

RAT EGRADATION OF LACK STRUGGLE

A. SIVANANDAN

HAITI
INDENTURED LABOUR AND APARTHEID
RACISM AND RADICAL FEMINISM
SRI LANKA: STATE TERROR
POETRY OF THE MINERS' STRIKE

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RAT and the degradation of black struggle

There is a class war going on within Marxism as to who – in the period of the de-construction of industrial capitalism and the re-composition of the working class – are the real agents of revolutionary change: the orthodox working class, which is orthodox no more, or the ‘ideological classes’ who pass for the new social force or forces. It is a war that was engendered, on the one hand, by the growing disillusion with Soviet communism and, on the other, by the receding prospect of capturing state power in late capitalist societies where such power was becoming increasingly diffuse and opaque. The solution to both, on the ground, pointed to a variant of social democracy under the rubric of Eurocommunism. The solution, for theory, pointed to a re-reading of Marx, a re-hashing of Gramsci and a return to intellectual rigour accompanied by activist mortis. The working class, as a consequence, was stripped of its richest political seams – black, feminist, gay, green, etc. – and left, in the name of anti-economism, a prey to economism. Conversely, the new social forces, freed from the ballast of economic determinism (and class reductionism), have been floated as the political and ideological ‘classes’ of the new radicalism. But that flight from class has served only to turn ideological priorities into idealistic preoccupations, and political autonomy into personalised politics and palliatives – which, for all that, have passed into common left currency and found a habitation and a name in Labour local authorities. The

A. Sivanandan is Director of the Institute of Race Relations and has been active in the black movement from the early 1960s.

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clearest expression of these tendencies and the mortality they bring to the new social movements are to be seen in the philosophy and practice of Racism Awareness Training (RAT), the blight of the black struggle – itself a result of the flight of race from class.

Culture, community and class

What, however, had led to the flight from class within the black movement in Britain was the demise of the black community. That community – of Black, of Afro-Caribbean-Asian – had been created in the post-war years by a culture of resistance to racism in the factories and the neighbourhoods of the inner cities to which Afro-Caribbeans and Asians had been condemned to work and live. As workers, they were initially separated by a colonial division of labour which, by and large, assigned Afro-Caribbeans to the service industries and Asians to the foundries and factories. But, as denizens of the same ghetto, they found common cause against a racism that denied them their basic needs in housing, schooling and social and welfare services and brought them up against racist landlords, racist teachers, racist social workers and racist policemen. Common problems and common interests led to a common culture of resistance – and to community.

That sense of community was reinforced by a common (albeit different) tradition of struggle against colonialism in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Nkrumah, Nehru, Garvey, Padmore, James, Williams were all stars of a common constellation, and the struggles of one continent flowed and ebbed into the struggles of the other. So that when the trade unions refused to take up the cause of the Afro-Caribbean or Asian workers over industrial disputes or racial discrimination and/or exploitation, black communities closed ranks behind them and gave them the sustenance and the support to mount a protest or conduct a strike. And that then wove the interests of the class into the concerns of the community and made for a formidable political force far in excess of its numbers.

The direction for that political force and its ideological tenets came from a variety of black marxist organisations (the Indian Workers' Association (IWA) and the Universal Coloured Peoples' Association (UCPA) foremost among them) which, in reaction to the eurocentrism of the white metropolitan left and its attempts to subsume race to class, held this much in common: that the unity and autonomy of black struggle could only enrich and politicise the struggles of the class as a whole. That did not mean that they were culturally exclusive. On the contrary, their struggles, though informed by a resistance to the oppression of black people, were directed towards the liberation of the class. And in this, they were guided by the understanding that any struggle against racism which deepened and extended the class struggle

was the right struggle. Conversely, any struggle that led to the *cul de sac* of reactionary nationalism was the wrong one. Hence their stand: for the blacks and therefore for the class.

This politics was, in turn, fed back to the community, in the temples and the churches and Sunday schools, and through meetings and marches and news-sheets and pamphlets that linked the struggles here to the struggles back home and made common cause with the movements in Africa and Asia and the Caribbean. And it was this common and burgeoning culture of active resistance to racism and imperialism that cohered black community, linked race to class and engendered the struggles of the second generation.¹

It was no accident, therefore, that the state should, as of nature, go for the cultural jugular of the black movement, with strategies to disaggregate that culture into its constituent parts – and then put them up for integration. And integration, as defined by Home Secretary Roy Jenkins in May 1966, was to be seen ‘not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’. But ‘equal opportunity’ never got off the ground, nor was meant to, and the plea for ‘mutual tolerance’ proved to be conclusively cynical with the passage of yet another racist Immigration Act two years later. The emphasis was on ‘cultural diversity’ – and the integration of those cultures into a ‘cultural’ pluralist set-up. Racism was not a matter of racial oppression and exploitation, of race and class, but of cultural differences and their acceptability. The 1965 White Paper had got it wrong in trying to get the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI) to teach British culture to ‘coloured immigrants’. But the Race Relations Act of 1968* was going to teach immigrant cultures to the white power structure instead – through a national Community Relations Commission (CRC) and its myriad provincial progeny – and so minimise the social and political cost of racial exploitation. And to facilitate that process in the most fraught areas of urban deprivation, the government would provide special financial aid – some of which might even trickle down to ‘the Coloured quarter’.

But that type of multiculturalism did not quite work out either. Explaining West Indian and Asian peoples to white groups and individuals in positions of power – as the CRC did – or picking (ineffectually) at racial discrimination – as the Race Relations Board (RRB) was wont to do – seemed to have little effect in managing racism or breaking down black resistance. Nor had urban aid reached the parts

* This was meant to balance out the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of a few months earlier (which denied British citizenship to British Asians in Kenya). For, as Hattersley had said, ‘without integration limitation is inexcusable, without limitation integration is impossible’.

(of society) that would have lubricated such a strategy; and, though a class of black collaborators was springing up in the shadow of the CRC and the RRB, they were still too few in number to take the heart out of black protest. And to make matters worse, the (Tory) government brought in yet another Immigration Act (1971)* stopping dead all primary immigration and putting all dependants on a hit list (those, that is, who were waiting in their countries of origin to join their families in Britain).²

A different struggle ...

The Act may have diverted the struggles of the black community, and the Asians in particular, from the (political) fight against racism to the more legalistic fight for entry permits for their dependants. But, by creating an official category of illegal immigrants (and overstayers) and setting up a special police unit (IIIU) to pursue them, the Act served also to stoke the fires of black resistance. Already, Afro-Caribbean youth were being brutalised by the police and criminalised by the 'Sus' law; now, the Asians were suspected of being illegals and so open to arrest in their work-places or their homes. And on the streets, the sport of Paki-bashing had grown, with police indifference (if not connivance), into more generalised and organised racial violence. In education, the relegation of Afro-Caribbean children to ESN schools and the dispersal of Asian children to schools outside their neighbourhoods combined to agitate black parents. On the shopfloor, the power of the employers (heightened by the Industrial Relations Act of 1971) was compounded by the racism of the unions.

And as racism intensified, the resistance to it intensified too – but in different ways from the 1950s and 1960s. Whereas the struggles of that period had been taken up with the 'first-generation' fight against a brutal racism that denied basic needs and services to Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, those of the late 1960s and early 1970s had to address themselves to creating a social and educational infrastructure for the second generation – in self-help groups and social centres, supplementary schools and neighbourhood schools, workshops and bookshops, hostels for the unemployed and the homeless, youth clubs and associations. And because of the differential racism now visited on the different communities, these activities themselves became differentiated as between Afro-Caribbean and Asian. But they still found their expression in and through political groups and organisations – which, if

* The Tory government is mentioned not because there is any difference between Tory and Labour Immigration Acts – Callaghan, the Home Secretary in the previous Labour government, had in fact foreshadowed the 1971 Act by preventing the entry of fiancés – except that with every one of its Acts to restrict numbers, Labour had a balancing Act to restrict social dislocation.

they tended to be less 'universal' than the UCPA (1967-71), less generalised than the IWA (now split three ways), still came together to gather the community and mount a protest, organise a march, set up a picket. And through their newspapers and bulletins and demonstrations, they continued to connect the struggles of black people in Britain to the struggles of the Third World, the struggle against racism with the struggle against imperialism. The parameters of struggle were still the same as in the decade before – except that now, with the second generation, the priorities of resistance were beginning to change. And, though there was still a culture of resistance that held black communities together and made for race/class struggle, this owed more to the self-conscious ideology of black political parties and organisations than to spontaneous local community initiatives.

