

By the Spartacist League of New Zealand

September, 1982.

(for Charles Davis, Aotearoa's first Maori Trotskyist who defended  
revolutionary meetings against fascists.)

What You Do Now, Brother (To a Comrade Worker)

What you do now, Brother?

they sack you again

the fifth time now but

you got your big aiga to feed?

You just sit and nod

like a puppet your head

to promises sprout like words

out of the shiny teeth

of our leaders? Or

Sunday sleep in church

obey the yelp of the dog-

collared pastor? Or

lie bellyhungry in your shack

like prison in the swamp

you rent and watch the fat-

bellied limousine of the vampire

man and woman fin

by like a tagifa?

What you do now, Brother?

let the vampire man and bitches

continue for to feed on the gut

of your dream?

What do you tell your to'alua

and fanau? That they

suffer cos it god's

wish and scheme?

Why not feed them  
on anger like bullets brother  
then go hunt the vampire men?

Why not feed them  
on bullets like anger brother  
then go hunt the vampire bitches?

brother, we got nothing to lose  
this tropical paradise it all  
a vampires lie

Albert Wendt

## **(1) Racism, Marxism and Internationalism**

New Zealand's massive demonstrations against the Springbok Tour in 1981 became, especially in Auckland, demonstrations of Polynesian protest against racism. In spite of every effort by Halt All Racist Tours (HART) leaders and the Workers' Communist League (WCL) and the loyal opposition of 'labour left', it proved impossible to limit the struggle against racism to South African apartheid. The slogans directed against South Africa were also directed against the New Zealand government's racist policies at home. 'Protesting' every inch of the way, the HART leaders were forced to accept that the struggles against racism in South Africa and New Zealand were *both part of the same international struggle against racism*.

So long as South African racism alone was attacked, postures of moral outrage could be adopted and political issues avoided. The New Zealand movement refused to even discuss the political differences between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC). Once it could no longer be denied that racism was at home and alive and well in Queen St., the need to bring the South African struggle home forced the movement to rub its nose in grubby politics. Turning moral outrage against Bantustans into moral outrage at the oppression of Maori people, black radicals adopted the positions of the PAC, hiding behind Protestant morality and issuing ultimatums that the 'black movement' should be given the same uncritical support as that HART gave to the ANC/PAC.

This is not only a means of avoiding political debate about the relationship between race and class, but of keeping democracy out of the anti-racist movement. Without political debate on the character of racism in Aotearoa, its relation to capitalism, and the working class, white militants turning toward anti-racist working class internationalism, away from single-issue moralism, will not move forward.

Just as the entire South African left has chosen, is choosing, and will choose between the opposed political lines of ANC and PAC (and also the Non-European Unity Movement) so, at a time when a mass movement in Aotearoa is forced to take a stand on New Zealand racism, it must face political choices between different political lines. The same choices present themselves, essentially as on the pakeha left, *between populism and Marxism*, but it is always populism which tries to avoid debate and political struggle.

The anti-racist movement will grow powerful and break the alliance Muldoon tried to forge with the backward sections of the working class during the Tour only by making New Zealand racism towards its own Bantustans in the Pacific and at home an issue with workers. That involves raising, debating and resolving the relationship between race and class – the issue which 'Black Unity' evades in every way at every point. The task is to bring the South African war back home by showing that racism is an international creation of imperialism, and that it can only be brought to an end by the international working class.

"Communists" wrote Marx, "are distinguished from other working class parties by this alone: in the national struggles of the proletarians of all the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality, in the various stages of development which the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interest of the movement as a whole." (*Communist Manifesto*)

The working class of this area of the Pacific, Polynesia, is made up of both Pakehas and Polynesians. They work in the same factories, queue for the same unemployment benefits, and live in the same boarding houses.

Their interests are common interests; their fight against imperialism, capitalism in its epoch of parasitism and decay, is a common fight. In the South Pacific, the working class cannot develop a clear consciousness of its interests and goals outside the framework of working class internationalism. Against imperialism and its class collaborators, the Spartacist League opposes the revolutionary tradition, the tradition of the Communist Manifesto, the tradition of working class internationalism.

In this pamphlet, the Spartacist League puts forward its position on the question of racism and capitalism. We oppose those white 'left' chauvinist groups like the Socialist Unity Party and the Workers' Communist League, who suppress the history of the Polynesian working classes and subordinate the national rights of Polynesians to a white-racist, reformist, programme to "fight racism". We oppose just as firmly the petty-bourgeois black populists who too turn their backs on the proletarian history of their peoples, in order to establish "sovereignty" on capitalism's terms. We also oppose those radical groups like HART, the Socialist Action League and the Republican Movement, who in giving their uncritical support to black populism, also give their support to imperialism's attempts to deepen divisions in the working class in order to smash working class internationalism. The Spartacist League is uncompromising in exposing those forms of petty-bourgeois chauvinism, and we expect to be called all sorts of names for doing so. But let them be called in public debate, and the real issues argued.

## **(2) Super-Exploitation, Super-oppression and the reserve army of 'cheap labour'**

The weakness of the New Zealand 'Marxist' left finds its clearest expression in the fact that the debates about the special characteristics of Australasian capitalist development take place among Northern Hemisphere Marxists, with no participation from nor even echo among New Zealand Marxists. Sutch and Roth, whose incomprehension of Marx's analysis of the Wakefield system leads to the acceptance of a racist theory of the export of English capitalism to New Zealand still dominate the little debate there is on the development of Australasian capitalism. [1]

Meanwhile in European debates over the crucial issue of the character of the contemporary world imperialist system, much discussion has taken place on the position of relatively high-wage agricultural exporting capitalist countries such as Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of the debate, in particular between Emmanuel on the one hand, and Mandel and Bettelheim

on the other, has been to explain the differences separating such countries from poorer third-world countries whose exports are predominantly agricultural also.[2] In contrast, to Marxists groups whose 'New Zealand-centredness' impoverishes Marxism, such as the Workers' Communist League, we intervene in the debates of the internationalist Marxist movement.

The importance of this debate is that of clarifying the explanation of why there emerged in New Zealand a high-wage largely white working class and a relatively low-wage Polynesian 'reserve army of labour', combining in the one country the divisions introduced into the world proletariat by imperialism. Without such an explanation, there can be no Marxist, materialist, explanation of the evolution of the Maori proletariat, and its history as the most advanced section of the New Zealand working class.

Mandel, in his book *Late Capitalism*, argues that:

"In the 'empty' countries of Australia and New Zealand the whole population was incorporated from the outset into the capitalist production of commodities. This population consisted principally of independent commodity producers who were themselves owners of their means of production (proprietors of extremely cheap or free land which was available in abundance) and who were therefore guaranteed a high minimum level of existence from the very start, with which the prices of commodity labour power had to compete in order to allow wage labour to come into being at all. In Portugal or Algeria, by contrast, the mass of the population existed outside the realm of capitalist commodity production. The slow displacement of pre-capitalist relations of production led to the increasing immiseration of the indigenous population, which became willing to sell its labour power at ever lower prices in order to be able to bear at least part of the ever more oppressive burden of ground-rent, usury and taxes. The destruction of the native (sic) handicrafts and the separation of indigenous peasants from their land and soil was therefore accompanied in the long run by the secular growth of an industrial reserve army, which explains the blocking of wages and needs instead of simply proceeding from it axiomatically." (p.364)

Mandel's acceptance of the 'empty country' hypothesis in the case of carries a stage further a racist myth: capitalism was not simply 'exported' from Britain, its establishment required the prior expropriation of the Polynesian population, who far from 'disappearing', continued in existence as a section of the proletariat. Mandel's argument, however, does have the merit of recognising (unlike his Socialist Action League 'co-thinkers') the significance of independent producers in 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand.

This being so, Mandel's distinction between New Zealand on the one hand, and Portugal and Algeria on the other, breaks down. The dominance of *white* independent commodity producers *followed* from the land wars fought to expropriate by force large areas of the best and most strongly coveted Maori land; *increased* during the long period of 'slow displacement' – through the operation of the capitalist land market – of the remnants of the Polynesian

mode of production, which maintained a tenuous existence on increasingly marginal land, that least attractive to capitalist farmers. On this marginal land, Mandel's statement about Portugal and Algeria applies: "the mass of the population existed outside the realm of capitalist commodity production. The slow displacement of pre-capitalist modes of production led to the increasing immiseration of the indigenous population, which became willing to sell its labour power at ever lower prices..." Side by side with the rise of white independent commodity producers, in Mandel's words, "guaranteed a high minimum level of existence from the very start", the expropriated Maori population was denied by the facts of continuing expropriation, and land alienation, access to this "high minimum level".

But while expropriation and continued land sales made possible the rise of commodity production, it was the survival of remnants of the Polynesian mode of production which made the super-exploitation of the Maori rural reserve army of cheap labour possible.<sup>[3]</sup> Pre-capitalist forms of property in land and traditions of mutual economic support within tribes provided means of subsistence outside that which could be bought with wages in the market. This meant that Maori workers could be paid low wages (below the cost of reproduction of labour power in the market) and employed as casual or seasonal labour. As land values dropped further and more land was alienated, the dependence of the Maori rural reserve army on its own means of subsistence lessened but without any equalisation of the low wage and the 'high minimum level' set by commodity production.

