BLACK MARXISM

CEDRIC J. ROBINSON

FOREWORD BY ROBIN D. G. KELLEY

WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS

CHAPEL HILL & LONDON

First published 1983 by Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN; reprinted 2000 by the University of North Carolina Press.

Designed by April Leidig-Higgins
Set in Minion type by Keystone Typesetting, Inc.
Manufactured in the United States of America

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Robinson, Cedric J. Black marxism: the making of the Black radical tradition / Cedric J. Robinson; foreword by Robin D. G. Kelley; with a new preface by the author.
p. cm. Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8078-4829-8 (pbk.: alk. paper)
1. Communism—Africa. 2. Communism—Developing countries. 3. Afro-American communists. I. Title.
HX436.5.R63 2000 335.43'0917'496—dc21 99-30995 CIP

06 05 04 03 02 6 5 4 3 2

CHAPTER 1

RACIAL CAPITALISM: THE NONOBJECTIVE CHARACTER OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

The historical development of world capitalism was influenced in a most fundamental way by the particularistic forces of racism and nationalism. This could only be true if the social, psychological, and cultural origins of racism and nationalism both anticipated capitalism in time and formed a piece with those events that contributed directly to its organization of production and exchange. Feudal society is the key. More particularly, the antagonistic commitments, structures, and ambitions that feudal society encompassed are better conceptualized as those of a developing civilization than as elements of a unified tradition.

The processes through which the world system emerged contained an opposition between the rationalistic thrusts of an economistic worldview and the political momenta of collectivist logic. The feudal state, an instrument of signal importance to the bourgeoisie, was to prove to be as consistently antithetical to the commercial integration represented by a world system as it had to the idea of Christendom. Neither the state nor later the nation could slough off the particularistic psychologies and interests that served as contradictions to a global community. A primary consequence of the conflict between those two social tendencies was that capitalists, as the architects of this system, never achieved the coherence of structure and organization that had been the promise of capitalism as an objective system.[1] On the contrary, the history of capitalism has in no way distinguished itself from earlier eras with respect to wars, material crises, and social conflicts. A secondary consequence is that the critique of capitalism, to the extent that its protagonists have based their analyses upon the

presumption of a determinant economic rationality in the development and expansion of capitalism, has been characterized by an incapacity to come to terms with the world system's direction of developments. Marxism, the dominant form that the critique of capitalism has assumed in Western thought, incorporated theoretical and ideological weaknesses that stemmed from the same social forces that provided the bases of capitalist formation.

The creation of capitalism was much more than a matter of the displacement of feudal modes and relations of production by capitalist ones.[2] Certainly, the transformation of the economic structures of noncapitalist Europe (specifically the Mediterranean and western European market, trade, and production systems) into capitalist forms of production and exchange was a major part of this process. Still, the first appearance of capitalism in the fifteenth century[3] involved other dynamics as well. The social, cultural, political, and ideological complexes of European feudalisms contributed more to capitalism than the social "fetters"[4] that precipitated the bourgeoisie into social and political revolutions. No class was its own creation. Indeed, capitalism was less a catastrophic revolution (negation) of feudalist social orders than the extension of these social relations into the larger tapestry of the modern world's political and economic relations. Historically, the civilization evolving in the western extremities of the Asian/European continent, and whose first signification is medieval Europe,[5] passed with few disjunctions from feudalism as the dominant mode of production to capitalism as the dominant mode of production. And from its very beginnings, this European civilization, containing racial, tribal, linguistic, and regional particularities, was constructed on antagonistic differences.

Europe's Formation

The social basis of European civilization was "among those whom the Romans called the 'barbarians.' "[6] Prior to the eleventh or twelfth centuries, the use of the collective sense of the term "barbarian" was primarily a function of exclusion rather than a reflection of any significant consolidation among those peoples. The term signified that the "barbarians" had their historical origins beyond the civilizing reach of Roman law and the old Roman imperial social order. The "Europe" of the ninth century for which the Carolingian family and its minions claimed paternity was rather limited geopolitically[7] and had a rather short and unhappy existence. Interestingly, for several centuries following the deaths of Charlemagne and his immediate heirs (the last being Arnulf, d.899), both the Emperor and Europe were more the stuff of popular legend and clerical rhetoric than manifestations of social reality.[8] The idea of Europe, no longer a realistic project, was transferred from one of a terrestrial social order to that of a spiritual kingdom: Christendom.

In fact, those peoples to whom the Greeks and the Romans referred collectively as barbarians were of diverse races with widely differing cultures.[9] The diversity of their languages is, perhaps, one measure of their differences. But in using this measure, we

must be cautious of the schemes of classification of those languages that reduce the reality of their numbers to simple groupings like the Celtic, the Italic, the Germanic, the Balto-Slavonic, and Albanian languages.[10]

Direct and indirect evidence indicates that a more authentic mapping of the languages of the proto-Europeans would be much more complex. For instance, H. Munro Chadwick, as late as 1945, could locate extant descendants of those several languages among the Gaelic, Welsh, and Breton languages of Great Britain and France; the Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Provençal, French, Italian, Sardinian, Alpine, and Rumanian languages and dialects of southern and western Europe; the English, Frisian, Dutch, German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Icelandic languages of England, Scotland the Netherlands, Germany, and Scandinavia; the Russian, Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, Slovenian, Slovakian, Czech, Polish, and Lusitian languages and dialects of central and eastern Europe; and the Latvian and Lithuanian languages of northern Europe.[11] But even Chadwick's list was of merely those languages that had survived "the millennium of Europe." The list would lengthen considerably if one were to consider the languages which existed in this area at the beginning of this era and are no longer spoken (for example, Latin, Cornish, and Prusai), along with those languages of peoples who preceded the migrations from the north and east of Rome's barbarians (for example, Basque, Etruscan, Oscan, and Umbrian).[12]

