'Rule Britannia' and the New American Empire: a Marxist analysis of the teaching of imperialism, actual and potential, in the British school curriculum

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ABSTRACT The author begins by arguing that in order to understand imperialism it is necessary to have a conceptual awareness of the concepts of racism and racialisation. He then considers how the British Empire impacted on schools during the imperial era. He goes on to examine the nature of the New Imperialism. Calls are currently being made by notable 'establishment figures' for the renewed teaching in schools of the history of Britain's imperial past. He concludes that Marxists should endorse these calls and should argue for the teaching of imperialism to be extended to include an analysis of the New Imperialism.

Introduction

'Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves. Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.' Thus sang the English fans in Japan as England played ex-colony Nigeria in the first round of the World Cup on 12 June 2002. At the same time throughout England, pubs were serving alcohol at 7 a.m. (one shudders to think what some of the comments directed at the Nigerians might have been) and eight-year-olds were encouraged to come to school dressed in the regalia of the flag of St George. In England, this flag has become a symbol of identity, draped on windows and festooning vans and cars in large numbers. It also appears on various items of clothing. At the time of the World Cup it was identified with a land of 'hope and glory' and a monarchy that was conveniently celebrating its jubilee at the same time as the World Cup (hence, in Osaka there was a rendition of 'God Save the Queen' after 'Rule Britannia'). I suppose one can only be thankful that it was not a time of local elections or a general election. Then, the politics of the British National Party (BNP) would have become lost (and legitimised) in a sea of red and white.[1]

At the very least, the behaviour of the English fans indicates a degree of ignorance and/or a considerable lack of sensitivity about the nature of British Imperialism in Nigeria.[2] So, should we teach imperialism as part of the current school curriculum in England? At the Prince of Wales Education Summer School for English and history specialists in July 2003, calls were made from the Prince himself, along with historian Professor Niall Ferguson and Scott Harrison, Specialist Adviser for History at the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted – the official schools' watchdog in Britain), for the history of Britain's imperial past to be reinstated at the core of the secondary-school curriculum (Pike, 2003). Ferguson presented a television programme on the British Empire that was watched by more than two million people in Britain. I will argue that Marxists should endorse these calls in the pursuit of an education which examines imperialisms, past and present, and which puts economic, social and political analysis of everyday life at the centre of the curriculum.

Racism

In order to understand imperialism it is necessary to have a conceptual awareness of the concepts of racism and racialisation. Elsewhere (e.g. Cole, 2004a; Cole & Stuart, 2005) I have suggested that,

in order to encompass the multifaceted nature of contemporary racism, it is important to adopt a broad concept of racism. I have defined racism as including intentional as well as unintentional racism; biological as well as cultural racism; racism that is 'seemingly positive' as well as obviously negative; dominative racism (direct and oppressive) as opposed to aversive racism (exclusion and cold-shouldering) (Kovel, 1988); and overt as well as covert racism. All of these forms of racism can be individual or personal as well as institutional and there can, of course, be permutations among them (Cole, 2004a, pp. 37-38; Cole & Stuart, 2005).

I have also argued elsewhere at length that racism in British society may be viewed as a continuous process from the origins of the welfare state up to the present, both in general terms (Cole, 1992) and with particular respect to education (Cole, 1992, 2004a).

Racialisation and Common Sense

The concept of 'racialisation' is useful to understand this process. Robert Miles has defined racialisation as an ideological [3] process that accompanies the exploitation of labour power (the capacity to labour), where people are categorised into the scientifically defunct notion of distinct 'races'. As Miles puts it, the processes are not *explained* by the fact of capitalist development (a functionalist position). However, 'the process of racialisation cannot be adequately understood without a conception of, and explanation for, the complex interplay of different modes of production and, in particular, of the social relations necessarily established in the course of material production' (Miles, 1987, p. 7). It is this interconnection which makes the concept of racialisation inherently Marxist.[4]

