first two decades of the 20th century. In South Africa, where the recruitment of mine workers (both 'black' and 'white') began in the 19th century, the concentration of 'free labour' in the Transvaal at the start of the 20th century was remarkable and gave rise to growing workers' organisation. The establishment of the Transvaal

Mineworkers' Union in 1902 triggered the first in a series of bitter campaigns against the mining companies. A major strike of Witwatersrand miners in 1907 was followed by the Transvaal Industrial Disputes Prevention Act of 1909, which tried to outlaw strikes. In 1913, one of the most serious disputes in South African history (over trade union recognition) gave rise to strikes all over the Reef. This led to a judicial commission which recommended recognition of the South African Miners National Union by both the Chamber of Mines and the government. But further disputes resulted in the calling of a general strike in 1914. Parliament responded with the Act of Indemnity and a Riotous Assemblies Act designed to prohibit strikes in the public services and make peaceful picketing illegal. The Chamber of Mines, however, as well as several private companies and municipal authorities, accepted the 'closed shop' principle and wages rose significantly. Between 1915 and 1918 the unions in South Africa increased their (mainly white) membership from 10,538 to 77,819 (37).

The end of the First 'World War' saw further unrest, this time involving 'black' African workers. In 1919, Clemens Kadalie, a migrant worker from Nyasaland, formed the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICWU) of Africa, which became the centre of African industrial and political struggle for the next decade. The ICWU attracted African workers, not only in manual but also in clerical and white collar jobs, and even professionals. Clemens Kadalie was feted by the British TUC as the representative of over 100,000 workers, and the ICWU applied for affiliation to the ('white') South African TUC.

In 1919-20, a series of strikes brought the docks and railways to a halt; and in February 1920, 40,000 African miners came out on strike. In early 1922, the Chamber of Mines announced that it would employ larger numbers of African workers and reduce the wages of white miners (38). Within 9 days a general strike had broken out; it lasted for 8 weeks and towards the end became an armed revolt – the Rand Rebellion (38). Led by white Afrikaaner nationalists, dissidents expelled from the Mineworkers' Union and a few members of the Communist Party, the strikers sang the 'Red Flag' and marched under a banner which read: 'Workers of the World Unite and Fight for a White South Africa'. The minority of trades unionists and left-wing political activists who wanted the strike to be a struggle of *all* workers against the Chamber of Mines were overwhelmed by the majority of white miners, and there were serious clashes between the strikers and African and Indian workers. At a mass rally in February 1922, the white strikers called for a Nationalist-Labour coup and the proclamation of a South African Republic. The Nationalist leadership rejected the proposal and in mid-March, Smuts called out aircraft and artillery to smash the strike, killing 230 workers and injuring hundreds more. In 1923, however, the Nationalists did form a pact with

the Labour Party and at the 1924 election a Lab-Nat coalition swept into power, pledged 'to oppose capitalist and monopolistic domination' and to introduce 'a civilised labour policy' – which protected white workers. A year later, the Mines and Works (Colour Bar) Act was passed, making the right to skilled work dependent on race and colour (39).

Wage-fixing legislation followed and despite unprecedented economic growth, the mid to late 1920s saw thousands of African workers unemployed or forced to accept substantially lower wages. Kadalie was urged to review the strategy of the ICWU. The 'left' – backed by the Communists – wanted more positive action; the 'right' wanted a 'respectable' organisation and the expulsion of the Communists. In December 1926, Communists were banned. The Communist Party started a new campaign to organise African (and other 'non-white') workers, and in 1928, a Non-European Trade Union Federation was established. In early 1928, the large Natal section disaffiliated from the central ICWU, to be followed by a series of further splits and secessions; by 1930, the ICWU was in fragments. It foundered in large part because it was unable to make a decisive commitment to either a militant or a moderate line.

It was not until the end of the decade [the 1930's ?] that the South African TUC urged the government to recognise non-white trade unions on the same basis as other workers' organisations. In 1942, it opened the first annual conference of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions at which 25 unions and 35,000 workers were represented. The government's offer of limited 'administrative recognition' was strongly rejected by 'black' workers. In any case, in 1948, the Nationalist Party came to power and began to establish the racially determined framework within which all class issues would be caught for the next half century.

Workers' struggles across Africa in the inter-war period

Elsewhere in Africa, during the inter-war period, workers in both the public and private sectors were widely involved in industrial action and, in some instances, wider political struggles. In Egypt, for example, where workers had long been organised, they were heavily involved in the nationalist movement during the First 'World War' and participated in the so-called 'revolution' of 1919. The first federation of trades unions was established in 1920, two years before Egypt became a formally independent state. Over the next 20 years the Egyptian working class was to develop a relatively high degree of self-consciousness; its relationship, however, to the Wafd nationalist movement, led very much by the Egyptian bourgeoisie and landowning classes, remained ambivalent through this period (40).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the first recorded strike by railway workers in the Gold Coast was in June 1918, following the exclusion of skilled and unskilled workers from a war bonus granted to European and 'permanent' African staff in the civil service. African railway workers were also involved in strikes in Sierra Leone (1919 and 1926), in Nigeria (1921), and among the Thies-Niger workers in French West Africa (1925). The railway experienced the largest single number of recorded disputes and strikes in Nigeria in the inter-war period, and was the birthplace of manual worker unionism. In 1930 serious strikes and disturbances occurred among the mineworkers in the Gold Coast and among dockers at Bathurst (the Gambia). From the outset, industrial action by African workers was regarded as tantamount to rebellion or revolt. The response was often violent and almost always extremely repressive. The 1926 railway strike in Sierra Leone, for example, was described by the Governor as 'a revolt against the Government by its own servants'. Troops were called in, strikers and demonstrators shot, strike leaders imprisoned, exiled or at least sacked, and any tribal association connected with the disturbances banned or dissolved. In Kenya, a general strike organised by the Young Kikuyu Association [when?] led to the massacre of some 150 people by the King's African Rifles. In Northern Rhodesia, major strikes by African workers took place on the Copperbelt in 1935 and 1940. The first of these was provoked by an increase in the poll tax and organised through the Watchtower sect and Bemba dance societies, the second involved a demand for equal pay with white workers and mobilised some 3,000 strikers. The 1940 strike was put down by troops, with 60 injured and 17 killed (41).