The Ostrogoth, Visigoth, Vandal, Suevi, Burgundi, Alamanni, and Frank peoples—that is the barbarians—whose impact on the fortunes of the Late Roman Empire from the fifth century was quick and dramatic,[13] were in fact a small minority of thousands among the millions of the decaying state. Henri Pirenne, relying on the estimates of Emile-Felix Gautier and L. Schmidt, reports that the Ostrogoths and Visigoths may have numbered 100,000 each, the Vandals 80,000, and the Burgundi 25,000.[14] Moreover, the warrior strata of each kingdom are consistently estimated at about 20 percent of their populations. On the other hand, the Empire that they invaded contained as many as 50–70 million persons.[15] Pirenne cautiously concludes:

> All this is conjecture. Our estimate would doubtless be in excess of the truth if, for the Western provinces beyond the *limes*, we reckoned the Germanic element as constituting 5 percent of the population.[16]

More importantly, the vast majority of the barbarians "came not as conquerors, but exactly as, in our own day, North Africans, Italians, Poles cross into Metropolitan France to look for work."[17] In a relatively short time, in the southern-most European lands that were bounded by the Western Roman Empire, these peoples were entirely assimilated by the indigenous peoples as a primarily slave labor force.[18] The pattern was already a familiar one within the dying civilization of the Mediterranean[19] with which they desired and desperately needed to join.[20] It is also important to realize that with respect to the emerging European civilization whose beginnings coincide with the arrivals of these same barbarians, slave labor as a critical basis of production would continue without any significant interruption into the twentieth century.[21]

From the *familia rustica* that characterized Roman and even earlier Greek (*doulos*) rural production within vast estates, through the *manucipia* of the *colonicae* and *mansi* land-holdings of Merovingian (481–752) and Carolingian eras, the feudal villains of western medieval Europe and England, and the *sclavi* of the Genoese and Venetian merchants who dominated commercial trade in the Mediterranean from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, slave labor persisted as an aspect of European agrarian production up to the modern era.[22] Neither feudal serfdom, nor capitalism had as their result the elimination or curtailment of slavery.[23] At the very most (it is argued by some), their organization served to relocate it.[24]

Despite the "Romanization" of the southern Goths, or seen differently because of it, the Germanic tribes did establish the general administrative boundaries that were to mark the nations of modern western Europe. The kingdoms that they established, mainly under the rules of Roman *hospitalitas* and in accordance with Roman administration,[25] were in large measure the predecessors of France, Germany, Spain, and Italy.

Still, we must not forget that in historical reconstruction, a medieval age is to be intervened between these two ages. Medieval Europe, though still agricultural in economy, was a much cruder existence for slave, peasant, farmer, artisan, land-owner, cleric, and nobility alike than had been the circumstance for their predecessors in the Empire. Urban life declined, leaving the old cities in ruins,[26] long-distance trade, especially by sea routes, decayed dramatically.[27] Latouche summarizes:

> The balance-sheet of the Merovingian economy is singularly disappointing. The now fashionable, if unpleasant, word "rot" describes it to perfection. Whether in the sphere of town life, commerce, barter, currency, public works, shipping, we find everywhere the same policy of neglect, the same selfish refusal to initiate reform. From this disastrous, drifting laissez-faire which left men and things as they had always been, pursuing unchanged their traditional way of life, there sprang the illusion that the ancient world still lingered on; it was, in fact, no more than a facade.[28]

The Carolingian Empire did little to repair the "rot" that anticipated the restructuring of Europe in feudal terms. The Muslim conquests of the Mediterranean in the seventh and eighth centuries had deprived the European economies of the urban, commercial, productive, and cultural vitality they required for their reconstruction. Pirenne put it boldly:

> The ports and the cities were deserted. The link with the Orient was severed, and there was no communication with the Saracen coasts. There was nothing but death. The Carolingian Empire presented the most striking contrast with the Byzantine. It was purely an inland power, for it had no outlets. The Mediterranean territories, formerly the most active portions of the Empire, which supported the life of the whole, were now the poorest, the most desolate, the most constantly

menaced. For the first time in history the axis of Occidental civilization was displaced toward the North, and for many centuries it remained between the Seine and the Rhine. And the Germanic peoples, which had hitherto played only the negative part of destroyers, were now called upon to play a positive part in the reconstruction of European civilization.[29]

Latouche, though he differed with Pirenne on many of the particulars of the Carolingian response to the loss of the Mediterranean, finally concurred:

> [T]he Empire broke up less than half a century after its creation, and Charlemagne did nothing to prevent, and did not even attempt to delay, the development of feudal institutions, so heavy with menace for the future . . . a world in which there were no great business concerns, no industries, and in which agricultural activity was predominant.[30]

Urban life, trade, and market systems incorporating the goods of long-distance trade did not return to Europe until the end of the eleventh century at the earliest, and most probably during the twelfth century.[31] By then, the depth to which the degradation of European life had fallen is perhaps best expressed by the appearance of commercialized cannibalism.[32]

The First Bourgeoisie

Into this depressed land where few were free of the authority of an intellectually backward and commercially unimaginative ruling class, where famine and epidemics were the natural order of things, and where the sciences of the Ancient World had long been displaced as the basis of intellectual development by theological fables and demonology,[33] appeared the figure to which European social theorists, Liberal and Marxist, attribute the generation of Western civilization: the bourgeoisie. The merchant was as alien to feudal society as the barbarian invaders had been to the Empire. Unlike the Mediterranean tradesmen,[34] the origins of the western European bourgeoisie are obscured. No doubt this is largely due to the fact that historical documentation is inevitably sparse where civilization in the formal sense of urban culture has largely disappeared, and where life is recorded by an elite of land and church largely preoccupied with its own experience while hostile to commerce.[35] Nevertheless, it is clear that the western European merchant class—"a class of deracines"[36]—crystallized within a social order for which it was an extrinsic phenomena.