For Marxists, any discourse is a product of the society in which it is formulated. In other words, 'our thoughts are the reflection of political, social and economic conflicts and racist discourses are no exception' (Camara, 2002, p. 88). Dominant discourses (e.g. those of the government, of big business, of large sections of the media, and of the hierarchy of some trade unions) tend to reflect directly the interests of the ruling class rather than 'the general public'. The way in which racialisation connects with popular consciousness, however, is via 'common sense'. 'Common sense' is generally used to denote a down-to-earth 'good sense' and is thought to represent the distilled truths of centuries of practical experience. So, to say that an idea or practice is 'only common sense' is to claim precedence over the arguments of left intellectuals and, in effect, is to foreclose discussion (Lawrence, 1982, p. 48). As Diana Coben (2002, p. 285) has noted, Gramsci's distinction between good sense and common sense 'has been revealed as multifaceted and complex'. For, common sense:

> is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the 'folklore' of philosophy, and, like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is ... fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential. (Gramsci, 1978, p. 419)

The rhetoric of the purveyors of dominant discourses aims to shape 'common sense discourse' into formats that serve their interests.

Schooling and the Empire: some historical observations

> The British Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century includes lands in every part of the globe, some gained by the valour of our soldiers, or by the patient toil and steady enterprise of colonists from the mother country. It embraces people of almost every race, colour and religion, all living peacefully and prospering under the British flag, and content with the knowledge that the strong arm and brave spirit that gained freedom for them will always be ready to defend the precious gift. (Pitman's *King Edward History Readers* [for Juniors], 1901, pp. 5-6, cited in Chancellor, 1970, pp. 127-128)

> I don't think there can be any doubt that the only safe thing for all of us who love our country is to learn soldiering at once and be prepared to fight at any moment. (Fletcher & Kipling's *A School History of England* [for Juniors], 1911, cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 130)

British Imperialism

Racialisation is historically and geographically specific. Thus, in the British colonial era, implicit in the rhetoric of imperialism was a racialised concept of 'nation'.[5] British capitalism had to be regenerated in the context of competition from other countries and amid fears that sparsely settled British colonies might be overrun by other European 'races'. While the biological 'inferiority' of Britain's imperial subjects was perceived second-hand, the indigenous racism of the period was anti-Irish and anti-Semitic (Miles, 1982; Kirk, 1985). From the 1880s there was a sizeable immigration of destitute Jewish people from the Russian pogroms and this fuelled the preoccupation of politicians and commentators about the health of the nation, the fear of the degeneration of 'the race', and the subsequent threat to imperial and economic hegemony (Holmes, 1979; Thane, 1982). In 1905 the Liberal Government passed the Aliens Act, which halted further Jewish immigration. Anti-Semitism was not merely the province of the ruling elite. Ten years earlier (in 1895) the Trades Union Congress (TUC), representing organised labour, had convened a special conference and had drawn up a programme advocating the nationalisation of land, minerals and the means of production; old-age pensions; adequate health and safety facilities; the abolition of the House of Lords; workers' compensation for industrial injury; the eight-hour day and the reform of the Poor Law System. They also demanded the restriction of Jewish immigration (Cohen, 1985, pp. 75-76; see also Virdee & Cole, 2002, pp. 40-41). As Cohen (1985, p. 80) argues: 'It was a common theme amongst many socialists that England was eugenically doomed if it carried on sending its own citizens to the colonies while receiving Jews from Europe.'

Thus, an 'imperial race' was needed to defend the nation and the colonies (Miles, 1993, p. 69), while Jews needed to be barred to ensure the survival of the British 'race'. Intentional and overt institutional racism was rampant in all the major institutions of society: in the Government, the TUC and, of course, at the heart of capitalism itself. By the end of the nineteenth century the ideology of the 'superiority' of the British 'race' and the inferiority of Britain's colonial subjects was available to all through popular culture (e.g. Cole, 1992; Virdee & Cole, 2002). It had become 'common sense' to view the world in this way. Britain had become a dominative and overtly institutionally racist society.

