ANTI RACIST ANTI FASCIST BULLETIN

This bulletin contains two articles written by members of the ARAF/SC. One is a discussion of Free National Development in relation to other theses put foward in the pamphlet 'Southall, Birth of a Black Community' and articles in Race Today. The second article stems from a resolution passed on the SC earlier last year:

> "We support the national rights of the Irish national minority in Britain and their struggle against national oppression, and oppose the chauvinism against them from the majority nationality."

Whilst the conference voted in favour of 'anti-Irish racism' it was agreed that we still have much to learn on this topic. This article is a contribution to this discussion.

As always, we would welcome comments, criticisms, news and articles.

JANUARY 1984

IS ANTI-IRISH CHAUVINISM RACISM?

The roots of racism lie in the imperialist oppression of the lands of origin of the national minorities, and more specifically it was the experience of black slavery which gave rise to the racist ideology that emerged as an international ideology amongst all white nations. Dr ERic Williams (1) has demonstrated that slevery was not born of racism. Likewise, to demonstrate the vicious brutality employed by the English to subdue Ireland is not proof of racist intent. With regard to the treatment of Africans, a racial twist was given to an economic phenomenon. African slavery paid better than did the enslavement of Indians or the use of Irish or Scottish prisoners of war, (some 100,000 had been transported from Ireland as slaves to the Barbados tobacco plantations by 1650).

One strand of argument is that, as the basis of racist ideology lies in the oppression of nations, the oppression of Ireland, which preceeded the systematic development of racism as an imperialist ideology, gave rise to an anti-Irish chauvinism as a form of racism within the majority nationality. Given this assumption, the fact that Irish people are not black and do not usually stand out physically from the Scots, Welsh and English, it does not follow that they cannot be subject to racist treatmert. Underlying this position is the mistaken association that national oppression is always accompanied by the articulation of a racist ideology.

That there are similarities between the national oppression of the Irish people and the African people is evident from a survey of English (mis)rule in Ireland. This rule, as James Connolly noted, resulted in a fate akin to the African nations:

> "Ireland at the same time as she lost her ancient social system, also lost her language as the vehicle of thought of those who acted as her leaders. As a result of this two-fold loss the nation suffered socially, nationally and intellectually from a prolonged arrested development." (2)

It is not only revolutionaries who perceived the similar history. Thomas Carlyle, in an essay in 1849, sneered at those who proceeded on the principle that all men are equal, having made of the West Indies:

> "a Black Ireland; 'free' indeed, but an Ireland, and Black!.,...
> reality be stranger than a nightmare dream. Our own white or
> sallow Ireland, sluttishly starving from age to age.... was
> hitherto the flower of mismanagement amongst the nation: but
> what will this be to a Negro Ireland, with pumpkins themselves
> fallen scarce like potatoes! Imagination cannot fathom such
> an object; the belly of chaos never held the like!" (3)

A decade earlier, in his essay 'Chartism', Carlyle likened the living conditions of the Irish in Britain "to squalid apehood". However, there is one qualitative difference in Carlyle's treatment of the black slave and the 'free' Irish. He maintains that the slave, unlike the irish, has:

> "an indisputable and perpetual right to be compelled, by the
> real proprietors of said land, to do competent work for his
> living." (4)

Furthermore, the agitation of Irish servants and African slaves in Barbados in the late 17th century, which threatened insu-rection against the plantocracy, was met with a mixed response: the Irish servants were disarmed and freed, and 20 slaves were executed. As Hilary Beckles warns:

> *"Overt co-operation between slaves and Irish servants did not*
> *imply that the Irish servants did not accept the planters'*
> *ideological conception of Negroes. Indeed, some must have*
> *done so; the co-operation was merely evidence that certain*
> *groups, inspite of different ideological positions arrive at*
> *historical junctures at which decisions are made in the interest*
> *of mutual strategic objectives (the logic being that your*
> *enemy's enemy is your ally, though not necessarily your friend)."*
> (5)

In the planters' ideological conception of Negroes" the Irish may have occupied
a low position in the spectrum of humankind, but they were considered human
unlike the African classification in the animal world. The use of racism to
deny Africans any value other than brute labour, inspite of the existence of
well developed African civilisations, differentiates racism from the anti-
Irish prejudices displayed by the English wherever they settled.

Likewise, one commentator notes that in the spurious discussion of
19th century 'scientific racism' the differences made between:

> *"The relative merit of the so-called white races in 'intra-*
> *European' racial theory, and the racist attitude to coloured*
> *peoples: that 'miscegenation' between say, Saxons and Celts*
> *was normally regarded as a source of strength and a positive*
> *good, while racial mingling between white and black was always*
> *considered the reverse." (6)*

This differentiates racism from the English phenomenon of anti-Irish chauvinism
and the national contradiction that lies at the heart of Belgium society.

Ireland as one of England's first colonies is a historical truth that
can give rise to suppositions as in one unpublished study of Anglo-Irish
relations entitled 'White Britain and Black Ireland: the Anglo-Irish colonial
relationship' (7). The author compares anti-black racism in the US with the
Victorian English attitude towards the Irish, echoing a remark made by Marx
in a letter of 1870. But what preceeded it in the same letter is of more
substance:

> *"The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as competitor*
> *who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker*
> *he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns him-*
> *self into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country*
> *against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself.*
> *He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against*
> *the Irish worker ." Our emphasis. (8).*

Although written in the special circumstances of the aftermath of 1867-68,
years of exceptional violence between the English and Irish in England, herein
lies the recognition of the roots of national antagonism in 19th century
England. As John Werly notes, the irish, along with the working class:

> *"were continually exposed to English lower and middle class*
> *prejudices. The English workers, although resenting the Irish*
> *for reasons of religion and nationality, reserved their most*
> *bitter prejudices for the economic issue." (9)*

Irish labour was a crucial component of capitalist development in
Britain, satisfying the demand for mobile unskilled and semi-skilled labour
in the construction of capitalism's infrastructure of canals and then rail-
ways. Engels has described at great length the appalling conditions in
which the Irish lived, and how they, as competitors, were kept separate to

aviod conflict as the Industrial Revolution absorbed the human consequences of
England's ruination of Ireland.

The pattern of seasonal migration to assist in harvesting, (some 60,000
in 1841) replaced the depopulated rural areas   by the requirements of
labour in developing industrial towns. That migration was transformed into
settlement as the 1851 census records - over 727,000 Irish in Britain, making
up 2.9% of the population of England and Wales, 7.2% in Scotland, with a high
proportion in unskilled textiles and the building trades. Irish labour was of
particular importance in the development of Scottish capitalism, working in
the mines, building construction, general labouring and cotton manufacture.
Many of the latter came from Ireland's ruined linen sector.

Although the migrant Irish were often used as blacklegs and strike-
breakers, amd as a source of cheap wage labour, the expectations of the
capitalist to use the Irish as the instrument to defuse labour struggles were
not always fulfilled. As far as the national working class movement was
concerned, the Irish were not without their impact.