The economic organization of demesne production was characterized by Pirenne as a "closed domestic economy one which we might call, with more exactitude, the economy of no markets."[37] In fact, there were markets, local ones, but their function and existence had no part in the development of the markets of long-distance trades that were the basis of the merchant class's development. The *mercati*, whose existence predates the bourgeoisie, dealt not in trade but foodstuffs at the retail level.[38] The one

factor "internal" to the feudal order that did contribute to the rise of the bourgeoisie was the eleventh century's population growth. This increase had ultimately placed significant strains on feudal production:

> It had as a result the detaching from the land an increasingly important number of individuals and committing them to that roving and hazardous existence which, in every agricultural civilization, is the lot of those who no longer find themselves with their roots in the soil. It multiplied the crowd of vagabonds. . . . Energetic characters, tempered by the experience of a life full of the unexpected, must have abounded among them. Many knew foreign languages and were conversant with the customs and needs of diverse lands. Let a lucky chance present itself . . . they were remarkably well equipped to profit thereby. . . . Famines were multiplied throughout Europe, sometimes in one province and sometimes in another, by that inadequate system of communications, and increased still more the opportunities, for those who knew how to make use of them, of getting rich. A few timely sacks of wheat, transported to the right spot, sufficed for the realizing of huge profits. . . . It was certainly not long before nouveaux riches made their appearance in the midst of this miserable crowd of impoverished, bare-foot wanderers in the world.[39]

In the beginning, before they could properly be described as bourgeoisie, these merchants traveled from region to region, their survival a matter of their mobility and their ability to capitalize on the frequent ruptures and breakdowns of the reproduction of populations sunk into the manorial soil. Their mobility may have also been occasioned by the fact that many of them were not free-born and thus sought respite from their social condition by flight from their lords: "By virtue of the wandering existence they led, they were everywhere regarded as foreigners."[40] For security they often traveled in small bands—a habit that would continue into their more sedentary period. It was not long before they began to establish *porti* (storehouses or transfer points for merchandise) outside the *burgs* (the fortresses of the Germanic nobles) bishoprics and towns that straddled the main routes of war, communications, and later, international trade. It was these *porti*, or merchant colonies, that founded, in the main, the medieval cities of Europe's hinterland. It was at this point that the merchants of Europe became bourgeoisies (*burgenses*). By the beginnings of the twelfth century, these bourgeoisies had already begun the transformation of European life so necessary for the emergence of capitalism as the dominant organization of European production.

The western European bourgeoisie re-established the urban centers by basing them upon exchange between the Mediterranean, the East, and northern Europe:

> [In the tenth century] there appears in Anglo-Saxon texts the word "port," employed as a synonym for the Latin words *urbs* and *civitas*, and even at the present day the term "ports" is commonly met with in the names of cities of every land of English speech.
>
> Nothing shows more clearly the close connection that existed between the eco-

nomic revival of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of city life. They were so intimately related that the same word which designated a commercial settlement served in one of the great idioms of Europe to designate the town itself.[41]

Elsewhere, Pirenne puts it more succinctly: "Europe 'colonized' herself, thanks to the increase of her inhabitants."[42] Flanders—geographically situated to service the commerce of the northern seas, and economically critical because of the Flemish cloth industry—was the first of the major European merchant centers. Close behind Flanders came Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, Lille, Douai, Arras, Tournai, Cambrai, Valenciennes, Liege, Huy, Dinant, Cologne, Mainz, Rouen, Bordeaux, and Bayonne.[43] Cloth, which both Pirenne[44] and Karl Polanyi[45] identify as the basis of European trade, originally a rural industry, was transformed by the bourgeoisie in Flanders into an urban manufacture "organized on the capitalistic basis of wage labour."[46] The urban concentration of industry was thus initiated:

> The increase of the population naturally favored industrial concentration. Numbers of the poor poured into the towns where cloth-making, the activity of which trade grew proportionately with the development of commerce, guaranteed them their daily bread. . . .
>
> The old rural industry very quickly disappeared. It could not compete with that of the town, abundantly supplied with the raw material of commerce, operating at lower prices, and enjoying more advanced methods. . . .
>
> [W]hatever might be the nature of industry in other respects, everywhere it obeyed that law of concentration which was operative at such an early date in Flanders. Everywhere the city groups, thanks to commerce, drew rural industry to them.[47]

It is also true that the bourgeoisie, in so doing, came to free some portions of the serfs[48] only to re-enslave them through wage labor. For with urban industry came the successful attack on feudal and seigniorial servitude:

> Freedom, of old, used to be the monopoly of a privileged class. By means of the cities it again took its place in society as a natural attribute of the citizen. Hereafter it was enough to reside on city soil to acquire it. Every serf who had lived for a year and a day within the city limits had it by definite right: the statute of limitations abolished all rights which his lord exercised over his person and chattels. Birth meant little. Whatever might be the mark with which it had stigmatized the infant in his cradle, it vanished in the atmosphere of the city.[49]

With the flourishing of long-distance trade and the development of urban centers in western Europe came some specializations in rural production. Though open-field agriculture dominated Europe as a whole in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, specialized grain production could be found in Prussia (corn), Tuscany and Lombardy (cereals), England (wheat), and north Germany (rye). By the late fifteenth century, viticulture had appeared in Italy, Spain, France, and southwest Germany. In

the Baltic and North Seas, fishing and salt made up a significant part of the cargoes of Hanseatic shippers. And in England and Spain, meat production for export had begun to emerge.[50]

In northern Europe, these exports joined wool and woolen cloth as the major bases of international trade. In southern Europe—more precisely the Mediterranean—the long-distance trade in cloth (wool, silk, and later cotton), grains, and wines came to complement a significant trade in luxury goods:

> The precious stuffs from the east found their way into every rich household, and so did the specialities of various European regions: amber and furs from the countries bordering on the Baltic; *objets d'art* such as paintings from Flanders, embroidery from England, enamels from Limoges; manuscript books for church, boudoir or library; fine armor and weapons from Milan and glass from Venice.[51]

Still, according to Iris Origo, the most precious cargo of the Mediterranean tradesmen was slaves:

> European and Levantine traders sold Grecian wines and Ligurian figs, and the linen and woolen stuffs of Champagne and Lombardy, and purchased precious silks from China, carpets from Bokhara and Samarkand, furs from the Ural Mountains, and Indian spices, as well as the produce of the rich black fields and forests of the Crimea. But the most flourishing trade of all was that in slaves—for Caffa was the chief slave-market of the Levant.[52]

