

New Proposals For Anthropologists¹

by Kathleen Gough

THIS PAPER WAS first prepared for an audience of anthropologists in the United States of America, where I have taught and researched for the past 12 years.² Some of the questions that it raises apply, although perhaps less acutely, to social and cultural anthropologists from the other industrial nations of Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The international circumstances to which I refer no doubt also create problems for anthropologists born and resident in a number of the Latin American, Asian, and African countries where much anthropological research is carried out. I should be especially glad if this paper stimulates some among the latter anthropologists to comment on how these circumstances are viewed by them and how they affect their work.

Recently a number of anthropologists, and of students, have complained that cultural and social anthropology are failing to tackle significant problems of the modern world. As I have thought this for some time, I should like to make a tentative statement about where I think we stand today, and to follow it with some proposals. This being a new departure, I must ask to be excused if I am both obvious and argumentative.

Anthropology is a child of Western imperialism. It has roots in the humanist visions of the Enlightenment, but as a university discipline and a modern science, it came into its own in the last decades of the 19th and the early 20th centuries. This was the period in which the Western nations were making their final push to bring practically the whole pre-industrial non-Western world under their political and economic control.

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Until World War II most of our fieldwork was carried out in societies that had been conquered by our own governments. We tended to accept the imperialist framework as given, perhaps partly because we were influenced by the dominant ideas of our time, and partly because at that time there was little anyone could do to dismantle the empires. In spite of some belief in value-free social science, anthropologists in those days seem to have commonly played roles characteristic of white liberals, sometimes of white liberal reformers, in other spheres of our society. Anthropologists were of higher social status than their informants; they were usually of the dominant race, and they were protected by imperial law; yet, living closely with native peoples, they tended to take their part and to try to protect them against the worst forms of imperialist exploitation. Customary relations developed between the anthropologists and the government or the various private agencies who funded and protected them. Other types of customary relationships grew up between anthropologists and the people whose institutions they studied. Applied anthropology came into being as a kind of social work and community development effort for non-white peoples, whose future was seen in terms of gradual education and of amelioration of conditions many of which had actually been imposed by their Western conquerors in the first place.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Southwestern States Anthropological Association meetings in San Francisco, California, in March, 1967. It was broadcast on KPFA radio and later published in *The Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, September 9, 1967. Extracts from the paper appear in another article, "World Revolution and the Science of Man," in *The Dissenting Academy*, edited by Theodore Roszak (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), pp. 135-58.

² My husband, David F. Aberle, and I left the United States in 1967 to live and work in Canada. We did so partly because of the general problems to which I refer in this paper. More immediately, we were unwilling to allow the academic grades that we gave our male students in their university classes to be used by draftboards, under the Selective Service system, as a criterion of whether or not they should be conscripted for military service in Vietnam. I mention this as an instance, relevant to the subject of this paper, of ways in which the proper goals of intellectual work have been undermined by current nationalist and military policies.

Since World War II, a new situation has come about. There are today some 2,352,000,000 people in underdeveloped nations.³ About 773,000,000, or $\frac{1}{3}$, of them have already, through revolution, passed out of the sphere of Western imperialism into the new socialist states of China, Mongolia, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cuba. However arduous and conflictful their conditions, they are now beyond the domination of the capitalist powers and are off on tracks of their own. Because of the Cold War (and, in the case of Vietnam, the hot war), American anthropologists are unable to study these societies directly and have made few comparisons of their political economies or community structures with those of underdeveloped nations with capitalist or with "mixed" economies. When American studies of socialist societies are made, the built-in assumption that "communism," especially revolutionary communism, is bad and unviable commonly produces distortions of both theory and fact.⁴ Granting the difficulties of obtaining reliable information, I believe that more objective studies could be made if greater attention were paid to the work of the few Western social scientists who have lived in these countries, for example, Lattimore (1962), Robinson and Adler (1958), Robinson (1964), Myrdal (1965), and Crook and Crook (1959, 1966). In addition to primary sources from the socialist nations there are also, of course, the writings of Western journalists and other specialists who have lived or travelled in the new socialist countries since their revolutions. Examples are Dumont (1965, 1967), Gelder and Gelder (1964), Greene (1961, 1964, 1966), Snow (1962), Hinton (1966), Han Suyin (1965, 1966, 1967), Strong (1962, 1964), Burchett (1963, 1965, 1966), Taylor (1966), and many others. Most of these writers are favorable to the new socialisms, and most tend to be neglected or scoffed at in the United States. Yet American social scientists think nothing of using travellers' reports to eke out their knowledge of non-Western societies of the 15th to 18th centuries, biased or mission-oriented though some of them may have been. Certainly such studies are not discarded on the grounds that their authors happened to like the societies they visited. There is no reason why anthropologists cannot apply similar criteria of objectivity to modern writers who admire China or other socialist countries today.