Working class struggle was evidently a political as well as an 'economic' threat in many countries across Africa in this period. Not surprisingly, the greatest resistance to the organisation of African workers was generally experienced in the white settler states, where a significant class of European capitalists had an immediate vested interest in both their exploitation (for profit) and their oppression (for political reasons), and where the 'white' working class had its own concerns about the growing strength of 'black' workers' organisations. As Davies notes, "in the short run – in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Tanganyika, Northern and Southern Rhodesia – the settler elite was able to sabotage all efforts at permitting the growth of African trade unions." (42). In these colonial states, the forms of repression characteristic of the early colonial period elsewhere in Africa continued in force, often until the 1930s and even later. In South Africa, they were to continue, in effect until the 1990s.

The development of trades unions

Virtually all of these actions were organised and supported by groups of un-unionised workers, in some cases by tribal associations but more usually by an

ethnic cross-section of workers. According to Jeffries, the Sekondi-Takoradi railway and harbour workers were the only Gold Coast wage-workers to establish a durable union organisation prior to World War II (43). An organisation of railway workers may have existed in Tanzania as early as 1929 (44), but generally, outside Egypt and South Africa, the establishment of the trades union movement took place only from the 1930s onwards.

The gradual development of labour legislation and the emergence of trades unions in the 1930s and 1940s across most of the continent marked a significant stage in the history of class struggle in Africa. In the British territories, it was only just before the Second 'World War', following outbreaks of labour unrest in various parts of the Empire (including Northern Rhodesia), that effective labour legislation was introduced (45). The need to recruit labour (and soldiers) in support of the war effort further stimulated progress. The Colonial Development and Welfare Act was passed in 1940, stipulating that "no territory might receive aid under its provision unless it had in force legislation protecting the rights of trade unions, and unless the works for which the aid was to be used were carried out under a contract which embodied a fair wages clause, and which forbade the employment of children under the age of 14" (46).

The commitment in the colonies to the implementation of measures conceived in Britain remained strictly limited. In Uganda, one colonial official was dismissed because he 'acted in conflict with offical policy' by advising unions on negotiation tactics, and the Kenya union adviser, James Patrick, was told [when?] that 'the time had not yet arrived' for the establishment of trade unionism in Kenya; he should come back in twenty years or so (47). Indeed in Kenya, although a Labour Trade Union of East Africa was registered as early as 1937, and an African Workers' Federation in 1947, both were later banned because they helped to organise a strike in Mombasa. In the meanwhile, the Railway African Staff Union, formed in 1940, built up branches all over the country during the war and played an important intermediary role during a threatened strike in Mombasa in 1945 (48). By 1945, the Railway African Association was the most powerful workers' organisation in the territory, with a majority of the 17,000 or so railwaymen as members. Railway workers in Tanganyika played a critical role in the general strike of 1947 and in the articulation of broad political demands during that strike (49). An East African TUC, founded in 1949, was refused registration and various measures introduced to give the government stronger powers against unions and workers. One of the measures introduced was the Deportation Ordinance aimed specifically at militant Indian workers; the government was worried that the East African TUC was led by 'a prominent Communist agitator' who was also an Indian.

Trades unions in most British territories throughout Africa were registered and closely supervised by the colonial labour departments; accounts were scrutinised, political affiliation discouraged, and the right to strike circumscribed by the 'emergency' actions of Governors or by the inclusive definition of 'essential services' in which strikes were illegal. During the 1950s, 15 such essential services were listed in Tanganyika, 13 in Kenya, and 10 in Nyasaland. In 1950, the leaders of the African Workers' Federation of Kenya and the East African TUC were arrested, and a general strike in Nairobi crushed by armed police, the army and the RAF. Three hundred workers were arrested and some of union leaders sentenced to 'banishment' or jail for declaring illegal strikes. The history of the Kenya unions and the East African TUC, together with the experience of Morocco and Algeria, and the Rhodesias, shows the commitment of white settler colonial regimes to repress the workers and block the evolution of labour unions. But by inhibiting these forms of class conflict, they ensured that resistance and protest eventually took more violent forms and contributed to the bitterness of the struggles for national independence in those states.

At the other end of the spectrum was the experience of Sierra Leone. Most of the early unions were connected with the public sector railways, docks, mines, and schools; most of them involved relatively privileged Creoles from Freetown. Here, Edgar Parry, a British trade unionist who became Labour Commissioner, helped establish a union structure, presided over by the non-political co-ordinating body of the Sierra Leone Council of Labour, which operated quietly and effectively from 1946 - a model of official colonial union policy in practice. By 1958, some 60 per cent of the wage labour force were members of unions. Here, collaboration and co-option were the government strategy, rather than confrontation and conflict. But, following a major strike in Freetown in 1955, two of the most prominent union leaders formed political parties with trade union support, in 1957 and 1961 (50).

The Nigerian Railways Corporation comprised the single largest concentration of manual wage workers in the region (with some 27,000 employees in 1953) and the Railway Workers' Union of Nigeria was the first registered union in the country; and its leader, Imoudu, was involved in the 1942 and 1945 wage movements, the militant or left-wing trade union centres from the 1940s to the 1960s, and most of the attempts to create worker-based parties or union-party alliances during the post-war period (51). Differing from the repressive white settler states of east and southern Africa, and also from the 'collaborative' Sierra Leone case, the development of working class consciousness was probably greater in Nigeria than almost anywhere in Africa during the later colonial period (52).

In ‘French’ West Africa, where the right to form trades unions was granted by French the Popular Front government in 1937, some 19,000 Africans were employed in the railways and on the docks. In 1947-8 the longest strike in African union history involved workers of all four railway networks in the ‘French’ West African territories. Their major demand was for a non-racist labour hierarchy. The Ivorien network returned to work after three months, but the rest remained on strike for 160 days (of the 19,000 workers involved, only 858 had returned to work after 82 days). Substantial concessions were gained by the strikers. In Algeria and Tunisia, the formal right to organise trades unions was granted in 1932, but membership was initially restricted to those literate in French and possessing an elementary school diploma. In 1944, the literacy requirements were abolished, opening the way for the larger-scale organisation of workers. In Morocco, although indigenous workers were secretly organised during the 1930s, it was not until after the war that trades unions were made legal (53).