Besides, the deployment of black workers itself had changed from the earlier period: they were scattered now in various industries and not necessarily concentrated (race-wise) in a few. Hence the strikes of '72, '73, '74 in the East Midlands (Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester), Birmingham, Greater London were distinguished not only by the support they received from black political organisations, but also by their attempts to break down the racism of the trade unions and involve them more directly in black workers' struggle.* 'Unions, after all, were the organisations of their class and, however vital their struggles as blacks, to remain a people apart would be to set back the class struggle itself: the struggle against racism was still a struggle for the class.'³

The politics of the black youth, however, were of a different order. They were not prepared to do the 'shit work' that their (immigrant) parents had been forced to do – they wanted what they were entitled to as of right – and their politics were therefore insurrectionary. Nor were they prepared to put up with mounting police harassment and brutality – which, in 1972, had received the blessing of the press and, in 1973, the government's imprimatur.** A series of running battles with the police marked the early years of the 1970s – at Brockwell Park Fair, for instance, in 1973, and at the Carib Club (1974) and in Chapeltown, Leeds, on bonfire night (1975) – and exploded into direct confrontation with bricks and bottles and burning of police cars at the Notting Hill Carnival of 1976.

... and a different state strategy

Already, by 1974, the anxieties of the state had begun to shift from the

* From this emerged the first National Committee for Trade Unions Against Racism (1973).

** The White Paper on Police-Immigrant Relations (1973) warned of 'a small minority of young coloured people ... anxious to imitate behaviour amongst the black community in the United States'.

resistances of the first generation to those of the second. The 1968 version of multiculturalism cum urban aid had clearly failed because it was aimed primarily at the white power structure. All it had done was to spawn a nursery of comprador blacks – in the race relations industry. The new labour strategy of multiculturalism-with-urban-aid, therefore, would be aimed at the black communities – financing in particular the *respective* self-help projects of Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, which were starved of funds. Accordingly, in January 1975, the Home Office announced the granting of aid to ‘urban areas facing special social problems’ to the tune of £7,000,000, funding a host of black community groups in the process.⁴ And in September of that same year, the (Labour) government indicated in a White Paper on Racial Discrimination its intention this time to include effective equal opportunities programmes into its multicultural strategy. For ‘the character of the coloured population resident in this country has changed dramatically over the decade ... and the time is not far off when the majority of the coloured population will be British born’ – and it was ‘vital to tap the reservoirs of resilience, initiative and vigour in the racial minority groups and not to allow them to lie unused or to be deflected into negative protests on account of arbitrary and unfair discriminatory practices’.⁵

The strategy and purpose of the White Paper, and the Race Relations Act that followed from it (1976), have been anticipated and analysed in ‘Race, class and the state’ (1976).^{*} For my argument here, what is important to note is that the combined strategy of promoting individual cultures, funding self-help groups and setting down anti-discriminatory and equal opportunity guidelines, not least through the collapsing of the RRB and CRC into a single Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), began finally to break down the earlier cohesion of culture, community and class. Multiculturalism deflected the political concerns of the black community into the cultural concerns of different communities, the struggle against racism to the struggle for culture. Government funding of self-help groups undermined the self-reliance, the self-created social and economic base, of those groups: they were no longer responsive to or responsible for the people they served – and service itself became a profitable concern.

Anti-discriminatory action was either ineffectual or touched only the cultural fringes of discrimination – so that you could wear a turban and still get a job – and behind equal opportunity, based as it was on

* ‘Within ten years Britain will have solved its “black problem” – but “solved” in the sense of having diverted revolutionary aspiration into nationalist achievement, reduced militancy to rhetoric, put protest to profit and, above all, kept a black underclass from bringing to the struggles of the white workers political dimensions peculiar to its own historic battle against capital.’⁶

the concept of racial disadvantage (as opposed to institutional racism), hovered the notion of differential opportunities for Asians and West Indians respectively.⁷ If opportunity there was, it was opportunity for the 'black' compradors, preened and pruned by the CRE to blossom into the new 'black' leadership, and later the 'state-class', that would manage racism and keep the lid on protest – or at least deflect it from political struggle. And as a further bonus, Labour had, under the previous Tory administration, been gifted a cross-section of Asian business men from Uganda (passing for refugees), presumably to add to 'the leaven of energy and resourcefulness that immigrant communities brought with them'.⁸

Underlying the whole of the state's project was a divisive culturalism that turned the living, dynamic, progressive aspects of black people's culture into artefact and habit and custom – and began to break up community.

In fact, the collapse of the long-standing strike at Grunwick at the end of 1977 owes not a little to this process. The strikers (predominantly Asian women in a predominantly Asian workforce), it has been argued by some black activists, would have done better to have relied on the black community and black organisations for their support than to have looked to the trade unions – who finally betrayed them.⁹ But except for the support of women and of the odd black organisation, that community, which as recently as 1973-74 had rallied to a series of black strikes in the East Midlands, was no longer there. And even in the strikes that followed Grunwick's in the next couple of years – as at Futters, and Chix – it was the women in the black community who turned out to help the class.

Black women had 'held up half the sky', without getting half the recognition, during the black power era. But now, when the rest of the community was falling away, it was they who stood out against the skyline. And, informed not only by their struggles against racism and sexism but by those of their sisters against sexism and imperialism in the Third World, it was they who found common cause with the class.*

It was the women, besides, who had to bear the brunt of the cuts in health, education and welfare which marked the last years of Callaghan's Labour government. These affected Asian and Afro-Caribbean families in particular, and it was the women from the communities who took up the issues of child care (Afro-Caribbean and Asian), black prisoners' rights (Afro-Caribbean), the virginity testing and X-raying of immigrants (Asian), the enforced use of depo-provera (Afro-Caribbean and Asian), the neglect of 'ethnic diseases' such as

* By 1978, black women's groups had sprung up all over Britain and came together to form one powerful national body, the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), with a national newspaper, FOWAAD.¹⁰

sickle cell anaemia (Afro-Caribbean) and rickets (Asian), the easy relegation of Afro-Caribbean children to adjustment units ('sin-bins') and the fight against the deportation of 'illegal' (Asian) mothers or for the entry of 'illegal' (Asian) children to join them. But, of their very nature, these issues had a differential impact on the two communities and tended to make for separate struggles on the ground. And although ideologically the black women's movement still tried to cohere the common interests of race, gender and class, the black culture of resistance of an earlier period was now being put under review by a feminist culture of resistance which was still not confident enough to create new black parameters.

From black struggle to anti-racist struggle

The struggles of the youth, already divided by the propagation of multi-culture, had also taken off in different directions. The trouncing the police had received at the hands of the Afro-Caribbean youth at the Notting Hill Carnival (1976) had only led to a more sophisticated, mailed-fist velvet-glove, approach to policing. The tactic of using the media to legitimate the criminalisation of black youth, first begun under Police Commissioner Robert Mark, was continued by his successor, David McNee – only he, taking to heart his nickname 'The Hammer', now brought riot shields to the 'defence' of his force. And increasing police authoritarianism itself found legitimacy in the policies of a Labour government which, with an eye to the forthcoming elections, had begun to back-pedal on its anti-discriminatory programme (however ineffective) and rely instead on the forces of law and order to smother black discontent.

Labour had earlier – as part of its balancing act between restricting immigration and improving integration – started yet another Dutch auction on immigration control through, this time, a Green Paper on Nationality Law. The Tories, under Thatcher, upped the ante and promised pass laws to control 'internal immigration' and 'arrangements' to facilitate voluntary repatriation. And the National Front, thus released into respectability, became more brazen in its attacks on the Asian community – and so occupied the attention of Asian youth. But since the Front's bravery was invariably under 'police protection', the Asian youth were up against the police as well. The killing of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in 1976 by young fascist thugs in the heart of Southall had led to clashes with the police (who held that the murder was not necessarily racial). In 1977, the Front, under police escort, had staged virulently racist and provocative marches through black city areas and were stopped by the youth of both communities. In 1978, Judge McKinnon ruled that the National Party leader Kingsley Read's pronouncement on Chaggar's murder – 'one down, one million to go' –

did not constitute incitement to racial hatred.* In 1979, the Front, abetted by the policies of the local Tory council and the police, flaunted its fascist election programmes in Southall Town Hall – and was repelled by the citizenry, but at the cost of the life of a teacher, who was battered to death by the Special Patrol Group.