Racism was institutionalised in popular culture in the British Imperial era in many ways: in popular fiction (Miles, 1982, pp. 110 & 119), in missionary work, in music hall, in popular art (Cole, 1992; Virdee & Cole, 2002) and in education (Blair & Cole, 2002; Cole, 2004a).

The Rise of Mass Schooling

The role assigned to mass schooling in maintaining the Empire was well expressed by Lord Rosebury, leader of the Liberal Imperialists:

> An Empire such as ours requires as its first condition an imperial race, a race vigorous and industrious and intrepid, in the rookeries and slums which still survive, an imperial race cannot be reared. (Cited in Simon, 1974, p. 169)

Here we see the links between the British 'race' and social class. Schooling was seen as a way of creating workers who could compete efficiently with other capitalist countries (epitomised in the slogan 'national efficiency'). In the 1860s British capitalists were particularly worried about competition with Germany, and the poor British showing at the Paris Exhibition in 1867 was seen as exemplifying British backwardness in technological education (Shannon, 1976, p. 86). As Andy Green (1997, pp. 56-65) demonstrates, industrialists, educationalists such as Matthew Arnold and liberal philosophers such as J.S. Mill (who wrote extensively on education) were concerned about the relative efficiency and effectiveness of French and German technical and vocational education systems as compared with the voluntarist and underdeveloped British equivalent. The dual themes of nationalism and imperialism can be gleaned from the major landmark in mass schooling in the Victorian age:

> Upon this speedy provision of education depends ... our national power. Civilized communities throughout the world are massing themselves together ... and if we are to hold our position among men of our own race or among the nations of the world we must make

> up the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual. (Forster, 1870, cited in Maclure, 1979, p. 105)

This is how W.E. Forster, Vice-President in charge of the Education Department in Prime Minister Gladstone's first administration, introduced the Elementary Education Bill in the House of Commons in February 1870. Although the 1870 Education Act, passed three years after the humiliation in Paris, made education neither compulsory nor free, it laid the foundations for a system which was soon to begin to abolish fees and make attendance compulsory.

The quest for 'national efficiency' continued in the Samuelson Report of 1882-84, whose terms of reference were:

> To inquire into the instruction of the industrial classes of certain foreign countries in technical and other subjects for the purpose of comparison with that of the corresponding classes in this country; and into the influence of such instruction on manufacturing and other industries at home and abroad. (Cited in Maclure, 1979, p. 122)

'National efficiency' served as a convenient label under which a complex set of beliefs, assumptions and demands could be grouped – it completed the imperial chain of social class, nation and 'race'. The survival and hegemony of the imperial 'race' were, of course, mutually reinforcing, as evidenced in the lead-up to the 1902 (Balfour) Education Act, which established an integrated system of elementary, secondary and technical education under the general direction of the Education Department (Shannon, 1976, p. 303). There was a fear that the 'race' might be dying. For example, the Reverend Usher (quoting Darwin's forecast that, if artificial limitation of families came into general use, Britain would degenerate into one of 'those arreous societies in the Pacific') in his book *New Malthusianism* was sure about this: 'Yes we cannot deny it, we are a decaying race' (cited in Armytage, 1981, p. 183). Gladstone held similar views.

The Curriculum

Both Fabians like Sydney Webb, Bernard Shaw, Graham Wallas and Sydney Oliver (the 'Fabian Quartet') and the ruling class like the leader of the Liberal Imperialists Lord Rosebury and capitalists in general viewed the school curriculum as being crucial in preparing male members of an imperial 'race' for both combat (imperial warriors) and citizenship (imperial citizens) (Cole, 1992, pp. 60-83; Cole, 2004a). However, as MacKenzie (1986, p. 175) points out, it took at least two decades – the 1870s and the 1880s – and much intellectual propaganda before the teaching methods reflected this desire. The Royal Colonial Institute (RCI), for example, exerted pressure on the education system to introduce imperial studies. In 1883, letters were sent to the head teachers of public schools and other secondary schools attempting to persuade them to place colonial history and geography in the school curriculum. Nine years later they used the same technique to encourage studies of the Indian Empire (MacKenzie, 1986, p. 175).