As early as 1829, James Doherty founded the first (abortive) General
Union of All the Operative Spinners of the United Kingdom, and the National
Association for the Protection of Labour. In Liverpool in 1833, a temporary
combination of building unions, including the Irish hod-carriers, failed
after a 23 week strike. The negotiating delegates of the strikers were led
by an Irishman called Gavin. A State Enquiry of 1835 noted that in Glasgow
the "formidable union of cotton spinners was first organised by the Irish".
The leadership and influence of Bronterre O'Brien and Fergus O'Conner in the
Chartist movement is well documented x and a testament to the unity between
the English and Irish workforce throughout some of the early struggles of the
nascent working class. Whenever there was success in uniting the Irish and
English workers in struggle, the Irish infused that struggle with a strength
of committment, and often radicalism that assumed leadership qualities. Such
unity was not the result of breaking a racist barrier, but the consequences
of an integration into the mainstream movement.

The Irish in Britain were, from the 1840's to World War I, 4-6% of
the total British labour force. From 1833, the Catholic Church launched a
decade-long campaign against trade unionism, with membership forbidden under
the threat of the denial of the sacraments. Thus, ordinary Irish migrants
comfortably outnumbered trade unionists for much of the 19th century. X Yet
Irish trade unionists drew on traditions of the Dublin and Cork TU's and the
experience of agrarian terrorism to inject militancy into trade union struggles.
Co-operation with, and leadership of working class struggle pepper the relations
of Irish and English workers. Chartist support for Repeal of the Union and
the 20,000+ x demonstrating in support of the Manchester Martyrs in November
1867 reflects Marx's observation after 100,000 attended the Hyde Park demonst-
ration of October 1869 - that at least a part of the English working class had
lost their prejudices against the Irish. However, it was not all smooth
sailing. Liverpool's Scotland constituency returned Irish Nationalist/Anti-
Partition candidates in Westminster elections from 1885-1910 amidst a sea of
conservative victories partly secured by an English chauvinistic reponse.

One of the social effects of Irish labour was, as the Poor Law Enquiry
of 1835 observed, the Irish "spreading themselves, as a kind of substratum
beneath a more civilised community (sic)". English workers of the better
qualified trades etc rose in the scale, while xx the newcomers took the lower
and worse paid positions. To some considerable degree the 'aristocracy of
labour' must have been one of nationality as well as class status.

In the adjustment from rural to urban societies, the creation of a sub-
culture offered a viable method of adapting to an alien environment. The

Irish diaspora retained its national attachment and cultural inheritance as the entrenched patterns of Irish migration and settlement that arose exerted attractive power through strong family ties, resulting in the formation of Irish communities.

After the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy after 1850, the church had a considerable base from which it could be a force for reintegration. Professor Lees stresses the impact of the Faith as:

> *"a major agent of social and cultural change among the migrant Irish and helped them to convert their vestiges of traditional culture into an urbanised, nationalist variant comparable with Church orthodoxy."* (10).

The church furnished its members with a rich and separate institutional life which included clubs, mothers' meetings, education and relief organisations. As catholicism permeated the lives of most of the Irish, they were subject to the teachings and advice (often anti-socialist), so even those indifferent to ritual could not underestimate the respect the Priest elicited from almost all quarters. While 'Irishness' was nominally preserved within the Irish community ×ħ×Ձκ×̇ẋ×̇ħ it is also important to note distinctions within the Irish community in Britain, that the Irish did achieve during the 19th century *"a status and respect in many areas which allowed them to ignore the latent hostility."* (11) The 1834 testimony of William Longson, a silk ×× weaving manufacturer of Stockport, although couched in paternalistic tones, said of the Irish that,

> *"the habits of the people at Stockport are very decent and proper:*
> *there are some things to be complained of, but others conform to*
> *the habits of the place, they do not deteriorate the character of the*
> *place."* (12)

Thus the reaction to the Irish was mixed, far from the hostility or mistrust associated with a racist response. The realtions between the English and the Irish national minority were dependent on a combination of social factors to which ne must add subjective perceptions. Irish migrants in England had every reason to be wary - they were anti-English, papists and republican. It is Jackson's judgement that:

> *"The Irishman's clothes, his brogue and general appearance, even*
> *when he was not speaking Gaelic, singled him out from the rest*
> *of the community as an outsider, a stranger in their midst. But*
> *more potent than the fact that the immigrant lived in a strange*
> *and simple way was the fact that he belonged to a foreign church."*

> (13)

Even a proponent of anti-Irish chauvinism = racism such as Robert Miles, (14) hedges his position by discussing how racism was interrelated with other ideologies as *"in the case of the Irish, economic and political exclusion was justified by reference to the idea of 'race' and to religious adherence."*

Thus the argument shifts its focus as racist sentiment and argument regarding the Irish is said to ʍ incorporate and express itself in anti-fenianism and anti-catholicism as its cultural components. Such vagaries in the formulation leads to a situation where one cannot differentiate between racist sentiment and nebulous 'social' criticism. It makes the concept of anti-Irish racism so elastic as to be unapplicable as it becomes the key to any circumstance or action. Whilst it is true that for an upper class minority anti-celt racism was a partial but temporary component of English nationalism in the hey-day of the Anglo-Saxon 'lords of human kind', it is debatable how far this permeated the English working class. The myths of 'darkest Africa' loomed large in the imagination of the period.

"If a racist response to numbers was the active, determinant cause of working class hostility, then one would expect anti-Irish agitation to have been continuous, and to coincide with the peak period of immigration and settlement.   With the exception of Lancashire, *"Irish violence was mostly self contained and inflicted o other Irishmen, whereas rioting with the wider community took only a few days in a decade among decades of unbroken peace."* (15) From the popular ballads comes evidence of 'Irish violence' applauding the attacks upon police and orangemen, which went with a general contempt for English authority. Indeed, the Fenian barracks in Limehouse sent more police to hospital than any other block in London.

The State's crime figures have always targetted migrants as disproportionately responsible for crimes. The word hooligan, with its Irish origin, acted as an ingenious mechanism to place blame for street violence on the recently arrived and unpopular Irish peasant in 19th century England. Social problems associated with Irish migrants and perceived shortcomings were seldom minimised, and the Smilesian virtues necessary to send remittances home ignored.

Prejudices x against the Irish were directly occasioned by   political events such as the nationalist ferment of 1857-8 that underlay the hostility which Marx discerned between English and Irish in England. Moerover, John Werly argues (16) that there is a division in the source of anti-Irish feeling, and that before 1850, ecomomic, rather than social or religious rivalries were the source of anti-Irish feelings due to the relative weakness of anti-papist attitudes, Presbyterian Scotland excepted. Yet in spite of the tradition of religious sectarianism in Scotland, still very much alive, a tour by X Daniel O'Connell in 1835 in support of Catholic Emancipation saw 100,000 supporters on Glasgow Green. By this time, the Orange Order, imported by the Scots regiments sent to crush the XXX 1798 United Irishmen rebellion, had 45 lodges in Scotland, with 12 in Glasgow. Given the larger proportion of catholic Irish the antagonisms were much greater, stirred up by the Scottish Orange Order, as in the expulsion of the Irish from Dunfermline in the late 1860's. From the 1850's onwards, the spectre of militant catholicism combined with Irish nationalist agitation was seized upon to ferment anti-Irish propoganda by the likes of travelling lecturers such as William Murphy.