The rise of the right had, three years earlier, brought together radical whites and blacks in the inner-city areas in an Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (ARAFCC) with its own newspaper, *CARF*. Their battle was joined a year later by white organisations under the broad banner of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). But, in the process, the direction of the battle got deflected from a fight against racism and, therefore, fascism to a fight against fascism and, incidentally, racism. The whites from the local committees of ARAFCC defected to the ANL, which, with its spectacular events such as rock concerts and fetes and carnivals, its youth organisations such as School Kids Against the Nazis and its paper *SKAN*, and its mass leafleting drives, was able to attract more (white) support and mobilise more (white) people. The fascists, as a result, were stopped dead in their electoral tracks; but they were also driven from the (white) high streets into the (black) alley ways of the inner city, there to continue their depredations and their recruitment. And when, after the general election of 1979, the ANL (its mission accomplished) disbanded, the issues of racism and fascism had become separated, and the joint struggles of Asians and Afro-Caribbeans likewise. The black struggle (for community and class) was becoming more narrowly a struggle against racism, and the anti-racist struggle itself was tending to divide into struggles that concerned Asians (mainly) and the struggles that concerned Afro-Caribbeans (mainly).** The protest over Akhtar Ali Baig's murder (July 1980) in Newham, for example, was mostly an Asian affair, and the massive march following the burning to death of thirteen young Afro-Caribbeans in a fire in New Cross (January 1981) chiefly an Afro-Caribbean one.

And then, in the summer of 1981, the youth of the benighted inner cities, black and white, Afro-Caribbean and Asian, came together again – not so much in joint struggle as in a blinding moment of spontaneous insurrection against the impossibility of their common condition. For, in the course of two brief years, Thatcherite monetarism had blighted the future of all working-class youth, not just black, and left them a bleak landscape of 'rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds'

* 'In this England of ours', the good judge observed, 'we are allowed to have our own view still, thank goodness, and long may it last.'

** But not before the Indian Workers' Association, the Black Socialist Alliance, Blacks Against State Harassment and various black women's groups had organised one final national demonstration against state harassment and fascist thuggery – in June 1979.

over-shadowed by policemen.

The rebellions shook the government. The danger now was not the black community as such. There was no *black* community. The promotion of cultural separatism (euphemistically known as cultural diversity or multiculturalism) was keeping Asians and Afro-Caribbeans apart; the development of a youth culture and a women's culture were further de-composing the forces within the community, without, as yet, realigning them in a new black configuration; and the emergence of an Afro-Caribbean managerial class in the race relations industry (and sub-managers in the nationalised self-help groups), together with the flowering of Ugandan-Asian entrepreneurship, were breaking up community into classes. The danger to the state stemmed from the never-employed youth of the inner cities, both black and white, hounded and harried by the police. But the blacks, by virtue of their racial oppression, were the insurrectionary tinder.*

Hence, while a Task Force of town planners and bankers and business men under the Minister for the Environment was sent to study mixed areas like Toxteth in Liverpool, to see how such areas could be regenerated, black (mainly Afro-Caribbean) areas like Brixton got the attention also of a quasi-judicial inquiry under Lord Scarman to investigate the 'disorders' and their causes (in racism and police-black relations). Little of substance came out of the first of these initiatives for Toxteth (or Smethwick) as such, but the Urban Aid Programme, which, under the Tories, had fallen into disfavour, now received a 'dramatic re-awakening of interest ... as a vehicle for social measures in multi-racial areas', and the CRE, which the Tories had threatened to close down, was open to business again – the business of channelling funds to black 'self-help' groups.** Consequently, 'funding for the total urban programme ... was dramatically increased, against the trend, to a 1982/3 level of £270m.'***

The rise and rise of ethnicity

It was Lord Scarman's report, however, that pointed to a new ethnic

* 'To allege that unemployment or social deprivation is the cause of the "riots" is to pretend that racism is not also the cause of unemployment and social deprivation – among blacks.'¹¹

** Though Section 11 of the Local Government Act of 1966 is the 'major vehicle of ... government support for local authority programmes designed to combat racial disadvantage', 'the Urban Programme is the major source of funding for voluntary sector schemes designed to combat racial discrimination ...'¹²

*** 'Nationally, over 200 new "ethnic projects" have been approved for 1982/3; in the Partnership authorities these are valued at £2m (£0.77m in 1981/2) while Traditional Urban Programme expenditure on "ethnic projects" has increased still more sharply to £7m (£2.7m in 1981/2). It is estimated that £15m is currently being spent on ethnic projects under the urban programme.'¹³

strategy, which was received with enthusiasm (and relief) by Tory and Labour alike.* The foundation for that strategy, however, had already been intimated in the report of the Home Affairs Committee on Racial Disadvantage (1981) – which was itself informed by a whole school of ethnicity that had emerged (at Bristol University's Social Science Research Council Unit on Ethnic Relations) to take on the 'problem' of British-born blacks.**

Whereas multiculturalism, addressing itself to the revolt of the first-generation 'immigrant', diagnosed the problem as one of cultural misunderstanding, the ethnicists, in trying to relate to the ongoing revolt of British-born blacks, connected it with the cultural limbo to which racism had ostensibly condemned them. Neither Asian/Afro-Caribbean nor British but afflicted by both, the second generation was adrift of its moorings and rudderless, caught in a cross-current of emotion in its search for identity – not least, to fight racism with. And in that search, it kept returning to its ethnicity and, redefining it, found refuge therein. Ethnicity refers, therefore, to the creation of a new reactive culture on the part of British-born Asians and West Indians alike. But where Asians tended to go into their cultures to make the new ethnicity, West Indian ethnicity came out of a mixture, a 'creolisation', of Afro-Caribbean culture with the 'host' culture. 'Those who were born in Britain', states Watson, 'are caught between the cultural expectations of their parents (the first-generation migrants) and the social demands of the wider society. Young Sikhs and Jamaicans, for instance, often feel that they do not "fit" in either culture ... Largely in response to racism, these two minorities have begun a process of ethnic redefinition – or "creolisation" ...'¹⁵ Or, in Weinreich's language: 'West Indian boys have conflicted identifications with the general representatives of their own ethnicity and the native white population.' Hence, the 'changes' in the second generation should be seen as 'redefinition of their ethnic distinctiveness'.¹⁶ It is racism, however, according to the Ballards, that has 'precipitated a reactive pride in their separate ethnic identity'.¹⁷ Ethnicity itself, for Wallman, is a 'perception' of difference, a 'sense' of it, something that was 'felt', a clue to identity.¹⁸

By acknowledging the resistance to racism on the part of the second generation only to banish it to 'conflicted identification' and 'ethnic redefinition', the ethnicists deny the connection between race and class

* But then, it was in essence an elaboration of the multicultural strategy initiated by Labour in 1976 – and in hard times, the Tories were not averse to taking lessons from their masters in social control.

** Ethnicity, which became muted when the Unit moved to Aston University under Professor John Rex in 1979,¹⁴ is soon to be revived by Professor Robin Cohen (with Rex) in a five-year (policy-oriented) research programme at Warwick University.

and between racism and imperialism – and reincarcerate the second generation in the castle of their skin. Identity is all. The Home Affairs Committee then takes on the ethnic theme and, making ethnicity official, signs up institutional racism as racial disadvantage – leaving it to Scarman to tie it up with ethnic need.

Like the Race Relations Act of 1976, the main planks of the Scarman report were racial discrimination (direct and indirect) and racial disadvantage. Racial discrimination Scarman, too, was prepared to leave to the 'existing law', and presumably the CRE.* But racial disadvantage, which the 1976 Act – steering its way gingerly between the Scylla of institutional racism and the Charybdis of inherent inferiority – had left (undefined) to the vagaries of Equal Opportunity, was in Scarman to be (specifically) treated in terms of special ethnic needs and problems.** And it is here at the point of cure, in the act of applying the ethnic poultice to the ethnic wound, that racial disadvantage begins to smell of inherent disability.

The West Indian family, implies Scarman, is comparatively unstable, 'doubtless because of the impact of British social conditions on the matriarchal extended family structure of the West Indian immigrants'.¹⁹ For instance, 'the percentage of children in care and of single-parent families in the black community is noticeably higher than one would expect in relation to the proportion of black people in the community as a whole. Fifty percent of single parent families in ... Lambeth in 1978 were non-white'. Besides, 'the two wards where the April disorders were centred – Tulse Hill and Herne Hill – contain some 22% of all the single-parent households in Lambeth and 2.1% of the 0-18 group in those wards are in care. Of the 185 children in care of those two wards on 10 September 1980, 112 (61%) were black'. In addition, it was estimated that '200-300 young blacks are homeless, sleeping rough or squatting in Brixton'.