The African trade union movement had great difficulty in asserting its independence from the French unions.During the late 1940s and early 1950s, French unions developed their own policies and their own affiliates in Africa (54). Up until 1955, for example, the pro-Communist CGT claimed half of all African union members in the French colonies, the Catholic CCFTC, 18 per cent, and the Socialist CGT – FO, 10 per cent. The African unions were represented in the metropolitan union and, through it, in the appropriate international body. But these were reluctant to recognise independent African trades unions.

In 1946, the French Secretary-General of the WFTU rejected the application of the newly-formed General Union of Tunisian Workers, which had links with Bourguiba’s Neo-Destour Party, because, he argued, ‘unity must be achieved around the traditional organisation already integrated in the WFTU’ (55). In the Maghreb, the French unions had a controlling and moderating influence over the strategy and tactics adopted by the local trades unions in their conflicts with employers and the colonial state. Much of the emphasis on legislative action rather than on direct confrontation and conflicts with employers derived from French union experience, particularly that of the CGT.

In 1954, the Algerian National Movement, on taking over control of the unions, accused the CGT and the Communist Party of ‘making their attitude towards the Algerian movement dependent on the exigencies of French internal politics’; and Harbi notes (56) that in Algeria nationalist trades unions were founded only as late as 1956. The French unions, like the members of the various French left-wing political parties, were concerned to emphasise the primacy of ‘class struggle’ over the increasingly important struggle for national independence on the part of

African workers. In 1952, the CGT-FO adopted a resolution affirming that “the mission of the trades unions is to emancipate workers of all countries, its action being in the field of class struggle and not within the narrower and dangerous field of nationalism” (57).

In this, the position of the French unions was little different from that of the British. The British TUC regularly recorded its belief that the anti-imperialist struggle had little or nothing to do with the development of ‘genuine trade union activity’. Indeed, in 1957, the General Council of the TUC attacked the Ghana Industrial Relations Act as ‘a departure from the conception of independent trade unionism held in this country’ (58). In the Belgian colonies, labour legislation dates back to the 1920s, but from the very start there was a clear distinction between the laws for European employees and those for African workers. The Congolese ‘white’ unions, authorised by decree in 1921, like those in South Africa and the Copper Belt of Northern Rhodesia, strongly resisted African trade unionism. It is not surprising that, despite having a labour force with one of the highest proportions of wage workers in Africa, local unions were slow to develop in the Congo. African workers were not allowed to organise until 1946 and even then under severe restrictions; it was not until 1957 that African unions were allowed to federate; and not until 1959 that an African delegate was able to attend international meetings. Political activity by unions was banned and, although strikes in the private sector were permitted, government employees were forbidden to strike. It was not until 1959, however, that private industry recognised the rights of unions to organise and represent workers (59).

The growing strength and organisation of the African working class during first half of the 20th century, despite entrenched resistance from the colonial authorities, and even more so from white settlers and ‘white’ workers, is undeniable. This, it must be recognised, in a context where many African workers remained migrants (60) – often caricatured on the left as inevitably reactionary strike-breakers. Also, despite efforts by colonial governments to keep them rooted in the rural areas, a significant proportion of African urban workers had established themselves definitively in the towns and were now effectively organised in trades unions. Despite the high level of mobility of labour, and the legal and other restrictions on workers’ organisation, the emerging African trades unions were active and increasingly political.

Given the fact that wage labour was employed as much by the public sector as by private enterprise, it is not surprising that many struggles and conflicts were centred around the state, giving even the most mundane of industrial disputes a ‘political’ character. This served in turn to strengthen them. Working class actions

became inevitably associated with a collective struggle against the colonial state, and thus, increasingly, compatible with the broad political struggle for the overthrow of the colonial state and national independence. During the 1950s and 1960s, the efforts of the remaining colonial regimes in Africa were increasingly focused on controlling the trades unions and trying – unsuccessfully - to prevent them from linking their 'economic struggles' to the wider political movements that had emerged around the vision of national independence, and were growing in strength and militancy.

Nationalism and class struggle

In class terms, it was neither the peasantry nor the working class by and large, but the 'new' petty bourgeoisie which for the most part spear-headed African nationalist movements. Although there were exceptions – in Morocco, for example, where the indigenous bourgeoisie and 'feudal' elements led the nationalist movement, and in Egypt, where the landowners and bourgeoisie predominated in the Wafd - this was the case generally, even in South Africa. But the working class was everywhere also closely involved in the nationalist movement; so too were the rural masses, and without the weight and commitment of the popular classes generally the various nationalist movements would not have achieved the successes they did. It is certainly the case that there were, in many parts of Africa during the colonial period, periodic rural uprisings and revolts, and movements based in the countryside (the *maquis*) certainly came to be very significant towards the end of the colonial period in broader nationalist struggles. In some colonial states, particularly in the settler regimes, the nationalist struggle was perhaps most bitter in the rural areas where agrarian settler capitalism had its strongest roots, its most committed defenders, and some of its strongest opponents. Here, the notion of peasant *jacqueries* is not out of place.

Allen has argued for sub-Saharan Africa that, "while the different territories varied greatly in level of urbanisation, the extent of labour migration, the size of the educated elite or of wage employment, etc., the basic constitutents of their social structures were similar, as were the political histories that began in the 1940s with the development of mass nationalism, especially in areas with relatively large towns and an organised workforce. Within many of the nationalist movements there developed a division between a conservative wing, drawn from African elites, and a radical wing, led by members of the elite, but taking its support more from trade unionists, ex-servicemen, students, women, labour migrants, and other subordinate groups" (68). He cites as an example, the difference between the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) leadership – prepared to cooperate with the colonial authorities in return for a gradual and peaceful transfer of power- and

the supporters of Nkrumah, later the Convention People's Party, who demanded a far more rapid transfer, and were prepared to adopt a militant strategy employing strikes, demonstrations, riots, boycotts and agrarian conflicts.