The Murphy riots of 1868 came at a time when the hanging of the Manchester Martyrs and the issue of disestablishment in Ireland offered provocations which were fully exploited by touring protestant rabble rousers. In his concern to encourage anti-Irish sentiment, Murphy met with some success. on his tour of 1867/8, violence occurred at Walsall, Birmingham, Tynemouth and Ashton-under-Lyne. At Wolverhampton, 10,000 Irish people were reported to have prevented Murphy from speaking

Similarly, the volatile anti-Irish feelings in the towns of Stalybridge, Ashton and Stockport during the 1850's and 1860's, it has been argued, were not solely the reflection of economic friction or an influx of Irish immigrants to the area after the famine (17). The agitation and propoganda of the Chartists, Neville Kirk argues, was replaced by the effusions of Orangemen and catholic missions and the effects of proselytising.

The experience of English rule, with its implantation of a loyalist population, had consequences in the fusion of religion and nationalism - to be catholic was to be a true Irishman. Even the Irish revolutioanry James Connolly did not renounce his 'catholicism' for all his attacks on the Roman Catholic church. This was a legacy of Ireland's history. When the Williamite war of 1690-91 established the 'protestant ascendancy', the close identification of the catholic church with its 'flock', and their concern for tenant rights and national expression, clearly identified papists as the xxx enemy. The Irish protestants ascribed the Irish catholic'c 'inferiority' to their religion, and

to a viciousness instilled by popery wherever it prevailed rather than
inherent defects in Irish character.. Irish catholicism was almost regarded
as synonymous with treason, Ireland having acted on the motto that 'England's
difficulty is Ireland's opportunity'. As the Observer of April 1821 stated
in an article on Catholic Emancipation and the Irish:

> "Five millions of dissatisfied subjects, festering within the
> very body of the state, turning everything they touch to
> gangrene, and pining for an opportunity to extend and aggravate
> the infection." (18)

Such was the perspective of Ireland's fight for national liberation - a legacy
and fight   of which the Republican movement
are proud upholders today. Irish grievances were those of a political and
religious nature; their demands were Catholic Emancipation, Repeal, Home Rule,
Independance and Irish Unity. The demand of self-determination made the very
term catholic synonymous with disloyal and protestant with loyal, emphasising
most emphatically that the divide was not between Celt and Anglo-Saxon. Thus
Marx wrote specifically of English workers' "religious, social and national"
prejudices against the Irish, and as Gillery remarks:

> "Where class and religious loyalties were the same, there were
> no further barriers to climb, and upper-crust English and Irish
> catholics peacefully mingled and married." (19)

There was no blanket condemnation of the Irish. In his sanitation
report of 1842 Chadwick asserted that the Irish were at least no worse than
their native counterparts in matters of public health, whereas, Engels,
writing around the same time, could have been used by the bourgeoisie in
their attempt to rationalise away some of the more sordid consequences of the
growth of an unregulated capitalist economy.   In The Condition of the
Working Class in England the 24 year old Engels' description of the slum
area immediately south of Oxford Road in Manchester, then known as 'Little
Ireland', reflects the attitudes and arguments of the bourgeoisie. He quotes
Carlyle's description of the 'milesian', "the sorest evil this country has to
strive with", approving of such denunciation of the Irish with his own
observation that:

> "The Englisman who is still somewhat civilised, needs more than
> the Irishman who goes in rags, eats potatos, and sleeps in a pig-
> sty. But that does not hinder the Irishman's competing with the
> Englishman, and gradually forcing the rate of wages, and with it
> the Englisman's level of civilisation, down to the Irishman's
> level." (20)

It is not surprising that in his 1892 preface to the English edition, Engels
points out that his 1844 study cannot be regarded as a mature marxist work
for the political positions it expressed were often far from progressive; in
a passage on Ireland's social conditions Engels stated:

> "Irish distress cannot be removed by any Act of Repeal. Such an
> Act would, however, at once lay bare the fact that the cause of
> Irish misery, which now seems to come from abroad, is really to
> be found at home." (21)

Engels attitudes changed under the influence of his wife, Lizzie
Burns, Fenian daughter of poor Irish emigrants, and two visits to Ireland
in 1855 and 1869. From his correspondance with Karl Marx, the opinion that
"Ireland may be regarded as the first English colony developed into a
political critique of the suppression of the Irish nation.

Originally Marx expected Ireland to be liberated through the victory of the proletariat in Britain. Gradually there came the understanding that Ireland acted as a fetter in two main ways: by splitting the working class within England on natioanl lines, and thus giving the English workers an apparent joint interest with their rulers in exploiting someone else. Ireland was an early symbol of the marxist dictum that: "a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free". By the seemingly indirect means of supporting a national liberation struggle, one was contributing to destroying a major bond which linked English workers to the bourgeoisie:

> "This requires a blow in Ireland, which is the weakest point of Britain. If Ireland is lost, the British 'empire' goes and the class struggle in England, which has up to now been sleepy and slow, will take more acute forms. (22)

That Ireland bred treason at the Empire's core has had a long pedigree in English political thought since it has been the backdoor to continental intrigue since the Tudors. A sentiment expressed in October 1792 when The Observer commented that Irish insurgents, who "under the specious pretence of asserting the rights of Roman Catholics, are, with too much success, sowing the seeds of sedition." The remedy was simple and already traditional, - "we sincerely trust, that government, to prevent the effusions of human blood, will hang up to two or three hundred of these insurgents." (23)

It is instructive, that when a large section of 19th centry English ruling classes supported the demands for self government by the Serbs, Italians, ~~XXXXX~~ and Poles, and for colonists in Australia, Canada and South Africa, Gladstone's famous declaration on taking up his first ministry in 1868 was "My mission is to pacify Ireland". The attempts that followed to 'buy off' the Irish were founded on two arguments - the slogan 'Home Rule is Rome Rule' and the more substantial ecomomic concern that the industries of the North would be ruined as they were dependent on Britain for supplies and markets. The conflict was discussed in political terms, between a 'petty parochial nationalism' and the glory of the 'English supernational idea'.

> "The 'Home Rule' policy for Ireland is a direct attack upon England and the English race" thundered a conservative pamphlet in May 1894.
>
> "To Englishmen are mainly due the union of the United Kingdom and the building up of the wonderful Empire of 340,000,000 people that stretches over every portion of the habitable globe. The dismemberment of the Empire of which England is the centre and the heart, would be a deadly blow to the English Race." (24)

The activities of the Irish nationalists disturbed the 'body' at its heart and so were regarded as proving incapable of self-government by the very act of demanding it. Anti-Irish feelings tend to coincide with any threat to this self-interest. Thus in the words of the Resolution of February 1983 with regard to the Irish Natioanl Minority:

> "We recognise that their oppression is linked with the continuing occupation of Ireland by British imperialism and the resistance to it is linked to the support for the Irish natioanl liberation struggle by the Irish natioanl minority in Britain."