The history of the super-exploitation of the Polynesian workers is the history of the continued existence of the Polynesian mode of production within the framework of the dominant capitalist relations of production. So long as the Polynesian mode of production survives within the hostile capitalist environment, the wages of Maori workers are forced below the value of labour power. While the continued possession of some Maori land may slow down the proletarianisation of the Maori people, it cannot prevent and has not prevented it. It ensures, on the contrary, that when Maori workers enter the proletariat, they do so on the worst terms, as the lowest stratum of the class. This is not the result of racism, though this process has produced and will continue to produce racism. It arises rather from the logic of a slow and protracted expropriation of a pre-capitalist mode of production by the capitalist mode, at every point representing continuous immiseration of the indigenous population as the value of Maori land declines and the amount of land owned is reduced in area and fertility. Similar processes take place in other Polynesian islands but even more slowly.

So long as capitalism had a revolutionary character, it smashed the remnants of feudalism in its European centres, expropriating thousands of proletarians and throwing them onto the labour market as a reserve army. Before this first stage of 'primitive accumulation' had been completed in Europe, imperialism had penetrated into the colonial periphery to organise large-scale capitalist production of raw materials and to generate super-profits based upon the super-exploitation of cheap colonial labour power. This primitive accumulation in the colonies set limits to the expropriation of pre-

capitalist modes of production, creating dependent national economies each with specific combinations of pre-capitalist, semi-capitalist and capitalist relations of production. The dominance of imperial capital from the outset limited the power of local capital to escape its dependence on imperialism and to develop its industrial base and its proletariat, allowing pre- and semi-capitalist modes of production to survive.

In New Zealand the specific combination of modes of production involved the Polynesian mode of production, petty commodity production as well as capitalist farming. The result was that wages offered to white workers had to be higher than the subsistence level of small-scale farming, while those paid to the Maori reserve army of cheap labour enabled the development of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand. [4] The establishment of the arbitration system after 1894 represented state acceptance of the dual labour market – relatively high wages and good conditions for urban white workers subject to arbitration, and low wages to rural Maori workers whose wages and conditions were not protected by state-enforced labour laws.

In Mandel's terms, New Zealand combined some of the features of the United States and Australia as high-wage countries along with characteristics of low-wage countries like Algeria and Portugal. With changes in Maori land laws, 'Maori land' became less a site of a Polynesian mode and more a site of a peasant mode of production based upon subsistence agriculture. As the petty commodity mode of production among white farmers is transformed into intensive capitalist agriculture, the peasant mode of production is consolidated in 'Maori land'. It is this form of economic organisation which today is defended in struggles for 'Maori land rights'. This transition from a Polynesian to Peasant mode of production was not accomplished peacefully –Te Whiti's struggle at Parihaka, and to some extent Rua's as Maugapohatu, mark definitive defeats of attempts to defend the Polynesian mode of production in unfavourable historical circumstances.

New Zealand's combination of high and low-wage workers is best understood by comparison with South Africa. There the land wars to expropriate the indigenous modes of production were carried through by the Boers, who replaced them with small-scale petty commodity production similar to New Zealand sheep farming. Then, in the Boer war, the states set up by the Afrikaner petty producers were militarily defeated by British imperialism. The British represented the interests of large mining capital, and used the ideology and practice of Boer apartheid to divide the working class on colour lines, and so force down wages. It was the existence of white peasant farming which set relatively high wages for white workers, while the African population, like the Maori, was pushed out of the capitalist economy to form a reserve army of labour. When the African re-entered the capitalist economy, it was under conditions that one writer describes as follows:[5]

“When the migrant labourer has access to means of subsistence outside the capitalist sector, as he does in South Africa, the relationship between wages and the cost of the production and reproduction of labour-



power means the capitalist is able to pay the worker below the cost of his reproduction”.

This as we have argued, is similar to the position in New Zealand. In both cases part of the costs of reproduction of indigenous labour-power is being met by the traditional labour of those (particularly women) outside the capitalist mode of production. South Africa’s development diverged from New Zealand’s in that the CMP displaced the petty commodity MOP in agriculture by force, a result of British imperialism’s drive to protect large-scale mining capital. The absence of any large-scale mineral or other raw material resources in New Zealand meant that massive capital investment such as in South Africa did not take place. This held back the development of industry and the rate of conversion of petty commodity production into capitalist agriculture, and allowed the survival of comprador small capital dominated by British finance, shipping and meat exporting capital. These differences however, are differences of pace and scale, not of substance. An accelerated concentration of capital in New Zealand and the South Pacific would utilise existing wage differentials between white and Polynesian workers to entrench an apartheid-like system. *Under capitalism, South Africa represents the future of Polynesia.*

It is because Marxists understand and have a programme to end the super-exploitation and super-oppression of non-white racial groups under capitalism that they reject all subjective conceptions of oppression. Super-oppression exists because of super-exploitation of ‘cheap labour’, that is, the payment of wages below the socially necessary average for the reproduction of labour-power. Super-oppression exists because of the exploitation of Polynesian workers in the factories and freezing works of New Zealand and the South Pacific. A ‘return to the land’ under capitalism will only increase existing super-exploitation, by enabling white capitalists to pay wages more and more below subsistence level. Only under socialism – that is through the conquest by black and white proletarians of both industry and the land – can a nationalised land be restored to the Polynesian people, together with the abolition of wage slavery. ‘Land rights’ under capitalism means Bantustans – the Pacific Islands are becoming more like Bantustans year by year – or ‘native reserves’ like those in Queensland, and intensified exploitation of black labour-power.

### **(3) The Workers of Polynesia: Their Role and History**

The real history of the working class in Aotearoa and the Pacific has still to be written. It begins with the strikes against the first agents of

imperialism, the missionaries, for the most basic and elementary requirement of the worker – the payment of wages. The struggle against capitalist missionaries, shipowners and ‘traders’ for the conversion of unpaid labour into wage-labour, was a long and bitter struggle. In many cases Polynesian people resorted to the use of arms to coerce the agents of European imperialism into giving themselves *and* pakeha workers alike the same wages and conditions. Throughout the history of capitalism in Polynesia, the existence of a Polynesian mode of production in any form has always been used by the white capitalist ruling class to ‘justify’ a ‘special’ wage rate for Polynesians – initially a ‘special’ rate which was no wages at all!

In 1841 in Nelson, the first strike of pakeha workers in Polynesia for piece work at higher rates took place. The ruling class feared that the labourers would rise and take possession of the fort at Nelson. The Maori population, dispossessed of their land, and turned into wage workers, also threatened this fort. The two groups opposed to the ruling class failed to make common cause, the colonial authorities maintained their power, and the pakeha workers were bought off by leases or sales of small pieces of land. The land became the wedge driven by British imperialism between pakeha workers and Polynesians who were expropriated and turned into a reserve army. This division between pakeha and Polynesian workers remained through most of the nineteenth century: the pakeha worker, when militant, was offered land, so that he ceased to depend for his livelihood solely on wages. Maori land in the Polynesian island most suited to farming, Aotearoa, was purchased, and the Maori forced more and more to work for wages for a living, as the Polynesian mode of production was increasingly subordinated to the Capitalist mode.

Together the pakeha and the Capitalist mode of production arrived in Polynesia, displacing the formerly existing Polynesian mode of production in Aotearoa, the centre of white settlement, by force of arms in the land wars, and ‘peacefully’ by land sales and duplicity before and after those wars. Imperialism in the South Pacific meant the imposition of capitalism, ultimately by force or arms (Tahiti, Hawaii, and Samoa as well as Aotearoa) on the Polynesian peoples. In the centre of Polynesian capitalism, Aotearoa, the destruction of the Polynesian mode of production began the process of proletarianisation of the Maori people with the expropriation of the Waikato people. There was bitter class conflict even before the New Zealand ruling class aided by British imperialism turned their armies against the Taranaki and Waikato people. Maori workers’ strikes for higher wages, for mail carriage and transportation services, and the building of colonial government institutions, increased. Maori producers boycotted European markets until reasonable prices were paid. So not only did the ruling class use force to grab the land for future petty capitalist agriculture, they picked up the gun to put an end to these bitter class struggles and to maintain Maori ‘cheap labour’.

New Zealand is the exception rather than the rule among Polynesian islands where only Hawaii and Tahiti besides New Zealand have large white settler populations. Elsewhere, the older Polynesian mode has been transformed into a predominantly peasant mode of production (with many

survivals of the older mode however) with the same result of enabling overseas companies, usually from the dominant colonial power, to pay Polynesian labour-power below its cost of reproduction while exploiting Polynesian resources. As communal labour and land ownership under the Polynesian mode has been eroded, productivity and food exports have fallen, and with them living standards. The island governments have themselves required support of aid and wages earned in New Zealand to help meet the costs of government and its services.

The incorporation of the island states into the world capitalist economy increases the pressure on peasant economies, and proletarianises thousands of islanders. Their land becomes inadequate even for subsistence agriculture as individualisation of land titles is linked to population increase – an example of the capitalist law of surplus population. At the same time, colonial practices of indirect rule through chiefs and others has assimilated the traditional role of chief in the Polynesian mode to a role approaching that of landlord, claiming a large part of the workers' surplus-labour. As well as this, the world capitalist economy forces the small island economies more and more towards bankruptcy, limiting drastically what they can buy, lowering living standards and pauperising the people. The possession of land no longer guarantees adequate income. The depreciation of Polynesian-owned land values outside Aotearoa serves the same purpose as the expropriation of land in Aotearoa – forced proletarianisation.