Tartar, Greek, Armenian, Russian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Circassian, Slavonic, Cretan, Arab, African (*Mori*), and occasionally Chinese (Cathay) slaves[53]—two-thirds of whom were female[54]—were to be found in the households of wealthy and "even relatively modest Catalan and Italian families."[55]

From the thirteenth century to the beginnings of the fifteenth century, the primary function of these predominantly European slaves in the economics of southern Europe was domestic service.[56] Nevertheless, in Spain (Catalan and Castile) and in the Italian colonies on Cyprus, Crete, and in Asia Minor (Phocaea) and Palestine, Genoese and Venetian masters used both European and African slaves in agriculture on sugar plantations, in industry, and for work in mines:

> This variety of uses to which slaves were put illustrates clearly the degree to which medieval colonial slavery served as a model for Atlantic colonial slavery. Slave manpower had been employed in the Italian colonies in the Mediterranean for all the kinds of work it would be burdened with in the Atlantic colonies. The only important change was that the white victims of slavery were replaced by a much greater number of African Negroes, captured in raids or bought by traders.[57]

In an unexpected way, this trade in slaves would prove to be the salvation of the Mediterranean bourgeoisie. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, however, it appeared that the merchants of the European hinterland would inevitably overshadow those of Italy's city-states. They, unlike the Italians, were undeterred, as

Giuliano Procacci points out, by the peninsula's small but densely packed populations; the increasingly unfavorable ratios of townsmen to countrymen (Florence could only survive on the produce of its countryside for five months of the year, Venice and Genoa had to be almost entirely supplied by sea); and the rapid deforestation of the countryside that aggravated the destruction of the autumn and spring floods.[58]

However, it was the fate of this nascent bourgeoisie not to thrive. Indeed, for one historical moment, even the further development of capitalism might be said to have been in question. The events of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries intervened in the processes through which feudalism was ultimately displaced by the several forms of capitalism.[59] The consequence of those events were to determine the species of the modern world: the identities of the bourgeoisies that transformed capitalism into a world system; the sequences of this development; the relative vitalities of the several European economies; and the sources of labor from which each economy would draw.

The momentous events of which we speak were: the periodic famines that struck Europe in this period, the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century and subsequent years, the Hundred Years War (1337–1453), and the rebellions of peasants and artisans.[60] Together they had a devastating impact on western Europe and the Mediterranean—decimating the populations of cities and countryside alike, disrupting trade, collapsing industry and agricultural production—leveling, as it were, the bulk of the most developed regions of western European bourgeois activity. Denys Hay has summed it up quite well:

> The result of prolonged scarcity, endemic and pandemic plague, the intermittent but catastrophic invasions of ruthless armies, and the constant threat in many areas from well-organized robber bands, was seen not only in a dwindling population but in roads abandoned to brambles and briars, in arable land out of cultivation and in deserted villages. Contraction in the area of cultivation in its turn made dearth the more likely. There was in every sense a vicious circle. A sober estimate suggests that "in 1470 the number of households was halved in most European villages compared with the start of the fourteenth century"; the reconquest of forest and waste of the arable is "an episode equal in importance to the drama of the earlier clearings."[61]

This general economic decline in Europe of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was marked in a final and visible way by social disorders much more profound than the territorial wars. Such wars, after all had been in character with feudal society. The appearance of peasant movements was not:

> In the boom condition of the thirteenth century there had been in rural areas a degree of over-population which made many peasants—day labourers, poor serfs—very vulnerable. Now the countryside was more sparsely occupied and a better living was possible for those who remained. . . . What was new in the slump

conditions of the fourteenth century was a bitterness in the lord's relations with the villagers.[62]

As Hay indicates, the most intense of the peasant rebellions occurred in Flanders (1325–28), northern France (the Jacquerie of 1358), and England (1381). But such movements erupted over much of western Europe during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. In France, and especially Normandy (precipitated surely by the final savaging of the peasants by the forces of the Hundred Years War), in Catalonia (1409–13 and later), in Jutland (1411), in Finland (1438), and in Germany (1524), peasants arose, seizing land, executing lords, clergy, and even lawyers, demanding an end to manorial dues, petitioning for the establishment of wage-labor, and insisting on the dissolution of restrictions on free buying and selling.[63]

Within the vortex of these disturbances, long-distance trade declined drastically. In England, the export of wool and cloth, and subsequently their production, fell well below thirteenth-century levels.[64] In France (Gascony), the export of wine was similarly affected.[65] Hay remarks that "Florentine bankruptcies in the first half of the fourteenth century are paralleled by similar troubles in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century,"[66] while P. Ramsey notes the precipitous fall of "the great merchant bankers of southern Germany."[67] Further north, the Hansa League disintegrated,[68] while to the west, the Flemish cloth industry collapsed.[69] Finally, even the northern Italian city-states found their bourgeoisie in decline. The rise of the Ottoman Empire, at first disruptive to the Italian merchant houses, would dictate new accommodations to Islam and commerce, eventually persuading some of the Italians to relocate as capitalist colonists in the Iberian peninsula.[70] For the moment, however, the foundations of the European civilization, still figuratively embryonic, appeared to be crumbling.