There remain about 1,579,000,000 people, or 67% of the total, in non-Western nations with capitalist or with "mixed" economies. Of those, 49,000,000, or 2% of the total, are still in more or less classical colonial societies such as South Africa, Mozambique, or Angola, ruled by small white elites drawn from the "mother country" or else now severed from it as separate settler populations. About another 511,000,000, or 22% of the total, live in what may be regarded as satellite or client states, states

³ I use the term "underdeveloped" to refer to societies which have, or have recently had, particular features of economic structure produced as a result of several decades or centuries of overt or covert domination by Western industrial capitalist nations. I have included in this category all the nations and the remaining colonies of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, with the exception of Japan. These and later figures are derived from United Nations totals of 1961, as provided in the *World Almanac* of 1967. For some of the more general characteristics of underdeveloped economies see Myrdal (1956), especially Chapters 11-13, Baran (1957), and Frank (1966, 1967a).

⁴ There are, of course, notable exceptions to this statement, among them, for example, Schurman (1966).

which have indigenous governments, but are so constrained by Western military or economic aid and by private investments that they have little autonomy. Most of their governments are opposed to social reforms and would probably collapse if Western aid were withdrawn. The largest of these states, with populations of over 5,000,000, are Columbia, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Venezuela, the Philippines, South Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Congo, Nigeria, Iran, Southern Arabia, Cameroon, and Turkey. The list is very tentative, for modern neo-imperialism varies in intensity. Some might include Mexico and Pakistan, bringing the total to 657,000,000, or 28% of the underdeveloped world. About 318,000,000, of these people or 14% of the total, live in nations beholden to the United States, either in Latin America, the traditional preserve of U.S. capital, or else in a fringe around China, where the United States has established satellite regimes in an effort to stave off the spread of revolutionary socialism. If we include Pakistan and Mexico, U.S. client states amount to about 20% of the total.

The remaining 873,000,000, or 37% of the total, live in nations that are usually considered in the West to be relatively independent, under governments containing popular nationalist leaders. Most of these leaders conducted nationalist struggles against European colonialism a decade or two ago, and some fought wars of liberation. (By contrast, the governments of most of the client states were either installed by, or arose after, military coups at least partly inspired from the West.) Most of the independent "Third World" nations regard themselves as politically neutral and as in some sense socialist or aspiring to become socialist. Because the appeal of their governments is of a multi-class character, Peter Worsley (1964) calls them "populist." The economies of these nations have both a public sector, with an emphasis on national planning, and a large private sector dominated by foreign capital. The largest of these states, with populations over 5,000,000, are India, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Nepal, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, the United Arab Republic, Algeria, Morocco, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Ghana.

