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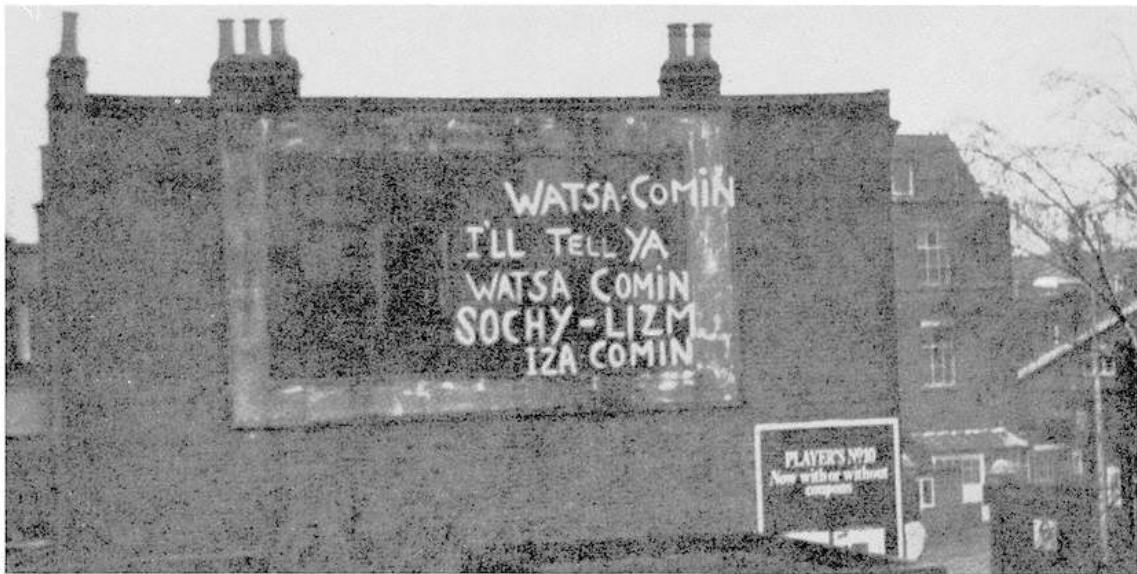
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NATIONALISM: Enemy of the Workers

The Lib-Lab Rabble

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Lab-Lib: A Rabble

There is an old saying that if you lie down with a dog you get up with fleas. No doubt it has dawned on the leaders of the Liberal Party that the idea of projecting themselves as an alternative government to the Labourites and Tories is a non-starter. With thirteen MPs and a discredited minority government, their only way to power is through the side door.

With no ideas to put to the working class, the only alternative to a future in the political wilderness and possible extinction was to do a deal. But, such are the fortunes of opportunism and reformism, they could be cutting their own throats either way. The price they will inevitably pay for "dealing" will be to forfeit the phoney image they have built up over twenty or thirty years that they had distinctive policies and independent ideas. For them to line up openly with one of the parties they have claimed to be so different from can only lose the support of those who had turned to them, having despaired of the other two.

In an effort to have his cake and eat it Mr. Steel, the Liberal leader, sought to pose as champion of the motorist and pledged himself to vote against Budget increases in petrol prices and road tax. He argued that these increases fell outside the arrangement, and as there had been no consultation on them the Liberals were free to vote against them. After the by-election massacre at Stetchford the motorist did not seem to matter so much. A more urgent need instantly asserted itself: avoiding a General Election, with the threat of annihilation. The great and courageous leader had to find a way out while still trying to sound plausible, at least to the gullible. So he discovered that the increases in motoring costs would not be voted on as a separate resolution in Parliament, but would be tied to other proposals; so it might be best to let the thirteen Liberals make up their own minds, and led from behind.

The Labour Government are like drowning men desperately clutching at anything in the agony of their disastrous attempt at running capitalism. Having repeatedly declared against coalition, they turned to the Liberals to survive. The one-time "firebrand" of the Left, Michael Foot, will solemnly sit down each week in consultation with the Liberals to keep his mob in power a little longer, unless the whole thing blows up in their faces. Then they will blame each other and fall back on any feeble excuse to try to save their political hides. There is no expediency too shabby for any of them.

The IMG, WRP, IS and the CP, who urged workers to vote Labour and now go round muttering demands for "socialist policies", get the policies of the Labour Party which they voted for. The policies which these Lefties hold to be Socialist are in fact just as useless and reformist as those of the Labour Party.