The Modern World Bourgeoisie

Henri Pirenne, however, provided a key to one of the mysteries of the emergence of the modern era in the sixteenth century from the chaos and desperation of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: the "survival" of the bourgeoisie. Pirenne also anticipated the somewhat rhetorical question put by K. G. Davies in the heat of the debate revolving around the historical authenticity of the phrase: the rise of the middle class. Davies queried:

> What, after all, is wrong with the suggestion that the *bourgeoisie*, not steadily but by fits and starts, improved its status over many centuries, a process that began with the appearance of towns and has not yet been finally consummated?[71]

Forty years earlier, Pirenne had already replied:

> I believe that, for each period into which our economic history may be divided, there is a distinct and separate class of capitalists. In other words, the group of capitalists of a given epoch does not spring from the capitalist group of the preceding epoch. At every change in economic organization we find a breach of con-

tinuity. It is as if the capitalists who have up to then been active recognize that they are incapable of adapting themselves to conditions which are evoked by needs hitherto unknown and which call for methods hitherto unemployed.[72]

Both Pirenne and Davies understood that the biological metaphor of a bourgeoisie emerging out of the Middle Ages, nurturing itself on the "mercantilisms" and administrations of the Absolute Monarchies of the traditional period between feudalism and the capitalism, and on the lands and titles of impoverished nobilities, then finally achieving political and economic maturity and thus constituting industrial capitalism, is largely unsupported by historical evidence. Rather it is a historical *impression*, a phantom representation largely constructed from the late eighteenth century to the present by the notional activity of a bourgeoisie as a dominant class. This history of "the rise of the middle class" is an amalgam of bourgeois political and economic power, the self-serving ideology of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class and thus an intellectual and political preoccupation—mediated through the constructs of evolutionary theory:

> From Darwin has descended the language of error, a language that has locked up historical thinking and imposed slovenly and imprecise conclusions even upon scholarly and sensible researchers. Words like "growth," "decline," "development," "evolution," "decay," may have started as servants but they have ended as masters: they have brought us to the edge of historical inevitability.[73]

Hegel's dialectic of *Aufhebung*, Marx's dialectic of class struggle and the contradictions between the mode and relations of production, Darwin's evolution of the species and Spencer's survival of the fittest are all forged from the same metaphysical conventions. The declining European bourgeoisies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were not, for the most part, the lineal antecedents of those that appeared in the sixteenth century. The universality of capitalism is less a historical reality than a construct of this "language of error."[74] These "distant and separate class[es] of capitalists" were less the representatives of an immanent, rational, commercial order than extensions of particular historical dynamics and cultures. They were not the "germ" of a new order dialectically posited in an increasingly confining host—feudalism—but an opportunistic strata, willfully adaptive to the new conditions and possibilities offered by the times. Not only did different western European bourgeoisies appear in the sixteenth century, but these new bourgeoisie were implicated in structures, institutions, and organizations that were substantively undeveloped in the Middle Ages.

For one, the focus of long-distance trade in Europe gravitated from the Mediterranean and Scania areas to the Atlantic. The most familiar forms of this extension of trade to the south and west of the European peninsula were merchant voyages and colonization. Second, "expanded bureaucratic state structures"[75] became the major conduits of capitalist expansion: determining the direction of investment, establishing political security for such investments, encouraging certain commercial networks and relations while discouraging others:

> In these conditions, in fact, may be seen the matrix of modern capitalism: like nationalism, less the creator than the creation of the modern state. It had many antecedents, but its full emergence required a conjunction of political and moral as well as strictly economic factors. This emergence could take place within the intricate framework of one type of western state then evolving; it may be doubted whether it could have done so under any other circumstances that we know of in history; at any rate it never did.[76]

The city, the point of departure for the earlier bourgeoisies and their networks of long-distance trade and productive organization, proved to be incapable of sustaining the economic recovery of those bourgeoisies situated where the merchant town had reached its highest development: northern Italy, western Germany, the Netherlands, and the Baltic.[77] The Absolutist State, under the hegemony of western European aristocracies, brought forth a new bourgeoisie. The territories of Castile (Spain), the Ile de France, the Home Counties and London (England), the expansionist and colonial ambitions and policies of their administrations, and the structures of their political economies organized for repression and exploitation, these constituted the basis of this bourgeois' formation.

The bourgeoisies of the sixteenth century accumulated in the interstices of the state. And as the state acquired the machinery of rule—bureaucracies of administrative, regulatory, and extractive concerns, and armies of wars of colonial pacification, international competition, and domestic repression[78]—those who would soon constitute a class, settled into the proliferating roles of political, economic, and juridical agents for the state. And as the state necessarily expanded its fiscal and economic activities,[79] a new merchant and banking class parasitized its host: State loans, state monopolies, state business became the vital centers of its construction.

> So while the territorial states and empires acquired lands in plenty, they were unable to exploit unaided the resultant huge economic units. This incapacity again opened the door to the towns and the merchants. It was they, who, behind the facade of subordination were making their fortunes. And even where the states could most easily become masters, in their own territory with their own subjects, they were often obliged to make shifts and compromises.[80]

It is still debatable whether this was a result of what Adam Smith and Eli Heckscher after him termed the "system" of *mercantilism*,[81] or the consequence of what other historians describe as the ideology of *statism*.[82] Nevertheless, it is clear that by the seventeenth century, the new bourgeoisies were identified with political attitudes and a trend in economic thought that was pure mercantilism:

> [I]mplicit in the "tragedy of mercantilism" was the belief that what was one man's or country's gain was another's loss. . . . It was, after all, a world in which population remained remarkably static; in which trade and production usually grew only very gradually; in which the limits of the known world were expanded slowly and with great difficulty; in which economic horizons were narrowly limited; and in

which man approximated more closely than today to Hobbes' vision of his natural state: for most men most of the time, life was "poor, nasty, brutish and short."[83]

The parochialism of the town, which had so much characterized the perspective of the bourgeoisie of the Middle Ages, was matched in this second era of Western civilization by a parochialism of the state. Heckscher commented that:

> The collective entity to [peoples of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] was not a nation unified by common race, speech, and customs: the only decisive factor for them was *the state*. . . . Mercantilism was the exponent of the prevailing conception of the relationship between the state and nation in the period before the advent of romanticism. It was the state and not the nation which absorbed its attention.[84]

Again, the particularistic character of the formations of these bourgeoisies[85] withheld, from what would be called capitalism, a systemic structure. The class that is so consistently identified with the appearance of industrial capitalism was inextricably associated with specific "rational" structures—a relationship that profoundly influenced bourgeois imaginations and realizations. Political economies,[86] that is national economies, enclosed them, and thus the bourgeoisie perceived what later analysis argues in retrospect is the beginnings of a world system as something quite different: an international system.[87] The bourgeoisies of early modern capitalism were attempting to destroy or dominate each other.