Young West Indians, for Scarman are 'a people of the street ... They live their lives on the street, having often nothing better to do: they make their protest there: and some of them live off street crime.' Inevitably, they must come into conflict with the police, 'whom they see as pursuing and harassing them on the streets'.*** And this hostility of black youth to the police has '*infected* older members of the community' (emphasis added). The street-corners are 'social centres' for old people too, and 'young and old, good and bad have time on their

* The CRE was under inquiry by the Home Affairs Committee at the time and Scarman would not commit himself.

** 'The special problems and needs of the ethnic minorities', is how Scarman put it.

*** By contrast, the 'chief complaint of Asian leaders appears to be that the police do not do sufficient to protect their community from alleged attacks by racist members of the white community.'²⁰

hands and a continuing opportunity ... to engage in endless discussion of their grievances', so that 'in Brixton even one isolated instance of misconduct can foster a whole legion of rumours which rapidly become beliefs firmly held within the community'.

If this is not as elaborate as Moynihan's 'tangled pathology' of the American 'Negro family',* it is because Scarman's brief was to investigate the 'Brixton disorders' not the West Indian community. But, given his determination to acquit the state of institutional racism, it was inevitable that he should find the West Indian community guilty of inherent disability – and so give racial disadvantage a meaning which even the Home Affairs Committee report on the subject (July 1981) had been careful to avoid. But the committee, since its brief was racial disadvantage as such, also referred to the disadvantage suffered by the Asian community and located it in language, religion, custom and (peasant) illiteracy. (Only the 'East African Asians' were an exception.) Between them, the two reports set out the terms of West Indian and Asian ethnic need and provided the criteria on which the government based its (ethnic) programmes and allocated its (ethnic) funds.

The ensuing scramble for government favours and government grants (channelled through local authorities) on the basis of specific ethnic needs and problems served, on the one hand, to deepen ethnic differences and foster ethnic rivalry and, on the other, to widen the definition of ethnicity to include a variety of national and religious groups – Chinese, Cypriots, Greeks, Turks, Irish, Italians, Jews, Moslems, Sikhs – till the term itself became meaningless (except as a means of getting funds). This 'vertical mosaic' of ethnic groups, so distanced from the horizontal of class politics, then became even more removed by the policies of 'left' Labour councils who, lacking the race-class perspective which would have allowed them to dismantle the institutional racism of their own structures, institutionalised ethnicity instead. And it was left to a handful of genuinely anti-racist programmes and/or campaigns, such as those against deportation, police harassment and racial violence (sustained largely by GLC funding), to carry on the dwindling battle for community and class.

The other cure for racial disadvantage propounded by Scarman was 'positive action', which meant no more than a determined effort at promoting equal opportunity or, more precisely, reducing unequal opportunity for ethnic minorities, but backed up this time by a system of monitoring. And this, too, was taken up avidly by inner-city administrations who, having set up their own race relations units (to administer ethnic programmes and ethnic funds), required now an ethnic

* 'Once or twice removed, it [the weakness of the family structure] will be found to be the principal source of most of the aberrant, inadequate or anti-social behaviour that did not establish, but now serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation.'



staff – not least, to keep an eye on jobs for ethnics.*

Underlying the whole of Scarman's report is a socio-psychological view of racism, resonant of the ideas of the ethnic school, which, when coupled with his views on racial disadvantage, verges on the socio-biological. Institutional racism, for Scarman, is not a reality of black life but a matter of subjective feelings, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs. Ethnic minorities have a 'sense' of 'concealed discrimination'. Young blacks have a 'sense of rejection' and 'a sense of insecurity'. They do not 'feel' secure socially, economically or politically. They 'see' policemen 'as pursuing and harassing them on the streets' – and the older generation have come to share this 'belief'. (The 'belief' in the Asian community is that the police do not protect them against 'alleged' racist attacks.) Community 'attitudes and beliefs' (caused by a lack of confidence in the police) underlay the disturbances. 'Popular attitudes and beliefs' themselves 'derive their strength' from the 'limbo of the half-remembered and the half-imagined'. The 'image' of a hostile police force is 'myth' and 'legend'.²²

Equally, if the police force was guilty of anything, it was not institutional racism but racial prejudice – which 'does manifest itself occasionally in the behaviour of a few police officers on the street'. And the breakdown of police-community relations was, on the part of the police, due to the fact that their 'attitudes and methods' had not quite caught up with 'the problem of policing a multicultural society'. Part of the policeman's training, therefore, should be directed to 'an understanding of the cultural backgrounds and attitudes of ethnic minorities'.

Racism, for Scarman, was in the mind – in attitudes, prejudices, irrational beliefs – and these were to be found on both sides of the divide – black and white. Institutional racism was a matter of black perception, white racism was a matter of prejudice. Or that, on the face of it, was what Scarman seemed to be saying – and at worst, it was even-handed, liberal even. But what he had effectively done was to reduce institutional racism to black perception and replace it with personal prejudice – and so shift the object of anti-racist struggle from the state to the individual, from changing society to changing people, from improving the lot of whole black communities, mired in racism and poverty, to improving the lot of 'black' individuals.

It was a plan that the nascent 'black' petit-bourgeoisie, nourished on government (and local government) aid for ethnic need and positive action for ethnic equality, leapt to embrace. By and large, the ethnics were content to fight each other in their quest for office. And it was only when there was a white blockage in the system, preventing them

* The local CRCs were pushed on to the sidelines in the process and the central CRE was left the statutory task of taking up cases of discrimination.

from going up further, that the ethnics turned 'black' and pulled out all their oppressed 'black' history to beat the whites with. Hence the demand for Black Sections in the Labour Party; the rise and fall of the Black Media Workers' Association (BMWA) (the fall coming after the white media made room for them in ethnic slots – since when, they have gone back to being Afro-Caribbeans and Asians respectively); and the emergence of a black trade union aristocracy, the Black Trade Union Solidarity Movement (BTUSM).^{*} None of these give a fart for ordinary black people, but use them and their struggles as cynically as any other bourgeois class or sub-class.

Ironically enough, most of the support for these groups has come from the 'left wing' of the Labour Movement which, having failed to incorporate black working-class struggles and black working-class leadership into its own history and organisation, now feels compelled to accommodate black sects in its vaunted broad church. Taking black out of the context of the struggles in which it was beaten into a political colour, the white left now believes that any self-seeking middle-class group that calls itself black has an automatic right to appropriate that history and is automatically political or progressive. What is even more ironical is that this should be happening at a time when, in the rush for office, even such reconstituted blackness is breaking up into Afro-Caribbean and Asian, with the Afro-Caribbeans claiming a prior right to black history on the basis, simply, of a darker colour – thereby emptying 'black' of politics altogether.^{**} Black Sections are no more representative of black working people than the Labour Party is of white. In fact, black politics has to cease to be political for blacks to get into politics. The BTUSM is no more interested in the lot of the rank and file than their lordships Chapple and Murray were as erstwhile leaders of their unions. The BMWA, in the short period of its fight-to-get-into-Channel 4 existence, never did anything for the lower ranks of black workers or, for that matter, demanded to make political black plays or programmes that would have improved the lot of ordinary Afro-Caribbeans or Asians – unless exposing the foibles and manners of one's own people to white voyeurs, but from the inside this time, can be considered funny or political. But then, an ethnic media can only reproduce the cult of ethnicity. And a culture of ethnicity, unlike a culture of resistance, has no community and has no class.

And to undergird it all, undergird the efforts of the new ethnics to move up and away – up through the white blockages in the system and

^{*} The personnel of one group were frequently the personnel of another, as in an interlocking directorate.

^{**} This degradation of 'black' has now passed into vulgar usage and separated Afro-Caribbeans from Asians – as in 'black and Asian', which is itself a nonsense, as one refers to colour (not politics) and the other to geography.

away from the black communities and their troubles – there is a whole school of thought and enterprise which promises to change white minds and white attitudes so that a thousand black flowers can bloom in the interstices of the white structure. Felicitously, it calls itself RAT (Racism Awareness Training)* – and it is to this final degradation of black struggle that I now turn my attention.

The birth of RAT

RAT began life in HAT (Human Awareness Training) on a military base in Florida at the end of the 1960s, when the reverberations of black rebellion in American cities began to resonate in the military installations in the US and Japan and drove the Defense Department to a Human Goals Proclamation upholding individual dignity, worth and equal opportunity in its ranks. The training of human relations instructors at the Defense Race Relations Institute (DRRI), therefore, was meant to inculcate a knowledge of minority cultures and history, together with an understanding of personal racism.