The more advanced country, Aotearoa, shows the future of the less developed. As the world crisis deepens, and national barriers to the expansion of the productive forces reflect capitalist social relations which threaten the very existence of Polynesian island economies, the illusions of harmonious co-existence between the Polynesian/peasant modes and the world capitalist mode in crisis will be ruthlessly destroyed, as the Polynesian mode collapses, completing catastrophically the proletarianisation of Polynesia. Island independence will become an even more transparent fiction, masking the dictatorship of the Polynesian islands' imperialist creditors whose power will be more absolute than that of the former colonial rulers, completing land alienation, increasing white petty bourgeois settlement, and subordinating the islands to imperialism's war plans. Today these islands are on the edge of their own land wars, which they can win if they combine and fight against imperialism with the class struggle for international socialism they can learn about in the New Zealand working class.

The history of working peoples in the world is a history of the rise and development of the Capitalist mode of production, of its colonisation of pre-capitalist societies, of the sometimes violent, and sometimes economically forced 'peaceful' separation of the wage-workers from the land, and their herding into the big cities as an industrial reserve army of labour. Marx wrote in *Capital* about the history of the proletarianisation of European workers. Their migration to Polynesia, and their integration into the Capitalist mode, meant that they formed the bulk of the workers as capitalism shifted from agriculture towards manufacture, and began to form a labour aristocracy based on the privilege of high wages. As in England, there was a gap in time

between the taking of the land and the dispossession of the Maori people – more or less complete by the end of the nineteenth century – and their employment as wage-workers in urban industry, which became a steady trend from the 1940's onward. In this interval, trade unions had grown up whose members were predominantly pakeha and which were controlled by a white labour bureaucracy more and more under the domination of the racist apparatus of the capitalist state. Polynesian workers had to struggle to have their voice heard and their interests defended by these bureaucratic organisations.

European annexation of Polynesia meant and still means the imposition of a white ruling class on the Polynesian people, and their forced conversion from owners of common land, into increasingly landless, dependent wage workers. 'European civilisation' means the expropriation and immiseration of pre-capitalist people. But in creating a Polynesian proletariat, capitalism creates its own gravediggers. Capitalism expropriated Polynesians in armed struggle; in turn, capitalism will similarly be destroyed. The Polynesian people will regain their land as proletarians, be expropriating their expropriators.

#### (4) 'Capitalism' – the Stalinist 'export'.

In Polynesia the history of the formation of the working class has not been written in the same way that Marx wrote about the formation of the European working class. The whole struggle has been ignored by generations of pakeha 'labour' historians, who camouflaged the truth to allow the labour bureaucrats and Stalinists to sell out Polynesian workers. While the labour bureaucrats suppress class struggle in general, the Stalinist history of the workers in Polynesia suppresses the documentation of the proletarianisation of the Polynesian people. This is a betrayal of both Marxism and the Polynesian people. The legacy of this Stalinist 'fake' communism in New Zealand is a 'Marxism' that refuses to call for the expropriators to be expropriated!

Stalinist 'Marxism' combines with imperialist ideology to argue that the entire Capitalist mode of production –capitalists, workers and all – was *exported* to Polynesia lock, stock and barrel, from Britain, and is purely Anglo-Saxon. This racist 'Marxism' denies the Polynesian people a place in capitalism as members of the working class which is reserved for whites only. Just like the fate of the national peoples in the USSR under Stalin, Stalinists in the South Pacific put their white racist chauvinism before the rights of the Polynesian people and tell them to wait until the white revolution before they can be liberated.

The Stalinist Workers' Communist League claims (WCL) it has a 'class' analysis of racist and colonial oppression in New Zealand. But their programme itself is clearly racist. For them, the history of New Zealand's movement towards independence is a pakeha history, to which the Maori people are an appendage. The racist suppression of the brutal and atrocious record of the expropriation of the Polynesian people is aided and abetted by these 'friends' of the working class (whose real 'friends' are white union bureaucrats) – in the name, naturally, of breaking with the 'Trotskyist' *theory of permanent revolution*. For them, the achievement of white settler power based on denial of Maori suffrage in New Zealand is an "advance". The failure to see that white 'independence', achieved at the expense of Maori independence, assumed a reactionary and imperialist character leads logically to a recognition of Polynesian workers as a class with no revolutionary potential, but which must limit itself to a 'minimum program' of democratic rights, forgetting 'independence' and 'socialism'.

The WCL does not see the split between Maori workers and the white labour aristocracy it seeks to represent has its basis in the reproduction of a reserve army of labour. It says racist ideas are "learned" by white workers, ignoring capitalism's use of racism to justify the super-exploitation of Polynesians in the reserve army to the privileged white labour aristocracy. It is not enough for the WCL to say that 90% of Maori are workers and that they are a "powerful component of the working class". Rather it has to be said that it is because Maori are oppressed as members of the reserve army that they have been and must be in the vanguard of the proletariat. In 'allowing' Maori to lead the 'anti-racist struggle', but in limiting their demands to "full equality" and "minority rights", the WCL actively suppresses the revolutionary potential of the Maori proletariat in order to maintain its 'leadership' of the white working class.

When Polynesian workers overstep the 'minimum programme' of the WCL the white chauvinist 'Marxist' Graeme Clark will do exactly the same as the white chauvinist 'Marxist' Bill Andersen – call the cops on Polynesian militants to get them thrown out of the labour movement. The WCL have refused to attack coplover Andersen in public and that for a very good reason: they must repeat his performance (Andersen after all had a 'minimum programme' which Black Unity overstepped). WCL student bureaucrats are still ready to refuse to let Auckland University Student premises to Te Moana. However, in this period of mounting capitalist attacks on Polynesian workers they will not be held back by reactionary white labour bureaucrats from understanding that their history of imperialist oppression is a revolutionary history and that their future is that of proletarian revolution. [6]

Yet such is the legacy of Stalinism in Polynesia – that of dressing-up petty-bourgeois chauvinism as 'Marxism' – that it infects the thinking of national peoples and diverts them from revolutionary class struggle. In Aotearoa, the most influential Polynesian group, Black Unity, has so far been unable to overcome the legacy of white racist 'Marxism'. Black Unity tries to talk about the overthrow of the Maori mode of production by the Capitalist mode, and least one group, referring to itself as "Black Marxists" identify the

Maori people as “an oppressed layer of the proletariat”. [7] But Black Unity is unable to draw out any revolutionary significance from this analysis. Rather than arriving at a revolutionary Marxist position on racism and imperialism, it arrives at a petty-bourgeois psychological one.

Ripeka Evans in a recent Suva speech for which she has been inexcusably ‘punished’ by eviction from the Trade Union Centre, argued that the Capitalist mode of production was an “export”. [8] She said “it is the responsibility of the white working class” to remove the “super-oppression” of the Maori people. In blaming white racist workers for the super-oppression of Maori workers, Ms Evans accepts the divisions introduced into the working class by imperialism. Ms Evans rejects the racist ‘Marxism’ which says that Polynesians should not act separately, but wait for the ‘real’ white working class to hand them their liberation bit by bit. Naturally, Black Unity is not prepared to wait for ever – especially since the eviction of Te Moana from the Trade Union Centre has shown that the Stalinists mean what they say! But the lessons Black Unity have drawn from the white racist paternalism of the labour bureaucrats have fallen short of Marxism which makes it the responsibility of the Polynesian proletariat to remove their oppression by leading all workers to smash the white ruling class. [9]

In Chapter 25 of Volume 1 of *Capital*, ‘The Modern Theory of Colonisation’, the only chapter of *Capital* with direct bearing on early New Zealand economic development, Marx argues strongly that the Capitalist Mode of Production cannot be simply ‘exported’. Wakefield, wrote Marx, “discovered that in the colonies, property in money, the means of subsistence, machinery, and other means of production, do not suffice to stamp the owner as a capitalist if the essential complement to these things is missing: the wage-labourer, the other man, who is compelled to sell himself of his own free will. He discovered that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things”. [10] Wakefield, according to Marx, found that “in the colonies the divorce of the workers from the requisites of their labour, and from their root, the land, has not yet been effected, or has been affected only here and there”, and so developed the theory of ‘systematic colonisation’ for this purpose.

In spite of what bourgeois historians write, Marx argued that Wakefield’s scheme had to fail in New Zealand. It was not that easy to create a proletariat, because this meant that the capitalist had to use force to “clear out of his way the modes of production and appropriation that are based upon the independent labour of producers”. For Marx, that whole point of his discussion of Wakefield was to demonstrate that “political economy has discovered in the new world...that capitalist private property demands...the expropriation of the worker”. The succession of stages Marx had noted in English capitalism, first petty production (based in England on Henry VIII’s massive expropriations) followed by developed industrial capitalism (also requiring large-scale land expropriations) must necessarily recur in New Zealand. In both stages of development, the expropriation of a Maori proletariat was necessary for capitalism, first to establish itself and then to develop. This expropriation was largely completed by 1945.

