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RACE, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Critical Essays On the Radicalism of the 1960s

Adolph Reed, Jr.

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CRITICAL ESSAYS ON THE
RADICALISM OF THE
1960s

Edited by
ADOLPH REED, JR.



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For my parents,
my son Touré,
and the spirit of Herbert Marcuse

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To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was." It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. . . . In every era the attempt must be made to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. . . . Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

—Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

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Introduction

ADOLPH REED, JR.

Russell Jacoby has argued that a peculiar, amnesic principle increasingly constrains American life, militating against development of critical thinking. "Social amnesia," as Jacoby calls it, is enmeshed with reification, the spurious presentation of the "human and social relationships of society as natural—and—unchangeable—relations between things."¹ To the consciousness formed under those circumstances the dominant viewpoint of the present is taken as "neutral and absolute truth, outside—not inside—history."² The past, therefore, is reduced to positive (as similarity) or negative (as deviation) affirmation of whatever currently exists. To the social amnesiacs past and present appear as discontinuous, and thus practically irrelevant to each other, or the past flounders around as a Mardi-Gras image: this week's banalities adorned by replicas of obsolete artifacts; in either case only a reified present seems to organize life.

Popular culture offers perhaps clearest illustration of the quietistic consequences of the obliteration of historical consciousness. On the one hand, films such as *Reds* or *Return of the Secaucus Seven* deauthorize the principle of opposition by locking it within the past perfect tense; radicalism and idealism were appropriate stances "back then" because unfairness *had* existed, and, besides, the activists inhabited a naive world that did not yet understand the futility of idealism. On the other hand, the television "docudrama" proceeds from a formula that reads back into the past even the most historically specific attitudes and behaviors of the present; black freedmen or Shogun warriors interact among their fellows through a distinctly mass capitalist discourse of psychobabble and human relations engineering. In both cases a hollow past is pasted together only to validate the present.

Not even so recent a past as the 1960s is immune. Now that the postwar baby boom has settled into maturity, at least two forms of amnesic decay suffuse reflection on its youthful activism. In one, the political and social movements and personalities prominent during that period are hypostatized as "the Sixties." The critiques and visions articulated by those movements and the self-understandings of participants in them are melded with styles of hair and clothing into a single, time-bound image. Thus classified, this image requires little further rumination; "the Sixties" constitute another "back then," worthy of note only as a curio piece that underscores the natural order of the present. By the latter 1970s the stage was set for a where-are-they-now popular journalism in which activist relics enter the spotlight to acknowledge the image's obsolescence. With a kitschy irony born of cynicism, the mass media have paraded a string of God-that-failed (or God-that-succeeded) revelations by old movement symbols, a characteristically sensational kind of mass culture show trial.

So, we saw Rennie Davis traipsing around behind a pudgy, improbable guru and Abbie Hoffman exposing himself in the pages of *People* and *Viva* to reassure us that his underground tour—inspired by flight from a prison term for selling cocaine—had shown him balance in the "heartland of America" and a new awakening on the horizon. Jerry Rubin, lauding the "inner revolution," was equally sanguine about the lessons of his meandering journey within, announcing that he could now revel in his ever-youthful, evanescent Self—which thereupon became a stockbroker/consultant. Bob Dylan resurfaced as a fundamentalist Christian gospel singer; Mike Klonsky lingers as a *de facto* agent of whatever faction rules in China; and the FBI—four years before the Nyack, New York, Brinks robbery—proclaimed the Weather Underground to be no longer even worthy of prosecution. Obituaries of Marcuse, Sartre, and Paul Goodman were written also as obituaries of opposition. At the same time, on the other side of Du Bois's veil, Eldridge Cleaver—ever the media creature—returned to America as a latter-day Cold Warrior, holy roller, advocate of wife-beating (a mellowing of his earlier defense of rape?), and designer of pornographic pants. Huey Newton's name came to evoke suspicions of drug-dealing, murder, and extortion, and Bobby Seale was showcased as a nightclub comedian and cookbook author. H. Rap Brown returned to public view as a Muslim small businessman, consuming his time in prayer to Allah, Martin Luther King became a holiday and a postage stamp, a meal ticket for his widow and hobby for Stevie Wonder. In each case the message rings clear; opposition is the property of the image of "the Sixties," and it is, therefore, like bell-bottom pants, dashikis, and long hair, no longer appropriate.

