

I. An Introductory Note

We live in a world which we can barely understand, much less control...In Seveso, near Milan, deadly gas escaped from a huge pharmaceutical plant in July, threatening every life in the area, forcing the evacuation and dismantling of the city; and we are suddenly confronted with the grim reality: that in our contemporary commodity societies, where the imperative of the market prevails, we live under the cloud of perpetual danger...We glance at the most reactionary bastions of the Third World, models of repression like the regimes of Iran, Brazil, South Korea, and we see their burgeoning nuclear installations; and we wonder how then those repressive regimes will ever be displaced...We look at the decolonized societies of the Third World, trapped in the processes of neo-colonialism: their "growth" enriching a narrow elite; their popular classes growing poorer; their excess population furnishing a vast reserve army of labor in every advanced industrial society, and we are hard pressed to see how their revolutionary process will start up again...We read accounts of torture in Chile; and we have to ask ourselves where and how the agents of Western imperialism are at work at this very moment...We see the gaping holes in the fabric of our consumer societies: the coupling of inflation and recession; the sterility of work; the recourse to racism; the alienation from the formal political process, and we have to ask whether the liberationist hopes enunciated a decade ago belong to the realm of the possible...We see and feel it: the sense of impotence deepens; the programmed pleasures are derisive; the age of the toad lurks on the horizon.

And so, our collective effort is anchored to a peculiar urgency: that we need a handle on the contemporary world; that history, the meaningful relationship between the past and the present, can tell us how we got here and where we may go; that our understanding is no mere intellectual game but an instrument of struggle. The questions which we expect to pose are critical ones: what happened to the resistance and liberation movements of the Second World War? how did the American imperium and Soviet power organize the postwar world? how did the Cold War operate to impose neo-capitalism on Western Europe and neo-colonialism on vast stretches of the Third World? And then, the breaches in the imperial system: how and why did the revolutionary process come to fruition in China, Vietnam, the old Portuguese colonies of Africa? what about inter-imperialist rivalries? what of the global and domestic contradictions of American capitalism? What of the critical balance between revolutionary movements and the technology of repression?

As we try to address those questions we will roam as far and wide as we can: synthesizing the social histories of several societies; analyzing their social structures; traversing their cities and villages; detailing the movements of the peasants, workers, women...deepening our historical consciousness so that we can understand the options which are posed, and engage ourselves. An effort, and no more, since the range of our aspiration will surely outstrip both our capacity and time. But hopefully, worth the effort.

II. Books for the Course

a) Required Paperbacks

- D. Eudes -- The Kapetanios
- G. Kolko -- The Roots of American Foreign Policy
- R. Blackburn, ed. -- Explosion in a Subcontinent
- Nguyen Khac Vien -- Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam
- L. Bianco -- Origins of the Chinese Revolution
- V. Nee and J. Peck -- China's Uninterrupted Revolution
- H. Braverman -- Labor and Monopoly Capital
- x C. Harmon -- Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe
- R. Gombin -- The Origins of Modern Leftism
- D. Singer -- Prelude to Revolution
- y R. Barnet -- Global Reach

x: The Harmon book, which has to be imported from England, has been delayed; delivery has been promised about October 1.

y: The Barnet volume, the most lucid analysis of the global impact of multinational corporations, is temporarily out of stock. The publisher has vaguely promised it by the end of October. If it arrives too late, we will substitute S. Amin's excellent Neo-Colonialism in West Africa, which the bookstores have already ordered as a safeguard.

b) Optional Paperbacks

We have asked the bookstores to stock a limited supply of two books which you aren't required to buy or read; but since they shed light on certain of the problems we expect to pose, we have made them available for those of you who have the time and interest to read further:

- H. Radice, ed. -- International Firms and Modern Imperialism
- F. Schurmann and O. Schell, ed. -- The China Reader: Communist China

III. The Discussion Sections and Reading Assignments

The weekly discussion section is a vital and integral part of our course: a workshop in which you can deepen your understanding of the readings and formulate your own ideas about them; a forum in which you can cultivate an historical consciousness and forge it into an instrument of daily struggle; a collective, free of the deforming influences of competition, in which you can begin to discern the relationship between the relevant past and the options for the future. We assume that you will attend every meeting of your section; and that you will have sufficiently studied the assigned readings so that you can make an active contribution to the discussion. For your own sake, you should take those weekly

meetings seriously; our teaching assistants, who are both sympathetic and well-informed, can help you in countless ways but only if they see you regularly.