Therefore, capitalism, according to Marx, cannot exist in the colonies, either as a petty commodity production or industrial capitalism, until such expropriation has taken place! So without the expropriation of the Maori people it would have been impossible for capitalism, even in the form of the sub-mode of peasant production, to develop. It is not surprising that pakeha historians refuse to admit that New Zealand capitalism is built upon the 'compulsion' to sell black labour-power "voluntarily". They do not want to think about the possibility of capitalism being "voluntarily" expropriated in its turn.

But Black Unity too, deliberately misunderstands Marx. It is not possible for the Polynesian mode of production to survive "outside" the capitalist mode of production, one the latter is dominant. The remnants of Maori society, its land and labour, served during the nineteenth century as partial means of subsistence for a rural reserve army of wage-labour. Maori social relations of production were increasingly converted into wage-labour/capital relations using the remnants of traditional cooperative labour on the land to hold down wages. Whilst the Maori people retained elements of their culture, these could only survive in a form reproduced by capitalism, either being turned into fetishised folk relics, or kept alive in the struggle of the Maori reserve army against imperialist super-exploitation. It is the fusion of the traditional culture of the Polynesian mode of production with the developing proletarian culture which explains the vital role of the Maori people in the vanguard of the proletariat, and not as Black Unity claims, its role in defending a traditional "culture" separate from, and "outside", the proletarian culture. This is 'cultural nationalism' not Marxism.

The Polynesian people are victims of capitalism in Polynesia; they have been proletarianised; they are workers on whose surplus-value pakeha capitalists have made their multimillions; they can act to achieve their demands. Far from waiting for the 'white working class' to 'liberate' the Maori people from their super-oppression, it is the white workers not bribed by the privileges of the labour aristocracy who will wait for the Polynesian proletariat to take a revolutionary lead, even on such bread and butter issues as jobs, wages and conditions. But this revolutionary lead will not come from Black Unity which repudiates Marxism. The Polynesian proletariat deserves a revolutionary Marxism which can develop its potential in the leadership of the struggle for a Socialist Polynesia.

## **(5) Permanent Revolution in Polynesia**

Polynesia (except Tonga) was annexed by various European powers in the nineteenth century, and

the history of struggle against annexation is long and bloody. Throughout Polynesia, King Movements developed as forms of Polynesian self-government, following European monarchical traditions, initially under the influence of missionaries. These movements generally lacked the strength to control European land purchases, and their surrender to the market made inevitable their surrender to European governors. In Aotearoa, however, a King Movement developed after annexation rather than before it, against European opposition and using its monopoly of physical force in certain areas to control the activities of pakeha farmers.

This movement, because of its totally Polynesian character and its effective control of agricultural production was seen by the white settler ruling class – who had achieved ‘responsible government’ in 1852, excluding Maori from the vote – as part of an insurrection. Forms of Maori sovereignty directly confronted pakeha sovereignty, in opposed forms of government based upon conflicting modes of production. The King Movement once under attack from the white settler government, lost effective power because it did not gain military support from all sections of the Maori population in the land wars. *The white government, protesting its ‘loyalty’ to Britain – so as to use the British army’s guns to facilitate land expropriation – conceded to the Maori people the struggle for national independence.*

A minority of the King Movement saw itself as opposed to British rule – *Te Hokioi*, the King Movement paper, pointed to Haiti’s success in maintaining its independence – but the majority could not rise to the conception of a national movement cutting across tribal divisions. Yet the King Movement, before its suppression, exercised more economic and political power over both Maori and pakehas within its jurisdiction than any similar movement elsewhere in Polynesia, learning as it did from similar movements in other islands.

The defeat of the King Movement had several effects. It confirmed the white settler government in its role as a dependent satellite of British imperialism. It led to the rise of Christian churches independent of the pakeha missionaries, most notably Ringatu, whose view of the lessons to be learnt from defeat was not only that the pakeha missionaries were servants of imperialism, but also that the Maori people were being proletarianised.

“Each tohunga therefore must earn his living with his own hands and anything that in any way resembles tithing is not tolerated”. “ The love-feast which is held in the morning of the second day of a monthly Ringatu festival, is a feast in the literal sense of the term. When a large crowd is gathered...the feast is held in the open, the ‘tables’ being laid on the ground in true Maori fashion...The tohunga offers grace, and the meal is eaten with relish. Truly only the best is provided, the motive being that it is a love-feast to God. A collection is taken toward the close of the meal, the money being used for church purposes only. The collection must not be used for defraying the expenses of the meal, or making other provision for the entertainment of the gathering. It is also a rule of the church that the money given must be earned



by the sweat of the brow – interest on investments, proceeds of sale of land or leases not being acceptable.”[11]

The withdrawal of many North Island Maori from the only white institutions they had previous links with – the pakeha churches – was their verdict on the ruling class’s land war. Now, in a period of Maori political decline new white missionaries have emerged to tie Polynesian workers to white capitalism.

The formation in 1892 of a Kotahitanga, or union, deriving from the 1835 Declaration of Independence by a confederation of united tribes, was another effort by Maori in Aotearoa to achieve their own form of government. While it was claimed that Kotahitanga did not aim to limit the authority of the British Crown, both the New Zealand and British ruling classes refused to recognise it. Had its leaders seriously based themselves on the 1835 Declaration, they could have claimed the Kotahitanga had more right to existence than the pakeha parliament. They did not do so. Although the movement later subsided (as was inevitable because its success relied on pakeha parliamentary approval) it was nonetheless an expression of Maori lack of faith in capitalist parliamentarism, and an attempt to develop their own institutions instead.

By contrast, the so-called ‘Young Maori Movement’ (praised by Donna Awatere and the Socialist Action League), was an abandonment of the Polynesian revolutionary tradition, and a surrender to European parliamentarism, leading to such racist attacks on Maori culture as the Suppression of Tohungaism Act. With Apirana Ngata’s impeachment in 1934, it was shown that even the better elements in the Movement, given opportunities at the highest level, could not work through colonial parliamentary institutions. The Ratana Movement, in reaction, linked itself to the Labour Party, in endorsing Tawhiao’s view of the unity of the working class.

“...in London, Ratana was snubbed by his own High Commissioner, Sir James Allen, who was happy for the party to perform haka and poi dances at the Wembley exhibition but laughed when Ratana asked that arrangements be made for him to meet representatives of the British Government. This rejection deeply wounded Ratana and, standing on Westminster Bridge, he prophesied in the words used by Tawhiao: “When all your stone houses are destroyed in time to come, then will the carpenters, the blacksmiths and the shoemakers be in power and I will be the government.”[12]

Although their links with the labour movement have enabled the Ratana Church to play a continuing political role in Maori affairs, again it has failed to achieve its objectives through parliamentary means.

The history of the Maori people in Aotearoa has been a history of struggle for its own form of government. So long as the Polynesian mode of production continued to have vitality, traditional leaders basing themselves on the survival of Maori social relations tried, always unsuccessfully, to persuade white settler governments to tolerate forms of Maori self-government. When traditional leadership failed, new leaders emerged – often as apparently ‘religious’ leaders in a society where distinctions between religion and politics are not clear cut – giving expression to the proletarianisation of the Maori people and their links with other workers outside the framework of parliamentary politics. The refusal of Maori to fight imperialist wars have been the direct result of the emergence of this formally religious, but proletarian in reality, tradition – mass actions with little echo and no support from the ‘official’ pakeha labour movement.[13]

As the old social relations of the Polynesian mode of production fused with the social relations of the Capitalist mode, as the Maori people became fully proletarianised, the early forms of proletarian ideology lost their religious shell and took on the form of self-government in opposition to imperialism and colonial racist parliamentary rule. The New Zealand colonial ruling class has and will refuse to concede the demand for self-government, but this demand will be achieved in spite of the ruling class, by smashing it. The King Movement and the Kotahitanga were imitations of European class institutions, their monarchies, their parliaments. It is necessary to go beyond European class society and its imitation.

The Polynesian people, their land having been expropriated, now constitute a section – potentially the most revolutionary section because of their tradition as an oppressed nationality – of the working class. The struggle for self-government has now become the workers’ struggle for power: instead of Kings and parliament, workers’ councils are on the agenda. The tradition of the Maori people, a tradition of armed struggle and revolutionary aspiration, now fuses with the international working class culture, developed by Marxism and its tradition of revolution to form the science and culture of the Polynesian socialist revolution.

This struggle has always had an international dimension. The King Movement of the Waikato drew on the lessons of Tahiti, Hawaii and Haiti in the nineteenth century. Today, as the Spartacist League predicted fifteen years ago, the Polynesian islands which have been conceded formal independence by imperialism, experience as a result the crisis of the nation-state in holding back the development of the forces of production, in its most acute form.