The Lower Orders

Just as the western European middle classes were suspended in webs of state parochialisms, so too was that vast majority of European peoples: the lower orders. The class that ruled, the nobility, by its orchestration of the instrumentalities of the state, imprinted its character on the whole of European society. And since much of that character had to do with violence,[88] the lower orders were woven into the tapestry of a violent social order. By the nature of hierarchical societies, the integration of the lower classes—wage laborers, peasants, serfs, slaves, vagabonds, and beggars—into the social, political, and economic orders of the Absolute State was on the terms of the clients of the latter. The function of the laboring classes was to provide the state and its privileged classes with the material and human resources needed for their maintenance and further accumulations of power and wealth. This was not, however, a simple question of the dominance of a ruling class over the masses.

The masses did not exist as such. As earlier, Greek and Roman thinkers had created the totalizing construct of the barbarians, the feudal nobilities of western Europe had inspired and authored a similar myth. Friedrich Hertz has reported that:

> In the Middle Ages and later, the nobility, as a rule, considered themselves of better blood than the common people, whom they utterly despised. The peasants were supposed to be descended from Ham, who, for lack of filial piety, was known to have been condemned by Noah to slavery. The knightly classes of many lands, on

the other hand, believed themselves to be the descendants of the Trojan heroes, who after the fall of Troy were said to have settled in England, France and Germany. This theory was seriously maintained not only in numerous songs and tales of knightly deeds, but also in many scholarly works.[89]

It was a form of this notion that Count Gobineau revived in the mid-nineteenth century, extending its conceptualization of superiority so as to include elements of the bourgeoisie.[90] The nobilities of the sixteenth century, however, proved to be more circumspect about "the masses" than their genealogical legends might imply. They did not become victims of their own mythic creations. When it came to the structures of the state, their knowledge of the social, cultural, and historical compositions of the masses was exquisitely refined. Perhaps this is no more clearly demonstrated than in one of the most critical areas of state activity: the monopolization of force.

The Absolutist State was a cause and effect of war. Its economy was a war economy, its foreign trade was combative,[91] its bureaucracy administered the preparations and prosecutions of war.[92] Such a state required standing armies (and, eventually, navies). But for certainly political and sometimes economic reasons, soldiers could not be recruited easily from, in V. G. Kiernan's phrase, "the mass of ordinary peasants and burghers." Kiernan puts the situation most simply for France, though it was the same all over Europe: "Frenchmen were seldom eager to serve their king, and their king was not eager to employ Frenchmen."[93] Loyalty to the state of the monarchy from the exploited ranks of the lower classes was rare. In any case, not one state of the sixteenth or seventeenth century was reliant on such an identification between the masses and their rulers. The soldiers of the armies of France, Spain, England, Holland, Prussia, Poland, Sweden, and at first Russia, were either alien to the states for which they fought and policed or very marginal to them:

> European governments . . . relied very largely on foreign mercenaries. One of the employments for which they were particularly well suited was the suppression of rebellious subjects, and in the sixteenth century, that age of endemic revolution, they were often called upon for this purpose. . . . Governments . . . had to look either to backward areas for honest, simple-minded fellows untainted by political ideas . . . or to foreigners.[94]

Depending then on changing fortunes, the "identities" of the combatants, the geopolitics of wars, and the mission, mercenaries were drawn from among the Swiss, the Scots, Picardians, Bretons, Flemings, Welsh, Basques, Mavarrese, Gallowayians, Dalmatians, Corsicans, Burgundians, Gueldrians, the Irish, Czechs, Croatians, Magyars, and from Gascony, Allgaeu, Norway, and Albania. Since one function and result of the work of these mercenaries was the suppression of subject peoples, the degree of their success is directly indicated by their own absence, for the most part, from the political geography of modern Europe. The Absolute State (or its direct successors), the instrument that propelled them into prominence in the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries (for France, into the late eighteenth century), ultimately absorbed the autonomous sectors from which the mercenaries originated.

In the armies of the sixteenth century, native recruits distributed among the foreign mercenaries were also chosen with an eye to minimizing the political and social risks of the monarchy and its allied nobility. In France, the army "drew its volunteers from the least 'national,' most nondescript types, the dregs of the poorest classes," Kiernan informs us.[95] In Spain, the hills of Aragon and the Basque provinces served a similar function. In Britain, until the mid-eighteenth century, the Scottish Highlands were the most frequent sites of recruitment; and the Welsh soldier's skills became legendary.[96]

Important as the formation of these armies was for the construction of the states that dominated Europe for more than 200 years, we must not be diverted from their more historical importance by the romantic richness of the social and political drama to which they contributed. Louis XI's innovation in 1474, of organizing a "French infantry without Frenchmen"[97] was revolutionary in scale, not in character.[98] The tactic of composing armies from mercenaries and from marginal peoples and social strata extended back into the Middle Ages and earlier. Imperial armies, republican armies, bandit armies, invading armies and defending armies, the armies of rebellious slaves, of nobles, and even of the chauvinist medieval cities, all laid claim to, or incorporated to some extent, souls for whom they had at best few considerations in less intense times.[99] More significantly, in reviewing this phenomenon for the sixteenth and later centuries, the point is not that mercenaries were recruited from the outside and from among those least secure internally; this is simply the best documented form of a more generalized pattern of structural formation and social integration.