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In isolating the examples of anti-Irish jokes and the PTA, the proponents of the position of anti-Irish racism fail to demonstrate racist treatment as involving a whole panorama of social discrimination, especially as alternative explanations can be offered.

For instance, racist immigration rules do not extend to citizens of the Irish Republic. They are admitted freely without constraint or condition unless the Home Secretary decalres that exclusion is "condulcive to the public good"; a clause directed mainly at Republicans. The Immigration controls over Irish citizens provided for in the 1962 debate were never intoduced, which suggests that "capacity to absorb", as spelt out in Labour's 1965 White Paper, 'IIigration from the Commonwealth', is related to factors other than a general issue of population growth, pressure on resources or scarce sevices. When selective power's of control over Irish migrants were introduced by the Labour government's PTA, significantly, it was in response to Irish Republican activity. In the relatively quiet days of the 1960's, such 'concern' was not forthcoming.

Catherine Jones has detailed the historical response to Irish migration in comparison with the subsequent arrival of EastEuropean Jews and Afro-Caribbeans. (25) Between 1880-1914 some 120,000 Jews, mainly from Russia and Poland, accounted for about 1% of Britain's labour force, but they were more controversial than the Irish migrants. However much resented, the Irish were not faced with the equivalent to the anti-Jewish legislation agitation that resulted in the 1905 Alens Act. These newcomers were open to challenge (and eventually to immigration comtrol legislation) since they were neither geographically neighbours, nor citizens.

> "When Ben Tillet told Jewish immigrants disembarking
> at London that he wished they had not come he must
> have been echoing what many had said or implied to
> his Irish ancestors." (26).

During the Second World War, British labour needs led to direct recruiting in Ireland by the Ministry of Labour. Unlike the 1919 experience when Britain repatriated nearly all the workers recruited in the colonies, the reconstruction of British Imperialism s home base saw a labour demand met by 19,000 European Voluntary Workers on 3 year contracts and a net Irish inflow, (between 1946 and 1959 around 350,000). There was the hostility towards intinerant labour reflected in the 'No Irish' signs in the windows of boarding houses, but it was not the Irish who were tarred with the traditional English welcome for newcomers: concern over public health and morals, employment conditions, wage levels, law and order, standard of living. That social ostracism was directed at the newly arriving Afro-Caribbeans, as the popular news magazine of the time, Picture Post recorded, (27). Or as Miles puts it in his own indomitable style:

> "The racialisation of New Commonwealth migrants was
> more extensive that the racialisation of Irish migrants.(28).

Unlike the experience of the Irish, within years of direct recruitung by British Transport in the West Indies, the Labour government was secretly discussing the merits of imposing immigration controls on the entry of Black British passport holders. Indeed the possibility of applying alien control to British subjects from 'overseas' was rejected in a secret government review on the basis that: -

> "If the controls were applied to persons from the colonies
> and the independent Commonwealth countries, it would be
> difficult to justify the exemtion of persons from the Irish
> Republic."
> Furthermore it would "be particularly unrewarding as there
> would be few, if any, Irish workers whom we should wish to
> exclude." (29)

There was nothing objectionable about white migrant labour to the Labour government of Clement Attle. It was in tune with British society as the agitation at the turn of the century pales in stature to that directed at the arrival and settlement of Black British passport holders.

The totality of a racist response is kkx in the abuse and everyday harrassment, in the mundane graffitti, the discrimination and attacks that Black national minorities, regardless of class, are subject to. Anglicised in language, the Irish in Britain are not so conspicuous as Black national minorities, and the accent does not immediately confer a negati e reaction. The manifestation of a racist ideology reproduced from one generation of English is absent. There is no 'Little Black Sambo' syndrome, there is no Tarzan equivalent in relation to the Irish national minority.

While the use of the word chauvinism to describe reaction to Irish migrants does not define the nature of the oppression, but only the attitude of the oppressor, that reaction should be placed in the context of Irish resistance to national oppression. Anti-Irish prejudices should be recognised as a symptom of the containment of the working class within bourgeois society, however, that bellicose patriotism that partly incorporated anti-Fenian and anti-catholic elements in xxx relation to the Irish in England, has been far from a constant attitude. E. Hunt judged that:

> "By the 1860's the divisions between the two communities were
> beginning to erode....The dock strike of 1889 was something
> of a watershed in this process of gradual assimilation. Half
> or more of the London Dockers were of Irish extraction." (30)

Hunt underestimates the fact that accompanying integration at the work-place was that the two major elements in Irish national resistance - catholicism and nationalism - had helped to provide a social alternative to assimilation into the mythical 'English way of life'. The setting up of organisations, outside of the mainstream of British institutions, has maintained the distinctive cultural tradition so evident in today's annual London Irish festival. In spite of attendances in the 70,000 bracket, the Irish natioanl minority communities have a relatively low profile.

As 150 years of continual Irish migration to Britain subsided in the 1960's, there is the paradoxical situation of being thought of as not that different from English people, yet subject to a pervasive negative Irish stereotype that associates them with stupidity and irrationality.

Nowadays, given the colonial background of treating all 'foreigners' as inferior, the Irish are "second class foreigners not quite as unacceptable as Blacks and Asians" , as stated by one contributor to C4's 'The Irish in England' series. In the words of Mrs Tuck, deputy head of the Home Office research and planning unit, the Irish in Britain "have learned to pass as white", as outcries about Irish criminality were now a thing of the past. The finger of suspicion has switched from the Irish to Afro-Caribbean peoples. As with hooligan, Mrs Tuck doubted whether the recent use of the word 'mugger' would have achieved currency without its hidden memeries of the racist 'nigger'. (Guardian 15.9.83.)

What stirs national antagonism is the war in Ireland, as an article from September 1973 concluded:

> "It is a pity that the wave of bomb attacks has made most of those
> I spoke to feel less at home here, and more like aliens." (31)

As evidence of racist treatment of the Irish people it has been argued that 'like the SUS laws, the PTA is an act which is also used to promote racism. Just as the police try to blame Black people for crime, so they try to criminalise the Irish community.'

The use of criminal status has a long history in English strategy;
criminalisation is the logical culmination of the state's attempt to deny
that it is waging a war in the Occupied Counties. It is not a strategy
born of racism - even working class resistance is criminalised. It is a
means to obscure the political nature of the struggle - a refusal to
recognise a national liberation struggle de jure by the concession of
special status. If put into perspective, the PTA is one aspect, one
consequence of the war in Ireland that affects the life of the Irish
national minority in Britain - it is bringing the war home. Rushed
through parliament by the Labour administration after the Birmingham
bombings, it is a political instrument par exellance, designed to make
illegal and criminalise the political aspirations of an oppressed people,
The PTA is not without precedent. There was the Prevention of violence
(Temporary Provisions) Act of 1939, introduced in Britain as a response
to the pre-war IRA military campaign in Britain. - a political/military
response to a military and political threat. It was not directed at a
general infringement of civil liberties, but towards one specific activity:
support for or expression of sympathy with a united Ireland, independent
and free.