Political independence only deepens the economic dependence of the Polynesian island states, accentuating the dependence of the national economies themselves on the remittance of wages of Polynesian migrant workers in New Zealand. Therefore, the achievement in the less developed island states of what has proved impossible in the most developed island with its white culture – the objectives of the King Movement and Kotahitanga –

shows that *these forms of independence do not halt the pauperisation, immiseration and proletarianisation of the Polynesians by the Capitalist mode of production.*

In Polynesia, the less developed island states are to Aotearoa what Transkei and Ciskei are to South Africa – reserves of cheap labour-power which can be forced back into poverty during any economic downturn in the sacred name of respect for ‘national sovereignty’. But the Polynesian proletariat has outgrown ‘nationalism’, which is another name for starvation behind national frontiers, and which intensifies imperialist exploitation instead of abolishing it. Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue and to a certain extent Tonga, are New Zealand semi-colonies whose colonial dependence can be ended only by socialism. Tahiti, Eastern Samoa and Hawaii, are victims of the final ruse of imperialism – incorporation of the colony into the metropolitan imperialist state. We demand for them the right of secession!

What is needed is a Socialist Union of Polynesia! The revolutionary tradition of Samoa, Hawaii, and Tahiti – the history of uprisings against imperialism – must now be directed beyond independence to socialism. Now that large numbers of Polynesian workers have been concentrated in Auckland and other parts of Aotearoa, it is there that they will exchange experiences and prepare for united revolutionary action. This pamphlet has concentrated on Polynesia since (with the exception of Tahiti and Hawaii) it is largely within the sphere of interest of New Zealand as a small imperialist power. A Socialist Polynesia would, however be only a step toward a Socialist Union of the Pacific.

## **(6) Racism and Imperialism**

Capitalism in the South Pacific entered its imperialist stage, the stage of decay, virtually at its birth. The rise of capitalist social relations in Polynesia, the last act of the capitalist division of the world, was an expression of the *uneven development* of world capitalism, being incorporated by imperialism at the onset of its epoch of decay. This means also that the Polynesian economies *combine* within them per-capitalist social relations and advanced international capitalist social relations, principally in the form of the super-exploitation of cheap labour-power and resources by giant multi-national forms.

The imperialist ruling class is typically white and male, reflecting Europe the birth-place of capitalism and the patriarchal family. Those who try to rise in imperialist society ape the secondary characteristics of the ruling class. Being white and male is seen to be an admission ticket to the profits of corporate capitalism. The ruling class, a very small privileged minority,

encourages these racist and sexist illusions – which form part of the ideology of equality of opportunity – in capitalist society. During the period of capitalist youthful expansion – the late nineteenth century – a privileged white male labour aristocracy was formed, bribed by colonial super-profits. But in its imperialist epoch of decline, this privileged stratum in the working class is not only bought-off with bribes, but also corrupted into political collaboration with imperialism.

The form of imperialist state which travelled furthest on the road to total decay, fascism, showed the underlying logic of such petty bourgeois ideologies based on privilege. The ruling class surrounded itself with a privileged social stratum based on race and sex, a 'master race', which proletarianised and even enslaved new oppressed nationalities as 'Untermensch'. As the defeat of fascism proved, however, the logic of capitalism is not based on sex or race but on the rate of profit and victory in global bloodletting for control of labour-power and resources. The imperialists who dope themselves with their own ideological opiates commit suicide in catastrophic military defeat.

Imperialism has, does and will continue to try to split the working class on race and sex lines, between the white male labour aristocracy and the predominantly non-European and female reserve army. But as the fate of fascism proved, it is impossible to organise a capitalist economy on this basis without catastrophe. In day-to-day struggle, the working class exposes the limits of imperialism's ability to exclude Polynesian workers from white wages, to keep women in the reserve army, and to provide decent wages for the bulk of white workers. The guerilla struggle for wage increases cannot destroy the basis of the system – only revolution can do that – but it can force the capitalist system to adhere to the historic value of labour-power and act as a brake on tendencies to divide the working class permanently. The conversion of advanced capitalist states into 'paradises' for the master race only accelerates their economic and military decline. The accelerated tempo of economic development in political independent states, once relieved of a white ruling class living at the expense of the bulk of the people, goes far to prove the same socially and economically decadent character of racism and colonialism.

The laws of social development of the capitalist economy are social, economic and political, not racial or sexual. Racism and sexism represent reactionary political and social strategies: strategies for dividing the working class and co-opting sections of it in collaboration with the ruling class. When large social strata accept such incentives and privileges as imperialism offers, imperialism must ensure that the working class pays for them. There are limits, however, to imperialism's ability to increase exploitation to pay for these privileges. These limits are set by the most advanced sections of the proletariat who reject ruling class ideology and the intensified oppression that increased exploitation brings; that is, the black workers against whom the racist ideology of the mainly white labour bureaucracy is directed. What is decisive in this attempt to use racism to perpetuate the splits in the working class, is the extent to which the most oppressed sections of the working class,

despite race and sex, reject imperialist ideology, and develop a class conscious struggle against imperialism. As the rate of profit falls, exacerbating the tendency to crisis in the more developed capitalist societies, imperialist super-profits can no longer be utilised to prop up the special privileges of labour aristocracies based on race and sex, even though labour aristocracies will attempt to defend their privileges at the expense of other sectors of the working class.

As our fraternal Australian party, the Communist Left states in its programme, “the revisionist theory of ‘double oppression’ (sometimes treble or quadruple oppression) on racial, national or sex lines, is designed to divert the most oppressed workers from their oppression as wage workers to some other kind of exploitation, usually one denounced by petty bourgeois ideologists. It should be said that for the petty bourgeoisie, this ‘special oppression’ is usually psychological. “It is not the most exploited workers who are only partially exploited as wage slaves,” the programme goes on, “in fact, under capitalism, racism and chauvinism are only made possible by wage slavery.” Under capitalism there is no *independent* source of exploitation and oppression outside of wage-slavery. [14]

But while there is only one possible source of exploitation and oppression under capitalism, as we have shown, it is the reserve army of ‘cheap labour’ who are the most exploited and oppressed. We have defined super-exploitation as the payment of wages below the costs of reproducing labour-power. In New Zealand both Polynesian and pakeha workers, in different ways, find that the land issues are used to divide them, and to force down wages, directly and indirectly. The existence of ‘nation states’ in the islands is used to casualise and therefore reduce the wages of island workers. Maori populism is used to divert Maori workers away from struggles on the job back to the land. These divisions are used to blind pakeha workers to the need for class unity. At the same time a limited privileged stratum of white workers is bribed (quite openly as in the 1981 Budget) to maintain racist attitudes and split the working class. In all cases, forms of populism, whether Maori or pakeha, introduce a false radicalism into existing class consciousness to prevent the development of a revolutionary class consciousness across race lines.

As we have shown in this pamphlet, Polynesians in the South Pacific were the first proletarians in the area, whose conversion into wage-slaves was a result of the destruction of the Polynesian mode of production and the expropriation of the land. At every point, and in every way, capitalists use and still use competition and racism within the working class to worsen the conditions of Polynesian workers. All competition between different groups of workers, forces wages for all workers down to the advantage of the capitalists. Without wage labour, the division of the working class on race and sex lines would not have the same effect. This historically entrenched division takes the form of special privileges for that section of the white working class ready to abandon class struggle and collaborate with the ruling class, that is, the white labour aristocracy and their representatives, the labour bureaucrats of the trade union leadership.

## (7) Maori Nationalism – Real and Fake

To throw off the colonial yoke, all national oppression and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat because it brings the socialist revolution closer. But to go beyond these strictly limited and definite historical limits is helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie.

“Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight for any kind of national development, for national culture in general? Of course not... The proletariat, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary warns the masses against such illusions, stand for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force and privilege.”  
[15]

So Lenin wrote in his *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, opposing the reactionary conception of ‘national culture’ with the conception of an international working class and democratic culture.

In her recent *Broadsheet* articles, Donna Awatere also contrasts ‘national oppression’ with ‘national culture’. She tells us that the basic contradiction in New Zealand is not the “alienation of wage labour” (which we suppose to mean the alienation of wage-labour from the means of production), but “white alienation of our land and white destruction of that is more important than money, or wage-labour – our culture, Maoritanga.” [16] Here Ms Awatere substitutes for the ‘basic contradiction’ between the forces and relations of production, which we have shown brought about the destruction of the Polynesian mode of production and the proletarianisation of the Maori people, a ‘contradiction’ between white racism and Maoritanga.

This means that so long as Ms Awatere imagines that the basic contradictions of capitalism have nothing to do with the alienation of Maori land, she is abandoning any fight for the Polynesian proletariat. Naturally, in abandoning Marxism for Maoritanga, Ms Awatere also has to repudiate ‘the left’; not just the so-called ‘white left’, but the left in general. Yet although the ‘white left’ she repudiates has suppressed the historic struggle of the Maori proletariat as we have shown, Ms Awatere, too, is diverting the Polynesian proletariat from the class struggle. The Spartacist League, therefore, repudiates both ‘white’ and ‘black’ lefts who abandon Marxism and the working class.

But how far does Ms Awatere support the reactionary concept of 'cultural nationalism', a criticism made of her by the Polynesian Panthers which she has yet to answer. In fact, while vociferous about 'culture' she is very vague about what 'nationalism' she stand for: "Maori sovereignty", "autonomy" or "reclaiming the land".