The working class gave its support generally to the more radical political parties, but the instances where the trades unions allied themselves unambiguously with the leading nationalist parties and continued to do so up to independence were relatively few: Guinea, Ghana, Tanganyika, Kenya, Tunisia, Algeria, the Ivory Coast and Mali. In two of these territories – Kenya and Tunisia – the unions acted for some time as the basis of the nationalist movement and as substitutes for political organisations when these were forced underground. In others, notably Nigeria, Morocco and Cameroun, the unions at one time appeared in the vanguard role of the nationalist movement, only later to move into opposition. This occurred to some extent in most of former French West Africa. But generally, the unions remained carefully separate from the leading nationalist political parties, playing an important part in the political struggle, working closely with minority parties, or conducting campaigns and strikes which furthered political resistance, without becoming affiliated or subordinated in any way to a leading party. In Northern Rhodesia, the relationship between the unions and the nationalist parties was ambivalent, but highly political; in Dahomey, between 1956 and 1960, the relationship was even more problematic, but reflected similar problems arising from both issues of class and issues of nationalist strategy and politics. The relationship between the working class and trades union movement and the predominantly 'new' petty bourgeois-led nationalist parties often remained ambivalent in the immediate post-colonial period (69).

Class and the 'post colonial' state

Broadly, the more dominant the indigenous elites in the nationalist movement, the less violent and protracted the transition; where the struggle for independence was more protracted, the greater the involvement of the popular masses (workers and peasants) and the greater the commitment to a revolutionary 'war' of liberation. Left politics of the European kind, explicitly based on class politics, were constrained in an overwhelmingly colonial context, but in most countries, some form of national 'socialism' based broadly on the Soviet model inspired the ideology of the left and led, after independence, to a wide range of new states in which various versions of 'African socialism' prevailed. More rarely, and particularly in the case of states where the nationalist struggle had been particularly protracted and bitter, Marxism-Leninism was officially espoused (70).

While in a very few African states (notably Morocco and Egypt), the indigenous landowning classes and the bourgeoisie led the nationalist movement and

effectively dominated immediate post-independence politics, the widespread coincidence of political independence with the coming to power of a fraction of the new petty bourgeoisie (often from the army) is remarkable. The young 'free officers' coup of 1952 in Egypt led the way. During the late 1950s and the 1960s, many newly independent states adopted a radical populist rhetoric and initially made real efforts to break with the European dominated capitalist path of development. A distinctive combination of state capitalism and the one-party state with various 'national socialist ' ideologies became increasingly pervasive through the late 1960s and first half of the 1970s (72).
Debates on the nature of this distinctive 'post-colonial state in Africa' (73) during the 1970s, were part of the wider struggle by left intellectuals to provide both a theoretical critique of 'underdevelopment' and concrete support to 'progressive' regimes and movements in the Third World (74).

Although some have referred to regimes of this kind as 'radical bourgeois nationalism' (75), the general absence of a strong indigenous capitalist class ensured the political predominance of the new petty bourgeoisie and often also an initial willingness of the working class and the trades unions to support such regimes, where they espoused a radical populist rhetoric. In one interpretation, these new regimes were characterised during the period immediately after independence by an intra-class struggle (within the petty-bourgeoisie) as to the direction of development and over the kind of role the popular classes would be encouraged to play. Where 'leftist' tendencies predominated, one can speak of 'radical populism' and a more 'socialist' orientation; where more conservative and self-interested tendencies prevailed, one might speak of 'populist authoritarianism' and unashamed 'state capitalism'. Amilcar Cabral – leader of the radical nationalist movement in Guinea Bissau – argued that, in those cases where the petty bourgeoisie had been effectively radicalised by its involvement in a revolutionary mass movement or armed struggle for independence, either it could take on the role, after independence, of a revolutionary class or at least open up the way for a genuinely popular worker-peasant regime (76). Claims in support of such a possibility being realised in practice have been made for Eritrea, Mozambique, Algeria, Libya, Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe and Namibia (at various periods), among others. Von Freyhold argues that such an outcome could also have been realised in Tanzania in the 1960s (77), and the Kenyan trade union leader even went so far as to declare that 'most of our governments are working-class governments' (78).

An alternative interpretation would see even the 'socialist' impulse in such regimes as a self-interested expression of petty-bourgeois hegemony (79), which could lead eventually to the consolidation of class power, and possibly the emergence (via an

intermediate state-bourgeoisie) of a capitalist class and the development (via state-capitalism) of a capitalist economy. Recalling the 'Bonapartist state' described by Marx in the 18th Brumaire (80), the 'radical populist' regimes of Africa could be characterised by a situation in which no indigenous class was effectively dominant and the state was therefore 'relatively autonomous' at the national level, while remaining effectively subordinate to foreign capital (notably that of the former colonial power) at the international level. In so far as the state – government and bureaucracy - was then largely responsible for orchestrating and managing the process of capital accumulation, it became possible (for some) to talk of state capitalism, and even of a state bourgeoisie. From this perspective, the widespread harassment and suppression of left-wing political parties in the name of national unity, the banning of independent trades unions in the name of 'African' (Tanzania), 'Arab' (Egypt) or 'Islamic' (Libya, Mauretania) socialism, and the suppression of the peasants and workers, and even the very idea of class struggle all become explicable in terms of class conflict – between the popular and working classes and an emergent (or 'would-be' bourgeoisie).