During the 1950's, many liberal social scientists and others hoped that these neutral nations would form a strong Third World that could act independently of either the Western industrial or the Communist powers. I suggest that in the 1960's this hope has dimmed, and is now almost extinguished, chiefly because of the expansion of American capital and military power, the refusal of European nations to relinquish their own economic strongholds, and the failure of many new governments to improve the living conditions of their people. In the past 15 years, at least 227,000,000 people in 16 nations, or 10% of the underdeveloped world, have, after a longer or shorter period of relative independence, moved into, or moved back into, a client relationship, usually with the United States. These nations are Guatemala, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, South Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, the Congo, Togo, and Gabon. In most of these countries the shift in orientation followed a military coup. A further 674,000,000 in India, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Ceylon, Kenya, and Ghana, which I have classified as "independent," have recently

moved into much closer dependence on the United States, so that their future as independent nations is now uncertain. Together with the U.S. client states and colonial dependencies, this brings to 1,140,000,000, or 48% of the (the number of people whose governments' policies are very heavily influenced by the United States. We must also remember that U.S. capital and military power now exert a strong influence on the colonies and client states of European powers (11% of the total), as well as on most of the remaining 8% of "neutral" states. In these circumstances, U.S. power can truly be said to be entrenched with more or less firmness throughout the underdeveloped world outside of the socialist states.

Countering this re-imposition of Western power, armed revolutionary movements now exist in at least 20 countries with a total population of 266,000,000. These countries are Guatemala, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay, Brazil, Honduras, Bolivia, Columbia, Angola, Mozambique, the Congo, Cameroon, Portuguese Guinea, Yemen, Southern Arabia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam. About 501,000,000 people live in seven other countries where unarmed revolutionary movements or parties have considerable support, namely India, Rhodesia, Southwest Africa, South Africa, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. In more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the underdeveloped world, therefore, socialist revolution against both native elites and Western dominance is a considered possibility, while in another $\frac{1}{3}$ it has already been accomplished. Even in the remaining relatively stable colonial, client, or neutral states, a majority of the people are getting poorer, and a small minority of rich are getting richer. Populations are increasing, discontent is widespread, and revolutionary struggles are quite possible within a decade or two. Whereas in the 1950's it looked to some of us as though much of the non-Western world might gain genuine political and economic independence of the West by peaceful means, this is no longer the case. Western dominance is continuing under new guises, even expanding and hardening. At the same time, revolution now begins to appear as the route by which underdeveloped societies may hope to gain freedom from Western controls.

In this revolutionary and proto-revolutionary world, anthropologists are beginning to be in difficulties. From the beginning, we have inhabited a triple environment, involving obligations first to the peoples we studied, second to our colleagues and our science, and third to the powers who employed us in universities or who funded our research. In many cases we seem now to be in danger of being torn apart by the conflicts between the first and third set of obligations, while the second set of loyalties, to our subject as an objective and humane endeavour, are being severely tested and jeopardized. On the one hand, part of the non-Western world is in revolt, especially against the United States government as the strongest and most counter-revolutionary of the Western powers. The war in Vietnam has, of course, exacerbated the non-Western sense of outrage, although the actual governments of most of these nations are so dependent on the United States that they soften their criticisms. On the other hand, anthropologists are becoming increasingly subject to restrictions, unethical temptations, and political controls from the United States government and its subordinate agencies, as Beals's (1967) report on problems of anthropological research and ethics amply shows. The question tends to become: what

does an anthropologist do who is dependent on a counter-revolutionary government in an increasingly revolutionary world? To complicate matters, into the arena has stepped a fourth and most vociferous public, namely students, who once imbibed knowledge peaceably, but who are now, because of their own crises, asking awkward questions about ethics, commitments, and goals.

There is little wonder that with all these demands many anthropologists bury themselves in their specialties or, if they *must* go abroad, seek out the remotest, least unstable tribe or village they can find. As Peter Worsley (1966) has recently pointed out, however, in a paper called "The End of Anthropology?" we shall eventually have to choose either to remain, or become, specialists who confine themselves to the cultures of small-scale pre-industrial societies, or else, bringing to bear all our knowledge of cultural evolution and of primitive social institutions, embark fully on the study of modern societies, including modern revolutions. If we take the former path, as our subject matter disappears, we shall become historians and retreat from the substantial work we have already done in contemporary societies. If we take the latter path—which is the one some of us must inevitably follow—we shall have to admit that our subject matter is increasingly the same as that of political scientists, economists, and sociologists. The only way that we can not admit this is by confining ourselves to studies of small segments of modern society; but as the scale of these societies widens, such studies are less and less justifiable theoretically or methodologically except within a framework of understanding of what is happening to the larger system. Anthropologists have, moreover, some right to demand of themselves that they do study the larger system as a totality, for they have 50 years of experience of analysing the interconnectedness of political, economic, and religious institutions within smaller-scale systems. While they must necessarily depend for much of their data on the other social sciences, anthropologists do have some historical claim to play a synthesizing role.

