

**THE  
MARXIST**

No:52

PATRIOTISM AND  
INTERNATIONALISM

A BANK RAID

TRADE

RACE, CULTURE, CLASS

SOVIET STYLE PLANNING  
- A NEGATIVE EXAMPLE

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MARXIST**

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## Patriotism and Internationalism

The word 'nationalism' is used as a synonym for both patriotism, and chauvinism or jingoism.

The linking of that word with socialism by Hitler was an example of how two words, both of which were highly emotive in their own right in the Germany of the 1920s and 30s, could be joined together to become a powerful banner around which to unite the German people.

The resurgence of nationalism on the territory of the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe since the collapse of those 'socialist' states provide other examples of how nationalist sentiments can be used for reactionary ends. The vicious civil war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia has, in the minds of many people, served to confirm the view that nationalist sentiments are deplorable and politically reactionary.

Progressive people in imperialist countries have always been aware of how patriotism has been used to serve reactionary ends, but it must also be remembered that it has also been used to mobilise people for just causes.

One example was Winston Churchill's famous speech, ("We will fight them on the beaches"); another was how the Soviet government mobilised the people of Russia under the slogan of Patriotic War. Another was the slogan used by the Communist Party of China to mobilise the Chinese people against Japanese invaders, and yet another, how patriotism unified the people of Viet Nam in their struggle against French and American aggression.

Patriotism is not only about defending the territorial integrity of the nation, it is also about being proud of the contributions that it has made to the development of human culture.

Patriotism springs from a sense of common identity and what are perceived to be common interests, but it also has a class content which is revealed when one asks the question, which class represents the interests of the nation? (the mass of the people).

Bourgeois 'patriotism' is jingoistic because bourgeois relationships are inherently antagonistic. It is used to mobilise the mass of the people to take the side of their own capitalist class when it is in conflict with the bourgeoisie of other countries.

In retrospect it can be seen that those on the left of the political spectrum in the imperialist countries have allowed the capitalist class to go unchallenged as the patriotic class, the defender of the nation.

The Left have deserted the ideological battlefield by denigrating the whole concept of patriotism.

### THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

The domestic struggle of oppressed against oppressor takes place within the context of the already existing, historically developed culture, which is itself partly a product of earlier class struggles. As a consequence, the oppressor classes have their heroes, and the oppressed have theirs. On occasions we have a common hero because throughout history there are periods in which the rulers actually, even if momentarily, represented the interests of the whole nation.

For example, Chaucer played a key part in re-establishing Anglo-Saxon as the language of the people of England, therefore he is honoured by all classes of the population.

Thomas More is honoured by socialists, not because he was an Archbishop of Canterbury, but because he placed himself on the side of the oppressed, those who were, in his day, being driven from the land so that it could be turned over to sheep farming. He wrote Utopia, a book which not only condemned the evictions, but also painted a picture of a land in which poverty had been abolished.

We honour Wat Tyler, John Ball, Jack Straw, and others who led peasant revolts, and the soldiers who took part in the Putney debates during the English civil war. They helped Cromwell create his New Model Army for the purpose of establishing a republic, but refused to serve when he invaded Ireland. We honour the Chartists, who led the struggle to make the franchise universal, the Tolpuddle Martyrs and others who fought for the right of workers to combine in their own interests, the feminist movement epitomised by women like Annie Besant and the Pankhursts. We pay homage to those who fought against conscription during the first world war and against imperialist attempts to crush the newly formed Soviet state. We honour the pioneers of the Shop Stewards Movement and those who organised the mass trespasses during the 1930s which challenged the right of big landowners to deny access on foot to 'their' land.

These movements, and the rights which resulted from them represent the national tradition of which we have a right to be proud.

Those 'left wingers' who try to disassociate themselves from 'the nation', also disassociate themselves from that part of our

culture which belongs to us.

Although European culture in general has its origins in ancient Greece, national variations have occurred as a result of the differing historical experience of its peoples.

As a consequence, the form which the class struggle takes varies from country to country, therefore the people of each country must find their own road to socialism.

The saying that 'workers have no country' is only true in the sense that they do not own the land and other means of production, but nations exist and the working class is part of the nation.

Each successive ruling class has made its contribution to the cultural development of the nation, and the working class must also place its own unique cultural stamp on the culture of our nation if socialism is to have its roots in the people.

### THE NATIONAL STATE.

The national state, or the so-called nation state, represents the interests of a particular class within the nation, but in order to gain political power, that class must make it appear as though its own class interests are synonymous with those of the nation, (the majority of the people), as a whole. Indeed, as Marx observes, each ruling class in history has, for a short period of time, actually been representative of the interests of the nation. But once it gains power it creates the conditions for a new social division of labour and hence for the emergence of a new class or classes whose interests are contradictory to its own.

From then on it ceases to represent the interests of the nation as a whole.

The interests of the rising capitalist class coincided with the interests of the nation because they demanded a colossal expansion of the productive forces of society. The bourgeois democratic state, the best framework in which they could expand the productive forces, marked a great social and political advance, a fact that was recognised by both Marx and Engels.

The interests of the capitalist class came to be regarded as synonymous with the interests of the nation.

Now, powerful sections of the capitalist class in European countries express the view that the concept of nation and nationality is out of date, and that the national interest must be subordinate to 'the broader European interest'.

In this respect they are reflecting the interests of the

European-based transnational corporations and finance houses which need an expanded internal market so as to grow strong enough to challenge, on an international scale, those that are based in the U.S. and Japan.