Sender & Smith saw the impasse in African development as deriving in part from "an astonishing absence of any coherent, analytical/ideological framework within which to formulate state interventions of an effective and suitable kind"; they suggest that "in particular, the denial of the existence of a working class, and the absence of an analysis of rural class structures, has resulted in the ideological dominance of a 'classless' nationalism, albeit expressed in the language of socialism" (81). Damagingly, in this context, denial of a role in the construction of 'national socialist development' for a progressive working class (proletariat) became a feature, not only of the political rhetoric of 'radical' and 'authoritarian' populism, but also of many left analysts in the immediate post-colonial period. In the late 1960s - less than a decade after independence for many African states - Saul and Arrighi argued that the economic interests and political affinities of the African working class on the one hand and post-independence elites on the other, were becoming increasingly complementary (82). Both, it was argued, were implicated in the appropriation of the economic surplus generated by the peasantry (seen from this perspective as the main productive force and the poorest, potentially most revolutionary class in African societies). The key distinction to be made in class political terms was, it followed, not between workers and petty bourgeoisie/bourgeoisie, but between the mass of unskilled labourers in African cities (who were to be regarded as peasants temporarily engaged in wage employment rather than part of the urban proletariat 'proper'), and those skilled workers, with higher incomes and more secure jobs. "These (latter) workers enjoy incomes three or more times higher than those of unskilled labourers and together with the elites and sub-elites in bureaucratic employment in the civil service and

expatriate concerns, constitute what we call the labour aristocracy of tropical Africa" (83). Far from acting as the vanguard of the proletariat and a force for revolutionary or even significant political change, it was suggested, the 'labour aristocracy' was divisive of the popular working classes and essentially reactionary.

It was remarked that, while the trades unions might have the potential to challenge and even overthrow a government, in most cases they had failed to do so: nowhere, it was suggested (with the possible exceptions of Congo Brazzaville and Mali), was a trade-union-sponsored government in power. Davies, for example, argued that "where the ruling elites are precariously maintained in power, the unions may precipitate a showdown by staging a successful strike, as recently occurred in Upper Volta and Dahomey, only to find that their efforts have removed a civilian government and paved the way for a military dictatorship. But where a nationalist government is well entrenched, union action may result not in the overthrow of politicians but in the absorption of unions into the party machine. Ghana, Guinea, Tanganyika, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal and several smaller states all have one federation in close relationship with the ruling party" (84). He adds how, even while his book was in preparation, the Kenyan government had dissolved the major trades union federations and established one national organisation under the control of the governing KANU. He saw the increasing subordination of African trades unions to the one-party state was fundamentally undemocratic - "the idea of a trade unionism emanating from the policies of ruling elites suggests a variation of 'guided democracy' and 'scientific management' theories found elsewhere" (85).

But there is little support historically for the thesis of the reactionary 'labour aristocracy' and any alliance between the organised working class and the ruling elite in the post-colonial period derived from a common commitment for some time in many newly independent states to nationalism, anti-imperialism, 'radical populism' and socialism. Even at the end of the 1960s, when the "documentation of the growing African working class (had) barely begun", Davies was obliged to admit that the workers and their unions had become "one of the major foci of political power. (….) Unions have been involved in several major political crises. In Sudan, a general strike precipitated the downfall of the Abboud regime; in Nigeria, another general strike provided the occasion for a major trial of strength between the state and workers; in Dahomey, Congo (Brazzaville), Upper Volta, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Tanganyika, trade unions have been identified with attempts to overthrow governments; in Algeria, they became a battleground for both the Ben Bella and Boumedienne regimes" (86).

Also, if some left analysts were concerned at the 'failure' of the organised working class to match up to 'expectations' of its role as a revolutionary class, others recognised that, usually, the struggles by the better-off, better-organised workers were, in fact, struggles by the 'advance guard' of the working class on behalf of the working classes as a whole. Jeffries, for example, taking the case of the 1961 strike in Sekondi-Takoradi in Ghana as an example, points out that it was the skilled railway (and harbour) workers of Sekondi-Takoradi who initiated and led the 1961 strike in response to the perceived failure of the TUC to respond to the July austerity budget, and suggests that "railway workers throughout Africa have tended to display a quite exceptional level of militancy and radical political consciousness" (87). He also pointed out that the generalisation put forward by Arrighi and Saul was based on East African (Kenyan and Ugandan) experience, where wage rates between skilled and unskilled workers tended to be very high. In Ghana, by contrast, where the wage differentials were not so great, skilled workers, while admittedly part of the better-paid, relatively secure section of the manual working class, had consistently proved "the most radical 'mass' force in Ghanaian politics". Moreover, "any notion that they are generally perceived within their society as a labour aristocracy is clearly belied by the widespread support their major strike actions have received from other urban mass groupings looking to them for expression of political protest" (88).

Again, it was argued by some on the left, during the 1960s and early 1970s, that the lack of a democratic left wing revolutionary tradition (or the suppression of any such groupings) was a major factor in the 'failure' of the working class movement in Africa to capitalise fully on its evident strength. Certainly, the need for genuinely radical political leadership of the working class movement was often recognised by trade union leaders. At the time of the general strike of 1964 in Nigeria – in which the Joint Action Committee of labour leaders, backed by *over five hundred thousand workers*, successfully defied the federal government – one of the strike leaders argued that "although the cause of the strike was based on economic demands, yet in its development it has raised possible political action which, with a developed Marxist-Leninist party, could have led to a proletarian revolution" (89). In fact, in many African states, during the 1960s and 1970s, the working class and trades unions usually sought explicitly to link themselves with the more radical, often minority parties – as they tended to do in the late colonial period. But in many states both trades unions and minority left-wing parties, representing the popular and working classes and the more radical sections of the 'new' petty bourgeoisie, came increasingly into conflict with the regimes in power and often suffered extreme repression. External support for repressive regimes with a variety of political ideologies and state forms throughout Africa during the

1970s further undermined the capacity for the popular and working classes to organise and express their interests democratically.

As regards the role of the peasantry – by implication considered by the proponents of the 'labour aristocracy' thesis to be the truly revolutionary class – despite the general arguments put forward for the role of the peasantry (and particularly the middle peasantry) in Third World revolutions (90), there was little evidence to indicate this in terms of concrete class struggle. Bernstein argued that, in objective terms, "there is no single and essential 'peasantry' and that "there can be no uniform 'model' of class action by peasants nor any single and abstract formulation of the relation of peasants to revolutionary politics, whether such a formulation expresses a blanket optimism or a blanket pessimism concerning their 'revolutionary potential'". In fact, such historical accounts as exist of rural class struggle in the post-colonial period tend to refer to the struggles of petty commodity producers and the rural petty bourgeoisie against the various constraints (exerted by private traders or by the state itself) on their profitability and survival as the producers of commodities for the market. Relatively little has been written on the struggles of those poor 'peasants' who are, in effect, disguised wage workers, or of agricultural wage workers more generally (91). Nevertheless, the continuing links between the rural poor and the urban masses ensured a real alliance of interests among what might be termed the popular classes. The rapid growth of rural-urban migration in the 1960s and 1970s and the massive expansion of the shanty towns and slums across Africa shifted the emphasis of popular class struggle increasingly to the urban areas.

