

**THE  
MARXIST**

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PATRIOTISM AND  
INTERNATIONALISM

A BANK RAID

TRADE

RACE, CULTURE, CLASS

SOVIET STYLE PLANNING  
- A NEGATIVE EXAMPLE

60p

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**MARXIST**

## 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 accomodation 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 'spckesmen' 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 racist 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

racism 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.