The Maori tradition is a tradition of demanding forms of self-government: the Maori King and his rununga, Kotahitanga, and today, the appropriate form is the Workers' Council. This tradition is rejected, though the majority of Maori are workers as Ms Awatere knows. Independence, without a definite form of government is unreal – Ms Awatere does not even call for a 'black government'. Her conception of "Maori Sovereignty" is instead to persuade them that the present endless series of land struggles unwon, and in continued isolation, unwinnable, have some kind of 'nationalist' goal and should be intensified. Ms Awatere, far from introducing a new 'political' element into Maori struggles, is following a reactionary traditionalism.

It is clear that Ms Awatere uses the term 'sovereignty' in an economic sense, referring to reclaiming the land. We ask: how does Ms Awatere wish to reclaim the land? In a recent speech at a Public Service Conference, she said that Maori have to fight for traditional objectives in "pakeha ways". Among these "pakeha ways" she listed union activity (apparently unaware that unions are a product of capitalism, and while often led by pakehas have large numbers of Maori members). But these "pakeha ways" do not apparently include 'green bans', nor struggles such as that at Bastion Point – even as a step by Polynesian workers to regain possession of part of their land. How then will she regain the land? There is no answer. We have a proposal: expropriate the expropriators! But this proposal, it seems, is rejected along with any other 'left' solution.

The 'cultural nationalists' Lenin attacked fought in their bourgeois way for independence and for protection of their land. Ms Awatere does not. Instead of linking herself to the Maori tradition – those traditions of resistance and struggle which are today being incorporated in an international working class culture wherever workers meet in Aotearoa – she borrows a set of phrases from Pacific peoples' national liberation movements and from Azania's Pan African Congress. Not surprisingly, she cannot translate these phrases into a consistent Maori nationalism with its roots in traditional Maori struggle, but instead popularises a petty bourgeois cultural chauvinism. Why is this?

Pacific islands outside Aotearoa have retained their language and most of the land and traditional cultures. Yet they form a group of states almost bankrupt in the world economy. Vanuatu, frequently held to be a good example of a successful 'national liberation' has expelled the imperialist master only to invite him in the back door with offers of tax-free investment and other incentives at the expense of the labour-power of the people of Vanuatu. The immiseration of the 'liberated' Pacific peoples reaches levels that would be intolerable in Aotearoa, but in Ms Awatere's terms they have

their culture, so what does the alienation (read starvation) of labour-power matter? This is where cultural nationalism leads.

Donna Awatere and Ripeka Evans are familiar with these islands and their leaders. They frequently attend international conferences of nationalist leaders in the Pacific. In her *Broadsheet* articles, Ms Awatere seems to identify with bureaucrats when she says that the conference on the Public Service in a multicultural society “produced an impressive collection of people who would be acknowledged as leaders by the Maori people themselves”. Here affinity with the Pacific leaders also reflects her social position as a Maori professional earning far more than the unemployed or part-employed Maori proletariat, a position of social privilege which she shares with Pacific island leaders outside Aotearoa. The social position which tends to produce a rejection of the working class also provides Ms Awatere’s “tools of analysis”: the psychological techniques used in measuring “white hatred” and “white paranoia”.

For example, Ms Awatere’s account of workers in a capitalist city – Auckland – a phenomenon written about by Engels in *his Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844*, is psychologising in its most extreme ideological form. In early capitalist England, the proletariat sections of the city were always the worst, the middle class refused to live in those areas. The most class conscious proletarians, who lived in these areas, were Irish migrant workers who experienced both national and class oppression. Yet Ms Awatere invents her psychological ‘explanations’ for a class phenomenon documented as such for more than a century. What is her reason for such deception? Even with her bourgeois professional credentials as a psychologist, she will not convince Maori workers, who are all too conscious that their situation is directly caused by lack of money and not white racism. (It is a curious “white hatred” that can determine property values with such precision).

Such populist psychologising does however, influence those white liberals whose economic interests are served by a psychological rather than class analysis of racism. Liberals who can be ‘blamed’ for racism, whose guilt feelings are manipulated by Ms Awatere, and who accept their ‘responsibility’ to fight their personal racism. As Ms Awatere abandons the other Polynesian peoples, abandons the feminists, and abandons the ‘left’, who has she got as allies but the white liberals and their guilt complexes? Side by side with Ms Awatere at meetings and conferences sit clerical advocates of ‘racial harmony’ – National Council of Churches education officers on racism. Churches remain throughout Polynesia, a major white racist influence on the Polynesian proletariat. In her articles, Ms Awatere does not attack these phonies and the “opiate of the people”. Her seminars on ‘confronting racism’ are full of rich white liberals made to feel ‘uncomfortable’ but without challenging their support of a white ruling class which exploits Polynesian labour-power. The Polynesian proletariat will wait forever for emancipation if they have to wait for whites to ‘confront racism’. Racism will be smashed when the white ruling class is smashed. In this a Polynesian vanguard of the working class can take a lead.



## (8) Proletarian vs bourgeois culture

Capitalism attempts to obliterate the culture of all indigenous peoples by commercialising and trivialising what it cannot physically destroy, and by reducing the cultural level of the worker to that of the non-unionised factory – to barbarism. In resistance to capitalism, international working class culture takes all the revolutionary elements of traditional cultures and fuses them together as the ideological weapons of the world's workers. The Maori wars, Maori resistance to conscription, the May Rebellion, the Tahitian uprising against the French – all these live on in the world proletarian culture to inspire and further the Polynesian socialist revolution. International working class culture has absorbed and will continue to absorb far more from Polynesian culture than from crass Anglo-Saxon empiricism, sterile emotional withdrawal and pacifism.

Phrases like 'Maori culture' and 'international working class culture' are not mere abstractions. In Aotearoa, there is an international working class, a class consisting of pakehas and Polynesians from Aotearoa and other island states. The Maori culture of the past which survives is the culture which is remembered now by Maori workers on job sites and passed on to their mates; the culture which they remember when they are on a long, bitter strike and recall past records of courage, endurance and fortitude, which inspires other workers as it inspires Maori workers. Rewi Maniapoto at Orakau is now remembered by many workers who are not of Maori ancestry but are in the class struggle together with Maori comrades. Maori culture too, links Maori workers with other Polynesian workers: Polynesian languages are used to beat the boss, to attack his exploitation or discuss industrial tactics in a language he does not understand. Difference groups of Polynesian workers find their struggles against imperialism have been part of a common struggle. The Maori tradition of community now maintains a closer union solidarity than pakehas can achieve.

Against this living Maori culture absorbed with other cultures into a common stock of ideological weaponry needed to fight bosses and to survive as workers in day-to-day industrial work and conflict, there is a dead Maori culture, a culture from and remaining in the past, with no relevance to where the Maori people are now, which tries to isolate them, and keep them apart from other workers, allowing the pakeha ruling class to smash the Maori people by dividing them from their allies.

The praise of "cultural treasures' of indigenous peoples is not restricted to black radical. De Wit Wel, the South African Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development said in 1959:

“...there is something...which binds people, and that is their spiritual treasures, the cultural treasure of a people. It is those things which have united other nations in the world. That is why we say that the basis of our approach is that the Bantu, too, will be linked together by traditional and emotional bonds, by their own language, their own culture, their national possessions...” [17]

Apartheid and Bantustans are at the end of the road of “cultural” or “spiritual” autonomy! While this is clear to South African apologists for apartheid, it escapes white radicals in New Zealand. The Republican applauded Ripeka Evans’ speech as the first clear statement of “Marxist spiritualism”, reinforcing the black radicals’ abandonment of Marxism for Maoritanga.[18]

Walter Benjamin, in *Illuminations*, saw fascism’s role as rendering politics aesthetic, while “communism responds by politicising art”. [19] His understanding of the reactionary implications of making politics ‘cultural’ still expressed the perspective of Leninism. “Cultural treasures” writes Benjamin are the spoils of wars between ruling classes which owe their origin not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries – in Maori society, all those who could not claim to be an ariki or a rangatira.

“There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.” [20]

Maori culture as it is now consists of the spoils of war which the white ruling class has plundered. Historical materialism, on the contrary, wishes to retain that image of the Polynesian past which unexpectedly appears to the Polynesian worker in crisis, singled out by history at the moment of danger. That danger affects both the content of Polynesian tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every area the attempt must be made anew to wrest Polynesian tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. Only that *militant*: “will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the [Polynesian] past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And that enemy has not ceased to be victorious.” [21]

The Maori people, at this stage of their history, have become proletarians. Their self-determination means the emancipation of the working class. It is both utopian and reactionary, in this context, to move backwards in history for a vague goal of a classless ‘autonomy’. The Maori people from where they are now in the working class must reclaim a culture which the pakeha ruling class is trying to bury in order to judge what is living and what is dead within it. Capitalism is trying to destroy Maori culture before it can make the contribution it should to international working class culture. It tries to erase

from history the Maori victories in the land wars, the successes in military tactics, their declarations of independence from imperialist rule, their economic achievements, their community feeling extending over all areas of life, their revolts against pakeha religion, their history as workers.

Maori culture, unlike other Polynesian cultures, and certainly unlike pakeha culture, requires effort to reclaim from commercialism and pakeha philistinism. Marxists recognise that the present revival of the Maori people demands a re-discovery of their culture and their history, and that Maori workers without links to their culture, and the pride and independence that go with such links, will have nothing of their own to contribute to working class culture, and so will fail to find their destined place in the class vanguard. A new consciousness of Maori identity is necessary if the conquest of power by the working class is to be the final historic realisation of the Maori national struggle.