The logic of this position is that European capital must also present a united political front to the rest of the world, i.e. political decisions must be made at a European rather than a national level.

It is by no means certain that this idea of a united Europe will ever come to fruition, but the working class should oppose this attempt to form a European imperialist bloc, for that is what it amounts to.

The resistance to full economic and political integration put up by the British ruling class reflects its fear that such a Europe will be dominated by the German capitalist class, an outcome that could not possibly benefit the British working class, or that of other countries for that matter.

In that respect, the interests of those sections of the British ruling class which are opposed to further European integration coincide with the interests of the British working class, therefore, on that issue, there is a need for the working class to support the 'Euro-sceptics', while at the same time becoming more resolute in the struggle to protect the interests of the international working class against the depredations of British capital.

Both europhiles and eurosceptics agree on the necessity of internationalising trade and competing with each other to reduce labour costs by increasing competition between workers on an international scale.

Capitalist internationalism is for the purpose of intensifying its exploitation of the workers in every country by increasing the competition between them on an international scale, and the reason for this is quite clear - capitalism can continue to expand only as long as it can keep costs falling at a faster rate than prices on a world scale.

Working class internationalism springs from the recognition that the working people of all lands have a common interest in creating a world in which the exploitation of man by man no longer exists.

#### COMMAND STRUCTURES.

The activities of each transnational corporation and financial institution is directed by a very small group of managers who have

absolute power to make decisions that are untrammelled by governments and shareholders alike. They have the power to conduct their activities like military operations.

The working class cannot hope to achieve that kind of command structure on a national, let alone an international scale. Any notion that workers can establish, on an international scale, the degree of ideological and organisational unity necessary to counter, head on, the machinations of international capital is idealist in the extreme.

That is a matter of realism, not defeatism. It is the preference for idealistic 'solutions' to practical problems that gives rise to disillusionment and defeatism.

Although the activities of individual corporations are conducted like military operations, the relations between them are inherently antagonistic, and it is for the workers of each country to exploit the contradictions between international capitals as best they can, and cooperate when and where the opportunity arises.

There is an obvious need for the working class of each country to learn from the experience of others and, where appropriate, draw general conclusions, but the idea of a central directing body which can dictate policy, strategy, or tactics to national units is impractical for the simple reason that experience has shown that it does not work.

The general rule should be that the working class of each country should refuse to be drawn into imperialist adventures by its own capitalist class. That is the best kind of support that can be given to the workers of other countries, other than aid projects for specific purposes.

#### THE EUROPEAN UNION.

For all the high minded aims ascribed to the conception by most of the establishment politicians, it is an imperialist bloc in the process of creation.

It represents a recognition by European-based capitals, that if they are to survive in the face of competition from the U.S., and an Asian bloc led by Japan, then contradictions between themselves must be moderated through some form of regulation so that competition will be on the basis of 'a level playing field'; hence the Social Chapter.

Laws which limit the length of the working day and year, set a minimum hourly rate of pay, lay down safety regulations in the workplace, and minimum environmental standards, all need to be

supported and improved upon. But concessions 'from above' carry with them the danger of weakening the resolve of the working class to carry through the struggle on its own behalf through mass actions, by strengthening the legalistic tendencies that are encouraged by the majority of trade union leaders and social democrats.

The British T.U.C., which was initially opposed to membership of the EEC, changed its stance in order, so it thought, to bring the provisions of the Social Chapter into British law without the necessity for industrial struggle. When the Tory Government opted out of the Social Chapter the TUC limited itself to name calling instead of mobilising workers to demand that those provisions within it which could be of benefit to the working class be incorporated into British law. In this way they could have both had the cake and eaten it, they could have distanced themselves from the European integrationists while using the provisions contained in the Social Chapter as a focus for struggle against the Tory government.

On a world scale, large scale capital in the US, Europe, and Japan aim to regulate competition between them in ways which will enable them collectively to increase their exploitation of the world's peoples, hence their desperation to conclude the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, (GATT).

The more that international trade is integrated in its present pattern, the less possibility there will be that the working class in any individual country will be able to become the dominant class in that society. Therefore priority must be given to disrupting the present pattern of international trade so as to allow each country more freedom of action in determining its own economic priorities.

The struggle for national independence and the right of all countries to self-determination was smothered by the joint efforts of Western and Soviet imperialism, and weakened by the victory of the capitalist-roaders in China, but the objective need for such a struggle still exists and it should not be baulked just because it is difficult.

Although it may seem paradoxical, working class internationalism can best be expressed by the workers in each country striving to make their country as economically self-reliant as possible, and providing mutual assistance to each other to achieve that end.

This aim falls short of establishing socialism in one country, but it will benefit the working class world wide if the conditions

can be created in which the workers in each country are better able to influence their own conditions of life so that they can move towards socialism in accordance with their own historically determined conditions and traditions.

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### A BANK RAID

The world produces more food than ever before and most of the scientific credit for this must go to the eighteen international agricultural research centres (IARCs) situated mainly in Third World countries.

They were set up in the 1950s and have, since then, played an extremely important role in efforts to meet the ever-increasing demand for food. These centres are, in fact, seed banks which provide the genetic resources from which to breed new crops and are presently funded by developed capitalist countries to whom the material is freely available.

For example, Australia has benefited to the tune of \$2.2 billion in increased yields of grain since 1974; Italy by \$300m per year through increases in the yields of durum wheat for its pasta production, and one fifth of the value of the American rice crop is attributable to genes from the centres.