A second variant of amnesia concerning recent movements is more

complex, in part because it is frequently well intentioned. Toward the end of the 1970s a number of social scientists undertook in different ways to assess the impact of black activism on American political life. Even though those scholars' dispositions generally have been sympathetic, the structuralist and empiricist orientation of their accounts, by collapsing the intentions and outcomes of activism, have vitiated what they would vindicate. These accounts demonstrate that the Civil Rights and Black Power movements ensued in more thorough integration of blacks into the negotiating arena of electoral pluralism. To that extent this scholarship has helped to establish a solid picture of the outcomes of activism, principal among them enhancement of the position of blacks as a legitimate constituency to be factored into the steering calculus of the pluralist system. However, this outcome is taken as if it were the objective that stimulated activism in the first place. Suppressed in historical memory is the ambiguous, yet global, vision that gave those movements the heroic character through which they sustained themselves. These interpretations, therefore, sabotage the historical integrity of activism by forgetting its moments of transcendence, its openness to alternative possibility. They represent Civil Rights and Black Power activism as strategic behavior grounded entirely on pluralist rationality as a structuring principle.

The effects of that representation undermine even the best intentions. Retrospective reading of the objectives of those movements as rational pluralism suppresses the moments of opposition constituted in them both as utopian vision and programmatic radicalism. No matter how fleeting or marginal the oppositional tendencies in black activism were, they existed as discrete options among a number of embedded possibilities in contention to steer the movement's articulation. The reductionism inherent to structuralist and empiricist readings inclines toward a victor's history; once Civil Rights and Black Power activism are reduced to their outcomes, what remains of their genesis is only an objectified tale of the linear unfolding of the present arrangements.

So it is that James Button, in an empirically useful account, simply assumes the urban uprisings of the 1960s to have been politically cognizant expressions of discontent with urban blacks' position in the pluralist queue. Following this assumption, which he recycles from the collective wisdom of theorists of collective violence, Button invests urban disorders with responsibility for "performing attention-getting and catalytic functions on behalf of the partisans of violence."³ That is, even the most explicit quotidian repudiation of the current order becomes a *de facto* affirmation of its inescapable hegemony. Similarly, Doug McAdam is so much concerned with the movement's structural antecedents and empirical trace materials (e.g., number of demonstrations, demographic characteristics of initiating agents) that he never actually

discusses what he calls the "black movement" as a dynamic entity at all. As a result he rewrites the trajectory of more than two generations of black activism to yield a story of the working out of an invariant strategy of interest-group articulation. His account so tightly binds that activity to the imputed goal of expanded pluralist participation that he concludes, preposterously, that the "movement" declined primarily because it ventured too far from the "limited-reform goals" and postures required to retain support from powerful white entrenched elites.⁴ In other words, deviation from the regnant pluralist calculus of dominance and subordination is hopeless and, for McAdam, unthinkable.

Ironically, this scholarship draws much of its inspiration from the Marxist-structuralist interpretation proposed by Piven and Cloward, whose account—although much more sophisticated than McAdam's—also is disposed to explain activism in terms of its structural coordinates and by-products. Because their focus is elsewhere, these authors abstract away from the internal dynamics of the Civil Rights movement, and as a result they reduce the movement's goals to a least common denominator, the objectives of the liberal-reform tendencies that ultimately won the struggle for hegemony over the civil rights agenda.⁵ This reduction, filtered through their structural determinism, leads Piven and Cloward to characterize the political negation constituted by black activism as "defiance"—a notion connected with demands for positional adjustment in pluralist queueing—rather than opposition.⁶ Although it is hardly their intention, Piven and Cloward thereby reduce activism categorically to an epiphenomenon of the prevailing system of governance.

A partial exception to this structuralist reductionism is Robert Smith's discussion of the role of the Black Power movement as an agency for facilitating pluralist integration. Smith, unlike the others, acknowledges the existence of different tendencies in the movement. However, he then retroactively vests each of those tendencies with a substantive purpose of advancing pluralist participation. All roads lead to the New Deal coalition.⁷ Significantly, he cites Bayard Rustin's well-known 1965 *Commentary* article to illustrate the empirical transmutation of Black Power radicalism into interest-group politics. The reference forgets that Rustin was not *documenting* a shift "From Protest to Politics"; he was a partisan, lobbying for a particular—and very much controversial—point of view within the Civil Rights movement. Rustin's point of view became fully dominant eventually, but not until the 1970s and as the outcome of an accretion of political choices made in response to arrays of concrete options posed by dynamics operative in and on the movement. Smith's rendition glosses the controversy surrounding each step in the march toward pluralism. By discussing the radical elements only in terms of their immanent functionality for pluralist integration—which