Unfortunately, we have I think a serious drawback in our own history which makes it very difficult for us to approach modern society as a single, interdependent world social system. This is that although we have worked for over 100 years in conquered societies, and although for at least 50 of them we have emphasized the interconnectedness of parts of social systems, we have virtually failed to study Western imperialism as a social system, or even adequately to explore the effects of imperialism on the societies we studied. Of late a few pioneer works have appeared which attempt this task, notably Worsley's (1964) book, The Third World. Wallerstein's (1966) collection, Social Change: The Colonial Situation, draws together useful extracts by social scientists and nationalist leaders over the past 20 years. Wolf's study of Mexico (1959), Steward's and others' of Puerto Rico (1956), Epstein's of politics in the Zambian copper-belt (1958), and a number of others also move in this general direction; but it is remarkable how few anthropologists have studied imperialism, especially its economic system.

It is true, of course, that anthropologists have made numerous studies of modern social change in pre-industrial societies, especially in local communities. They have, however, usually handled them through very general concepts:

"culture contact," "acculturation," "social change," "modernization," "urbanization," "Westernization," or "the folk-urban continuum." Force, suffering, and exploitation tend to disappear in these accounts of structural processes, and the units of study are usually so small that it is hard to see the forest for the trees. These approaches, in the main, have produced factual accounts and limited hypotheses about the impact of industrial cultures on pre-industrial ones in local communities, but have done little to aid understanding of the world distribution of power under imperialism or of its total system of economic relationships. Until recently there also has been, of course, a bias in the types of non-Western social units chosen for study, with primitive communities least touched by modern changes being preferred over the mines, cash-crop plantations, white settlements, bureaucracies, urban concentrations, and nationalist movements that have played such prominent roles in colonial societies.

Why have anthropologists not studied world imperialism as a unitary phenomenon? To begin to answer this question would take another article. I will merely suggest some possible lines of enquiry, namely: (1) the very process of specialization within anthropology and between anthropology and related disciplines, especially political science, sociology, and economics; (2) the tradition of individual fieldwork in small-scale societies, which at first produced a rich harvest of ethnography, but later placed constraints on our methods and theories; (3) our unwillingness to offend, by choosing controversial subjects, the governments that funded us; and (4) the bureaucratic, counter-revolutionary setting in which anthropologists have increasingly worked in their universities, which may have contributed to a sense of impotence and to the development of machine-like models.

It may be objected that I have ignored the large volume of post-war American writing in applied anthropology and in economic and political anthropology concerned with development. This work certainly exists, and some of it is fruitful. I would argue, however, that much of it springs from erroneous or doubtful assumptions and theories that are being increasingly challenged by social scientists in the new nations themselves. Among these assumptions are (1) that economic backwardness can be explained in terms of values and psychological characteristics of the native population; (2) that it is desirable to avoid rapid, disruptive changes; (3) that the anthropologist cannot take value-positions that oppose official policies; (4) that causation is always multiple; (5) that the local community is a suitable unit for development programs; (6) that the main process by which development occurs is diffusion from an industrial centre; and (7) that revolution is never the only practicable means toward economic advance.⁵ In general, applied and economic anthropology stemming from North America has assumed an international capitalist economy in its framework. The harsh fact seems to be, however, that in most countries of the underdeveloped world where private enterprise predominates, the living conditions of the majority are deteriorating and "take-off" is not occurring. If this is true, it will not be surprising if the intellectuals of these countries

⁵ For these and other criticisms, see Bonfil Batalla (1966), Onwuachi and Wolfe (1966), Stavenhagen (1966-67), and Frank (1967b).

reject the metropolitan nations' applied social science and seek remedies elsewhere.