Little of this cash goes to the laboratories or to the developing countries which contribute most of the genes.

The IARCs hold the genes in trust and it is not clear who owns the property rights to them or who can benefit from the intellectual property rights taken out on varieties produced from them by genetic engineers.

With the development of biotechnology these seed banks have become potentially high money makers, hence the intense struggle for control over them.

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro two years ago, the IARCs were called upon to find a way of placing their genetic resources under the control of governments.

In May of this year the IARCs signed an agreement with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation, (the FAO), to give control to a body known as the International Commission on Plant Genetic Resources that the FAO sponsors and in which every member country has a vote.

However, this plan was rejected by the Consultative Group for Agricultural Research which represents the group of original donors

from the rich countries, but which has hitherto exercised little control over the laboratories.

Perhaps by coincidence, these donors are expected to fund only \$215 million of the \$270 million required by the IARCs for core research this year, and as a result they face a cash crisis.

By now you will have realized that the bank about to be robbed is the seed bank.

Enter the robber, not armed with a sawn-off shot gun and wearing a balaclava, but in pin striped trousers, clutching a brief case, a vice-president of another kind of bank, the World Bank.

He promised much needed aid to the IARCs, but also proposed that centralised committees, headed by the World Bank, be set up to control funding.

The problem is that, if the World Bank controls agricultural research, it can effectively determine the shape of world agriculture for the immediate future.

This is particularly worrying, given that Bank's backing for economic reforms in developing countries which favour cash crops rather than subsistence agriculture.

The stance taken by the Bank is to be expected because its members vote according to their contributions, thus ensuring that it is dominated by rich countries, especially the U.S. and most of those countries have a vested interest in integrating the economies of Third World countries into the current international trading system.

On the other hand, under the deal the IARCs signed with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Intergovernmental Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, a body on which Third World countries are in the majority, would decide how the IARCs and gene donors would be compensated.

The body which controls the finance, effectively determines the pattern of agricultural research and hence the shape of world agriculture in the future.

Thus the choice is between sustainable development for the Third World on the one hand and cash crops for international capital on the other.

The struggle to prevent control of the IARCs passing to the World Bank is a good example of what proletarian internationalism can mean in practice.

How many Marxist Leninists who call for solidarity with the world's oppressed will be willing to abandon leftist rhetoric long enough to take a stand on this issue?

## Trade

Spokesmen of the main political parties vie with each other in claiming that they alone have the economic policy which will make British industry more competitive in world markets. The debates between them are 'fierce' by their standards, but contain nothing of substance because the differences between them are merely technical. For them, the central issue is how to reduce the cost of production of goods manufactured in Britain. Why it is necessary to compete in this cost-cutting exercise is never questioned.

That all trade must be conducted according to the principle of competitive advantage is now regarded as a self evident truth that is challenged only by economic illiterates.

There was a time when trade meant an exchange of goods on the basis of mutual benefit. Countries traded things that they could produce for things that they could not, but that was long ago. Now, items made in Britain are exported to (say) Germany, and almost identical items are exported from Germany to Britain, all in the name of freedom of choice. A crazy system? Not for the capitalist class for whom the primary purpose of trade is not the exchange of goods, but the making of profit.

Trade is conducted on the basis of competitive advantage, that is to say, the successful company is the one that can, by whatever means, undercut its competitors and gain a bigger share of the world market.

The main argument put forward by the advocates of this system is that competition makes for greater economic efficiency as each capitalist is always under unrelenting pressure from the system on a world scale to reduce his costs of production.

This is as true on a world scale as it is at the level of a nation, but it is only true with respect to capitalist enterprises. It is not necessarily true with respect to the societies in which they operate.

Any social benefits that may accrue are purely fortuitous spin offs.

The success of any capitalist enterprise, and the same is true of the system as a whole, depends on its ability to keep costs falling to at least the same rate as prices. From the early 1950s until the late 1970s the system as a whole was eminently successful in this respect. This was achieved partly by making production more capital intensive, a process that was facilitated by a relative fall in the prices of the means of production.

An additional reduction in costs of production over the system as a whole was achieved by transferring production from high labour cost countries to low labour cost ones. This was made more profitable by the fall in oil prices in real terms over almost the whole period, thus reducing the relative cost of transportation.

One of the consequences of this was that what were formerly agricultural economies became more industrialised, and some of them are now themselves competitors on the world market in their own right.

As new producers came into the market the world system came up against the problem of the market failing to expand at a rate sufficient to absorb the volume of commodities produced. The direct consequence of this is sharper competition and an even more intensive drive to reduce costs.

### **ON BEING COMPETITIVE**

So as to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary at this point to stress that the currently high level of unemployment in both Europe and the U.S. is not entirely or even mainly due to cheap imports from the Far East. However, this phenomenon highlights the way in which capital is shifted around in order to increase the return on capital by intensifying competition between workers on a global scale.

One glaring example is provided by the state of the British coal industry. British deep mined coal could not compete with imports from Nicaragua and Columbia, or with state subsidised coal from other countries. Some of the pits closed by the Coal Board have been re-opened under private ownership, with pay and conditions that are even worse than was generally the case prior to nationalisation, all in the name of improving competitiveness. Meanwhile, miners in the countries just mentioned continue to exist at subsistence level.

The emasculation of the trade union movement in Britain was a necessary first step in the direction of 'making British industry more competitive'. Now safety regulations in mines, factories, and on the railways have been whittled away or completely rescinded.