can become most significant only *ex post facto*, once integration has occurred—but not also in relation to their intentional stance of opposition, Smith's interpretation forgets an important and problematic motif in the transformation he describes. To the extent that he disconnects that transformation from a contest of tendencies within the movement, he surrounds the development toward interest-group liberalism with an aura of inevitability. Like Button in intelligently describing substantive outcomes of the movement and like McAdam and Piven and Cloward in carefully relating those outcomes to movement characteristics, Smith shares with all the others an interpretive bias that reads the contingency out of past activism. So, while popular culture dispatches post-Cold War activism to the clothes bins of obsolete fashion, social scientists pacify it through reconstructions that eliminate its internal tensions and foregone possibilities as excess baggage. The one approach suppresses the historical specificity of "the Sixties" ' social movements by reifying their pastness; the other flattens those movements' lived history until it appears only as an embryo of an inexorable present. Both careful, sympathetic scholarship and cynical popular culture sanctify the present by amnestically eradicating its morphological origin.

The contributions to this volume, while generally accepting the premise that 1960s radicalism dissolved into pluralist politics and mass consumption culture, come together around a common perception that that dissolution was neither natural, inevitable, nor desirable. Rather, a thread that unites this collection is the desire to shed light on the dialectic of internal tensions and external pressures that eventuated in passage of black, counterculture and other New Left movements from critical opposition to new styles of interest-group politics and new consumer markets. Emerging from the collection as a totality is a view that connects the various currents of upheaval in "the Sixties" both with one another and with forces that simultaneously were reshaping the American social order in ways often opaque to but reinforced by the activists themselves. The picture thus presented is one of the erosion of oppositional content as a result of choices exercised (and rejected) within a universe of options structured by the developmental logic of post-World War II institutions.

Our project shares with structural accounts recognition of the need to situate the movements in relation to the social order in which they were articulated. Luke analyzes the development of the clientelistic "service state" as an integrative mechanism in the modern United States. Kovel examines the impact of capitalist rationalization on individual and family life, especially in the post-World War II period, and he suggests a basis for relating that impact to the problems and options that the New Left perceived for itself. Piccone provides a global critique of the logic of capitalist social administration since the New Deal and con-

nects 1960s activism with a crisis of administrative rationality. The other authors as well are sensitive to the historical or "conjunctural" specificity of the activist motion.

Unlike structuralist readings, however, this volume concentrates its focus on the movements themselves. Willingham examines ideological variants of black radicalism in relation to persisting issues of social theory and practical politics among Afro-Americans. Jordan provides a thoroughgoing internal critique of black cultural nationalism, based mainly on historically grounded close reading of that movement's literary texts as well as its political tracts. My contribution reconstructs the interaction of institutional and theoretical characteristics of black activism—radical and liberal—that undermined its oppositional content. Similarly, Feenberg unravels the interplay of organizational, theoretical, and ideological forces that drove the white New Left. Gross examines the assumptions and styles of counterculture radicalism and relates them critically to operating principles of the mass-consumption culture against which radicals defined themselves. Kotelchuk and Levy, in the mode of a critical phenomenology, excavate the natural history of a single movement organization that was an arena for all the major ideological tendencies of post-Cold War activism—from Civil Rights liberalism through Maoist death agonies.

At the same time that this volume's insistence on critique of activism's internal dynamics distinguishes it from structuralist renditions, the authors' general acknowledgment that 1960s radicalism failed as an emancipatory politics sets this collection apart from another body of recent literature on the various components of the New Left. At the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s reflection on 1960s activism attained a certain topicality, and a number of interesting, generally cogent reconstructions appeared in response to the vogue.⁸ Yet most of these volumes (Gitlin's is a welcome exception) are dominated by a cheery, positive thinking that obscures the problematic fact that Vietnam era radicalism—black or white—was unable to survive as coherent political opposition. Several of these volumes, e.g., those by Evans and Case and Taylor, offer valuable critical histories of given currents of 1960s activism. Each identifies weaknesses, misunderstandings, and contradictions existing in the movement in its heyday. However, each assures that those activist streams opened new vistas for emancipatory social intervention and that they minimally have "enriched the heritage of the left and contributed towards visions of the future."⁹ Despite these assurances, the fact remains that by the middle of the 1970s no signs of an oppositional political movement could be observed in the United States. The marginalized left's standard explanations—cooptation, repression—are hardly more than excuses. All opposition movements must face those obstacles, by definition. The ultimate sources of

decline must be sought within the movements themselves. Through that search this volume seeks also to overcome the disparity between saccharine prognostication and bleak reality.