There are of course already a large number of studies, indeed a whole literature, on Western imperialism, most although not all by writers influenced by Marx. In addition to the classic treatments by Hobson (1954), Lenin (1939), and Luxemburg (1951), Moon (1925), Townsend (1940), Williams (1944), Steinberg (1951), Baran (1957), and the anthropologist Mukherjee (1958) have provided outstanding examples of such work. More recent studies include, of course, Baran and Sweezy (1966), Nkrumah (1966), Dumont (1965, 1967), Fanon (1963, 1965), and Frank (1967a). Such books tend in America to be either ignored or reviewed cursorily and then dismissed. They rarely appear in standard anthropological bibliographies. I can only say that this American rejection of Marxist and other "rebel" literature, especially since the McCarthy period, strikes me as tragic. The refusal to take seriously and to defend as intellectually respectable the theories and challenges of these writers has to a considerable extent deadened controversy in our subject, as well as ruining the careers of particular individuals. It is heartening that in recent years the publications of Monthly Review Press, International Publishers, Studies on the Left, and other left-wing journals have become a kind of underground literature for many graduate students and younger faculty in the social sciences. Both orthodox social science and these Marxist-influenced studies suffer, however, from the lack of open confrontation and argument between their proponents. There are of course political reasons for this state of affairs, stemming from our dependence on the powers, but it is unfortunate that we have allowed ourselves to become so subservient to the detriment of our right of free enquiry and free speculation.

I should like to suggest that some anthropologists who are interested in these matters could begin a work of synthesis focusing on some of the contradictions between the assertions and theories of these non-American or Un-American writers and those of orthodox American social scientists, and choosing research problems that would throw light on these contradictions. For example:

(1) We might examine Frank's (1967c) argument, from United Nations figures, that per capita food production in non-Communist Asia, Africa, and Latin America has declined in many cases to below pre-war levels since 1960, whereas it has risen above pre-war levels in China and Cuba, in contrast to the common assumption in the United States that capitalist agricultural production in underdeveloped countries is poor, but socialist production is even poorer.

(2) We might develop a set of research problems around comparisons of the structure and efficiency of socialist and capitalist foreign aid. One might, for example, compare the scope and results of American economic and military aid to the Dominican Republic with those of Russian aid to Cuba. Although Americans cannot go freely to Cuba, it is conceivable that a European and an American, co-ordinating their research problems, might do such comparative work. In countries such as India, the UAR, or Algeria, comparable socialist and capitalist aid projects might be studied within the same locality.

(3) We might undertake comparative studies of types of modern inter-societal political and economic dominance which would help us to define and refine such concepts as

Southern Arabia? What are the types of peasantry and urban workers most likely to be involved in these revolutions? Are there typologies of leadership and organization? Why have some revolutions failed and others succeeded? How did it happen, for example, that some 1,000,000 Communists and their families and supporters were killed in 1966 in Indonesia with almost no indigenous resistance, and how does this affect the self-assessment and prospects of, say, the Left Communist Party in India?

I may be accused of asking for Project Camelot, but I am not. I am asking that we should do these studies in our way, as we would study a cargo cult or kula ring, without the built-in biases of tainted financing, without the assumption that counter-revolution, and not revolution, is the best answer, and with the ultimate economic and spiritual welfare of our informants and of the international community, rather than the short run military or industrial profits of the Western nations, before us. I would also ask that these studies be attempted by individuals or self-selected teams, rather than as part of the grand artifice of some externally stimulated master plan. Perhaps what I am asking is not possible any more in America. I am concerned that it may not be, that Americans are already too compromised, too constrained by their own imperial government. If that is so, the question really is how anthropologists can get back their freedom of enquiry and of action, and I suggest that, individually and collectively, we should place this first on the list.

imperialism, neo-colonialism, etc. How, for example, does Russian power over one or another of the East European countries compare with that of the United States over certain Latin American or Southeast Asian countries with respect to such variables as military coercion, the disposal of the subordinate society's economic surplus, and the relations between political elites? How does Chinese control over Tibet compare, historically, structurally, and functionally, with Indian control over Kashmir, Hyderabad, or the Naga Hills, and what have been the effects of these controls on the class structures, economic productivity, and local political institutions of these regions?