Conclusion

In historical reality, across Africa, the working class played a key role in the struggle of popular and working classes against capitalism, during the colonial period and in the immediate post-independence period. This 'working class' should be seen as it is – a heterogeneous combination and evolving configuration of fractions and strata. The debates as to whether the working class or the lumpenproletariat would be 'more revolutionary', or whether the better paid workers of the formal sector constituted 'a labour aristocracy' and were essentially therefore reactionary or at best uncertain allies in the progressive struggle, were misplaced, misguided and misleading. The reality of class struggle from independence onwards in most African states has been a constantly shifting constellation of different elements – which can be seen broadly as popular working class struggle.

Notes

1 There is a considerable literature on this process. For a theoretical analysis with respect to Africa, see Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. “Research on an African mode of production”, in (ed) Seddon, D. (1974) ***Relations of Production: Marxist approaches to economic anthropology***. London: Frank Cass.

2 Review of African Political Economy (RoAPE), “Editorial”, 1975, p.5.

3 See the joint chapter in this collection by Leo Zeilig and myself (particularly the latter part of the chapter which takes the discussion and analysis into the more recent ‘post’ post-colonial period). See also, Walton, J. & Seddon, D. (1994) ***Free Markets and Food Riots: the politics of global adjustment***. London: Blackwells, passim but especially chapter on Africa.

4 Cohen, R., Gutkind, P.C.W. & Brazier, P. (1979) ***Peasants and Proletarians: the struggles of Third World Workers.*** London: Hutchinson University Press, p. 25.

5 Marx, K. ***Capital***, vol. 1, cited in Mbeki (see below). It was not only in west and central Africa that the Europeans brought slavery. In South Africa, the first slaves arrived in the Cape Colony six years after the arrival in 1658 of the Dutch settlers; and in 1806, when England seized the Colony by force of arms, there were 30,000 slaves as against 26,000 settlers and 20,000 ‘free’ Coloured, Nama and Khoi wage labourers. Although, described as free in relation to the 30,000 slaves in the Colony, “they were (only) free in so far as they had been ‘liberated’ by force of arms, disease and starvation from their status as independent producers..” Mbeki, T. “Domestic and foreign policies of a new South Africa”, ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 11, 1978, p. 7.

6 See Seddon, D. “Unfinished Business: slavery in Saharan Africa”, in (ed) Temperley, H. (2000). ***After Slavery: emancipation and its discontents.*** London: Frank Cass, pp.

7 Seddon, Unfinished Business.

8 Not only the insidious violence that undermined and destroyed indigenous social formations, subordinating them to the powerful demands of capital, but the open violence supporting that process, which led to death and destruction on a massive scale. cf. Bradby, B. “The destruction of natural economy”, ***Economy & Society***, vol. 4, no. 2, May 1975, pp. 127-61, p.138.

9 Crowder, M. (1968). ***West Africa under Colonial Rule***. London: Hutchinson.

10 On the notion of ‘articulation of modes of production’ generally, see Foster-Carter, A, “The modes of production controversy”, New Left Review, no. 107, January-February 1978, pp. 47-77. For discussion of ‘articulation’ in specifically African contexts, see, for example, Rey P Ph. (1971). ***Colonialisme, neo-colonialisme et transitions au capitaisme.*** Paris; and (1973***), Les alliances de classes.*** Paris.

11 Hobsbawm. E. ***Primitive Rebels: studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries.***
Manchester: Manchester University Press.
See the Chapter on Egypt in this book

12 see the chapter on Egypt in this book

13 Seddon, D. “Unfinished Business..”

14 Mamdani, M. 1975. “Class struggles in Uganda”, ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 4, November 1975, pp. 26-61. p.31

15 Davies, I. 1966. ***African Trade Unions***. Penguin African Library, London: Penguin Books. p. 33

16 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***. p.33

17 In 1956, “thousands of workers were being sentenced every year to prison with hard labour” according to Basil Davidson, in Davidson, B ((1956). ***The African Awakening.*** London: Cape, p. 75

18 From interviews with Mozambican peasant women, in Johnson, H. & Bernstein, H. 1982***, Third World Lives of Struggle***. London: Open University. p. 32

19 cited in Woddis, J. ***Africa – The Roots of Revolt***. London: Lawrence Wishart. 1960, p. 50. Further details can be found in Thomas, R. W. "Forced labour in British West Africa: the case of the northern territories of the Gold Coast, 1906-27", ***Journal of African History***, vol. 14, no. 1, 1973, pp. 79-103.

20 Mosley, P. ***The Settler Economies: studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1963***. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 p.134

21 In 1907, Winston Churchill, as Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, condemned the treatment of native labour in Natal; later that year, visiting British East Africa, he was apparently outraged by the official policy of labour conscription for settlers and in 1908 was able to change the policy to one of 'encouragement' of labour. cf. Sender, J. & Smith, S. 1986. ***The Development of Capitalism in Africa***. London & New York: Methuen. p. 48.

22 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.35.

23 Tom Brass asks 'when has running away not been, in a very general sense, an act of resistance?' in Brass, T. "At their perfect command? The struggle of/over post-emancipation rural labour", ***The Journal of Peasant Studies,*** vol. 28, no. 3, April 2001, p. 168, footnote 16. Labour conscripted from the northern territories of the Gold Coast to work on the gold mines regularly deserted in large numbers - in 1922-23, 483 men out of 2,524 so 'recruited' had absconded before reaching the south, according to Crisp, J. (1984). ***The Story of an African Working Class***. London: Zed Press. p. 48.