- a) Each discussion will gravitate around a problem raised by the weekly reading assignment. Since we have tried not to burden you with an excessive work load, heavier than your time and interest would permit you to shoulder, we have selected chapters or pages from the required paperbacks which, in our judgment, pose central and significant questions. In so doing, we have tried to find passages in each book which can stand as a coherent whole. Needless to say, you will be better served if you can read more than just the assigned selections; but we are much more concerned that you read what you can with care and understanding.

In all probability, the topics for each successive discussion will coincide no more than approximately (and perhaps even less than that) with the precise analyses which we're making in our lectures. An almost inevitable disjuncture, since we'll talk about certain countries and movements in the contemporary world for which accessible materials in English are impossible to come by. But we have organized the discussions around a certain number of problems which bear directly on the main themes of our lectures: the social impact of the Cold War; the modalities of the American dominion; the structure and impact of Soviet power; the makings of neo-colonialism; the contradictions of contemporary capitalism and its strategy of repression; the myth and reality of the revolutionary process.

- b) The first discussion section will meet in the third week of the semester (Sept. 20-24). It's especially important that you attend the first meeting; we base all of our records on your presence in the sections, and unless you're on hand for that initial meeting, we won't have any proper confirmation of your registration.

For the first two weeks (Sept. 8-17), until the sections begin to meet, we are asking you to read Parts 1 and 2 (pp. 1-163) of Eudes' The Kapetanos, an incisive history of that Greek Civil War which would provoke the Truman Doctrine and America's global strategy of containment: the history of a revolution which might have been if, if...

- c) The Reading Assignments for the Discussion Sections

I. Containment and Counter-Revolution

Section #1 (Sept. 20-24)

Kolko, pp. 3-87

topic--America's postwar hegemony: mechanism and goals

Section #2 (Sept. 27-Oct. 1)

Eudes, pp. 165-355

topic--the Greek Revolution: why it failed

Section #3 (Oct. 4-8)

Kolko, pp. 88-132; Nguyen Khac Vien, pp. 15-52; 75-125
topic--the Vietnamese resistance: why it succeeded

II. The Third World: the Capitalist Option or Social Revolution

Section #4 (Oct. 11-15)

Blackburn, pp. 11-78; 252-292

topic--"development" without revolution: the case of India
 and Pakistan

(On this question you might profitably look at Nee and Peck, pp. 59-152, on the profound difference between American modernization theory and revolutionary change)

Section #5 (Oct. 18-22)

Bianco, pp. 1-26; 53-130

topic--sources of the Chinese Revolution

Section #6 (Oct. 25-29)

Nee and Peck, pp. 272-317; 87-110; 157-207

topic--the originality of Chinese development: the concept
 of the Cultural Revolution

(On this question you might want to consult the essay in Nee and Peck entitled "Revolution and Bureaucracy")

III. Contradictions in the Contemporary World: West and East

Section #7 (Nov. 1-5)

Braverman, pp. 169-247; 271-289

topic--the degradation of work in advanced capitalism

Section #8 (Nov. 8-12)

Braverman, pp. 293-401

topic--the alienation of the "new working class"

Section #9 (Nov. 15-19)

Harmon (pages to be assigned when the book arrives)

topic--the bureaucratic development of East European
 Communism

IV. Revolt, Revolution, Repression; the delicate Balance

Section #10 (Nov. 29-Dec. 3)

Singer, pp. 69-205

topic--the revolt against capitalist culture

(On this question you might consult Gombin, especially chapters 3 and 4, on the doctrinal-theoretical sources of contemporary revolt)

Section #11 (Dec. 6-10)

Singer, pp. 243-364

topic--May '68: a permanent crisis?