4) We might compare revolutionary and proto-revolutionary movements for what they can teach us about social change. In spite of obvious difficulties, it is possible to study some revolutions after they have occurred, or to study revolts in their early stages or after they have been suppressed (for a rare example of such a study, see Barnett and Njama 1966). There are, moreover, Westerners who live and travel with revolutionary movements; why are anthropologists seldom or never among them? We need to know, for example, whether there is a common set of circumstances under which left-wing and nationalist revolutions have occurred or have been attempted in recent years in Cuba, Algeria, Indq-China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, and Zanzibar. Are there any recognizable shifts in ideology or organization between these earlier revolts and the guerrilla movements now taking shape in Guatemala, Venezuela, Columbia, Angola, Mozambique, Laos, Thailand, Cameroon, Yemen, or

Comments

by OLGA AKHMANOVA ☆

Moscow, U.S.S.R. 15 v 68

The articles by Kathleen Gough, Gerald D. Berreman, and Gutorm Gjessing are all that could be desired: profound scholarship, clarity, brilliance, force, conviction! They cannot fail to bring it home to all anthropologists that the modern, changing world and its destinies are their immediate concern. One wonders if CA's voice is loud enough to be heard by those responsible for the present state of affairs.

by RALPH BEALS ☆

Los Angeles, Calif., U.S.A. 27 v 68

Berreman, Gjessing, and Gough have belatedly joined the Women's Anthropology Society of Washington, who, in 1885, called for study of their contemporary society—asking "What state, what town, what household is destitute of the choicest materials for our work?"—and urged attention to social problems in order to chant in noble unison, 'I count nothing that affects humanity foreign to myself.' That this was not empty rhetoric was demonstrated by the Society's co-operating in 1886 in perhaps the first housing

survey in the United States and then organizing and partially financing a project which built 808 low-cost housing units in Washington (Helm 1966).

Concern with contemporary society later was submerged as the very few anthropologists concentrated on "urgent anthropological research," the discovery and recording of the enormous variety of vanishing human cultures. After 1900, social action was largely confined to combating racist doctrines in the United States. A related movement was the re-examination and rejection of 19th-century cultural evolutionism, both as a justification of colonialism and as the foundation for "scientific history." The modern micro-evolutionism of Steward and others in the United States is dedicated to seeking recurrent uni-directional cultural processes within relatively short time spans and has little if any relation to 19th-century evolutionism. To attribute Leslie White's neo-evolutionary "culturology" to the influence of United States post-World War II global strategy is absurd. Not only do White's basic ideas antedate the war, but Opler (1961, 1962) has traced the remarkable parallelism in ideas and language between the writings of White and those of Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Bukharin, Lenin, Stalin, and other Marxist theorists on the foundations of historical materialism. Far from belong-

ing to history, 19th-century evolutionism lives on in "scientific history" and markedly influences the work of anthropologists in the Communist countries. (For a humanist's analysis of the inhumane consequences of "scientific history," see Camus 1956: 188-252.)

Perhaps one reason more specific social action programs were less popular among U.S. anthropologists after 1900 was the catastrophic effects of anthropological intervention in behalf of the American Indian. Alice Fletcher, acting in behalf of what the Omaha tribe believed was the best way of protecting their homes and lands and using the best anthropological arguments of the day, played an important role in the adoption by the United States Congress of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 (Helm 1966). It quickly became apparent that this probably was the single most damaging act of legislation for the American Indian ever adopted. With reason, many United States anthropologists came to doubt whether their knowledge of culture and society was adequate to proposing major anthropological solutions to social issues, although a great many were individually concerned with problems of social justice. It is true that social scientists have vastly improved their ability to make meaningful assertions about social issues and the consequences of policy decisions. Many have been doing so