That the PTA is principally used to intimidate the Irish community in
Britain is not surprising. It is that community which is most likely to
be receptive to militant republicanism; it is that community, especially
its working class elements which is likely to provide the social base for
supporting the republican movement. It is those communities, increasingly
comprised of working class Irish whose affinity with the 'old country' is
the basis for republican sympathies, not the professional and bourgeois
assimilated Irish, that are the target for the PTA's repressive measures.

However, the PTA is not simply an anti-Irish measure. The PTA has rarely
been used to prosecute - of 5,555 arrested by December 1982, only 119 (2%)
were brought to trial. PTA Section 12 is used to detain people incommunicado
without charge to facilitate the gathering of information. It serves the
purpose of intimidating those connected with Irish republican politics,
to castrate active involvement in opposing British rule through solidarity
activity in Britain. Its powers are used not only to harass, cajole and
exclude Irish people, but also to intimidate and gather intelligence on
English Scottish and Welsh solidarity activists. Its use against the Welsh
and Scottish socialist republican movements does not make it an example
of anti-Celt racism. To confuse a political instrument and racist intent
is to construct an erronious analogy.

The aim to criminalise is an attempt to disarm ideologically, potentially
supportive elements in Britain. The Irish war serves to foster chauvinism
in all classes. The collaboration of the British labour movement is evidence
of the resilience of social chauvinism and the enduring 'national consensus'
that emasculates independant working class action. As Marx noted, this
is part of a reactionary nationalist element that contributes to class
coalition. The political and economic importance of Partition for the
ruling class has been demonstrated by Marlowe and Pakmer's "Ireland:
Imperialism in Crisis 1968-78" (Revolutionary Communist 8, July 1978).
Thus the fostering of national chauvinism is an ideological control for
bourgeois 'consent' which is not dependent on racist assumtions of
characteristics inherent in a people.

Just as the racist myths which emerged throughout British involvement in
slavery and imperialist oppression are found today, alive and well in
racist jokes and beneath the surface in many 'polite' conversations, anti-
Irish jokes are dependent on shared assumtions for the jokes to work.
If the audience for 'thick Mick' were not aware of, or do not share the
beliefs then these jokes fail.

Those who uphold anti-Irish jokes as an expression of anti-Irish racism
assume that in sharing such a joke, people rehearse racist beliefs. Whilst
not denying the existence of chauvinist stereotypes (the mean Scotsman, the
rugby playing, chior singing Taff) the belief that anti-Irish chauvinism
is fully defined as racist is a priori rather than empirical. Why such
attitudes to the Irish and not other white stereotypes are racist, needs
to be explained.

Humourists, and especially the cartoonists of the mass circulation
media, have always been foremost amongst the myth makers, creating images,
symbols and metaphors to embody the bourgeoisie's line - wit as a weapon
is a long standing argument. In surveying the despicable product of the
sewers of Fleet Street throughout the ages, one needs to remember that
such cartoonists are reactive, dealing in 'comment' (something 'apt' to
say), not in facts. We can agree with cartoonist David Low that "a cartoon
is an illustration of a pictorial or social idea,   served up some-
times in caricatural draftmanship, sometimes not."

To bolster the argument for anti-Irish racism, the 19th century
cartoons which 'simianise' the Irish, and those modern day cartoons of
the brutalised madman are used as evidence. They have a champion in
Professor L.P. Curtis. He argues that the formulation in the 19th century
of the Irish stereotype attributed character-istics of ignorance, laziness,
primitiveness, childishness and emotional instability:

"Irishmen thus shared with virtually all the non-white peoples
of the Empire the label of childish, and the remedy for unruly
children in most Victorian households was a proper 'licking'. (32)

The other sort of Ireland that appeared in Punch cartoons was Hibernia,
the spirit of Celtic Ireland, appearing as a maiden indistinguishable in
grecian purity of profile from the 'matron Britannia protecting her'.
Punch's vicious drawings that depicted Irish people as either as helpless
children incapable of governing themselves, or as wild monsters, were
caricatures that equally applied to the indigenous working class. The
selective barb of the Tomahawk cartoon is aimed at the heart of Irish
rebels - the Fenians and partisans of Home Rule.

Jak's drawing subscribes to the madmen of violence school of black
propoganda, specifically "featuring the IRA, INLA, UDF, PPF, UDA etc. etc.,"
which continually sets the tone of analysis by spewing out diatribes against
'men of violence' and 'the mindless killers', trying to implant the idea
of the 'incomprehensability' of the struggle in Ireland.

Cumming's cartoon reflects one of the central myths of English propo-
ganda as stated in the Sunday Times editorial of August 28th 1983:

"Since 1969 (to look no further back) the main note of British
policy in Northern Ireland has been altruism. Successive
British lives and money on a large scale, seeing - rightly or
wrongly - no other way to keep some sort of peace and prosperity
in a place they would just as soon be out of."

Whether in the Congo, Beirut or Belfast, the intervention of imperialist
forces is always packaged in the mythology of 'keeping the peace'. Just
as the state presents itself as a neutral arbitator within Britain, it
seeks to portray British imperialism as 'holding the ring' against the
'extremists': the 'bloodbath theory' of withdrawal and pogroms will follow.
Its use in relation to Occupied Ireland is not an exeption related to a
specific racist attitude towards the Irish people. The self-interest in
such an argument, the maintenance of English control, is self-evident.
It is one that continues to justify national oppression.

In not providing an analysis to demonstrate the operation of anti-Irish racism, but by asserting its existence, the danger arises of giving racism a mercurial quality, of random application, diluting the precise nature of that form of national oppression. We should act on the advice of Mao Zedong to study in an all-round way:

"Unless we study the particularity of contradictions, we have no way of determining the particular essence of a thing which differentiates it from other things, no way of discovering the particular cause or particular basis for the movement or development of a thing, and no way of distinguishing one thing from another."

(On Contradiction FLP 1967, p.14)

While the use and abuse of English power has been the leitmotiv of Irish history since the middle ages, that 'damnable question' has occupied the political arena like no other colonial concern. The inevitable reaction of the subjectpeople in the shape of an anti-imperialist struggle for national survival and independence has its reaction in the chauvinism of an English nationalist response that has had its effect in all classes.

As a colony Ireland differed in important respects from the other 'members' of the Empire. Ireland's representation in the imperial parliament reflected, in spite of the reality of a colonial relationship, a 'sister' island status whereby Irish members, at times, possessed influence on the parliamentary balance of power (eg. Parnell's organised obstruction of procedure). Ireland alone amongst Britain's dependant territories was in a position to exert direct political pressure on British political life. As already detailed, the position of the Irish immigrant meant that they were always first to feel each turn of the capitalist's screw, and they were also amongst the first to organise working class resistance to the encroachment of their meagre rights. As a catholic priest in Manchester stated, the Irish were "more prone to take part in trade unions, combinations and secret societies than the English" (33) The negative reaction towards the Irish migrant should not be automatically associated with 'racial animosities'. As E, Strauss, author of Irish Nationalism and B British Democracy noted:

"When the introduction of the new Poor Law (1834) was followed by the experiment of transplanting some four thousand East Anglian paupers into Lancashire and Cheshire, their reception was equally unfavourable and the resident Irish were, indeed, prominant in their opposition to this scheme." (34)

Racism is the expression of national oppression that Black national minorities in Britain endure. The intention of this assertion is not to question the existance of the national oppression that the Irish national minority face. It is to demonstrate that specific forms may relate to a particular nation. What is of major political concern is what form it takes. With regard to the Irish national minority it is an understanding of the historical evolution whereby the denial of its national rights provides a basis for oppression within Britain.