The convergence of wage costs between countries that is supposed to come about as the result of this competition between workers will always be on the basis of the lowest that is politically feasible.

It can be seen that the problem is not simply one of fighting against cheap imports, but of the knock-on effect as governments

create conditions which enable employers to cut wages more easily 'in order to be more competitive'.

The practice of using child labour in industrial occupations is endemic in some Third World countries, and, according to the International Labour Organisation, the practice of substituting child for adult labour is on the increase. A programme screened on Channel Four in May of this year, revealed the tip of the iceberg. The programme showed films of children working in deplorable conditions in India, Columbia, and other countries, and even in the U.S. where Californian farmers employ itinerant Mexicans, including their children, on terms that were generally thought to apply only in Third World countries.

The programme refrained from mentioning that cases involving the employment of child labour in industrial occupations are now occurring here in Britain. At the beginning of this year the Factory Inspectorate reported that it had discovered a factory in Bradford which was employing child labour on a consistent basis. It further reported that the fire exits were kept locked in order to prevent the children escaping.

These are some of the inevitable consequences of trade conducted according to the principle of competitive advantage.

But there is more to it than that.

### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

It has always been considered to be good business practice for a company to go all out to make a profit by disregarding the social consequences that arise as the result of the production process. Capitalist development from its earliest days has always resulted in environmental degradation and, until fairly recently, it either went unchallenged or was regarded as a local phenomenon. The pollution of the water in a particular river, or the air in a particular town, was of concern only to the inhabitants of that locality. As the middle classes came to realise that they could not escape by moving uphill or upstream, the realisation dawned that pollution is everyone's problem and the modern environmental movement was born.

As a result of this growth in environmental and ecological awareness, governments are being pressurised to do something about it by 'making the polluter pay'.

Opposition to this principle comes from industry on the grounds that the additional costs involved make their products uncompetitive with those produced in countries with lower or non-

existent pollution standards. In addition to dragging their feet in the implementation of such controls that are imposed, wherever possible they transfer production to countries where such controls either do not exist or are not rigorously applied. This adds to the pressure to continue with environmental degradation at home.

#### **TRADE IN TOXIC WASTE.**

Countries that belong to the Basle Convention, which was signed in 1989 under the auspices of the UN Environment Programme, have agreed to stop all exports of toxic waste to developing countries and Eastern Europe by the end of 1997. This was at the request of developing countries but the European Union says it will continue to export some types of waste which the Basle Convention claims are toxic but which the EU claims are safe.

Denmark and the Netherlands supported the ban but the European Commission, backed strongly by Britain and Germany, took the position that industrial nations should be allowed to export waste for recycling to any country that agreed to take it. In other words, any country that is so desperately poor that it grasps at straws, or whose arm can be twisted. The word 'recycling' gives the operation a 'green' tinge, but most of the waste is either just dumped or recycled under unsafe conditions.

After what were apparently stormy arguments in Brussels, EU Ministers finally agreed to ban exports of waste for recycling by the end of 1997, but the E.U. is now trying to get around it by arguing that some of the wastes on the 'Basle' List are not really hazardous at all.

According to Greenpeace, Britain shipped 578 tonnes of lead waste, including lead-acid batteries, to Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bulgaria and South Korea in 1992. Australia and Japan exported 47,000 tonnes of lead-acid batteries to South East Asia in the same year. Smelting the batteries causes severe pollution and health problems. 'Free' trade is a means of off-loading the consequences of our profligate society onto the shoulders of those least able to bear them.

#### **THE DISTRIBUTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES.**

Any rational economic system must take full account of the obvious fact that the earth's natural resources are finite. It follows from this that, in the interests of what we would call natural justice, these resources should be shared on an equitable basis.

The main feature of the present system is its underpinning of the present inequalities by virtue of the fact that trade and its institutions are dominated by the richest nations which consume about two fifths of the world's natural resources although their combined populations are only about one third of the world's total.

After nearly fifty years of fairly consistent economic growth disparities in income between the richer and poorer countries have actually increased. According to the the World Bank, 15% of the world's population have an annual income of \$21,000 per head, 85% have an annual income of \$1,000 - just one of the proofs that the present system of international trade actually syphons off wealth from the poorer to the richer.

So much for the universal benefits of economic growth.

#### **EFFICIENCY**

The capitalist mode of production has proved itself to be the most efficient ever known when it is measured in terms of the labour time taken to produce individual commodities, but that measure can no longer be taken as the sole criterion of efficiency.

For example, energy efficiency is important for two main reasons: one is that the reserves of carbon fuels are finite, the other is the pollution caused by burning them.

Probably the biggest wastage occurs in the field of transport of goods. Some transportation is unavoidable, but some is entirely unnecessary.

For instance, consider the wastage of energy incurred when coal is transported to Britain from half way across the world, although coal is present in large quantities here. In addition, trade between industrially developed countries, (which accounts for over half of world trade in commodities), involves the simultaneous import and export of essentially the same goods.

Such a colossal waste of energy warrants the imposition of a huge tax on international transportation to pay for the ecological damage that it causes.

The well publicised, but now largely forgotten jamboree that took place in Rio de Janero a few years back did not even have that subject on its agenda.

#### **THE REGULATION OF TRADE.**

Every country, if it is to be a viable economic unit, must be able to balance its imports with its exports. In view of the competitive nature of capitalist trade relations, governments must



always place the emphasis on exports, thus committing itself to political action in support of its own capitalist class in ventures overseas.

