

Dedication - Ken Post (1935-2017)

Monday 19 June 2017, by [WATERMAN Peter](#) (Date first published: 3 March 2017).

Ken has passed away March 11, 2017, at his 82nd birthday. This dedication was written before his death.

Dedication

To Ken Post (aka K. W. J. Post), 1935-[2017]) Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, with whom I shared almost all of my years there. He was in a hospice as I was drafting this. Ken, born down the Thames from London, in Chatham, was of working-class origin and one of those brilliant kids for whom Welfare-State Britain made entry to Cambridge University possible. Ken, who never got or bothered with a PhD, nonetheless wrote and published more than most of those with one, and – after a stormy academic-political adventures at the University of the West Indies – eventually landed up as a Professor at what was an institute of development studies *avant la lettre*, in The Hague. Here he would address shocked new students as ‘comrades’, but have generous attitudes towards these, comrades or not. He also helped save my neck when less-liberal colleagues wanted to shaft me. Ken later declared, on the basis of some ISS archive research, that he and I were amongst several colleagues on the hit list of a Rector who had been involved with the failed Dutch military attempt to restore colonialism in Indonesia after WW2. Our crime must have been in point out continuities between Dutch imperialism and ‘development cooperation’, with occasional reference to the Nazi occupation of The Netherlands during WW2.

Ken was one of the academics transformed by ‘1968’ into a Marxist. Whilst writing about social movements here, there and elsewhere, he long retained a Leninist attachment to the revolutionary state – something he and I disagreed about publicly. He nonetheless put his name, his home address and his money into my Libertarian-Marxist Newsletter of International Labour Studies (1980s). Although Ken identified himself with the Left and with the social movements he wrote about, and was expelled from Jamaica for his alleged ties to a Rastafari-linked movement, he was no more inclined to join a party than to identify himself with any particular Marxist academic tendency.

I have had difficulty finding a halfway adequate list of Ken’s publications – never mind his unpublished projects. Such would have been of little or no interest to him. But I recall him writing about post-independence politics in Nigeria, a labour uprising in Colonial Jamaica, about Yugoslavia, about the revolution in Vietnam, about Marxism. Indeed, his last major book was, I think, the one on Regaining Marxism, which was a basic re-thinking of Marxism in the light of the failure of Third World revolutions, and the collapse of Communist states. See this review [[1](#)]. He even wrote and self-published (printed and at considerable expense) a book about another English eccentric, the Satanist, Aleister Crowley.

Ken was an overweight child and then an obese adult, perhaps for this reason having difficult relations with colleagues and even with friends. Short, overweight, unkempt, badly dressed and opting for a tiny slumlike apartment that his mother would not have tolerated, he also had difficult and limited relations with the women in his life. Ken could be warm, witty and and wise – all in the working-class ‘Estuary English’ that he had never had any interest in hiding. His draft autobiography

was so lacking in his customary wit and self-deprecation that it made for heavy reading, though it should really still be published. He must have put it on a back burner loaded with other draft manuscripts or projects. It is to be hoped that his published and unpublished work will be placed in an appropriate archive so that he might receive the kind of public respect and admiration that he actually never himself really sought.

Peter Waterman

P.S.

* Compilation3-020317, Updated: 030317.

Footnotes

[1] <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/030981689806400123>