When Mr. Steel claims that his deal with the Government will mean no more nationalization in this session of Parliament, is he really silly enough to believe he is saving capitalism? Is he unaware that his own Party, when in power, carried out Acts of nationalization? He only displays his ignorance if he thinks a Labour Government represents any threat to capitalism, or that nationalization has anything to do with Socialism. It is a shame that questions like these never occur to people like Robin Day during those boring mock-interviews on television, like the one on polling day for Stetchford. But of course they would not keep their cushy jobs for long if they did.

Mrs. Thatcher and her Tory tribesmen can get as indignant as they like, but under Heath in 1974 they were quite willing to talk coalition with the Liberals. The readiness of the Liberals to co-operate with either of the "major" Parties, shows how little there is of fundamental difference between any of them. In fact, Steel said it is his belief that people "will find the artificial Party battles irrelevant to the problems of the day" (Guardian, 24th March). It is the parties that are irrelevant, Mr. Steel. The problems arise out of capitalist society, and you are all dedicated to its preservation.

For the Tories Mrs. Thatcher said: "We believe in capitalism and democracy". What about the other combinations, Mrs. Thatcher? Capitalism and war? Capitalism and poverty? Capitalism and crises? Capitalism and unemployment? Even Callaghan said in the same report: "I would not like to guarantee that the decline in unemployment will continue in the next few months". None of them can guarantee anything. But while the system lasts the misery and political trading it has always

produced will continue.

Enoch Powell pledged not to bring the Labour Government down and abstained on the crucial vote of confidence. Callaghan and Co. had been just as prepared to deal with the Ulster Unionists as they were with the Liberals. Just to show that they all have the same priorities, seven Liberals voted against cuts in war potentials in the first vote after the deal.

The working class trust any of them at the expense of their own interests. Apart from war-time coalitions when Tories, Labourites and Liberals joined forces with "Communist" support to pull capitalism's chestnuts out of the fire, there have been deals between the Labour Party and the Liberals from the very early days of the Labour Party. The 1924 Labour Government was voted into office on Liberal votes. As early as 1910 there were electoral "arrangements" between these two reformist Parties.

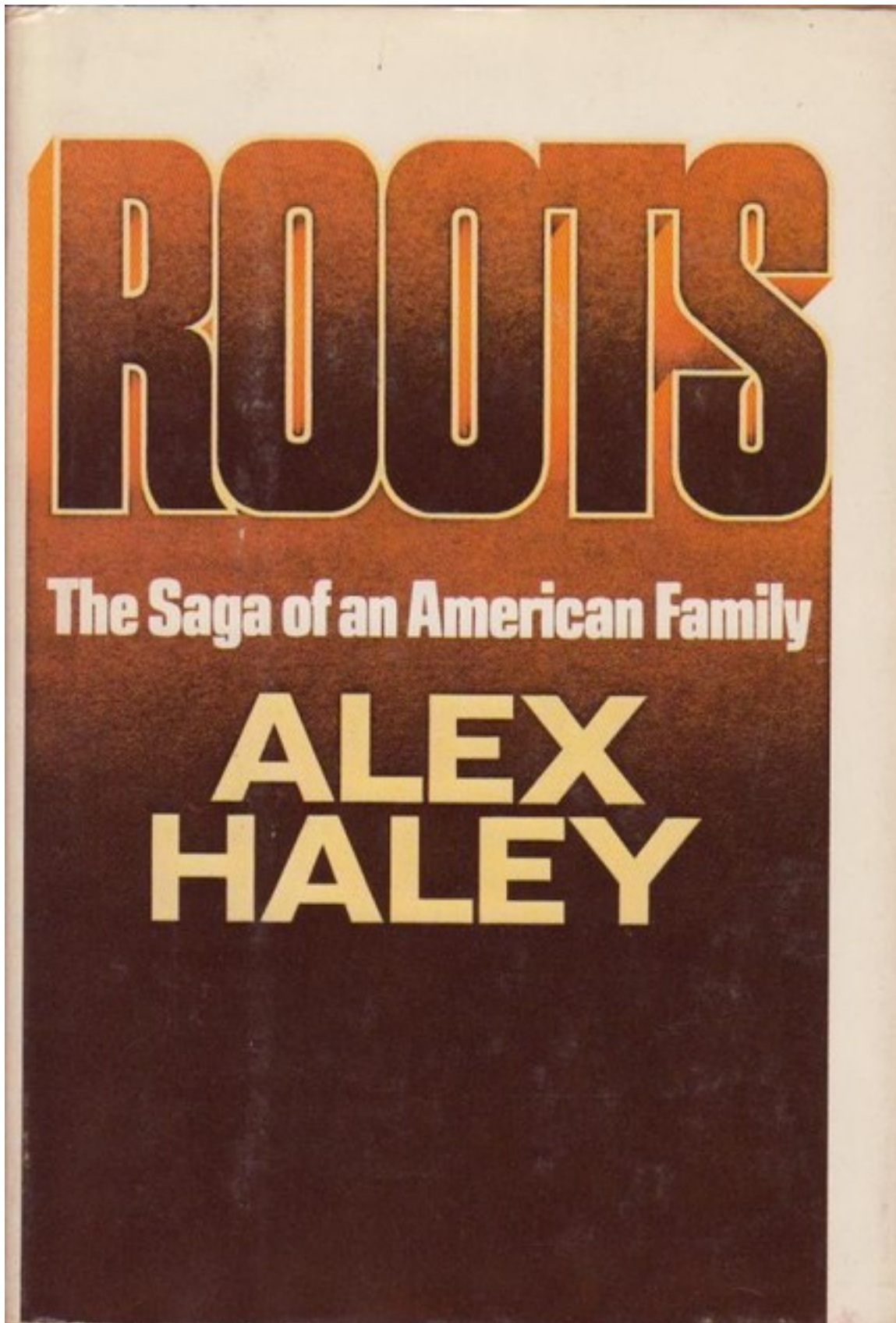
The Socialist Party of Great Britain has one objective, Socialism. This can only be achieved when a majority of the working class reject the squalid expedencies of opportunist politics.
Sunday, 1 May 1977