As competition for markets becomes sharper, conflicts between governments become more likely.

The aggregate effect of these contradictions is to make the world system increasingly unstable, hence the need from the capitalist point of view to try to regulate competition between the transnationals, (another level playing field).

#### **THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE.**

GATT was a treaty signed in 1947 which had as its stated purpose the promotion of trade by means of the reduction, and eventual elimination, of tariffs and import quotas, hardly a level playing field for a country trying to break free of economic imperialism.

Seven years ago, at a meeting in Uruguay, the signatories agreed on the need for a revision of its rules and regulations. Negotiations dragged on until, in desperation, January 1994 was set as the deadline for the conclusion of what became known as the Uruguay Round. The outfit will now be known as the World Trade Organisation.

These new Rules and Regulations actually tighten the grip of the transnationals over world trade. There are now clauses concerned with the protection of 'intellectual property'. Practically every new scientific discovery, be it in the field of health, agriculture, or whatever, is now patented by one or other of the transnational corporations, and their permission must be sought if it is to be used anywhere in the world. If poor countries want to use them, they must either pay up or do without them, even though their use could make the difference between abject poverty and a reasonable level of consumption.

The trade promoted by the WTO is of the kind which allows the rich countries to grow richer at the expense of the poorer ones. Furthermore it keeps them permanently in thrall to imperialism.

In the run up to the final agreement, government officials and others asserted that completion was essential if world economic growth was to take place in the future, and that this could result in the creation of many thousands of new jobs.

In a world where the shadow of unemployment looms over every working class household the argument that such and such an

adjustment to the system will create more jobs obviously has its appeal. Tory, Labour, Liberal Democrat all propound the notion that trade creates jobs as though it were a self evident truth.

The fact is that trade, a simple exchange of commodities, cannot create jobs, although it can bring about changes in the division of labour within and between the countries concerned.

The purpose of capitalist trade is to accumulate capital, to make a profit. The exchange of commodities is but a means to that end. To put it in global terms, the purpose of capitalist trade is to conduct it on such a basis as to ensure that the costs of production of the major corporations are made to fall at a faster rate than prices, thus counteracting the tendency for the general rate of profit to fall.

Competition between the three major Imperialist trade blocs is bound to get sharper and as a consequence the downward pressure on wages in all countries will intensify, and so will the danger of imperialist war.

The more that we get sucked into the competitive syndrome, the more likely are we to get sucked into an imperialist war. The only way to get off the treadmill is to do all we can to break up the present pattern of international trade and replace it with one based on national self reliance and mutually advantageous trade relations.

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#### **FIGHTING FOR A SHARE OF THE GRAVY.**

In response to a great deal of criticism, it was proposed to the European Parliament that restrictions should be placed on 'political tourism', the racket whereby MEPs, their wives, husbands, secretaries, interpreters, go on all expenses paid trips overseas to meet other parliamentarians.

The 1993 budget for delegations outside the European Union was more than £3 million, excluding the cost of back up staff.

The proposal was defeated by Labour Party MEPs on the grounds that it would be unfair for some of them to miss the chance of foreign travel.

No wonder that the Labour Party did an about turn on British membership of the E.U.

Corruption by any other name ....

## Race, Culture, Class

Despite all the anti-racist laws, the activities of government funded organisations such as the Committee for Racial Equality, the general anti-racist stance of the main political parties, and proclamations by religious bodies, what are referred to as 'racist attitudes' still persist.

Racial prejudice is reprehensible from a purely moral point of view, but even more importantly from a working class standpoint, it is divisive. Workers respond more readily to the latter argument because it appeals to their self-interest; the moral argument reinforces it.

Although racism must never be condoned, grievances expressed in racialist terms must not be dismissed out of hand.

Sometimes the host population in a particular area feels aggrieved because of the way housing, for example, is allocated. If, after investigation, those grievances are found to have some basis in fact, then attempts must be made to remove the cause of the grievances instead of lambasting the people as racist, as is more often the case, and thus driving them into the hands of fascists.

Is it right that people who have left their homes overseas should have a better chance of being classed as in urgent need of accommodation than someone whose family has lived in the area for generations and who are living in overcrowded or sub-standard accommodation?

The indigenous working class has its own ideas of justice and injustice and they should be taken into account at all times.

We should be critical of the antics of political opportunists who uncritically support the demands put forward by self-styled 'spokesmen' for ethnic minorities in the hope of gaining their political support. The antipathy that this arouses within the indigenous population is often expressed in racialist terminology and tends to inflame racism.

When people are physically assaulted solely on account of their racial characteristics, then they have the clear duty to protect themselves, but not to retaliate in the same way.

In a completely different context, the I.R.A. provides a model in this respect. The U.D.F. attacks Catholics just because they are Catholics, but the I.R.A. only attacks Protestant paramilitaries and the forces of the state. It does not respond in kind.

The elimination of racism is a long term problem.

The notion of 'superior' and 'inferior' races goes back many

thousands of years, so those who seek to find the roots of racialism in modern imperialism are on a wild goose chase.

The historical roots lie in the need of particular societies at a particular stage in their development to justify the exploitation of people of other societies. Modern imperialism was a relative newcomer in the field and its theoretical justification was more 'scientific' than those of its predecessors.

In the nineteenth century the polygenist theory held sway. According to this theory humans are classified as Negroid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid, with each of them branching off the evolutionary tree in that order. The Caucasoids, being the last to emerge, were deemed to be the most advanced.