24 See Cohen, R. "Resistance and Hidden Forms of Consciousness among African Workers", in (eds) Johnson, H. & Bernstein, H. (1982). ***Third World Lives of Struggle***. London: Heinemann & The Open University, pp. 244-58; Scott, J. ( ) ***Weapons of the Weak: everyday forms of resistance.***

25 Vail, L. "The state and the creation of colonial Malawi's agricultural economy', in (ed) Rothberg, R. 1983. ***Imperialism, Colonialism and Hunger: east and central Africa***. Lexington, Mass & Toronto DC: Heath. Pp. 49-50.

26 Mbeki. T. "Domestic and foreign policies of a new South Africa", p.12.

27 Saul et al cf Thompson, E. P. ***The Making of the English Working Class***. London: Penguin Books, 1961) 1971)

28 Poulantzas, N. ..

29 Davies, African Trade Unions, p. 75

30 Lozovsky 1935

31 For further details, see the chapter on Egypt in this collection

32 "We shall probably have a strike when a general reduction of labour is brought about; that will not last long – an African worships his stomach and will be back again to work before many days", cited in Hopkins, A. G. "The Lagos strike of 1897: an exploration in Nigerian labor history", in (eds) Cohen, R. Gutkind, P. C. W. & Brazier P. (1979). ***Peasants and Proletarians: the struggles of Third World workers***. London: Hutchinson, p. 89.

33 Hopkins, "The Lagos strike of 1897", p.91

34 Cohen. R. & Hughes, A. ***Towards the emergence of a Nigerian working class: the social; identity of the Lagos labour force, 1897-1939***. Occasional Paper Series. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1971. Hopkins, "The Lagos strike of 1897", p.105.

35 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.56

36 von Onselen. C. (1976). ***Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933.*** London: Pluto Press; also "Worker Consciousness in Black Miners: Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1920", in (eds) Cohen, Gutkind & Brazier, ***Peasants and Proletarians***. Pp. 107-27.

37 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.56.

38 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.57.

39 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***,, pp. 57-8.

40 For further discussion, see chapter on Egypt in this collection

41 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 75, also see the chapter on Zambia in this collection.

42 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.76.

43 Jeffries, R. (1978). ***Class, Power and Ideology in Ghana: the railwaymen of Sekondi***. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

44 Iliffe notes, in Iliffe, J (1979) ***A Modern History of Tanganyika***. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), that "railway workers were relatively skilled and numerous, and their occupation provided a natural framework of organization and communications", p.396.

45 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.75. The Labour governments of 1924 and 1929 paid some attention to colonial labour conditions in the British territories, but it was not until 1930 that the Labour government appointed a Colonial Labour Office Committee and Secretary of State Sydney Webb approved proposals to accord African trades unions formal legal rights.

46 cited in Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 39.

47 cited in Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 41

48 Stichter, S. "The formation of a working class in Kenya", in (1975) (eds) Sandbrook, R. & Cohen, R. ***The Development of an African Working Class***, London: Longman; Stichter, S. ***Migrant Labour in Kenya: capitalism and African response, 1895-1975***. London: Longman, 1982, pp. 119, 170

49 Iliffe, ***A Modern History of Tanganyika,*** p.402-3.

50 Davies, ***African Trade Unions,*** p. 79.

51 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, pp. 81-4

52 Cohen, R. (1974). ***Labour and Politics in Nigeria***. London: Heinemann.. pp.71 et seq.; Waterman, P.(1982). ***Wage Labour Relations in Nigeria: state, capitalists, unions and workers in the Lagos cargo-handling industry.*** The Hague: Institute of Social Studies. pp.92-3; also see the chapter on Nigeria in this collection.

53 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 43; see also Montagne, R. (1954). ***Naissance du Proletariat Marocain***

54 see Allen, C. H. (1975). "Union-party relationships in francophone West Africa", in (eds) Sandbrook R. & Cohen, R. ***The Development of an African Working Class.*** London: 54 Longman; Ousmane, S. (1970). ***God's Bits of Wood***. London: Heinemann.

55 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, pp. 44-45

56 Harbi, Mohamed, ***Le FLN: mirage et realite***. Editions JA, 1980, 140-42.

57 cited in Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 46

58 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 46.

59 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, pp 47-49

60 Elkan, W. (1961). ***Migrants and Proletarians***. Oxford: Oxford University Press. In 1956, for example, the Gold Coast Labour Commissioner estimated that about one-half of employees in the Eastern, Western and Ashanti region came from the Northern Territories, Upper Volta, Nigeria and Liberia; some estimates went as high as 70 per cent. In the Ivory Coast, 80 per cent of the labour force came from Upper Volta. In 1958, some 50 per cent of the workers in

Leopoldville province and 70 per cent in Katanga came from outside their sub-district, and even in the less industrialized provinces the proportion was almost 40 per cent. For the Congo as a whole, half a million (or just under 50 per cent of all wage earners) were permanently resident outside their village; something like 2 million Congolese were short-term migrants. Much of this was seasonal migration and ensured that the urban workers had 'one foot' in the rural areas'. In southern Africa, labour migrants continued to provide the bulk of the urban working class. By the 1960s, even in the strongly proletarianised South Africa, one survey found that in his working life the average man was in employment away from home for 64 per cent of his time, during which he had 34 different jobs, averaging 47 weeks in each. The Tomlinson Commission found the proportion of a workers' life spent in employment away from home to be 62 per cent, according to Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 28.

61 Post, K. n.d (c. 1972). ***'Peasantisation' and rural political movements in Western Africa***, pp. 47.

62 Bernstein, H. (1977). "Notes on capital and the peasantry", ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 10, September-December 1977, pp. 60-73.

63 Mamdani, M. (1975). "Class struggles in Uganda", ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 4, November 1975, pp. 26-61.

64 Syahuka-Muhindo, A. (1983). "The Rwenzuru Movement and the Democratic Struggle, in (eds) Mamdani, M. & Wamba-dia-Wamba, E. ***African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy***. Dakar: CODESRIA, pp. 491-543.