HAT, of course, had formed part of human relations training for some time, but the race relations element came into prominence only after the Kerner Commission (1968) declared that racism in America was a white problem and that it inhered in the very structures of society. 'What white Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it.'²³ On the face of it, the Kerner report looked like a radical statement (as radical as Scarman appeared liberal), and though it connected racism with white institutions, nowhere did it connect the institutions themselves with an exploitative white power structure. So that oppression was severed from exploitation, racism from class and institutional racism from state racism.

The US Commission on Civil Rights (1970) echoed the Kerner Commission and went on to define racism (which Kerner had left undefined) as 'any attitude, action or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of his or their color', adding that an 'institutional structure was any well-established, habitual or widely accepted pattern of action' (i.e., behavioural) or 'organizational arrangements whether formal or informal' (i.e., administrative). The Commission also made a distinction between 'overt racism' and 'indirect institutional subordination' (which was to become direct and indirect discrimination in the British context). And combating racism, stated the Commission, involved 'changing the

* Some RAT practitioners have recently changed the name to TIRA (Training in Racism Awareness); but a RAT by any other name still smells.

behaviour of whites' and 'increasing the capabilities of non-white groups' (which in Britain was to become known as tackling racial disadvantage). But the principal responsibility was 'with the white community rather than within the non-white communities'.²⁴

Following the two reports, a whole host of literature sprang up in education, psychology and the churches, rescuing racism from structural taint and interiorising it within the white psyche and white behaviour – and formulating programmes for combating racism on that basis. The New York-based Council for Interracial Books, Integrated Education (Chicago), the Foundation for Change and the Detroit-centred New Perspectives on Race were particularly active in the educational field. Writing in *Integrated Education*, Paul Goldin formulated a 'Model for racial awareness training of teachers in integrated schools' which 'pushes one (through inter-racial confrontation) into an identification with the minority position'.²⁵ In *Developing New Perspectives on Race*, however, Michigan's school superintendent, Patricia Bidol, advocated a more cognitive approach, emphasising that 'only whites can be racists because it is whites that have control over the institutions that create and enforce American cultural norms and values' – and it is whites who benefit from it. She distinguished, therefore, between overt (Archie Bunker type) racism and covert (unintentional) racism – and defined racism itself as 'prejudice plus institutional power'. And it was Bidol and Detroit's New Perspectives on Race who pioneered in the development of racism awareness training for educators.^{*26}

But the work of the Detroit Industrial Mission – following the burning of the city (1967) and the rise of black militancy in DRUM (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement) and FRUM (Ford Revolutionary Union Movement) – pointed to the need to create a 'new white consciousness' through both attitudinal and behavioural change. The emphasis hitherto, wrote its Associate Director Robert W. Terry in *For whites only*, had been on changing attitudes to change behaviour or changing behaviour (through law, for instance) in order to change attitudes. But though both attitudes and behaviour were critical and both needed to be changed, 'attitudes will be misplaced and behaviour misdirected if consciousness remains untouched'. For even the most well-intentioned person, argues Terry, taking on from where the Civil Rights Commission had left off,** without being 'personally involved

* Bidol's influence is also prominent in Britain, as for instance in the use of her slide show, 'From racism to pluralism', at RAT sessions run by the Racism Awareness Programme Unit (RAPU).

** 'Even many whites who sincerely abhor racism in principle and openly combat overt racism, sometimes feel themselves resisting clearly anti-racist actions for "intuitive" reasons they do not fully understand. This usually means such anti-racist actions threaten



in overt acts of racial injustice', can perpetuate racism in institutions merely by the way the American 'cultural or belief system ... sets his orientation in the decision-making process'. Hence, it was important to be conscious of cultural (historical, linguistic, etc.), institutional (direct and indirect) and individual racism all at once.²⁸ Cultural racism had to be examined wherever it occurred (language, textbooks, media), 'confrontation' was a good way of challenging personal racism and, for institutional racism, Terry provided a model check list designed by the Chicago Campaign for One Society: 'Inventory of racism: how to look for institutional racism'.*

The elements of the RAT credo were already set by the time Judy Katz came to write her D. Ed thesis: *Systematic handbook of exercises for the re-education of white people with respect to attitudes and behaviours* (1976) – except that by now she could also draw on the Women's Movement for an even more personal interpretation of oppression and the need for consciousness-raising. That perspective would, in addition, also allow her (and her followers) to distort the language, style and analysis of the black movement and further remove racism from its exploitative context and render it class-less.

Racism, states Katz, is indeed a white problem, and white people had better take conscience of it – for the sake of their own mental health. As far back as 1965, she points out, the Commission on Mental Health described racism as the number one mental health problem in the United States. 'Its destructive effects severely cripple the growth and development of millions of our citizens, young and old alike.'²⁹ Even before that, the Myrdal 'report' on 'The American Dilemma' (1944) had drawn attention to the hiatus, the schism, the rupture in the (white) American psyche: between 'American ideals of equality, freedom, God-given dignity of the individual, inalienable rights' and 'the practices of discrimination, humiliation, insult, denial of opportunity to Negroes and others in a racist society'.³⁰ New research had sprung up to show that racism was a 'psychological problem ... deeply imbedded in white people from a very early age both on a conscious and an unconscious level'. And even black commentators, according to Katz, confirmed the diagnosis, pointed to a cure – like Whitney Young, for instance, head of the National Urban League: '... most people are not conscious of what racism really is. Racism is not a desire to wake up every morning and lynch a black man from a tall tree. It is not engaging in vulgar epithets ... It is the day to day indignities, the subtle humiliations that are so devastating ... The Kerner Commission

to reduce certain almost sub-consciously perceived psychological benefits these whites have been gaining from living in a society where they are considered members of a "superior" group.'²⁷

* This same checklist is reproduced in Katz's handbook.

has said that if you have been an observer; if you have stood by idly, you are racist.' Katz even rallies radical blacks like Du Bois to her cause: 'Am I, in my blackness, the sole sufferer? I suffer. And yet, somehow, above the suffering, above the shackled anger that beats the bars, above the hurt that crazes, there surges in me a vast pity – pity for a people imprisoned and enthralled, hampered and made miserable for such a cause.' And more recent black militants, like Stokely Carmichael, taken out of the context of struggle: 'if the white man wants to help, he can go home and free his own people',³¹ or Malcolm X: 'whites who are sincere should organize themselves and figure out some strategies to break down race prejudice that exists in white communities'.^{*32}

Racism, for Katz, is an 'essence' that history has deposited in the white psyche, like sexism is an 'essence' deposited in the male: oppressors oppress themselves.** It is a part of the psycho-social history of white America, part of its collective unconscious. It is in American customs, institutions, language, mores – it is both conscious and unconscious at the same time, both overt and covert. There is no escaping it. And because the system is loaded in their favour, all that whites can be, even when they fight racism, is anti-racist racists: if they don't, they are just plain, common or garden racists.

Hence, any training programme that intends to bring individual whites to a consciousness of themselves should also take conscience of American culture and institutions. And it should be done at two levels at once – the cognitive or informative and the affective or emotional – at the level of thinking and at the level of feeling. The techniques that had hitherto been used in human relations training erred on one side or the other; or, like multicultural or ethnic studies, they were too other-oriented, not self-aware enough; or they were, like inter-racial encounters, too exploitative, once again, of Third World peoples. Only white on white techniques promised any success, and it was on that basis that Ms Katz had devised a systematic training programme which was influenced as much by the shift in psychotherapy towards a teaching role as the shift in education towards a counselling role.*** The point, after all, was not to change attitudes, but to change behaviour – to change the world.

Since then (1976), the Katz technique of racism awareness training – an intensive six-stage programme of forty-eight exercises crammed into two weekends but adaptable 'to many different settings' – has become widely used in the United States, 'in school systems, with

* RAT practitioners in Britain even quote Stokely on institutional racism.

** 'Our sexual and racial essences have an enormous influence on our perspectives and experiences.'

*** Which is why her trainers carry the exotically hybrid name of 'facilitators'.

teachers, counsellors and administrators, as part of Affirmative Action Programmes with managers; at university communities with students, faculties, and administrators ... '33

Part of its appeal lay, of course, with the American penchant for therapy, but part of it was also due to the political climate in which it grew: the collapse of the Black Power movement into culturalism and theological liberation, the personalisation of power in the Women's Movement and the diaspora of guilt broadcast by Israel in the wake of its imperial adventures.

Taking a leaf out of the Black Power book, Ms Katz defines racism as a 'white problem'. But whereas the white problem in Black Power ideology referred to the white capitalist power structure, in Ms Katz it is reduced to a personal one, a problem of individuals who, because they are white, have power – over non-whites. Having so established white guilt as irreversible, almost inborn, Ms Katz takes infinite pains to warn whites that they should not feel guilty, for guilt is 'a self-indulgent way to use up energy'.* On the other hand, whites suffer from racism – as much as men suffer from sexism. And 'we have learnt from the Feminist Movement that men as well as women are adversely affected by oppressive sex roles'. Her programme of anti-racist sensitivity training, therefore, promises through a 'process of self-examination, change and action that we will someday liberate ourselves and our society'.