The Roots of Roots

In his closing words to the Author's Foreword of Foundations of Christianity (dateline Berlin, 1908), Karl Kautsky wrote:

". . . with the aid of the materialist conception of history . . . the study of the past, far from being mere dilettante antiquarianism, will become a powerful weapon in the struggles of the present, in order to hasten the attainment of a better future."

The future that the Socialist pioneers outlined is not brought any nearer by the widespread employment of Marxist terminology by self-styled socialist or communist governments in the world today. But the Kautsky statement remains sound, nevertheless. A clear understanding of social forces, by the working class, will help enormously in clearing away obstacles to the movement for world Socialism. As it is now, prejudices of many kinds keep workers of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds apart. The Marxist admonition: "Workers of the world, unite!" is difficult to heed when workers do not understand the significance of the forces that divide them. It is an all-important duty of Socialists to spread knowledge and understanding on this subject. One of the latest examples, in America, of mass confusion is that phenomenal best-seller historical novel and TV extravaganza, Roots.



Now, this is not intended as a review of the book. Suffice it to say that Mr. Haley had set out on a prospecting adventure to unearth his personal roots—a tricky business at best, as we shall see, presently. But if the soundness of his genealogical research is questionable there is no doubt that he has found gold—a veritable gold mine. For, according to press reports, the book has earned him a cool 3 million bucks thus far, with no end to the profits in sight. And even if most who buy the book never actually read it (many blacks, even illiterates from backwater areas, seem to regard it as another Book of the Bible—their personal Gospel), an estimated 130 million people have seen at least a portion of the twelve hours of TV presentation and black Americans now know—or think they know—their roots.