These views were widely held by anthropologists and went virtually unchallenged in the period between the two world wars.

An example of this is contained in a collection of essays by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, a well respected anthropologist. They were first printed in the Thinkers Library, (a generally progressive outfit), in 1932 and reprinted as late as 1946:

'History points the great lesson that some races marched on in civilisation while others have stood still or fallen back, and we should partly look for an explanation of this in differences in intellectual and moral powers between such tribes as the native Americans and Africans, and the Old World nations who overmatch them .... This fits in with what history teaches us of the less development of the brain in the Australian and African than in the European.'

Tylor's reference to 'the less development of the brain in Africans and Australians' seems to be based on research at the time which purported to show that the average weight of the brain is less in Negroes, Australoids, and Pygmies than Mongoloids, and in all of them it is smaller than that of the Caucasoids.

This kind of reasoning carries little credence these days, for a number of reasons. In the first place, even if actual size was a relevant factor, it would be so only in relation to total body weight. Secondly, averages of these kinds are always suspect because of variations within races, and differences in brain size between individuals of the same race do not seem to be reflected in different levels of intelligence.

### INTELLIGENCE.

A pseudo science sprung up which purported to prove that a link existed between race and intelligence by subjecting individuals

of different races to the same series of tests and then classifying the results according to race.

The results purported to show that intelligence varied according to race, with white skinned people being the top scorers. It was later discovered that the person who conducted these experiments, the late Professor Burt, had falsified the results so as to make them fit in with his preconceived ideas.

Intelligence testing has fallen into disrepute, largely because of the inability of its practitioners to define the nature of intelligence in such a way as would enable them to construct a single set of tests.

From the standpoint of dialectical materialism, the only practical definition of intelligence that we can think of is the ability to solve problems of both a practical and theoretical nature, to relate theory to practice.

It must be said, in passing, that individuals vary in their capacity to sort out problems. Absolute equality does not exist in the real world because of the genetic differences between any two individuals. No two individuals are exactly the same, each is unique. But although intelligence varies between individuals, there are no grounds for believing that there are variations between races.

If, as we suggest, intelligence is related to the ability to solve problems, then the kind of intelligence that will develop will depend upon the kind of problems that individuals are required to resolve. That in turn depends upon the kind of society in which they live because each is faced with its own specific contradictions.

It follows that individuals reared in different societies get used to solving the kind of problems thrown up by their particular society, but when faced with the kind of 'tests' which relate to a different society they may be unjustifiably regarded as 'thick'. However, experience shows that after living in a different set of social conditions for a period of time, most individuals acquire the type of intelligence required to meet the new problems presented.

Of course, the old saying that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' still applies. Older people generally find it harder to adapt to new circumstances than younger ones.

A third string to the racialist bow is that Europeans proved their superiority when they led the way in industrialisation and scientific discovery during the nineteenth century.

Those who take that attitude fail to take into account the

fact that this was only possible on the basis of the scientific and technological groundwork laid by other, non-European societies.

Europeans were not always at the forefront of civilisation.

Advanced civilisations existed in Egypt, China, India, and the Middle East when west Europeans were still at a very primitive level of culture.

Fairly recent discoveries in the field of genetics underpins conclusions reached on the basis of fossil evidence gathered over the past fifty years or so to provide conclusive evidence that all modern humans have a common ancestry.

There are differences of opinion as to whether modern homo sapiens actually originated in Africa, or whether we evolved out of a type of homo which came out of Africa much earlier. But either way there is no doubt that we are all of the same species, that we all come from the same ancestral stock.

In the twenty thousand years or so since modern humans superseded earlier types of homo, skeletons show that physically we have hardly changed at all, except as the result of inbreeding due to geographical isolation and adaptation to particular climatic conditions.

The most obvious of these adaptations is the change in pigmentation of the skin. This is greater in regions where the rays of the sun are strongest, so our original ancestors undoubtedly had black skins. But, as some moved out of Africa into less sunny climates, natural selection favoured those with lighter skins, the reason being that the high degree of pigmentation that is beneficial in hot countries is detrimental to people who live in more moderate climates because it inhibits the ability of the body to produce vitamin D.

Proof of this is shown in the fact that children born of African parents who live in countries such as Sweden are more prone to rickets, (a disease caused by a deficiency of vitamin D), than children born of indigenous parents. Additional intake of vitamin D solves the problem.

Although the incidence of different blood groups varies between populations, all blood groups are present in all populations, and the life of a white racist may be saved as the result of a transfusion of blood taken from, for instance, an African or a Pakistani. Conversely, the life of a black racist may be saved by blood taken from a Scandinavian.

We repeat - all humans living today come from the same ancestral stock. The physical differences between the different

.. races can be explained as being the result of minor adaptations to particular climatic conditions, coupled with inbreeding.

The foregoing are rational arguments that may not cut much ice with rabid racists, but nevertheless we should never shun rational argument because name calling is easier. Furthermore, with an eye to the future, we need to bring pressure to bear so that the subject of human evolution becomes part of the school curriculum from a very early age. Then children will grow up with the knowledge that racism is bunk.

#### **RACE AND CULTURE.**

Although few academics would now endorse the views expressed by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, there is a fairly widespread, although unthinking, assumption that there is a causal connection between race and culture. This problem is exacerbated by indiscriminate use of the word 'ethnic'.

The dictionary definition only serves to confuse matters:

'Relating to or characteristic of a human group having racial, linguistic, religious, and certain other traits in common'. (Collins dictionary).