In the detail given to the relations between the English working class and the Irish national minority, the endeavour is to demonstrate the changing perceptions. Reaction has given way, after nearly 180 years of large scale Irish settlement, to processes of partial assimilation and acceptance, which diguises the National minority status of the Irish in Britain. It reaches such proportions that the CRC does not recognise the Irish as an 'ethnic group'. Nor is working class behaviour rooted in beliefs of 'celtic character', or what academics call 'an objective criterion of race', or skin colour. Increasingly the English response to the Irish is determined by events in Ireland. The agitation and violence against the Irish are not accompanied by articulation of racist

ideology, but is rooted in the resistance in the Occupied Counties.
As the February resolution concludes:

> "The Irish national minority in Britain will resist the increased
> oppression which they face from the British State as the oppression
> of Ireland by British imperialism intensifies. We must increase
> our support for this resistance."

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FOOTNOTES

1. Author of Capitalism and Slavery Andre Deutsch 1964.

2. James Connolly: Labour in Irish History.   or   ,   .

3. T. Carlyle: English and Other Critical Essays, Longman. 1964, p.307-8.

4. Ibid.

5. H. Beckles: "Rebels and Reactionaries: the political response of
   white labourers to Planter-Class hegemony in 17th century Barbados",
   The Journal of Caribbean History vol 15, 1981, p. 9.

6. S. Gilley: "English attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900,
   in C. Holmes: Immigrants and Minorities in British Society, Allen
   & Unwin, 1978, p.83.

7. R.N. Lebow, PhD study, The City University of New York 1968.

8. Marx to S. Mayer & A. Vogt, April 9th 1870 in Marx and Engels on
   Ireland, p.292.

9. J. Werly, "The Irish in Manchester 1832-49", Irish Historical Studies,
   vol. 18, 1973, p.358.

10. Exile of Erin - Irish Migrants in Victorian London, Manchester, 1979,p164.

11. J. A. Jackson: The Irish in Britain, RKP, 1963, p.156.

12. M. Durey, "The Survival of an Irish Culture in Britain 1800-1845"
    Historical Studies (University of Melbourne) April 1982, p.18.

13. Jackson op cit, p.154.

14. R. Miles: Labour Migration and racism, RKP, 1982, p.122.

15. Gilley, op cit, p.101.

16. See footnote 9.

17. N. Kirk in K. Lunn: Hosts,   Immigrants and Minorities:Historical
    responses to newcomers in British Society 1870-1914. Dawson, 1980

18. The Observer of the Nineteenth Century, Longmans, 1966, p.68.

19. Gillery op cit, p.93.

20. F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, L&W,
    1977, p.104

21. Ibid.

22. K. Marx:

23. The Observer, op cit, pp.11-12.

24. McKenzie and Silver: Angels in Marble -working class conservatives
    in urban England. Heineman 1968, p.54.

25. C.Jones: Immigration and Social Policy in Britain, Tavistock,1977.

26 W.J. Fishman: East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914, 1975, p.8.

27. "Is there a British Colour Bar?", Picture Post, July 2nd 1949.

28. Miles op cit, p.150.

29. Cabinet Document "Immigration of British Subjects into the United
    Kingdom" CAB 129/44.

30. E. Hunt: British Labour History 1815-1914, 1981, p.170.

31. P.Harrison: "The Irish English" New Society Sept 20th 1973.

32. Anglo-Saxons and Celts, University of Bridgeport Press 1968, p.54.
    See: L.P. Curtis, Apes and Angels:The Irishman in Victorian
    Caricature, London 1971.

33. British Parliamentary Papers 1836, xxxiv 62.

34. E. Strauss: Irish Nationalism and British Democracy Methuen
    1951, pp.124-5.

The first issue of PAIKAAR, organ of the Pakistani
Workers Association (Britain) will come out at the
end of this month. It will be published in Urdu
and English, price 30p. Copies will be available
at NEB, or via B'm.

'NEW DAWN' THESIS OR 'FREE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT'?

The purpose of this paper is to isolate and comment on a particular tendency of thought in relation to the development of black minorities in Britain and their resistance to racist oppression. For shorthand purposes it will be referred to as the 'New Dawn' thesis. There are three interconnected themes within this tendency. The clearest theme is that the minority youth constitute an entity with a new and distinct identity, created and expressed by their resistance movements. This theme necessarily entails the second, that the character and activity of Black Society derives principally from their response to racist oppression in Britain and little, if at all, from their origins, history and experience in the oppressed nations. The third theme is not so obviously connected. It is that the character of the minorities is overwhelmingly proletarian, and that only the activity of the workers from their communities is of a progressive nature, and is, in fact, part of the general activity of the working class in Britain. This theme is linked with the other two because like them it emphasises the Britishness of experience of the minorities in Britain, that is, experience of developed capitalism, free of the flaws and aberrations of peasant society and semi-feudal conditions.

All three themes can be recognised in RTL, as in the line of FRFI. The same tendency can be perceived in a Race Today article, which apparently encapsulates the position of that organisation. It also underlies the pamphlet: 'Southall, Birth of a Black Community.' It is proposed to deal mainly with the latter. The reason for this is that 'Southall' is a serious empirical study which purports to analyse the factors for cohesiveness and resistance in an important area of concentration of national minorities. As a document of racist oppression in such an area it is useful and impressive. The weakness of the 'New Dawn' thesis emerges clearly because of its contrast with the strength of the description of oppression. And the objective of the pamphlet enables the 'New Dawn' thesis to be exposed in the light of the theory of Free National Development.

On the surface, 'Southall, Birth of a Black Community' should be of great value in assessing and developing the concept of Free National Development and its concomitant of autonomy based on areas of concentration of national minorities. This is so because its major theme is the development of a community - which implies social, psychological and cultural integrity within a given geographic and demographic context - in an area known to be one of the highest national minority concentration in England. This critique will attempt to show that this promise is not fulfilled. The pamphlet contains a valuable catalogue of the response in various aspects of the national majority population and the state organs to the growth of black population - the response of racism especially in its more blatant forms. Its analysis of the national minorities, however, is based on an assumption of the validity of the first two of the themes in the 'New Dawn' thesis. It concentrates on the youth, emphasising the conflict between generations and ignoring their interrelationship. And it bases its theory of the 'birth of community' on the reaction of national minorities to racism, neglecting the development of group identity based on existing characteristics. It does not specifically emphasise the proletarian theme, although by failing to consider the interrelationship between classes within the national minority people, it allows this theme to be inferred.