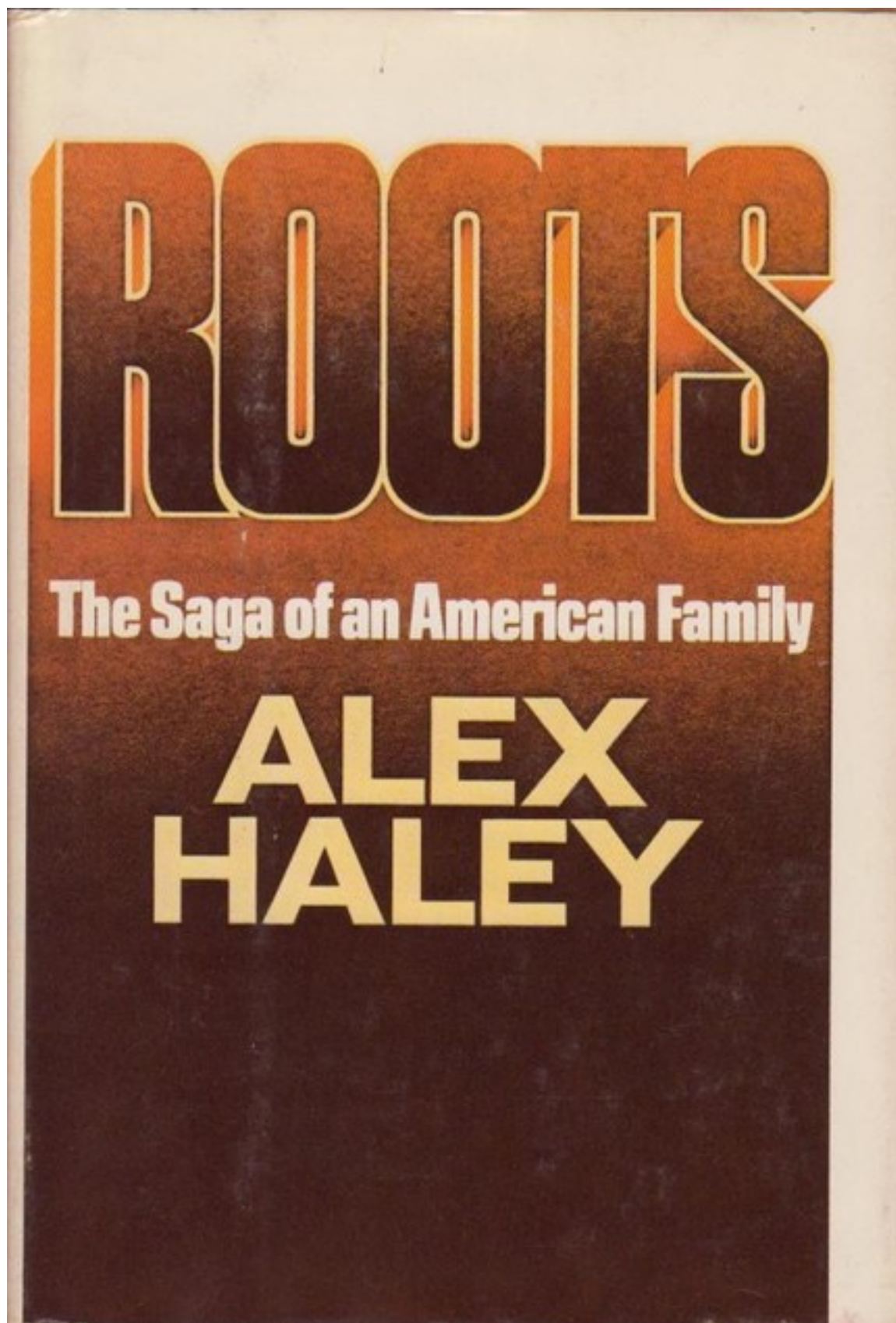
This fact, some writers believe, may serve as a spark to kindle a programme of black vengeance against "whitey." The "Establishment" (white and black) can go only so far of course in dispelling the mythology of roots. In this instance a lot of knowledge can be more dangerous than little. Consider:

The central hero, "Kunta Kinte," according to oral "historian" who gave him the "facts", was Haley's grandfather seven generations back. Now, "Kinte" may have been real and a direct ancestor of Haley's but it is a safe bet that not even Kinte's roots were all black, let alone Alex Haley's. For remote as Kinte's village may have been it was obviously not that remote and white traders, particularly slave traders, were frequent visitors to the area as long and longer ago than seven generations. But Haley, as do militant "Afro-Americans" generally, prefers to disown—or least not acknowledge—his "white" genes. (In that department, of course, he is no worse than "whites" who prefer not to contemplate their "black", or "yellow" or whatever ancestors). The fact is, that one need do is estimate the number of one's ancestors ten or fifteen generations back to burst bubble. Only through a practice of strict in-breeding through the generations could any of us, today, be considered "pure"! There can be no question about it: we all have the same roots. Migrations and invasions throughout history, have assured that.

But there is more to the confusion surrounding Haley's opus than one's genealogy. "Kunta Kinte", in the Haley chronicle, epitomizes the resistance which modern black-oriented historians prefer to believe black chattels gave their masters. That this was actually the case remains, at best, debatable. What is unquestionable, however, was the callous brutality of the slave trade. But even here is confusion because it is difficult, indeed, to surmount the morals of one's times. Trading in human chattels was legal (in varying degrees) for centuries and in pre-Civil War America some of the most highly respectable families were engaged in one or another facet of it. The morals of a society are established, generally, by the ruling class. Chattel Slavery was Big Business and, therefore, respectable. It was the Abolitionist, who was the non-conformist and trouble-maker, not the slave owner or slave trader. William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Philips have schools named after them, today, but it was a different matter when they were flaying Slavery and its beneficiaries in pre-Civil War United States of America.

And ponder, for a moment, on how few in our times see anything abhorrent about the relationships of wage-labour and capital, how few see it as a "higher" form of slavery. The chains are figurative but nonetheless real. Most of the population is bound for life to a class that owns the means and instruments of wealth production and distribution. An end to all slave relationships, including capitalism in all its forms, is possible but not without unification of the working class for the express purpose of establishing world socialism, immediately. And the dispelling of the mythology of roots will be a big help toward that goal.

Harmo, WSP Boston
Sunday, 1 May 1977



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