The important meaning is that this form of enlisting human reserves was not peculiar to military apparatus but extended throughout Europe to domestic service, handicrafts, industrial labor, the ship- and dock-workers of merchant capitalism, and the field laborers of agrarian capitalism. There has never been a moment in modern European history (if before) that migratory and/or immigrant labor was not a significant aspect of European economies.[100] That this is not more widely understood seems to be a consequence of conceptualization and analysis: the mistaken use of the *nation* as a social, historical, and economic category; a resultant and persistent reference to national labor "pools" (e.g., "the English working class"); and a subsequent failure of historical investigation. Wallerstein, in his otherwise quite detailed study of the origins of the capitalist world system, can devote a mere page to this phenomenon, including a single paragraph on the ethnic divisions of sixteenth-century immigrant labor. And though compelled to acknowledge that "not much research seems to have been done on the ethnic distribution of the urban working class of early modern Europe," he goes on to speculate that Kazimiery Tymimecki's description of systematic ethnic distinctions of rank within the working class "in the towns of sixteenth-century East Elba . . . [is] typical of the whole of the world economy."[101] Despite the paucity of studies there are historical records that tend to confirm this view. We

discover in them Flemish cloth workers in early sixteenth-century London; and later in the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, Huguenot refugees (40,000–80,000 of them), many of them handloom weavers, fleeing France and settling in Spitalfields in London's East End and thus, establishing England's silk industry.[102] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Irish workers "formed the core of the floating armies of labourers who built canals, the docks, the railways and transformed the face of England."[103] And again on the European Continent, as German farm workers and peasants were drawn to urban and industrial sectors of central and western Germany, Polish labor was used to fill the vacuum in eastern Germany.[104] France and Switzerland also recruited heavily from Poland, Italy, and Spain.[105] And, of course, the formation of industrial cores in the United States before the Civil War located immigrant workers from northern Italy, Germany, Scotland, and Ireland; and after the Civil War from southern Italy, and the lands of eastern, northern, and central Europe: Russia, Finland, Poland, Greece, and the Balkans.[106] (Perhaps the only unique aspect of north American industrial recruitment was the appearance of Asian workers beginning in the late nineteenth century, from China, Japan, and the Philippines.)[107]

We begin to perceive that the nation is not a unit of analysis for the social history of Europe. The state is a bureaucratic structure, and the nation for which it administers is more a convenient construct than the historical, racial, cultural, and linguistic entity that the term "nation" signifies.[108] The truer character of European history resides beneath the phenomenology of nation and state. With respect to the construction of modern capitalism, one must not forget the particular identities, the particular social movements and societal structures that have persisted and/or have profoundly influenced European life:

> Altogether western Europe had acquired a greater richness of forms, of corporate life, a greater crystallization of habits into institutions, than any known elsewhere. It had a remarkable ability to forge societal ties, more tenacious than almost any others apart from those of the family and its extensions, clan or caste; ties that could survive from one epoch to another, and be built into more elaborate combinations. But along with fixity of particular relationships went a no less radical instability of the system as a whole.[109]

European civilization is not the product of capitalism. On the contrary, the character of capitalism can only be understood in the social and historical context of its appearance.

The Effects of Western Civilization on Capitalism

The development of capitalism can thus be seen as having been determined in form by the social and ideological composition of a civilization that had assumed its fundamental perspectives during feudalism. The patterns of recruitment for slave and

mercenary we have reviewed held true for bourgeoisies and proletariats. According to Robert Lopez, in the Carolingian Empire long-distance trade was dominated by Jews and Italians.[110] In medieval Europe, Lopez and Irving Raymond have documented the importance of Mediterranean traders at international fairs, and the development of foreign merchant houses in the towns of the hinterland.[111] Fernand Braudel amplifies:

> [M]any financial centres, *piazze*, sprang up in Europe in towns that were of recent origin. But if we look more closely at these sudden, and quite considerable developments, we shall find that they were in fact ramifications of Italian banking that had by then become traditional. In the days of the fairs of Champagne it was already the bankers from Sienna, Lucca, Florence, or Genoa who held the moneychanger's scales; it was they who made the fortune of Geneva in the fifteenth century and later those of Antwerp, Lyons, and Medina del Campo. . . .
>
> In short, throughout Europe a small group of well-informed men, kept in touch by an active correspondence, controlled the entire network of exchanges in bills or specie, thus dominating the field of commercial speculation. So we should not be too taken in by the apparent spread of "finance."[112]

For Spain under Charles V (1516–56) and Philip II (1556–98), the German Fuggers, the Genoese, and other "international merchant firms" organized the state revenues, exploited mines, and administered many of the most important estates.[113] And at Constantinople, Genoese, Venetian, and Ragusan bankers and merchants shepherded the trade and financial relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire.[114] For the Mediterranean towns of the sixteenth century, Braudel has observed the functions of the "indispensable immigrant." To Salonica, Constantinople and Valona, Italian and Spanish Jews, as merchants and artisans, brought new trades to further broaden an already multicultured bourgeoisie.

> There were other valuable immigrants, itinerant artists for instance attracted by expanding towns which were extending their public buildings; or merchants, particularly the Italian merchants and bankers, who activated and indeed created such cities as Lisbon, Seville, Medina del Campo, Lyons and Antwerp.[115]

And in Venice:

> A long report by the *Cinque Savii*, in January, 1607, indicates that all "capitalist" activity, as we should call it, was in the hands of the Florentines, who owned houses in the city, and the Genoese, who provided silver, between them controlling all exchanges.[116]

Just as Nuremberg had ravaged Bohemia, Saxony, and Silesia, Braudel asserts, it was the Genoese who "blocked the development of Spanish capitalism."[117] It was, too, the "indispensable immigrant" who complemented the urban proletariat incapable of maintaining itself "let alone increas[ing] without the help of continuous immigration."[118] In Ragusa it was the *Morlachi*; in Marseilles, the Corsicans; in Seville, the

Moriscos of Andalusia; in Algiers, the Aragonese and the Berbers; in Lisbon, Black slaves; and in Venice, the immigrant proletariat was augmented by *Romagnoli, Marchiani*, Greeks, Persians, Armenians and Portuguese Jews.[119]

The bourgeoisie that led the development of capitalism were drawn from particular ethnic and cultural groups; the European proletariats and the mercenaries of the leading states from others; its peasants from still other cultures; and its slaves from entirely different worlds. The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into "racial" ones. As the Slavs became the natural slaves, the racially inferior stock for domination and exploitation during the early Middle Ages, as the Tartars came to occupy a similar position in the Italian cities of the late Middle Ages, so at the systemic interlocking of capitalism in the sixteenth century, the peoples of the Third World began to fill this expanding category of a civilization reproduced by capitalism.[120]

As a civilization of free and equal beings, Europe was as much a fiction in the nineteenth century (and later) as its very unity had been during the Merovingian and Carolingian eras. Both the church and the more powerful nobilities of the Holy Roman Empire and its predecessor had been the source of the illusion in those earlier periods. From the twelfth century forward, it was the bourgeoisie and the administrators of state power who initiated and nurtured myths of egalitarianism while seizing every occasion to divide peoples for the purpose of their domination.[121] The carnage of wars and revolutions precipitated by the bourgeoisies of Europe to sanctify their masques was enormous.