One question will be dealt with here as a preliminary point, although it is likely that deeper examination of it would throw light on many of the weaknesses of current thinking on the national minority struggle. It centres on the vagueness of the term 'community'. The pamphlet sets out to descibe a process at the culmination of which it can be said a black 'community' existed. But its own use of the term in various places in the text demonstrates ambiguity both

in the definition of a stage at which the 'community' was 'born' and in its
blackness. If it was 'born' in 1979 (when the police invaded Southall to help
the NF), as the pamphlet argues, then it makes little sense to refer to, much
earlier, 'the beginnings of the community', 'a community composed of men with
no intentions of settling' or 'a growing community responding to the attitudes
of white society'. If it is a black community, how can the pamphlet talk, at
one point, of 'black communities in Southall' and, at another, of 'bridging
religious and national divisions in the community'? This is not meant as a
nit-picking criticism, but as a clear recognition that the term is imprecise in
itself. Therefore it is of no value to prove that a black community exists in
Southall. Still less can it be deduced that, because such a community exists,
it is correct to seek its autonomy, or any other rights for it, for that matter.

There are indications that the authors of the pamphlet are aware of the true
nature of the social phenomena in respect of which Free National Development
poses the right to autonomy based on areas of concentration. On p.30, it says:
"But while the local authority was deliberately neglecting its area of greatest
black concentration, the Asians themselves were turning Southall into a self-
possessed Asian town." And "Asians feel at home here; it is their town in a
very real sense." It is clear from the context that it does not mean just
Southall Asians. The reality is not one of a number of isolated black
communities in a sea of white people. It is one of nationalities, each
disseminated throughout England, and to a lesser extent, Scotland and Wales.
Within the dissemination of a nationality are areas of concentration, such as
Southall, Highfields, Manningham or St Pauls. Within the area of concentration,
to a greater or lesser extent, the different nationalities themselves cluster
together. So that the areas of concentration form the core both of given total
nationalities and of the links between nationalities. For this reason Free
National Development focuses on such areas.

It has been said that the pamphlet concentrates on the reaction to racism.
It is a strength that it concentrates on the national minority's reaction to
this, rather than distorting reality in an attempt to prove a united black and
white response. It shows how the Asian workers in Southall factories organised
against their exploitation and against the racism of employers and fellow
workers and the indifference of the unions. It shows the use of social and
cultural organisations outside the place of work, like the IWA and Gurudwaras,
to organise at the workplace. It shows the use of common ties of nationality
to support strikes, by collections outside the workplace and extensions of
credit by shopowners.

It shows a history of settlement, and how racism caused the host community to
create intolerable housing conditions for the national minorities, to subject
their children to educational deprivation and physical danger, and to threaten
them with the violence of civilian and police attacks. The racist response is
described in detail. Some protests and pressure groups are described but there
is not the same detailed description of the national minority's initial reactions -
e.g. through the IWA or the Gurudwaras - perhaps because this information is not
easily available. But a more important reason for this is the theme of the
'New Dawn' thesis, that real resistance did not arise until the youth started
to fight back.

Treating the theme in this way gives a false impression of the character of
the national minorities in Southall, especially of the dominant Punjabi Sikh
community. It is true that the development of immigrant nationalities depends
to a great extent on their reception. Assimilation can take place where the
national majority is not antagonistic. The main determinant of the English
people's response to black immigration has been their racism. This has meant
that the conditions for assimilation were never created. Thus one important
aspect of the identity and separateness of the national minorities has been

their reaction to that racism. But the other aspect is more vital, because without it there would have been no basis for identity and no justification for separateness. This is the specific national character of the minorities, based on a common national origin, of which factors like language, culture and common psychological make-up are transplanted from common territory and economic system. This national tradition continues despite fragmentation through multifold processes of social interaction internal to the given national minority.

An important common theme both in the reaction to external forces of racism and the internal process of national development is the historical heritage of imperialism. It provides a valuable framework of learnt experience to explain the continuing oppression. Thus the pamphlet quotes the Punjabi Times on the April 1979 invasion: "Monday's police terrorism has convinced people that Southall has been reduced to the status of a British Imperial Colony from that of a town of free citizens." And it quotes a school student: "I remember thinking when I was younger that maybe, somehow, my language – the language of my parents – isn't a real language...All our history is from a British point of view....what they're saying all the time is that white is right. So we grow up with English nicknames and no self-respect." But to recognise the existence of this imperialist heritage is to see both the continuation of an internal tradition of resistance to it and the social imperative of continuing to assert a national identity free from it.

From the point of view of the continuation and development of national identity there are many themes which the pamphlet could have described in its search for the conditions of the 'birth of a black community'. Culture, language and religion maintain and strengthen identity and communality. They probably also adapt to serve the interests of a nationality in an alien surrounding, enabling it, perhaps, to absorb some aspects of the external culture without harming the integrity of the nationality, or emphasising aspects which help it to reject unwelcome intrusions. These are questions which could valuably be explored. Culture, language and religion also do not exist in a vacuum, but through concrete social, economic and political relationships. In the same way they are transmitted from one generation to another. The pamphlet may not wish to deal with the question of caste, but it is impossible to explain patterns of solidarity and loyalty without some reference to it. Family and marriage ties, however restrictive they may be to the individual of the younger generation, are part of the reality of the social structure of Southall. Patterns of employment exist within the minority community, and businesses gain and keep custom through social links, as well as finding funds to set up or survive. There are many forms of community leadership and community co-operation which depend on and reinforce the national interrelations of the Punjabis in Southall. These may be in the Gurudwara, the IWA, in various social or political groupings, or in families. There is no doubt that such structures will be in the process of fairly rapid change, to adapt to the needs of a hostile environment. But without them there would be no Southall 'community' to fight back against racism.

The pamphlet presents a relatively sophisticated version of the first theme of the 'New Dawn' thesis. It does not suggest a complete disjunction between younger and older generations. Thus it says "many of the parents sympathised with the more militant tactics adopted by their children to express their grievances." But the isolation of the role of the youth, and the neglect of the link between generations, is in keeping with the general theme of the pamphlet. In effect it is arguing that the strength and identity of the community was derived from the resistance to racism, and that this only flourished with the resistance of the youth from 1976 (Gurdip Singh Chaggar's death) onwards.

The concrete basis from which the argument proceeds is that the youth were more militant at that time, that they were prepared to take the struggle on to the streets and to attack the police and defend themselves against whites. The conclusions drawn from this are two.

1. The youth were organising "in terms of British realities, as opposed to the IWA which was based and organised around politics which emanated from the Indian Subcontinent."

2. The youth did not organise around "their Punjabi identity" but their "cultural reaction took on a much more political form."