It is the sort of psychospiritual mumbo-jumbo which, because it has the resonances of the political movements of its time – capitalists have changed the world, our business is to interpret it – and, by reducing social problems to individual solutions, passes off personal satisfaction for political liberation, and then wraps it all up in a Madison Avenue sales package promising instant cure for hereditary disease, claimed the attention not just of Middle America but of a grateful state. For what better way could the state find to smooth out its social discordances while it carried on, untrammelled, with its capitalist works?

The spread of RAT

It was not, on the face of it, a package that would have appealed to the British 'character', but it seemed the logical extension to the work of a group of teachers and community workers (mostly black) whose campaign against racial symbols in children's books had derived its

* In one of the exercises in the Handbook, Ms Katz advises the 'facilitator' that 'one way to manage feelings of guilt is to emphasise that racism is deeply ingrained in our system and that we are clearly products of our system' – and then proceeds illogically to demand that one changes oneself rather than the system.

message and method directly from the Council for Interracial Books in the US – who were themselves proponents of RAT. Accordingly, in 1978, the group founded the Racism Awareness Programme Unit (RAPU) on the rock of Katzian teaching – and was joined soon after by renegades (mostly black) from the multicultural faith, disaffected by its inability to speak to white racism. In the following year, some of the RAPU people, along with others, set up the National Committee on Racism in Children's Books and began to produce a quarterly magazine, *Dragons Teeth*. The journal's aim of investigating (and challenging) racial bias in children's books, however, was centred around black images and stereotypes. And this, over the next two years, led to a preoccupation with black identity and reclaiming the past – and found its obverse in white identity and RAT.

RAT, by now, had begun to make inroads into the public sector. Some interest in human relations training (including race relations) had been evinced in official circles with the rise of black youth militancy in the mid-1970s. But these, where they did obtain – principally in education, police and probation services – took the form of the occasional conference or seminar or lecture. Industry paid a little more attention to race relations, but strictly for O and M purposes, and was therefore limited, as in the work of the Industrial Language Training Centres (ILTC), to things like difficulties in communication between employers and employees because of language and culture.

By 1980, Nadine Peppard, who as Race Relations Adviser at the Home Office was responsible for developing race relations training, and advising the police, prison and probation services, was arguing for the type of affective techniques that had been developed in the US – at the DRRI in Florida, among others, and by the Council for Interracial Books. Although a more conscious effort, she felt, had recently been made in the 'practitioner services' to include 'the general question of attitudes and the psychology of prejudice', group work techniques, such as role-playing and training games, were still restricted to the industrial field (in the work of the ILTCs, for instance). 'A practical analysis of what is required', urged Ms Peppard, 'clearly shows that those attitudes or beliefs which underlie actual behaviour must be seen as the heart of the matter and that to construct a training scheme which tries to ignore them is to beg the question.'³⁴ An essential aspect of group work, she suggested, was the type of 'sensitivity training', 'consciousness-raising' or 'awareness training' that was 'a standard aspect of training' in the US. As a reference point and guide, she cited the 'experimental training programme' mounted at the University of Oklahoma by Professor Judy Katz.

In education too, the end of the 1970s saw a general shift of emphasis, often within multicultural teaching itself, from imparting information to challenging attitudes. Before students could understand



other people's customs, they would, it appeared, have to be opened up to such understanding, made receptive to it, emotionally and mentally. Hence, a psychological or affective approach was necessary — for the 'affective component "leads" the cognitive in attitude change'.³⁵ Information, in other words, did not change people's attitudes and behaviour. On the other hand, if you changed people's attitudes and behaviour, they would be more receptive to the information. The sociological approach of multiculturalism was yielding to the psychological approach of racism awareness training.

But not till after the riots of 1981 and Scarman did either the official race relations courses or RAPU take off seriously into RAT. For one thing, Scarman had changed the terms of debate from the material effects of racism on poor blacks to the cultural effects on and the job prospects of middle-class ethnics. For another, he had, in his recommendations on local authority spending and police training, provided a breeding-ground for RAT and the reproduction of 'imagined communities'³⁶ and their ethno-psychological struggles for identity against ethno-centrism.*

A flurry of reports, working groups and conferences on local authority strategies to combat racial disadvantage ensued.³⁷ The Minister of State for Home Affairs, declaring that 'it cannot be unfair to give help to those with a special handicap',³⁸ pledged central government support for local authority endeavours. Race relations sub-committees, ethnic advisers, RAT courses — and even (elected) black councillors — began to spring up — in every inner-city borough in London and the conurbations. The GLC, Brent, Haringey, Hackney, Camden, Islington, Lambeth, Newham, Northants, Coventry, Bradford, Nottingham, Leicester, Sheffield, Birmingham, Greater Manchester, Liverpool — they all had their ethnic units and ethnic officers and ethnic projects, their ethnic monitoring units and, above all, as an investment in an ethnic future, their RAT courses, some of them even compulsory for local authority staff, some of them with their own RAT inspectorate. (They were also, not fortuitously, the areas that had 'rioted' or were ripe for 'riot' in 1981.)

And yet, in terms of the material conditions of the workless, homeless, school-less, welfare-less blacks of slum city, all this paroxysm of activity has not made the blindest bit of difference. The GLC Housing Committee Chairman admitted in 1984 that racial harassment on some East London estates was 'on a scale not seen in this country for 40 to 50 years'.³⁹ In the same year, the Policy Studies Institute survey concluded: 'the quality of the housing of black people is much

*Identity is the personalisation of nationalism, ethnicity its group expression and all points in the same continuum.

worse than the quality of housing in general in this country.’⁴⁰ And unemployment for blacks, already twice the average for whites at the end of 1982, has worsened considerably.

All that has happened is that the centre of gravity of the race relations industry has moved from the central government and the CRE to the local state – and with it, the black struggle, not for community and class any more, but for hand-outs and position.* And racism awareness, not black power, was the new ideology.

The same tendencies to ethnicising and RATifying racism were observable in education. In 1981, the Rampton Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, though acknowledging racism in the teaching profession, identified racism with ‘a set of attitudes and behaviour towards people of another race which is based on the belief that races are distinct’ and went on to repeat the shibboleths of the American school.** Racism could be ‘both intentional and unintentional’ and ‘a well intentioned and apparently sympathetic person, may, as a result of his education, experiences or environment, have negative, patronising or stereotyped views about ethnic minority groups which may subconsciously affect his attitude and behaviour towards members of those groups.’⁴¹ And Rampton, like Scarman, emphasised ‘the particular educational needs’ of particular ethnic groups – which doubtless helped the National Association of Schoolmasters and the Union of Women Teachers to pass off their ‘negative, patronising or stereotyped’ view of West Indian children for ‘educational need’: ‘many West Indian children suffer from the fact they belong to a sub-culture of British culture with no readily identifiable distinctiveness’ – in contrast, that is, to Asian children who are ‘largely the products of a stable cultural background’.⁴²

But Rampton also gave a fillip to RAT in schools. The Birmingham Education Department even got its ‘multicultural outreach worker’, David Ruddell, to devise its own teaching kit – on Katzian lines, of course, but adapted to British needs (as Katz had said one could do). So that although the basic ‘philosophy’ remained the same (‘white racism is a white problem’, ‘racism = prejudice plus power’ and all that stuff), the reality in British inner-city schools also demanded that some attention was paid to the racist violence of the National Front

* By the very same token, however, a certain black radicalism has moved into the town halls and helped local organisations in the battle against the local state, as witness the Camden ‘occupation’ of the Town Hall in 1984 over the treatment of homeless families (many of whom are black), following the burning to death of a family in a sub-standard bed-and-breakfast joint.

** The report of the Swann Committee, the successor to Rampton, published as we go to press, emphasises attitudes and behaviour as Rampton does – but, unlike Rampton, does not see teacher racism as crucial to black underachievement.