As MacKenzie explains, although the schools at first responded in a noncommittal way, such activities began to bear fruit in the 1890s. For example, the Education Code of 1892 incorporated suggestions for 'instruction on British colonies', and school inspectors were urged to develop such studies from the 'fourth standard' upwards (p. 175). Lectures on imperial topics started to appear in the curriculum of the Cambridge Local Lectures Syndicate and in university extension summer schools. In a similar vein, the Geographical Association recommended the study of Empire geography in secondary schools in 1896 and the Library Association initiated a section on colonial literature in the library assistants' examination in 1904. The RCI was active in promoting and writing textbooks, a set of which appeared in 1889 covering in successive volumes the West Indies, Canada and southern Africa (p. 175). As MacKenzie concludes, these were all adopted by the management committee of the Schools Board of London, the first at least running to several editions (p. 175).

The primacy of the Bible and religion was replaced by the growing influence of imperialism, which was very central in shaping the changing school syllabus, especially from the 1900s onwards. The addition of subjects like history, domestic science and games to the elementary school curriculum was conceived and justified by reference to their contribution to national strength, efficiency (Humphries, 1981, p. 40) and, of course, the Empire. Thus, many English readers, for

example, contained passages glorifying the monarchy and celebrating Britain's commercial wealth and progress, and English teachers were increasingly encouraged to give instruction in the duties of citizenship. More specifically, the introduction of domestic science subjects was directly related to the fear of race degeneracy, since the intention was to teach working-class mothers how to manage their homes efficiently (Humphries, 1981, p. 40). As Humphries puts it, following Dyhouse (1978) and Davin (1978):

> Subjects such as home economics, laundrywork, cookery and needlework aimed to instruct working-class girls in the correct performance of their future duties of motherhood, housework and domestic service, thereby promoting the reinvigoration of the nation and Empire through a sexist division of labour. (Humphries, 1981, p. 40)

Similarly, he continues, the inclusion of games and sports in the school curriculum was justified in terms of encouraging a corporate spirit and developing the physical strength and moral fibre of [male] working-class youth – a direct transplant of elements of the public-school ethos to state elementary schools to foster the development of imperial warriors. The founding of cadet corps and rifle-shooting clubs for older children gave the fostering of imperialism a specifically militaristic form (p. 41).

Particularly influential in schools were the Empire Day Movement, the Lads' Drills Association and the Duty of Discipline Movement, all especially associated with the Earl of Meath. After having served in Germany in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Meath concluded that Germany's imperial ambitions necessitated that Britain's youth required a further and deeper understanding of the glory of the British Empire in order to ensure its survival (Mangan, 1986, p. 127). Meath particularly relished the idea of 'hardness'. 'The survival of the fittest', he wrote, 'is a doctrine which holds as good in the political and social as in the national world. If the British race ceases to be worthy of dominion it will cease to rule ... Britons have ruled in the past because they were a virile race, brought up to obey, to suffer hardships cheerfully, and to struggle victoriously.'

The white men and women of the British race would not rule well if they were idle, soft, selfish, hysterical and undisciplined (Lord Meath, 1910, cited in Mangan, 1986, p. 129).

Meath was greatly concerned with the moral deterioration of the 'Anglo-Saxon' women, who should be prepared to face the obligations of the marriage tie and the sufferings and dangers of childbirth 'with as much coolness and courage as was expected of the man on the field of battle' (Lord Meath, 1910, cited in Mangan, 1986, p. 129). He was also concerned with 'Anglo-Saxon' men's increasing tendency to watch sport rather than 'submit themselves to even the mild severities of amateur training, or take the rough and tumble of the game itself' (Lord Meath, 1910, cited in Mangan, 1986, p. 129). His solution was to train youth, via his various organisations, to build an imperial 'race', 'worthy of responsibility, alive to duty, filled with sympathy towards mankind and not afraid of self-sacrifice in the promotion of lofty ideals' (Lord Meath, 1910, cited in Mangan, 1986, p. 130). Empire Day was said to have been celebrated in 1905 in 6000 schools throughout the Empire and, by 1922, in 80,000 (Mangan, 1986, p. 132). Thus racialisation ensured that the institutionalised racism (and indeed sexism) promulgated by the ruling class filtered down to the school and became part of popular culture.