This definition confuses traits that are encoded in our genes, and cultural traits that are not. In order to make this distinction clearer, we need to show that they are the result of two different processes of development.

#### **BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION**

Biological evolution takes place as the result of natural selection, a process which assumes that the environment is imposed and that organisms must adapt to it if they are to survive.

Individuals cannot adapt in this way because their genetic make up is determined by the genes which they receive from each parent at the moment of conception, and remains virtually unchanged throughout their lifetime, therefore natural selection can only operate with regard to populations. Those individuals whose genetic structure has the greatest survival potential will tend to multiply while others will die off, thus, over a period of time, changing the genetic character of the population as a whole.

The transitions from a quadrupedal ape to an upright walking one, then to one that possessed highly manipulative forelimbs, and then to one which retained these attributes, but also possessed a larger brain, then to one which possessed a larger forebrain, were each the result of cumulative natural selection. That is to say,

small, infinitesimal changes in populations created the upright walking ape, then a similar process took place through a series of stages, with modern humans as the end product.

This entire process took place by means of natural selection, a process that is independent of either human or divine will. It was not pre-ordained, it was the result of a chance concatenation of circumstances.

#### **CULTURE**

On the other hand, culture is entirely the product of human mental and physical labour. Divine intervention played no part in that, either.

Here we use the word to describe or refer to the whole gamut of human activity, which includes the mode of production, language, economic, social and political institutions, customs, social laws, scientific and artistic creations, ideas, philosophies, moral values, the social structure, and so on.

Culture develops principally out of the struggle to make nature serve human ends, therefore its basis must be the means used to physically change nature - the kind of tools used and, closely linked, knowledge of the materials found in the natural world, the means of labour, and the objects of labour.

In order to engage in labour people must cooperate with each other, establish some kind of social relations. In order to understand the natural world, scientific methods of investigation must be developed. Alongside the attempt to physically change nature through labour there is the attempt to get nature to do human bidding by magic and a belief in the supernatural. It is probable that this was the original purpose of art in all its forms. Later, fear of the supernatural was used by the first ideologists, the priests, to get the masses to do their bidding.

Therefore, when we say that culture develops out of the struggle to make nature serve human ends, we must have in mind both the materialist and the supernatural aspects.

It follows that human groups, more or less geographically isolated and living in different natural habitats, will follow different paths of cultural development because their objective relations with nature will differ and so will their perceptions of it, hence the phenomenon of diverse cultures among people with a common genetic ancestry.

The fact that tremendous developments in the cultural sphere have taken place during the twenty thousand years or so since our

physical evolution came to a virtual halt is further proof that biological and cultural development must be regarded as two entirely separate processes.

Infants are not born with the ability speak a particular language, do mathematical equations, fashion tools. They have to be taught. These are characteristics that are acquired during the lifetime of an individual, and they die with that individual.

Our biological inheritance provides the cell structure of the brain, but the knowledge and skills acquired by an individual in his or her lifetime dies with the individual unless it is passed on through some form of education.

It is, therefore, important for the purpose of practical politics, as well as from the standpoint of scientific truth, to distinguish between characteristics such as racial ones that are inherited biologically, and those that are acquired during a person's lifetime - acquired characteristics.

Unless that clear distinction is made, it could be supposed, as some people do, that the time scale of cultural evolution must be of the same order as that for biological evolution. If that were the case the human species would have disappeared long ago, and the more immediate problem of resolving contradictions between ethnic groups would be insoluble.

We inherit the culture of the society in which we live in two different ways. Each generation is born into a world in which the productive forces, forms of social organisation created by previous generations, already exist. That represents the objective reality.

The subjective aspects of the culture, the theories, superstitions, customs, moral codes, ideologies both religious and secular, represent the reflective action of the human brain on the perceived contradictions in the objective world.

This, the ideological aspect of the culture, is inherited in a different way. It is transmitted from one generation to another by means of education, both formal and informal, folklore, religion, and other subtle ways which tend to cause the entire culture to be absorbed 'with the mother's milk', so to speak.

The process seems so 'natural' that the illusion can be created that it is transmitted biologically.

The ideological aspect of each culture is the product of the historical experience of a particular group. Different historical experience - different traditions.

Tradition plays an important, though double edged role. It represents, in a codified form, the accumulated experience of a

particular society up to a particular point in time, thus providing a sense of continuity. But, because it is transmitted in a codified form it tends to become resistant to change and may, in certain circumstances, hinder changes being made in the productive forces, the material base of society.

When that occurs the society either stagnates or declines, as could be seen in India, China, Japan, the Middle East, Africa, in the days before imperialism brutally broke up the old social relations.

That is not to be taken as endorsement of the 'right' for one people to impose their culture on others, it is simply a statement of fact.

The principle must be upheld that the people of each nation, region, or what have you, must have the right to determine culture.

But, by the same token, they must also bear the consequences of failing to develop their culture in ways dictated by objective circumstances.

At the moment, though, we are primarily concerned with the problems created when people of diverse cultures are brought together within the same geographical area, as in some parts of England today.

#### **CULTURAL PARITY.**

Argument about whether 'this' culture is superior to 'that' one is, in the absence of some agreed objective criteria against which all cultures can be judged, entirely fruitless. A common fall back position is to assert that all cultures are deserving of equal respect.

That works very well when we are considering relations between nations, i.e. ethnic groups which live within definite geographical borders. Then, each of them should, ideally, be allowed to develop their own culture in their own way as of right.