This project began with a symposium at Howard University on "Race, Politics and Culture in the Sixties and Beyond" at which most of the volume's contributors participated. That symposium provided a setting for a unique dialogue among a group of black and white intellectuals, all veterans of the motion in the 1960s, exploring systematically the dynamics that underlay the rise and passage of 1960s activism. Several of the contributions to this collection began as papers given at that gathering. Current versions reflect, *inter alia*, incorporation of insights produced by our interaction. A flavor of that interaction is presented here in a general exchange among contributors on the demise of radicalism.

The spirit of this volume accepts as an initial premise and problem the decline of political opposition in the 1970s and 1980s; to that extent it also proceeds from an assumption of the ultimate failure of new left activism (including black radicalism), inasmuch as institutionalization of an emancipatory force in America was one of the left's major objectives. The premise that activism failed, however, should not be read as belittling either the heroic sacrifices made by individuals or the actual successes of their movements, e.g., the destruction of racial segregation as a social system, the opening of pluralist politics to clienteles that previously had been excluded, and the articulation of feminist voices that have cracked the shell of givenness securing male dominance. Nor should that premise be taken even to hint at repudiation of opposition or resignation to the current order of things. Rather, the heroism of Viola Liuzzo, James Chaney, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the many less-well-known others who gave greatly of themselves in striving to actualize transcendent visions in the various movements of the 1960s is honored here not with sanctimony or hollow celebration but with a refusal to abandon the emancipatory project that evoked heroic effort in the first place. Indeed, those movements can be judged to have failed only in the context of the unrealized possibilities that they had opened. In recovering the sources of their failure, therefore, this collection pays homage to them by striving to remember opposition as a real historical possibility.

NOTES

1. Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing* (Boston, 1975), p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. James W. Button, *Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots* (Prince-

ton, 1978), p. 162. Button's account is characteristic of literature on the urban uprisings in its overly rationalistic reading in of strategic political motivations. A far more interesting and, I believe, accurate interpretation of the self-understanding of participants appears in Hajime Tada, "The Ghetto Riots As Celebrations of Communitas," senior essay, Department of Political Science, Yale University, 1983.

4. Doug McAdam, *Political Processes and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago, 1982), p. 228.

5. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York, 1977), p. 181 *passim*.

6. This aspect of the focus on defiance as a critical category is most apparent in Piven and Cloward's discussion of the Welfare Rights movement in *ibid.*, pp. 264ff.

7. Robert Smith, "Black Power and the Transformation from Protest to Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 96 (Fall, 1981), pp. 431-443.

8. Among the best of these are: Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, 1979); Todd Gitlin's masterful study, *The Whole World Is Watching!: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, 1980); Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968* (Amherst, Mass., 1982); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, 1981); John Case and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, eds., *Co-ops, Communes and Collectives: Experiments in Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York, 1979), and Nigel Young, *An Infantile Disorder?: The Crisis and Decline of the New Left* (Boulder, Colo., 1977). Among the worst is Dick Cluster, ed., *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee: Seven Radicals Remember the Sixties* (Boston, 1979). This literature is discussed more systematically in a bibliographical note at the end of this volume.

9. David Moberg, "Experimenting with the Future: Alternative Institutions and American Socialism," in Case and Taylor, p. 303.

Part I

Black Political and Cultural Radicalism

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Ideology and Politics: Their Status in Afro-American Social Theory

ALEX WILLINGHAM

The great visibility accorded political struggle among black Americans over the 1960s has obscured the fact that these people still lack a compelling model of themselves, of their purposes in North American society, and of the kind of reasoning which can generate such a model. We see this among political activists when we examine recent controversies over a "race" or a "class" interpretation of the black community, the call to join traditional African customs, the attempts to prevent the rise of a "nationalism" within the black community, the effort to implant "scientific" analysis, or the vain search for a glorious black history which has no present and for which nobody has demonstrated a need. The result has been a failure to develop a radical politics which can make unambiguous demands on the American state.

The times seem much like they were in the Age of Washington when social initiative passed from the hands of blacks into those of southern and national spokesmen and industrial activists. Yet today, as the corrective changes from the Civil Rights movement have been given such wide attention, it has been difficult to keep persistent theoretical problems in focus and to resolve them. The basis for a militant, self-confident critical assessment of American society was severely modified with the removal of racial segregation. Thus to discuss the problem of ideology and politics, even in terms of the remote future of the black community, challenges us to a new description of contemporary social structure, accounting for extensive changes and estimating limits. In order to see the relationship between that structure and theoretical problems, it will be useful to relate present trends to those prevalent during the previous "age."