This was also most marked in the actual curriculum. Geography texts were prime conveyors of racialisation. As MacKenzie puts it, '[e]ach text laid out the conventional progression from hunting to pastoral to agricultural and finally to industrial societies, larding this Social Darwinism with a strong sense of ecological determinism' (MacKenzie, 1986, p. 184). Thus, '[t]he inhabitants of the savannas' are described as 'superior to the forest tribes, who have many degraded customs and superstitions' (p. 184). The transmission of overt biological racism was facilitated by the portrayal of adult colonial subjects as degenerate children. The nineteenth-century vision of Africans as children sunk in tropical abundance was perpetuated into the twentieth century. In Nelson's *The World and its Peoples* (published *circa* 1907), the African was described as:

> An overgrown child, vain, self-indulgent, and fond of idleness. Life is so easy to him in his native home that he has never developed the qualities of industry, self-denial and forethought. (MacKenzie, 1986, p. 184)

In this text it was explained that the 'Dark Continent' was thus described because of the 'barbarous condition of its inhabitants' (MacKenzie, 1986, p. 184). And, as if to prove the point, the Chambers

Geographical Reader repeated the old and entirely inaccurate canard that '[m]any of the Central African tribes are so savage as still to be cannibals' (MacKenzie, 1986, p. 184), while '[t]he wretched bushmen [were] the lowest most debased human beings on the face of the globe' (Nelson's *The World and its Peoples,* cited in MacKenzie, 1986, p. 185). In the same book Asia was similarly denigrated as a continent of dying nations rapidly falling back in civilisation (cited in MacKenzie, 1986, p. 184). Australian Aboriginals were:

> Among the most miserable of men [*sic*]. They roamed nearly naked, and were ignorant of everything except the chase. The explanation of their degraded condition lies in the arid climate of Australia ... Their great poverty led them to practise vices like cannibalism and the murder of the sick and helpless. (Herbertson's *Man and his Work*, cited in MacKenzie, 1986, p. 185)

It was perhaps history, however, that was the most important subject so far as the instilling of nationalism, patriotism and imperialism was concerned. As Humphries puts it succinctly:

> History was widely viewed as a source of moral examples, good and bad, the study of which would encourage children to develop a sense of duty and loyalty towards national institutions. As a consequence, the history syllabus focused attention on military victories and imperial power, while history textbooks described a heroic national stereotype that was compared with stereotypes of inferior races and frequently contained homilies on the need for patriotic duty. (Humphries, 1981, p. 40)

While the negative stereotyping of other 'races' and nations was not a universal phenomenon (Chancellor, 1970, pp. 112, 113), by the end of the second half of the nineteenth century there had emerged a vociferous racist and imperialist lobby. In the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, one textbook writer saw England as being nigh on perfect:

> Costly gifts and loyal addresses poured in upon Her Majesty and even from the most distant parts of the Empire, and foreign courts vied with each other in the warmth of their congratulations. Noble institutions were established to commemorate a reign, the most wonderful perhaps the world has yet seen. (Collin's *Advanced History Reader*, cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 116)