Over Maori culture, hermetically sealed from the present and cut off from the working class, however, hangs the spectre of the disintegration of other Polynesian cultures which have been turned into state institutions by 'independent' Polynesian governments. Albert Wendt has written of this in one of his most biting poems: [\[22\]](#)

The faa-samoa is perfect, they sd

From behind cocktail bars like pulpits

...

and we all have alofa

for one another, they sd

drown me in your alofa, then, I sd

...

their imported firstclass whisky

was alove with corpses: my uncle

and his army of hungry kids,

malnourished children in dirty wards,

an old woman begging in the bank,

my generation migrating overseas  
for jobs, while politicians  
and merchants brag obesely  
in the RSA, and pastors bang  
out sermons about the obedient  
and righteous life – aiafu  
all growing fat in  
a blind man's paradise

## (9) Whose Right to Self-Determination?

The logic of petty-bourgeois “cultural nationalism” is to struggle for the suppression of other nationalities. On this question, Ms Awatere in her one sympathetic reference to a Marxist thinker, manages to turn poor Gramsci on his head.<sup>[23]</sup> While Gramsci understood the need to make Marxism a hegemonic ideology, Ms Awatere wants to make Maoritanga a hegemonic ideology. Where Gramsci saw the need for class alliances to this end, Ms Awatere substitutes for alliances, ultimatums, in the best left sectarian tradition. These ultimatums are enforced, not by ideological arguments, but by threats of future repression.

The reactionary character of the struggle for ‘cultural autonomy’ which displaces class struggle, is shown by Ms Awatere’s attack on ‘multiculturalism’. Petty bourgeois nationalists, whether on the cultural or political level always, when in power, oppress other nationalities, but Ms Awatere argues for the suppression of other national cultures before she has any power! It is all too clear how cheap *talk of oppression* is when it goes hand in hand with *threats of repression* <sup>[24]</sup> It is not the theory of the “four oppressions” that is important for cultural chauvinists but the theory of the “four repressions” – Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tonga, the four island groups whose culture is represented in Aotearoa. In disallowing other Polynesian cultures ‘rights’ in Aotearoa, Maori chauvinists limit the right to self-determination to those ‘homelands’ within the South Pacific designated as ‘nations’ by the colonial master.

However, Ms Awatere and other chauvinists are not alone in the advocacy of cultural repression. The Socialist Action League (SAL) in their youth paper *Rebel*, 'raise' this suppression from the cultural to the political level with their demand for a "bi-national state" – Polynesians whose 'homelands' are outside Aotearoa will not doubt (as now) be deported.[25] The Spartacist League, in part of its 1970 programme commenting on the SAL's "Maori Programme", pointed out to it that Polynesian islands outside Aotearoa existed and that people from such islands were in the working class too.[26] Neither reality nor political debate over the ensuing twelve years have brought them to realise these facts. Like Ms Awatere, the Socialist Action League also depart from the Maori tradition in failing to give any definite form to their demand for a bi-national state. But unlike Ms Awatere, they do at least discuss political issues, however abstractly and wrongly.

*Rebel* contends that "Maori workers are called upon to fulfill two historic tasks" 1) leading the Maori people in their fight to end their oppression as a people. 2) leading the working class as a whole to overthrow capitalist rule and the institution of a workers' and farmers' government to achieve socialism. We have argued in this pamphlet that these two goals are not separate, but *identical*. To pose them separately is to adhere to a Stalinist two-stage theory of revolutionary change. If, however, two stages are really necessary, what is the content of the first stage? *Rebel* does not raise directly the issue of 'national independence' (we will discuss later what this might mean), rather, it supports "full national equality" between Maori and pakeha and the "right of Maori people to live under whatever political, social and economic forms they choose."!

It would appear that the pakeha revolutionaries who dominate the SAL will twist and turn in every direction to avoid commitment to the real meaning of the right to self-determination: the Maori right to secede from pakeha New Zealand if they so choose. If SAL supports 'national independence' as a first step to socialism, it should say so plainly. If not, it should also make that plain. Certainly the *Rebel* document is so convoluted it can in no way lay the basis for a Marxist programme, either for a 'bi-national state' or for international workers' power in Polynesia.

If the Maori people as a whole decided to break away from pakeha New Zealand, and form their own black government of Aotearoa – and no organised group has yet raised this demand – the Spartacist League would support them. While the Spartacist League is not a nationalist party, it uncompromisingly opposes all national oppression and all privilege based on race and nationality. If national and racial exploitation becomes intensified to the point where Maori are forced to set up their own state, revolutionary black and white workers will fight for that state's establishment.

In the Maori movement the demand has already been raised for a black government. Ms Awatere is afraid of it: the SAL is afraid of it; the Spartacist League is not. Whether in the context of a black or a multiracial government in Aotearoa, the Spartacist League will argue for workers'

councils as the form of government to replace the existing racist and capitalist state, and the incorporation of such a government of Aotearoa in a socialist united states of Polynesia. If the demand for a black government is raised by the majority of the Maori people, their secession will form part of a movement to socialist revolution.

It is *possible* for a 'black nationalism' to come to power in Aotearoa, in the sense that a black comprador bourgeoisie have come to power in other Polynesian islands. Although we see those 'black nationalism' as now totally economically subordinated to white racist New Zealand – the Bantustans of Muldoon's imperialist labour policy- we support those islands' achievement of political independence; but we wish to make political independence more of a reality, through socialist internationalism. 'Black nationalism' instead of socialism, has been secured in the less developed islands of Polynesia because of the undeveloped character of the working class in these islands.

Such a situation, however, does not exist in Aotearoa. But, if Andersen's expulsion of Maori workers from working class organisations was intensified, and the white ruling class and white labour bureaucracy combined to force the vast majority of Polynesian workers into the reserve army of labour, we should then support declassed Black Nationalists movements by trying to win working class support for them. At present, though, the forms of 'black nationalism' which are dominant represent the ideological pressure of a Maori petty bourgeoisie on the Polynesian proletariat. While we do not wholly oppose such movements – they are an important and probably unavoidable first step in the political re-awakening of Polynesian workers, which in the absence of a strong Marxist movement, must inevitably take a populist form – we show their real class character, and demonstrate that their progressive tendencies result from their proletarian composition, and not their petty bourgeois leadership.

If Aotearoa were open to free migration from other Pacific islands, the proletarians entering Auckland and other cities to find work would increase the size of the Polynesian proletariat. The ruling class and its National and Labour Party hacks fear nothing more than a black majority in Aotearoa – as the panic reaction to the Privy Council decision to grant New Zealand citizenship to some Samoan citizens showed. Numbers alone do not add up to fundamental political and economic change, as in the case of Azania, but the white ruling class's response to a growing Polynesian proletariat would be to turn to even greater racist repression than at present. Such repression, would inevitably spur a united internationalist working class to take power for all working people.

The perspective of a black majority in a Socialist Polynesia is the perspective of the Spartacist League alone. The history of the proletarianisation of the Polynesian people must and should end with Polynesian working people who earn wages in Aotearoa controlling that country, along with pakeha workers. It is for these reasons that we demand that Samoans choose whether or not they wish to retain New Zealand

citizenship; the end to all racist immigration laws which discriminate against non-Europeans; and equality of all Polynesian languages along with English as official languages.

## (10) Land Struggles

Bastion Point is one of many struggles to regain land for the Maori people, lost to Europeans or the state. The attitude of Marxists to such struggles is determined by their understanding that the expropriation of Maori land is inevitable under capitalism. Survivals of the Polynesian mode of production were, are, and will be forcibly expropriated by pakeha capitalists (for example, for forestry), unless in the fight against expropriation, elements of a new, socialist mode of production emerge side by side with (or even combining with) survivals of earlier modes of production.

Donna Awatere, in a recent speech, emphasised that such combined forms of fightback are emerging, when she spoke of defending traditional Maori society in all possible 'pakeha' ways (by 'pakeha' in this context, she meant working class). In the Bastion Point *take*, the Auckland Trades Council placed a green ban on development of the site, effectively threatening industrial action to keep control of the site in Maori workers' hands. The capitalist economy divided the Ngati-whatua by offers of money over the last century, with many Maori succumbing to offers of ready cash for land. Now the tribe is split in two, with a group of reactionaries under the bourgeois professor Kawharu who say Bastion Point land is the government's because it was "sold" – abandoning traditional Maori rights in the 'sacred' name of capitalist private property – while others, led by Joe Hawke, reject the sales in the name of traditional Maori claims.

If Bastion Point land reverts to Maori ownership and control, it will not be to Kawharu (who would either refuse to accept it or re-sell it) but to a section of the tribe supporting Joe Hawke. In the struggle against land sales – which effectively means capitalist property relations – economic sanctions have split the tribe, and divided it on political lines, so that those who will regain the land when Muldoon is defeated will be those Maori workers who are opposed to private property (whether they see themselves primarily as such or not). Capitalism has successfully split the tribe, and the more militant the struggle for land rights – themselves a traditional Maori claim – the deeper that split goes, polarising the traditional hapu or tribe and politicising its members, so that it is not finally the traditional tribe, but a working class vanguard, which expropriates the expropriators, with the aid of industrial action.