65 Mamdani, "Class struggles in Uganda", pp. 36-7

66 Wolf. E. ***Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century***

67 The current struggles over the land of white settlers in Zimbabwe and South Africa can be seen as 'unfinished business' from the colonial era.

68 Allen. C. (1995), "Understanding African politics", ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 65, September, 1995, p. 303.

69 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, pp. 95-112. In some territories - notably in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, French Equatorial Africa, Nigeria and Sierra Leone - the elite parties survived to form the first independent governments.

70 There is an issue as to how best to characterise these regimes. While they were often self-defined as 'socialist', this is misleading. Perhaps 'national socialist' would be appropriate?

71 Seddon, D. "Morocco and the Western Sahara", ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 38, April 1987, pp. 24-47. A few Spanish enclaves like Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco remain under European control.

72 In Libya, in 1969, Colonel Qaddhafi and other young officers overthrew the corrupt regime of King Idris; in the same year, a new military government in Sudan adopted a radical and strongly anti-imperialist rhetoric and Soviet-educated Siad Barre became Somalia's leader, nationalised foreign enterprises and moved closer to the Soviet Union. Congo-Brazzaville became a 'peoples' republic' in 1970 and adopted Marxism-Leninism as its official ideology. Ghana experienced a left-wing military coup in 1972. Dahomey, following a military coup in 1969, became the Republic of Benin in 1974 and adopted Marxism-Leninism as its guiding principle. In Ethiopia, a military coup took power in 1974 and successive military regimes established a one party 'socialist' state; Eritrea, which opposed the regime in Ethiopia, adopted a radical socialist ideology. Madagascar, which had achieved independence in 1960, was transformed between 1972 and 1975 into a Marxist-Leninist socialist state.

73 Alavi, H. (1972) "The state in post-colonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", ***New Left Review***, no. 74, July-August, 1972 began this debate; John Saul and Colin Leys, arguably began the African debate – Saul, J. "The state in post-colonial societies – Tanzania", ***The Socialist Register, 1974***; Leys, C. (1975). ***Underdevelopment in Kenya: the political economy of neo-colonialism, 1964-1971***. London: Heinemann and Leys, C. "The 'overdeveloped' post-colonial state: a re-evaluation", ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 5, January-April 1976. Saul's article criticised an important work by Issa Shivji on ***Class Struggles in Tanzania*** (Dar es Salaam, 1975).

74 See Leys' acknowledgement of previous discussions which had influenced his work, Leys, ***Underdevelopment in Kenya***, p. 8.

75 Ougaard, M. (1984). “The Origins of the Second Cold War”, ***New Left Review***, no. 147, September-October 1984, p. 66-67.

76 Cabral, A. (1971). ***Revolution in Guinea – An African People’s Struggle***, revised edition, London.

77 von Freyhold, M. (1977). “The post-colonial state and its Tanzanian version”, ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 8, January-April 1977, pp. 86-88.

78 Tom Mboya of Kenya, cited in Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p.101

79 As Shivji argued for Tanzania specifically, and Africa more generally. See Shivji, I. (1975). “Peasants and class alliances”, ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 3, 1975, pp. 11-18, and Shivji, ***Class Struggles in Tanzania.***

80 Leys, ***Underdevelopment in Kenya,*** p. 207.

81 Sender, J. & Smith, S. (1986). ***The Development of Capitalism in Africa***, London: Methuen, p.130.

82 Saul, J. & Arrighi, G. (1969). “Nationalism and Revolution in sub-Saharan Africa”, in ***The Socialist Register, 1969***. London: Merlin Press.

83 Arrighi & Saul, “Nationalism and Revolution”, p.149. A major influence here was the revolutionary writer Franz Fanon, who had identified the explosive revolutionary potential of the lumpenproletariat and the peasantry, cf. Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 11. Others have been more sceptical – cf. Cohen, R. & Michael, D. “The revolutionary potential of an African lumpenproletariat: a sceptical view”, ***Bulletin, Institute of Development Studies***, 5, nos. 2-3, 1973, pp. 31-41.

84 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, pp. 10-11.

85 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 12.

86 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 10

87 Jeffries, R. (1975). “The Sekondi-Takoradi General Strike, 1961”, in (eds) Johnson, H. & Bernstein, H. ***Third World Lives of Struggle.*** London: Heinemann & The Open University.

88 Jeffries, “The Sekondi-Takoradi General Strike, 1961”, p.

89 Davies, ***African Trade Unions***, p. 146, and more generally pp.143-47).

90 Wolf, E. ***Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century***

91 Bernstein, H. “Notes on Capital and Peasantry”, p.

92For example, Leys, ***Underdevelopment in Kenya***.

93 For a discussion of these alliances, with reference to the Maghreb, see Seddon, D. “Dreams and disappointments: post-colonial constructions of ‘The Maghrib’”, in (ed) Abdullatif Ahmida (2000). ***Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib.*** New York: Palgrave, and also chapter XX in this collection.

94 Again, this debate could be said to have started with Leys, C. ***Underdevelopment in Kenya.*** It was followed by Swainson, N. “The rise of a national bourgeoisie in Kenya”, ***Review of African Political Economy***, no. 8, January-April 1977, pp. 39-55. Later contributions included Kitching, G. (1985). “Politics, Method and Evidence in ‘The Kenya Debate’”, and in Beckman, B. (1985). “Neo-Colonialism, Capitalism and the State in Nigeria”, both in (eds). Bernstein, H. & Campbell, B. ***Contradictions of Accumulation in Africa. Studies in Economy and State.*** Loon: Sage Publications.

95 Sender & Smith, ***The Development of Capitalism in Africa***, p. 35. For a similar, earlier view, see Warren, B. (1981). ***Imperialism: pioneer of capitalism***. London: Verso.

96 Sender & Smith, ***The Development of Capitalism in Africa,*** p.129

97 See the chapter by Leo Zeilig and David Seddon for further discussion of this ‘wave’ of popular and working class struggles in the 1970s and 1980s. Also Walton & Seddon, ***Free Markets and Food Riots*** passim, esp. chapter 5, on Africa, “Economic Adjustment and Democratization in Africa” by Riley, S. P. and Parfitt, T. W.