My working assumption is that, as a matter of principle, the general population is directly confronted by social institutions and adjusts according to a survival criterion.¹ We can call this the most elemental force to all individual social action. In the prior historical epoch (circa 1877-1915) when those adjustments took the form of subordination behind the developing walls of racial segregation, individual leaders took it upon themselves to articulate a "theory" to affirm the adjustment. In another epoch, the postsegregation era in which we are now, another adjustment is occurring, also of massive proportions, and, returning to form, other spokesmen are attempting to articulate this motion. Now as then those responsible for the ideology, while they may be condemned for many valid reasons, do stand close to actual changes that people are going through. Today the general black population seems to be readjusting after the upheavals of the Civil Rights era.

On the face of it these are commonplace remarks with which many would agree. Yet today we seldom hear an effort made to say who is supporting the adjustments and how that group should be approached theoretically. If we were to speculate, we might conclude that they are the proverbial cultural or revolutionary nationalists, the new communists, the scientific socialists or the Pan-Africanists. We would be in error in each case. The problem of this essay is to discuss why this question has been so seldom asked or meaningfully answered. In the process it will be necessary to characterize the malaise which has undermined the critical forces in the black community and foisted on them a style of analysis which is escapist. It is my hope that by so doing we can push political discussion beyond mere ideological debate and restore to it both a capacity to criticize social practice and the potential to engender, among black people, a receptive response to progressive politics. So while we may agree pro forma with the need to define the social character of the post-Civil Rights black community, it should be remembered that this has special importance for those unhappy with the beast.

THE RISE OF A NEW ELITE

In order to identify those elites who are more intimately connected with mass adjustments, their politicking, and their ideology, we can take a hint from a process of analysis used by Frantz Fanon in his evaluation of revolutionary Algeria.² There he identifies a group of native politicians aligned with the cosmopolitan sector of the settler population and occupying privileged positions relative to the mass of natives. This group assimilates and functions according to the rationalist thought criteria prevalent among the settler bourgeoisie. Such principles ultimately lead it to serve a dynamic nationalist function starting

from a class demand for larger participation in the present governing setup, a demand which becomes increasingly extreme, provoking "repression," expulsion, a resort to independent party organizing, suppression of the elitist party, and, finally, a resort to the mass party out of which a movement is generated to reclaim the territory and expel the settlers.

This little group of native liberals thus carry through a process which eventuates in a self-determining situation in which a people are now confronted with all the problems and opportunities of an independent social existence. While the particulars of Algeria do not apply to North America, the way in which Fanon conceptualized decolonization there is useful methodologically if we focus on the discrete phases of the process. Thus in terms of formal modeling, we can identify each phase, say what is positive or negative about it, the empirical indices which allow us to project the probability of proceeding beyond a given stage, the changing class dynamics of each phase (e.g., the extent to which the internal strata maintain traditional or customary loyalties), and how the character of either phase predisposes the general movement toward more or less humane ends. Generally speaking Fanon's model would judge the movement more humane the extent to which prior, received class configurations are dialectically resolved into a new "nation."³

In the Afro-American situation it is possible to apply Fanon's ideal type. We can identify an equivalent group of activists, relate them institutionally to cosmopolitan sectors of the American bourgeoisie, and chart the conflicts or tension between the two groups. In terms of such a process the Civil Rights movement can be understood in a historically specific sense. We find, however, that the Afro-American elite's function is less progressive than that imputed by the ideal type. Generally, the character of the struggle perpetuated by the black elites of North America never sets up a situation in which either that sector or any other in the black community could be transformed beyond its received social role—unless it be toward closer approximations of the authentic models of such roles prevalent in white society. Two mechanisms had accounted for such transformation in the ideal model: first, the generation, by the liberal activists, of absolute claims against the (settler) state—a condition forced on them by the nationalist demands of another more numerous stratum and concretized in a demand for the land, and, second, the total affirmation of violence which fastened a cover of seriousness onto the struggle and set a tough criterion of skepticism within which any compromise would be evaluated.

In the United States, on the contrary, the state was looked upon as an object to get into, and, as nearly as it was possible to have an "official" black position on political conflict, it was to be grounded in a so-called philosophy of nonviolence. The result was an incomplete "black"

revolution considered peculiar to North America in which the largely homogeneous former slaves developed internal stratification and made peace with the American state.