(NF), at whose instigation ('intentional or unintentional') innumerable black kids had been attacked and quite a few killed. But Ruddell gets over the difficulty with his opening salvo. 'One of the barriers to the recognition and tackling of racism today', he writes in his introduction to 'Recognising racism: a filmstrip, slide and cassette presentation for racism awareness training',⁴³ 'is the equating of racism with strong personal prejudice, with violence and the National Front. This is a vision of racism no less widespread among the teaching and caring professions than among the rest of the public. And it is a convenient and restrictive vision, for it allows the vast majority of racist thought and action to go unchecked.' Not all black people come face to face with 'this most extreme expression of racism', but 'all black people suffer the effects of the subtle but endemic institutional racism that permeates our society and our culture'. And then, as though catching himself in the act of too brazenly writing off the experience of a whole class, Ruddell attempts to bring it back through culture – 'cultural racism comes as the luggage of our history, our language and probably our class structure' – but is baulked by the opposing culture of Scarmanite ethnicity and the cult of RAT. From there on, his pamphlet takes off into the higher reaches of psychologism to reach a screeching crescendo in Brenda Thompson's 'I am a white racist – but willing to learn'.

Another school of thought, emanating from the Inner London Education Authority, however, feel that there is an anti-racist element in multi-cultural education which they, as radicals, can exploit. Accordingly, they call themselves the Anti-Racist Strategies Team. But their 'Pilot Course' for teachers, for all its political posturing and anti-RAT rhetoric, has the same RAT outlook and even some of its training methods – such as 'Concentric Circles: an exercise to help participants to get to know each other', 'Simulation Game', 'Brainstorming and commitments to changing institutions and practices – a sharing of ideas' (and this under 'Strategies for Action'!) and 'a heavy video' of Salman Rushdie's 'Viewpoint on Racism' for Channel 4 (which, because it errs on the side of rhetoric, as opposed to analysis, has become meat for RAT courses).⁴⁴

The Language Training Centres for industry, on the other hand, have gone over to psychological and affective techniques without necessarily espousing the Katz philosophy. They have, for instance, moved away 'from a narrow definition of language to one which encompasses all aspects of effective communication training and probes behind the actual words used to the attitudes beneath'.⁴⁵

The churches fell for RAT much more easily and as of second nature: its credo, after all, was no different from theirs: you must change yourself before you can change the world. Racism, in RAT eyes besides, had the look of original sin. And there was a certain set ritual and ceremony about RAT exercises, even a RAT confessional and a

RAT priesthood to facilitate your entry into a raceless heaven, and an aura of piety surrounding it all. But, of course, the different church groups stress different aspects of RAT, as churches are wont to do. The Methodist Leadership Race Awareness Workshop (MELRAW), for instance, speaks of the need for 'becoming aware of the sin of racism and seeking forgiveness so that we can begin truly to work for reconciliation'.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Ecumenical Unit for Racism Awareness Programmes (EURAP) sees 'Racism Awareness Workshops' as 'designed to help people to get free of the clutter of upbringing, of misinformation and prejudice in order to be equipped to tackle the abuse of power'. EURAP also stresses the need for periodical assessment 'to see whether effective practices have emerged'.⁴⁷ If tackling the abuse of power is the goal, the churches have the example of the World Council of Churches' material support (albeit short lived) of revolutionary movements in Africa. By comparison, they have had one-thousand nine-hundred and eighty-five years to assess whether or not changing minds changes society. But then, that is why RAT belongs in the church, but not, necessarily, the church in RAT.

Where RAT afforded immediate sanctuary to racism, however, was in the police force. The 1981 rebellions against the police and their state had discredited the police force on all counts and at every level. The Brixton 'disorders', in particular, had shown up the endemic and unrelenting racism of the force in its entirety. Scarman, in rescuing them and the state from such public and universal opprobrium, had let them off with a reprimand for 'racially prejudiced attitudes' (in the lower ranks) and a severe course of multiculturalism and attitude-training. Gratefully, the police accepted the sentence.

They had, immediately after the inner-city 'riots', made a stab at multicultural studies at the Hendon Police Training College – and even appointed a black lecturer, John Fernandes, to carry it off. But, after Scarman, the police were threshing around for a training programme that would change attitudes and behaviour rather than educate and inform. A Police Working Party was set up the following year, but even before it could report (February 1983), the Metropolitan Police Force, influenced by the work of the DRRI in Florida, went off into HAT, with all its attendant simulation games, 'experiential exercises' and role-playing. At the same time it entered into a joint study and experiment in RAT with the ILTC.

Multiculturalism, meanwhile, had died at Hendon: Fernandes' attempt to find an anti-racist strain in multi-culture had brought him up against the hard rock of police racism, both at the recruit level and the senior officers' – and put paid both to Fernandes and multiculturalism. But RAT was waiting in the wings and, no sooner had Fernandes been suspended, found its way into the Police Training

College – through RAPU, whose leading black light was also a member of the Police Working Party and Ethnic Adviser to Haringey all at once. The Fernandes case had, by then, blown up into an important political issue for blacks – leading to a campaign highlighting the racism not only of the police force but of the unions.⁴⁸ But RAPU and its black facilitators gave no thought or mind to dividing black struggle or placating the police with RAT placebos – reputedly for £600 a throw.^{*50} But then, that is the type of commerce that RAT lends itself to.

RAT also abounds in the voluntary sector – among youth workers, community theatres, housing groups, advice centres, community workers, nursery managers, who, because of the sense of vocation and commitment that have brought them to their jobs, are particularly susceptible to RAT potions.^{**51} And lest their commitment should let the voluntary sector stray from their particular briefs, the Home Office has made it a point (through Voluntary Service Unit funding) to corral them into umbrella organisations in Leicestershire, West London and Manchester.

Then there is black RAT for black people – as in RAPU and LRATU (Lewisham Racism Awareness Training Unit), for instance – concerned with recovering black identity and raising black consciousness and, in the stated case of the Lewisham Unit, with enhancing and strengthening ‘practices that lead to power acquisition particularly within the confines of white dominated organizations and society in general’.⁵² Inter-racial RAT (not advocated in Katz) has tended to dwindle of late, but still holds sway in bodies like URJIT (Unit for Racial Justice in Tooting), whose confused thinking and flagellatory rhetoric, as expressed in Tuku Mukherjee’s *I’m not blaming you: an anti-racist analysis*, would border on the risible but for the seriousness with which they take themselves.

Finally, there are the professional RAT operators who appear to have come out of management training and business rather than from an involvement with black issues – and make a business of RAT.

* The police have gone into all sorts of RAT experiments since this, but a recent Home Office assessment on ‘RAT for the police’ has doubts whether RAT fits into the ‘traditional culture of police training’. ‘What the trainers were offering ... were courses bearing upon the relationship between black people and white people. What the participants were expecting were courses dealing not just with this, but with the relationship between black people and the police.’ Clearly, the police did not want to be treated as whites suffering from racism but as police suffering from blacks. And RAT did not seem to be able to help them there, but a revised RAT, it was expected, has possibilities.⁴⁹ The Home Office has, in any case, removed police RAT from private enterprise by setting up the Police Training Centre in Community and Race Relations at Brunel University (1983).

** I am grateful to the workers of the voluntary sector – the discussions with whom at the GLC/IRR Seminars on Racism helped to inform my views. **Working for London**

Foremost among them is Linda King and Associates: Anti-Racist Consultants in Public Relations, Management and Staff Development. Founded by a black American woman, the firm has a leaning towards American concepts and American terminology such as 'internalised oppression', 'peoples of colour', 'parenting', etc. It even has courses for 'parenting in an anti-racist way' – for mixed couples, that is. It also has cut-price courses, and gets written up in up-market (and sexist) journals like *Cosmopolitan*, where you might be surprised to come across words like 'slavery' and 'colonialism', but not after they have been treated to RAT. 'People can't help being racist', Linda King is quoted as saying. 'It is a form of conditioning which comes from our history of slavery and colonialism and present inequalities in the economic structure. But we can unlearn it.' And, of course, you must then 'choose to put into practice what you have learned'.⁵³

The business propensities of RAT have also begun to be recognised in RAPU, the first and true church. Riven by schisms and sects and internal quarrels, its missionary zeal blunted by heresies and tainted by consorting with the police, and disappointed at seeing the money-changers arrive in their temple (when they themselves were being funded by the GLC), RAPU has fallen from grace.* But its (black) high priestess, taking note of the times, has set herself up as 'Affirmata', a 'Race and Sex Equality Training and Consultancy' in the manner of King. White racism, it appears, is no longer a white problem,** but a business proposition.

RAT fallacies and falsehoods

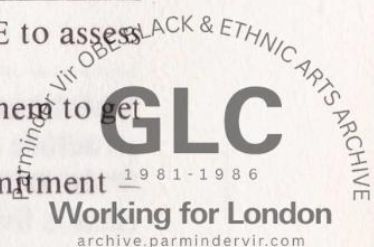
The confusion and fallacies of RAT thinking, as well as its metaphysics, have come through in the presentation. Thus racism is not, as RAT believes, a white problem, but a problem of an exploitative white power structure; power is not something white people are born into, but that which they derive from their position in a complex race/sex/class hierarchy; oppression does not equal exploitation; ideas do not equal ideology; the personal is not the political, but the political is personal;*** and personal liberation is not political liberation.