Section #12 (Dec. 13-17)

Barnet, pages to be assigned when the book arrives; if the book does not arrive in time, then Blackburn, pp. 151-220; 293-347

topic--the durability and limitations of contemporary imperialism

IV. The Required Work

- a) There will be one written test, the final examination, to be drawn (without any textual changes) from a list of study questions which we will distribute to you at least two weeks before the end of the semester. Those study questions will be based on the assigned readings and the lectures. You will have a reasonable choice of questions on the final.
- b) You will be responsible for two short written papers during the semester. We're not thinking about elaborate research projects but rather about reflective essays, each of which will address a question raised by one of the required books. We don't want a summary of the book, but we're asking you to formulate and address a problem which you consider relevant in understanding contemporary societies.
 1. If you are taking the course for three credits, each essay should be no longer than five typewritten pages; if you are taking the course for four credits, each essay should run no longer than eight typewritten pages. (Be sure to indicate clearly on each paper whether you are enrolled for three or four credits).
 2. If you are registered for three credits, you can base each of your essays on the one required book which deals with the question you have chosen to write about. If you're registered for four credits, you should look into one other source, in addition to the required one, as the basis of each essay. Since a vast number of useful works have been written about the topics under consideration, you shouldn't have any difficulty in finding a supplementary reading; but we will append at the end a short list of useful titles, most of them in paperback, which may facilitate your search.
 3. You must submit the first essay to your Teaching Assistant during the eighth week of the semester (Oct. 25-29). No later! You can choose one of the following books as the basis of your essay:
 - a) Eudes, The Kapetanos (i.e., on the potentiality and limitations of the crisis emerging from WW II)
 - b) Blackburn, Explosion in a Subcontinent (i.e., on the contradictions of non-revolutionary "development")
 - c) Amin, Neo-Colonialism in West Africa (i.e., on the modalities and consequences of neo-colonialism)

- d) Nguyen Khac Vien, Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam (i.e., on the sources and originality of Vietnamese resistance)
 - e) Bianco, Origins of the Chinese Revolution; plus, Nee and Peck, pp. 218-320 (i.e., on the propelling forces of the Chinese Revolution)
4. You must submit your second essay to your Teaching Assistant during the fourteenth week of the semester (Dec. 6-10). No later! You can choose one of the following books:
- a) Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital (i.e., on the degradation of work in advanced industrial countries)
 - b) Harmon, Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe (i.e., on the contradictions of East European Communism)
 - c) Gombin, The Origins of Modern Leftism; plus Singer, parts 4 and 5 (i.e., on the critique of and revolt against repression)
 - d) Nee and Peck, China's Uninterrupted Revolution (i.e., on the significance of "cultural revolution")
 - e) Barnett, Global Reach (i.e., on the power and significance of multi-national corporations)

V. A short Selected Bibliography on These and Related Topics:

- B. Moore -- The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy
- H. Magdoff -- The Age of Imperialism
- D. Horowitz -- Corporations and the Cold War
- D. Horowitz -- Imperialism and the Cold War
- D. Horowitz -- Free World Colossus
- S. Melman -- Pentagon Capitalism
- F. Fanon -- Wretched of the Earth
- P. Scott -- The War Conspiracy
- M. Klare -- War Without End
- F. Schurman -- The Logic of World Power
- M. Djilas -- The New Class
- P. Jalee -- The Pillage of the Third World
- P. Baran -- the Political Economy of Growth
- C. Bettelheim -- Independent India
- C. Bettelheim -- Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization in China
- G. Chaliand -- Armed Struggle in Africa
- B. Davidson -- Revolution in Guinea
- J. Buttinger -- Vietnam: a Dragon Embattled
- D. Marr -- Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism
- J. Belden -- China Shakes the World
- W. Hinton -- Fanshen
- R. Debray -- Strategy for Revolution
- A.G. Frank -- Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America
- A.G. Frank -- Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution

I.F. Stone -- The Hidden History of the Korean War
G. Challiand -- The Palestinian Resistance
A. Malek -- Egypt: Class and Society
Livingston, Moor, Oldfather -- Postwar Japan
P. Agee -- CIA Diary
A. Sampson -- Sovereign State: ITT
A. Sampson -- The Seven Sisters
Baran and Sweezy -- Monopoly Capital
A. Gorz -- A Strategy for Labor
F. Fejto -- The Popular Democracies of Eastern Europe
R. Reiche -- Sexuality and the Class Struggle