A black status group then has come to occupy authoritative positions in America which leave them "more free" than during previous eras but closely tied and subordinate to the cosmopolitan sector of the American power elite. The major mechanism covering this tie is the Democratic party. The McGovern reforms were efforts to formalize a new status for this group of participants in the party. In other cases their strength comes from appointed positions in federal, state, and local governments as well as actual offices held in the U.S. Congress, the state houses, and local aldermanic councils. Indeed the group of big city mayors is just now probably one of the most glamorous political groups in the entire black world. The significance of these trends may inhere in the fact that probably none of these individuals would have any prominence were it not for politics (i.e., their actual cultural and economic work has been insignificant) giving credence to a charge by Booker T. Washington that "politics is parasitic." Still they exist as a going social force in contemporary America.

However, to identify this process and to point to its end result creates a serious problem of taxonomy: what name is to be given the new elite or its behavior?⁴ It is fashionable these days, in some circles at least, to identify the above mentioned phenomenon and to condemn it as neo-colonialism. Thus Amiri Baraka has so concluded, in terms of his discussion of Kenneth Gibson, mayor of Newark, New Jersey:

Newark, New Jersey [is] a classic neo-colonial creation, where Black United Front of Blacks and Puerto Ricans moved through the late sixties to elect Kenneth Gibson black mayor. . . . Now some of the fruits born of the struggles of the sixties can be tasted in their bitterest aspect. These black faces in high places are simply objective agents of the rule of monopoly capitalism, as cold and as cynical as they have to be.⁵

Yet such neo-colonial analysis is fine only so far. To the extent that it affirms the need for criticism of the situation and of the antagonism there it is fine. Yet the analysis is misleading insofar as it implies that a "coherent" people stand juxtaposed to the new elite with a program of action that has been betrayed. Such might usually be the case in Third World situations where: 1) native culture can be distinguished from alien dominance and, perhaps, corruption, and 2) some kind of social independence has been experienced. In the case of the Afro-American there would be no need for a prefix on "colonialism."

At the very least we must start to focus on the continuity between the Age of Washington and the post-Civil Rights era. Certainly it is the Gibsons et al. who articulate the adjustment that the people have had

to make. However, like Booker T. Washington modern elite ideology is directly linked to real, necessary living patterns and represents—and I see little reason to think this does not hold for the mass of black people—accurate depictions of some binding constraints of American life. Because the Civil Rights movement compromised too drastically on the rearrangement of American institutions of order, it failed to modify the real relationship of black people to them, and the black elite functions today in a situation in which the prior subordination of their constituency is accepted as a given.⁶ Their honest articulation of this gives them a credibility not to be found among those who play on variations of “blacks should take the lead” slogans.⁷ Indeed such clarification calls can only be considered threatening when viewed by the potential agents themselves. As was true of Washington, modern leadership ideology has the positive aspect of being thus “realistic.”⁸ Yet because the subordination of the black community was not engineered by the handiwork of an indigenous class, we get a paradox which allows this group to develop and accumulate a reservoir of sympathy. This paradox suggests the peculiar difficulty of applying traditional models to the situation.

To recapitulate: in order to develop a viable model to criticize the black situation it is necessary to have a conception of social structure covering American institutions and the black masses and elite activists. A black left (i.e., the group engaging in and acting on the actual criticism) is possible only as it is conceptualized outside the Holy Family. Certainly there will be a few reading this who will notice and be disappointed at a definition of the left based on status rather than ideas. Such caution is warranted, but two things justify the definition: one is the absence of an authentic black radical praxis comprehensive enough to withstand the needs of modern political analysis, and the other is the cooptation by liberalism, during the Civil Rights era, of the only black radical tradition available, i.e., Du Boisian protest. Certain dynamics of recent politics give further support to the status approach, however. For example, the uncomfortable suspicion persists that militant radicalization and criticism from the mid-1960s on is directly related to the status of the ideologues relative to the developing liberal establishment. As they have suffered personal exclusion, they have become disaffected with the Civil Rights settlement and open to radical ideas. These conditions set the context for a black left entity to develop. Increasing self-consciousness about this is the key to generating a new criticism capable of withstanding the many rationalizations which legitimate American society today.

We may treat the question of ideology and politics as two phases of the same problem. To those still concerned about removing the fetters from left forces in the black community—and this means first and fore-