(What is meant by "more political form" is obscure.) These conclusions suggest a line, which admittedly seems to strike a discordant note in comparison with many of the quotations and descriptions in the text, that the way foward for the Southall 'community' is to turn its back on its national origins and identity. It is suggested that the politics of India are in themselves irrelevent to the situation faced by the Indian national minority in Britain. It is suggested that the 'Punjabi identity' is no longer a focus for the Punjabi youth to organise around. At the same time centuries of experience of imperialism in the Punjabi homeland seems to be relegated to the history books.

This position is untenable. It is only meaningful if the origins and traditions of the national minority are regarded as forgotten and abandoned. This is not possible, nor is it desirable. For to lose the link with the history of the national homeland would distort any understanding of the nature of the racist oppression faced, by abstracting it from its imperialist context. It would also disrupt continuance between the struggles of the national minorities in the metropolis and those of the oppressed nations of the Third World. The position makes racism a phenomenon of the metropolis, only fully experienced and understood by a youth who not only have been born and brought up in England, but also who are assumed to have no experience or connection with the traditions of their homeland. It is a short step from this to an assimilationist position, to 'black and white unite and fight', and to the loss of any distinct social and cultural basis of which the national minorities can build up a resistance to racism.

The reality of social development is one in which the different aspects of the nationality are interrelated. The youth is one aspect of the nationality. Their experience in England, their confusion over their language and culture, their new patterns of relationships with each other and with other national minorities and with the white majority, their attitudes towards racist oppression are all part of the character of the national minority. But the experience of the older generations, both at home and in England, are also a part of that character. One age-group cannot be a society. If there is a sharp conflict between the generations in a society this is itself a crucial aspect of that society, not a reason to treat them as two separate groupings.

On this point the Race Today pamphlet shows the logical extension of the conclusions to which "Southall" comes. Its one-sidedness extends to isolation of workers as well as isolation of youth. This comes rather incongruously in the pamphlet, since the youth movement it describes in its later paragraphs has nothing to do with work or struggles at work, presumably because most of these youth are either unemployed or intellectuals or both. But the major part of the pamphlet is a description of factory struggles. And in its conclusion it hammers home the proletarian theme. In one final passage the IWA are criticised as a hindrance to the development of the struggles of "Asian workers", the Asian Youth Movement given the task of "winning older workers" and are told they will be helped by "West Indian workers." For R.T., the young Asians have created a "political dawn". They have "scant interest in Indian politics", which is seen as a good thing.

The older generation's struggle is seen as a separate, and exhausted stage.
Now is the stage of the "radical and insurrectionary movement of the Asian
youth". And though the pamphlet claims to be showing Asian youth that there
has been "an Asian movement" since the 50's, it is doing so essentially to
prove that the organisations of the older people have become a hindrance, and
all depends on the youth.

Summed up, the 'New Dawn' thesis amounts to this: when the first generation
came, they wanted to live in peace so they didn't fight too hard. The new
generation face racist oppression which they are not prepared to tolerate.
They fight back for their community, and thus see themselves as distinct.
So the youth are developing their own identity (black, Asian, Indian, depending
on taste). This seems to be the meaning of an obscure passage in R.T. - The
young Asians' "sense of loyalty to the Asian community was only partly a
product of cultural up bringing. It owed much to the political isolation of
Asians in Britain who hadn't known Asia. In 1976 the isolation turned into
identity".

How can identity emerge from isolation? A desire for identity may, but not
identity, which is based on the positive - what you have - not on what you are
deprived of. And what kind of identity? This is the real question. Those
who see the youth as a new dawn cannot answer it because, after all, their
emergence is based on breaking links with the old - the homeland and its
culture. And what will they say when this youth becomes old, and their
children are the new generation? Is there yet another identity?

The different threads in the argument become confused and end up becoming
a tangle. The model of the first generation is supposed to have been
assimilation, of the second, separateness. To some extent there is truth
in this. The sociologists and planners from the majority community argued
for assimilation, and many national minorities were taken in by it. Some of
the immigrants believed they would be accepted as British - particularly
Caribbeans. Not only were they quickly disabused, but their culture and
behaviour contradicted any superficial desire to assimilate. They held
closely to their language, customs and social networks. The youth, on the
other hand, were in a better position to assimilate. They had been to
school in England, socialised with the English, picked up many English
habits and perspectives; they had not been acculturised in Punjab or
Bangladesh. But they found antagonism and sought separateness. Yet if that
separateness is to be real, it must be based on the cultural identity which
stems from the origins their parents are steeped in. And that identity, the
same argument tells us, the youth reject. If the identity they are forging
and grasping is derived from isolation, if it is divorced from the national
character and traditions, then what is it? No society creates its own way
of life out of nothing. Therefore it must be created out of English society
and culture. As the Southall pamphlet suggests "the youth were also
articulating their need to organise in terms of British realities". If this
logic is pursued, it is the youth who seek to assimilate with British society,
although antagonistically. The leaders, by contrast, remained separate but
docile. Clearly this cannot be right.

In criticising this train of thought there is no intention to deny one of the
positive aspects which the Southall writers bring out - the struggle for unity
between black nationalities. That is positive. But it is a struggle, still
existing in the desire rather than the reality, which is inevitably still
based in separate national cultures. We must avoid sinking into the blissful
naivety of the authors of "Rally Round Reorientate the League" and see the
beginnings of any kind of coalescence "into one nationality", even if this
does not yet cross the Afro-Asian divide and leaves the Chinese "as distinct"
(and presumably inscrutable) "as before". Nor is it intended to deny that

the new generation changes the norms and patterns of the national character passed on by the older generation. On the contrary, it is that dynamic interrelationship between the different elements in the nationality that gives it the strength to survive and establish its rights in a hostile environment. The Southall pamphlet is ambiguous, for its theme of the building of a total community conflicts with its argument for the uniqueness of the youth.

Both Southall and Race Today see the struggle for community self-defence as a high point in the development of Asian politics in England. The FND position wishes to go further and see it as a step on the road to a higher point - autonomy. There is a difference in that one view concentrates on response to attack, and defensiveness, the other tries to highlight the offensive, the building of a distinct entity with firm foundations in nationality. But the growth of national identity is clearly conditioned by the environment of racist oppression and the need to counter it. And the recognition of community self-defence is based in the realisation that there is something to be defended, going beyond the individual, but not class-based or class-oriented as the RTL proponents would aver. For all its immediate attraction, the 'New Dawn' thesis is fundamentally blurred and idealist. It avoids the extreme 'black and white workers' line by recognising some need for separateness. But it avoids also the anathema of nationalism. As a result it cannot explain concrete phenomena because it has no firm theoretical basis. It is not surprising that RCG and RTL can use it as a basis for lines which subsume the national struggles into the struggle of the working class.

A member of the sub-committee would like to borrow or obtain photocopies of the following:

C. McCollester, "The Political Thought of Amilcar Cabral", Monthly Review 24, 10, March 1973, pp.10-21.

L. Rudebeck, "Development and Class Struggle in Guinea-Bissau". Monthly Review 30, 8, Jan. 1979.

J. O'Brien, "Tribe, Class, Nation: Revolution and the Weapon of Theory in Guinea-Bissau". Race and Class 19,1, 1977, pp.1-18.

If anyone can help, please contact B'm.