Some of the confusion arises from the wrong use of terms. Racism, strictly speaking, should be used to refer to structures and institutions with power to discriminate. What individuals display is racialism,

* RAPU's anxieties were particularly noticeable at a seminar held at the CRE to assess RAT (31 October 1984).

** But if white racism is a white problem, why don't black people leave it to them to get on with it?

*** Changing society and changing oneself is a continuum of the same commitment else, neither gets changed.



prejudiced attitudes, which give them no intrinsic power over non-whites. That power is derived from racist laws, constitutional conventions, judicial precedents, institutional practices – all of which have the imprimatur of the state. In a capitalist state, that power is associated with the power of the capitalist class – and racial oppression cannot be disassociated from class exploitation. And it is that symbiosis between race and class that marks the difference between the racial oppressions of the capitalist and pre-capitalist periods.

The fight against racism is, therefore, a fight against the state which sanctions and authorises it – even if by default – in the institutions and structures of society and in the behaviour of its public officials. My business is not to train the police officer out of his ‘racism’, but to have him punished for it – if, that is, he is meant to be accountable to the community he serves. Nor does changing the attitude of an immigration officer stop him from carrying out virginity tests – but changing immigration law (or merely the instructions from the Home Office) would. Nor can (middle-class) housing officers who have undergone RAT change housing conditions for the black working class, as long as the housing stock is limited. Nor, finally, does disabusing the minds of the owners and editors of the yellow press of their ‘racism’ prevent them from propagating their poisonous ideology of racism (when it sells papers); only a concerted continuing, public and political campaign can do that.

RAT, however, professes to change attitudes and behaviour, and thereby power relations – not in reality, but by sleight of definition: by defining personal relations as power relations.*

That is not to say that RAT does not act as a catharsis – for guilt-stricken whites – or as a catalyst, opening them out to their own possibilities and those of others, leading even to a change in their individual treatment of blacks. (The unit of oppression for RAT is the abstract individual.) It might even, for a rare few, open up a path to political activism, but such people will have already had such a potential, anyway – and all that RAT could have done was to catalyse it. But its pretentiousness to do more is at once a delusion of grandeur and a betrayal of political black struggle against racism and, therefore, the state.

More importantly, in terms of strategy, the distinction between racialism and racism – the distinction between power relationships between individuals (however derived) and the power relationships between classes (however mediated)** – helps to distinguish between

* Multiculturalism, on the other hand, denies power relations by denying the hierarchical structure of society.

** In Stuart Hall’s brilliant and comprehensive phrase, ‘race is the modality in which class is lived’.⁵⁴

the lesser fight (because attitudes must be fought too) and the greater, and allows of different tactics for different fights, while clarifying at the same time the different strands of the same fight – so that the state does not play one against the other.

But then, the use of the term 'racism' to mean both (personal) racialism and (structural) racism – influenced partly by the use of the term sexism, which itself arose from the tendency in the Women's Movement to personalise politics by personalising power (there is no 'sexualism' in the Women's Movement)* – has passed into common usage, itself a sign of the decline of black struggle. And it would be pedantic not to accept it as such – till, that is, struggle again changes the terminology.

In the meantime, RAT has to be hoist with its own petard – it invites that sort of metaphor to explain itself, mixed and confused. Racism, for RAT, is a combination of mental illness, original sin and biological determinism (which, perhaps, explains its middle-class appeal). It is 'the number one health problem in America', according to Katz – and if her disciples in Britain have not proclaimed it as clearly for this country (they have had no Mental Health Commission to back up such a view), they have, in their therapy, certainly treated racism on that basis.

Racism, according to RAT, has its roots in white culture, and white culture, unaffected by material conditions or history, goes back to the beginning of time. Hence, racism is part of the collective unconscious, the pre-natal scream, original sin. That is why, in the final analysis, whites can never be anything more than 'anti-racist racists'. They are racist racists to begin with, born as they are to white privilege and power; but if they do nothing about it, 'collude' (consciously or unconsciously) in the institutional and cultural practices that perpetuate racism, then they are beyond redemption and remain racist racists. If, on the other hand, they 'take up arms' – or, in this case, RAT, against such privileges – 'and opposing, end them', in their own lives, at least, they could become 'anti-racist racists'. Racists, however, they remain in perpetuity. It is a circular argument bordering on the genetic, on biological determinism: racism, in sum, is culture and culture is white and white is racist. And the only way that RAT can break out of that circle is to acknowledge the material conditions that breed racism. But then, it would not be RAT.

For that same reason, RAT eschews the most violent, virulent form of racism, the seed bed of fascism, that of the white working class –

* The Women's Movement (in the West) personalised power – legitimately – to mean the immediate, direct and personal physical power of men over women, but then extrapolated it – illegitimately – to black and Third World struggle, which are connected more immediately and directly to economic exploitation and political power.⁵⁵

which, contrary to RAT belief, is racist precisely because it is powerless, economically and politically, and violent because the only power it has is personal power. Quite clearly, it would be hopeless to try and change the attitudes and behaviour of the poorest and most deprived section of the white population without first changing the material conditions of their existence. But, at that point of recognition, RAT averts its face and, pretending that such racism is extreme and exceptional, teaches teachers to avert their faces too. And that, in inner-city schools, where racism affords the white child the only sport and release from its hopeless reality, is to educate it for fascism.* David Ruddell, Antoinette Satow and even blacks like Basil Manning and Ashok Ohri specifically deny the importance of the battles against the NF on the basis that such an extreme form of racism is not necessarily the common experience of most blacks and, in any case, lets off the whites with fighting overt racism out there and not covert racism in themselves, in their daily lives and in their institutions (meaning, really, places of work, leisure, etc.).⁵⁶ But that is because they, like the activists of the Anti-Nazi League, but for different reasons, do not see the organic connection between racism and fascism. Martin Webster, the National Activities Organiser of the NF, saw it, though, when he declared that 'the social base of the NF is made up of the desperate and the dispossessed among the white working class'.⁵⁷

Nor does RAT, because it ignores all but the middle class, make a distinction between the different racisms of the different classes – the naked racism of the working class, the genteel racism of the middle class and the exploitative racism of the ruling class – if only to forge different strategies and alliances to combat the different racisms.

But then, to ask RAT to do anything so political is, as a Tamil saying has it, like trying to pluck hairs from an egg. RAT plays at politics, it is a fake, a phoney – a con trick that makes people think that by moving pebbles they would start an avalanche, when all it does is to move pebbles, if that, so that the avalanche never comes.

And because, in Britain, black people have been involved in this con trick – in introducing it, practising it, reproducing it – RAT has been able to mis-appropriate black politics and black history – and degrade black struggle. For if black struggle in Britain has meant anything, it has meant the return of politics to a working-class struggle that had lost its way into economism, the return of community to class,** the forging of black as a common colour of colonial and racist exploitation,

* Ideas for RAT, as for the 'ideological classes', matter more than matter.

** It was that understanding of community and the resolve not to let it die that brought to the miners the unstinting support of Afro-Caribbean and Asian workers (see Chris Searle in this issue).

and the opening out of anti-racist struggles to anti-fascism and anti-imperialism both at once.

Equally, if black and Third World feminism has meant anything, it has meant, on the one hand, a corrective to the personalisation of politics and the individualisation of power in the white Women's Movement and, on the other, an attempt to forge a unity of struggle between race, gender and class. RAT (which in Britain boasts black women in its ranks, some of them one-time activists) not only works in the opposite direction on both counts, but, in dividing the women on race lines reflects and reinforces the opposing feminist tendency to divide the 'race' on sex lines, and further disaggregates the struggle. Such fragmentation of struggle, while helping perhaps to overcome the personal paranoia that capital visits on different groups differentially, sends them off in search of their sectional identities, leaving capital itself unscathed.

Which is why even if there is no longer a classic working class to carry on a classic class struggle, the struggles of the new social forces must, for that very reason, focus on the destruction of the ruling class — for that there is, under whatever guise or name it appears before the respective movements: patriarchy, white racism, nuclearism, or is conjured up by the 'new marxists': power blocs, hegemonies, dominant factions. And particularly now, when the technological revolution has given capital a new lease of life and allowed the ruling class to disperse and dissimulate its presence — in so many avatars — while centralising and concentrating its power over the rest of us.

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