Eventually, however, the old instruments gave way to newer ones, not because they were old but because the ending of feudalism and the expansion of capitalism and its world system—that is the increasingly uneven character of development among European peoples themselves and between Europeans and the world beyond—precipitated new oppositions while providing new opportunities and demanding new "historical" agents. The Reformations in western Europe and then England that destroyed the last practical vestiges of a transcendent, unified Christendom, were one manifestation of this process of disequilibrium.

In England, as an instance, representatives of the great landowners, and agrarian capitalism, in pursuit of their own social and financial destinies disciplined first the church and then the monarchy and finally "the masses" through enclosures, the Poor Laws, debtors' prisons, "transportation" (forced emigration), and the like.[122] The contrasts of wealth and power between labor, capital, and the middle classes had become too stark to sustain the continued maintenance of privileged classes at home and the support of the engines of capitalist domination abroad. New mystifications, more appropriate to the times, were required, authorized by new lights. The delusions of medieval citizenship, which had been expanded into shared patrimony and had persisted for five centuries in western Europe as the single great leveling principle, were to be supplanted by race and (to use the German phrase) *Herrenvolk*, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[123] The functions of these latter ideological

constructions were related but different. Race became largely the rationalization for the domination, exploitation, and/or extermination of non-"Europeans" (including Slavs and Jews). And we shall have occasion in Part II to explore its applications beyond Europe and particularly to African peoples more closely. But while we remain on European soil, it is *Herrenvolk* that matters. In eighteenth-century England, Reginald Horsman sees its beginnings in the "mythical" Anglo-Saxonism that was flown as an ideological pennant by the Whig intelligentsia.[124] In France (for example, Paul de Rapin-Thoyras and Montesquieu, and before them François Hotman and Count Henri de Boulainvilliers), in Germany (Herder, Fichte, Schleiermacher, and Hegel), in north America (John Adams and Thomas Jefferson), "bourgeois" ideologists displayed the idea of the heroic Germanic race.[125] And the idea swept through nineteenth-century Europe, gathering momentum and artifice through such effects as Sir Walter Scott's historical novels and Friedrich von Schlegel's philological fables. Inevitably, of course, the idea was dressed in the accoutrement of nineteenth-century European science. *Herrenvolk* explained the inevitability and the naturalness of the domination of some Europeans by other Europeans. Though he reconstructed the pieces back to front, Louis Snyder, for one, recognized the effect.

> Racialists, not satisfied with merely proclaiming the superiority of the white over the coloured race, also felt it necessary to erect a hierarchy within the white race itself. To meet this need they developed the myth of the Aryan, or Nordic, superiority. The Aryan myth in turn became the source of other secondary myths such as Teutonism (Germany), Anglo-Saxonism (England and the United States), and Celticism (France).[126]

Then, in the nineteenth century, modern nationalism appeared.

The emergence of nationalism[127] was again neither accidental nor unrelated to the character that European capitalism had assumed historically. Again, the bourgeoisie of particular cultures and political structures refused to acknowledge their logical and systemic identity as a class. Instead, international capitalism persisted in competitive anarchy—each national bourgeoisie opposing the others as "natural" enemies. But as powerful as the bourgeoisie and its allies in the aristocracy and bureaucracy might be in some ways, they still required the co-optation of their "rational" proletariat in order to destroy their competitors. Nationalism mobilized the armed might they required to either destroy the productive capacities of those whom they opposed, or to secure new markets, new labor, and productive resources.[128] Ultimately, the uneven developments of national capitalisms would have horrifying consequences for both Europe and the peoples under European dominations.

In Germany and Italy, where national bourgeoisies were relatively late in their formation, the marshaling of national social forces (peasants, farmers, workers, clerics, professional classes, the aristocracy, and the state) was accomplished by the ideological phantasmagoria of race, *Herrenvolk*, and nationalism. This compost of violence, in its time, became known under the name of fascism.[129] With the creation of fascism, the bourgeoisie retained the full range of its social, political, and economic preroga-

tives. It had the cake of the total control of its national society, an efficient instrument for expanding its domination and expropriation to the Third World, and the ultimate means for redressing the injuries and humiliations of the past. Again, not unexpectedly, slavery as a form of labor would reappear in Europe.[130]

But this goes far beyond our immediate purposes. What concerns us is that we understand that racialism and its permutations persisted, rooted not in a particular era but in the civilization itself. And though our era might seem a particularly fitting one for depositing the origins of racism, that judgment merely reflects how resistant the idea is to examination and how powerful and natural its specifications have become. Our confusions, however, are not unique. As an enduring principle of European social order, the effects of racialism were bound to appear in the social expression of every strata of every European society no matter the structures upon which they were formed. None was immune. And as we shall observe in the next two chapters, this proved to be true for the rebellious proletariat as well as the radical intelligentsias. It was again, a quite natural occurrence in both instances. But to the latter—the radical intelligentsias—it was also an unacceptable one, one subsequently denied. Nevertheless, it insinuated itself into their thought and their theories. And thus, in the quest for a radical social force, an active historical subject, it compelled certain blindnesses, bemusements that in turn systematically subverted their analytical constructions and their revolutionary project. But this is still to be shown. To that end we will now turn to the history of the English working classes. Since these workers were one of the centerpieces for the development by radical intelligentsias of the notion of the proletariat as a revolutionary class, an inquiry into the effects of racialism on their consciousness forms the next step in the demonstration of the limits of European radicalism.