But the situation is very different when people with traditions that are widely different from those of the indigenous people, come to settle within the same territory.

Then, cultural parity, a situation in which each ethnic group would follow its own codes of conduct, its own laws, use its own language, would inevitably lead to the disintegration of the already existing society. Each ethnic group would have to inhabit its own territory if complete chaos was to be avoided.

This would transform ethnic groups into national minorities.

The inhabitants of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland can justifiably describe themselves as separate nations because they occupy distinct geographical areas, and there is a strong argument that they should be allowed some form of self rule. There would be the problem of defining the status of (say) Scots people who live in England. In this respect we think that the position of the S.N.P. is the correct one. English people living in Scotland would be regarded as Scottish nationals, therefore the same principle would apply to Scots living in England. The determining factor would be residence, not ethnic origin.

This is important when it comes to determining the cultural status of those people who, during the past forty years or so, left their country of birth of their own accord to come and make their home in Britain.

They cannot be accorded the status of national minorities because they have not historically resided in particular geographical areas within the British Isles, and any attempt to give them self rule would meet with strong and justifiable opposition from the indigenous population.

They are ethnic (i.e. cultural) minorities, and must be treated as such.

Wherever possible they should be allowed to practise their own religion, dress, art forms, customs. But the line must be drawn when they are antagonistic to the culture of the indigenous people.

For example, no-one should be obstructed from following their own kind of religious worship, but if the practice of that religion conflicts with secular law, then they must abide by the law of the land.

The laws of inheritance must apply to everyone, irrespective of whether they go contrary to the culture of any ethnic minority. The same must apply to the position of women with regard to the law. In many non-European cultures, women are regarded as being the property of their husbands and subservient not only to them but to their husband's family. Except in cases where it contravenes the law of the land this cannot be dealt with organisationally, but it should not be condoned or excused on the grounds that 'we must respect their cultural traditions'. Women indigenous to the British Isles have fought a long and difficult battle for equality of the sexes, and the propaganda battle must continue, whether or not it offends the cultural susceptibilities of some minorities.

If each ethnic minority wants to preserve elements of its own

culture that do not contravene English law or custom, there is no reason why they should be obstructed from doing so - providing that they do it at their own expense. This particularly applies to the teaching of ethnic minority languages. English must be the first language. Everyone residing in England must be able to speak in the English language. Imagine a society without a common language. It would be like the tower of Babel.

It is the fear that the indigenous culture is being undermined that is at the bottom of resentment that is often expressed in racist terms because of a tendency to associate culture with race.

As we said earlier, racism proper is a long term problem, the elimination of which is largely a matter of education of the young in modern theories about the origin and development of the human species. Darwinism should be a compulsory part of the educational curriculum.

With 'cultural parity', 'multiculturalism', call it what you will, being taken off the agenda because of its impracticality, the only alternative is integration. This, and inter-marriage between people of different races, is already taking place, and should be encouraged.

Ethnic minority people have at least one thing in common with the indigenous people, they all have to earn a living. To do so they must take part in joint economic activity within the existing system. The more closely that they are integrated into the economic system, the more closely will they become aware of their place within the class system.

### CLASS

Class is a matter of whether one lives on the proceeds of one's own labour or on the proceeds of the labour of others, coupled with the position occupied within the social division of labour.

Everyone is a member of a particular class, even though the individual may not be consciously aware of his or her objective position in the class structure.

This division cuts across racial, ethnic, religious, and all other divisions, and, because it is a division in the material world which directly affects our livelihood and that of our dependents, it strongly influences the way that we think. It tends to make us, as individuals, view things from a particular standpoint and it follows that individuals who occupy the same position in the class structure will, everything else being equal, tend to have a similar outlook.

We say 'tend' because our minds reflect, (in a philosophical sense), on the impressions received through our senses, and the way in which we reflect on those impressions is influenced by cultural background, personal experience, and even bodily chemistry, but the objective relationships provide the material basis for the establishment of common ideological bonds based on class interests, and as the process develops, this will cut across other ideological divisions.

In other words, class solidarity will eventually be perceived to be more important than ethnic solidarity.

We need to work out ways by which to assist this process.

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### **SOVIET STYLE PLANNING - A NEGATIVE EXAMPLE.**

Muslimova is an agricultural community of about 6,000 people in the southern Urals. Compared with industrial towns in the former Soviet Union, the air is clean, and, also, appear to be the waters of the River Tachna which flows through the village.

However, unbeknown to them, the people of Muslimova were exposed to radiation from the nuclear reprocessing plant at Mayak, about twenty five miles upriver, which was opened in 1949.

As a result of deliberate and accidental releases of radioactive elements into the Tachna, water supplies for the 124,000 people in the region became contaminated and villages along the Tachna began to be evacuated, except, that is, Muslimova. One of the reasons for this exception was that the Mayak plant was the main centre for the production of the USSR's nuclear weapons, and the railway station in Muslimova was vital to its operation.

Barbed wire fences were erected along the river banks and the authorities dug wells to provide drinking water, but no explanations were given, so that, as the well water was dirty and tasted bad, the villagers continued to drink river water.

When people complained of ill health, the regional hospitals were not allowed to treat the villagers, on instructions from the Soviet Health Ministry,

It was only under Perestroika that local medics discovered that the Soviet Health Ministry had been monitoring the situation all along, but the results were deliberately kept secret.

Meeting production targets was evidently considered to be more important than the health of the people.