Bastion Point, as a relatively advanced struggle in an urban context, illustrates processes at work in all land struggles. In any *take* of this kind, Marxists support most Maori land claims as first steps in a class struggle for land nationalisation, not endorsing all traditional claims, but bringing into the open the (usually hidden) class character of the struggle. Most struggles to retain or regain Maori land are seen by the Spartacist League as workers' struggles against private property in land and are supported as such. We call for total working class unity in such issues, white racist pakeha bureaucrats representing the labour aristocracy (and middle class) such as Andersen, and 'professional people' advocating black separatism equally help the pakeha governments and ruling class by fragmenting class unity.

It will be proved in practice who really supports Maori land struggles. The Stalinist Andersen (of the so-called Socialist Unity Party) has shown that Stalinism, the attempt to link white racist chauvinism with a phoney 'Marxism' made by the Russian misleader Stalin, necessarily means racism and the disruption and splitting of land struggle in Aotearoa. Equally, 'middle class' black nationalists have shown that they phoney 'Marxism' which separates the land struggle from the class struggle results in the splitting of the land struggles along national and racist lines. For the Spartacist League, the land struggle is the best practical demonstration of the disastrous results of the fake positions adopted on the issue of racism by the white and black 'left' in New Zealand. The struggle for land nationalisation can be won if the land issue is not separated from the struggle for workers' control and expropriation of the factories, the banks and the state power.

Rural and urban land struggles can only be resolved by nationalisation of land under a workers' and small farmers' government; Maoris forming what is probably the majority of working farmers not employing hired labour. The Spartacist League Programme for agriculture applies most particularly to Maori on the land.

## (11) **Mana Motuhake**

As the Labour Party under Rowling has moved steadily to the right – as the Spartacist League predicted in 1970 – its ties to the trades unions under threat, the Maori proletariat reacted to this rightward shift first, and most strongly, when Matiu Rata split from Labour to form Mana Motuhake. *This split however, generally resulted from a wrong assessment of the reasons for Labour's degeneration.* It is therefore doomed to repeat Labour's failures. At one level, Mana Motuhake exists as an alternative Labour Party for Maori voters in an area of work where Labour's party organisation has never been strong. It is a predominantly parliamentary party, against the bias of the Maori proletarian tradition, but has yet to gain a single parliamentary seat. It has



failed to make any appeal to non-Maori workers against Labour's betrayal of the working class as a whole, and it has also failed to gain the support of Maori cultural radicals. It has considerable support from a Maori intelligentsia, which is in most ways unrepresentative of the Maori proletariat.

On crucial issues such as Te Tiriti o Waitangi, it is divided. It has failed to win support on the basis of a clear programme, instead relying on the traditional rotten ground of 'Maori politics', loose diplomatic alliances of tribal and religious groupings. As such Mana Motuhake can only be an unstable and transitional formation, though it is transitional from the Labour Party toward revolutionary Marxist positions. Within Mana Motuhake, therefore, the Spartacist League gives critical support to those elements moving to the left, toward direct action, and opposition to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. 'Critical support' however, must recognise that there is at present no wing of Mana Motuhake that is in any sense consciously Marxist, and that understands the position of the Maori people as proletarian. Such a consciousness can develop among the rank-and-file of the Mana Motuhake left. We support for this reason, the present democratic demands being raised by this grouping and try to carry them further.

## **(12) For a Socialist Polynesia**

From the history of the rise of the New Zealand bourgeoisie, a chapter is missing that was, in Europe, the opening chapter of the history of capitalism: the struggle against imperialism. That chapter is missing from its history, for the New Zealand white settler bourgeoisie always too dependent on imperialism to oppose it, relied on imperialism to suppress the King Movement; and to colonise Polynesian people elsewhere in the Pacific. Independence struggles in the Pacific were not begun by the bourgeoisie, but by Polynesian people. The New Zealand bourgeoisie, therefore, became mainly a comprador bourgeoisie, lacking either political or economic independence from imperialism. As the pressure of the USA forced an unwilling New Zealand toward de-colonisation in the Pacific – to aid continued direct US colonialism – designed to promote more, not less, political and economic dependence, Polynesian 'bourgeoisies' emerged, black petty bourgeois compradors for a New Zealand comprador bourgeoisie.

The extremely small scale of local capitalism in Polynesia intensified the colonial character of exploitation of small capital outside New Zealand by relatively large New Zealand capital, itself dominated by Britain, the USA or Japan (most usually by Britain, the most backward major imperialist state). The growth of state bureaucracies outside Aotearoa took on a colonial

character also. The unwillingness of white labour bureaucracies to challenge the colonial character of New Zealand's economic development derives from the same uncritical acceptance of imperialism' domination of 'foreign' workers by colonialism, and led to the purely 'economist' character of the struggles of the labour movement.

The failure of the New Zealand bourgeoisie to develop beyond comprador status led and still leads to the extreme industrial underdevelopment of New Zealand. Small-scale secondary industry vulnerable to every world depression, developed as an ancillary to a state-supported agriculture which was bound hand and foot to the British market, British shipping lines and British freezing company and stock and station agency capital. The lack of large-scale industry held back the formation of a strong multi-racial working class, and 'big labour' which successive governments from Balance to Muldoon, have feared as their worst enemy. The relatively privileged position of agriculture tied New Zealand to a dependence on British imperialism for more than a century, and allowed the New Zealand ruling class a 'Polynesian empire', while at the same time held back the intensification of class war in an underdeveloped economy.

The failure of the New Zealand bourgeoisie to win its independence from imperialism – so as to facilitate its plans of annexation and expropriation in Polynesia – naturally means that the bureaucracies manipulated by New Zealand imperialism adapt state apparatuses created by colonialism. Where New Zealand can no longer export a white capitalist ruling class, it creates a block comprador bureaucracy. What this means in the epoch of imperialism, is that oppressed national peoples, imprisoned in imperialist chains as workers or poor peasants, can achieve their 'national liberation' only in the vanguard of the international socialist revolution, which alone can strike these chains from the working people.

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The SLNZ became the Communist Left of NZ in 1984, fused with Worker's Power in 1992, splitting in 1995 to form the Communist Workers' Group of NZ. CWGNZ puts out Class Struggle bi-monthly. Its address is PO BOX 6595,

Auckland, New Zealand. Its website is  
<http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/>

## NOTES

1 See in particular, Sutch's *Quest for Security in New Zealand*. Sinclair, in his *A History of New Zealand*, accepts Sutch's account of Marx's view of the Wakefield system in order to attack Marxism.

2 A. Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange* (which includes comments by Charles Bettelheim, and E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism*).

3 For a description of the characteristics of the Polynesian Mode of Production see M. Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, Cambridge, p 112 etc.

4 See the discussion of the peasant mode of production in D. Bedggood, *Rich and Poor in New Zealand*. And on the 'combination' of modes of production, see J. McRae and D. Bedggood, 'The Evolution of Capitalism in New Zealand', *Red Papers*, No.3.

5 H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to Apartheid', in *Economy and Society*, 1 (4), 1972, p 434. See also R. Davies, 'Mining Capital, the State and Unskilled White Workers in South Africa', in *Journal of South African Studies*, 3 (2), April, 1977, p50-51.

6 See Workers Communist League *Manifesto*, November 1980. Also *Unity*, July 1982.

7 *Witches, Bitches and Dykes*. Vol 1 (4), November, 1981, p 20-21.

8 "A statement on the attempt by white leftists to divide Pacific peoples". Reprinted along with other material on the eviction of the Polynesian Resource Centre in *The Republican*, No 41, July 1982.

9 That one of their number at least now recognises she is not a Marxist, is admitted by Donna Awatere in the *Auckland Star*, 7-9-82

10 [page 932 in Chapter 33 in the penguin edition of *Capital*. Marx uses the example of Mr Peel who took his money and machines to the Swan River region of Western Australia where he bought land but could not obtain 'free' labourers. "Unhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English social relations of production to Swan River!" p. 933]

11 Greenwood, *The Upraised Hand, or, The Spiritual Significance of the Rise of the Ringatu Faith*. P. 54

12 Tony Simpson, *Te Riri Pakeha*. P 227-8

13 Peter Gibbons, *Oxford History of New Zealand*. First edition. p. 313

14 *Programme of the Communist Left of Australia*. 1975 p 2-4

15 *Collected Works*, Volume 20, page 35

16 *Broadsheet*, June, and October. No 101 and 103, 1982.

17 Quoted in H. Wolpe, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1 (4), 1972.

18 Editorial, *The Republican*, No 40, May 1982.

19 Fontana/Collins 1982 Pages 243-244.

20 Ibid 258-259

21 *Illuminations*, p 257.

22 "The Faa-Samoa is Perfect, They Sd" *From Inside us the Dead*. Longman 1976

23 *Broadsheet*, October 1982

24 Rebecca Evans, in *Broadsheet*, October 1982, rejects Samoan claims to New Zealand citizenship and tell them to "fuck off".

25 Young Socialist *Rebel*, 'liftout' May 1982

26 *Socialist Action's* reply to the Workers Communist League, August 13 and 17<sup>th</sup> 1982, doesn't add anything to the *Rebel* article.

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