Consequently, all wars were the fault of others (the childish colonial subjects). Thus, as Glendenning explains, citing the work of Mangnall (1869), the Afghan war of 1838 started 'as a result of the British government in India having determined to support the claims of Shah Soojah to the Afghan throne'; in the Punjab 'the Sikhs revolted'; 'the Burmese committed several aggressions and inroads on the British territories' and, in 1851, there was another war 'in consequence of the ill treatment of British sailors at Rangoon'. The 'Indian Mutiny' was the result of 'the natives' being excited 'to rebellion by ... an old prophecy that British rule would only last 100 years from the Battle of Plassey in 1757'. In similar fashion, 'the sepoys, or native soldiers, declared that the British served out cartridges greased with the fat of animals which the Hindoos are forbidden by their religion to touch, and making this as an excuse for disaffection, broke in open revolt in 1857'. The Kaffirs were 'a warlike and athletic race of savages inhabiting the territories on the inland borders of Cape Colony and Natal', who 'frequently broke into insurrection'. As far as the Chinese were concerned, Mangnall wrote of 'the disinclination of the Chinese to hold intercourse with foreign nations, which has constantly led them to disregard all treaties entered into with foreign powers' (Glendenning, 1973, p. 35). References were made to 'the barbaric peoples of Asia' (Cassel's *Class History of England,* cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 122) and the most frequent impression conveyed about Indians and Afghans was that they were cruel and totally unfit to rule themselves (Chancellor, 1970, p. 122).

As Chancellor explains, the Black Hole of Calcutta, in which a party of English people was imprisoned, the result being that most of them died from suffocation, is reported widely in textbooks. There are many accounts of how the victims trampled each other down 'amid the laughter of the guards' (Edwards' *A School History of England*, cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 122) and how they heard their cries for mercy savagely mocked (Holborn's *Historical Studies,* cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 122). In reality, survivors' eyewitness accounts inform us not that the guards laughed, but that they did their utmost to bring the prisoners water (Chancellor, 1970, p. 122).

Later, the 'Indian Mutiny' was used as yet another example of Indian cruelty. Nana Sahib was described by several writers as 'a fiend in human shape' or as 'a monster' (Jack's *Historical Readers,* cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 122). One author commented: 'And truly the barbarous cruelty with which they had executed this massacre, presented a tale of unheard of horror' (Tegg's *First Book of English History,* cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 122). Chancellor does note, however, that 'a significant minority' do refer to 'the equal brutality of the English in the suppression of disorder in the Indian sub-continent' (p. 122).

While there was some criticism of British rule in the eighteenth century, the textbook orthodoxy was that Indians were lucky to be ruled by the British (Chancellor, 1970, p. 123). The author of the *Pitman's Reader* described the 'native' response to Lawrence during his period as viceroy: '[U]nder his able guidance the natives soon learned to recognize the justice and sound sense of their conquerors and gradually settled down to peaceful work in the rice-fields' (cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 123). And the author of the *Warwick Readers* described Indians as sensible enough to recognise that they needed firm rule, although they were incapable of providing it themselves (cited in Chancellor, 1970, pp. 123-124). As this author put it, '[t]he people of India see that we desire their welfare and they know it is only our rule which keeps them at peace with one another' (cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 124). The fighting qualities of the Indians were afforded little praise, save when they were under British command: then tribute was paid to 'the devotion and gallantry with which the Indian troops obeyed their British officers' during the 'mutiny' (*Warwick Readers*, cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 124).

The peoples of Africa were treated in a similar fashion (Chancellor, 1970, p. 124). Commenting on the Boer War, one author wrote:

> [T]he people within the Queen's dominions were determined that the paramount power in South Africa should be Great Britain, and that the white races south of the Zambesi should have equal rights. (Hassall's *A Class-book of English History*, cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 124)

Meanwhile, in Fletcher & Kipling's *A School History of England* there is a description of the freed slave in the West Indies, indicating his need to be looked after by his 'colonial masters':

> Lazy, vicious and incapable of any serious improvement or of work except under compulsion. In such a climate a few bananas will sustain the life of a negro quite sufficiently; why should he work to get more than this. He is quite happy and quite useless and spends any extra wages which he may earn upon finery. (Cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 124)

Glendenning (1973) documents other ways in which black Africans were denigrated. For example, in a popular textbook G.R. Gleig commented that 'the rude courage of the savage went down before the disciplined troops'. As Glendenning explains, this concept of 'savage', or the more romantic concept of the 'noble savage', was created to distinguish European from African culture. P.D. Curtin, in analysing the theories in William Cooke Taylor's book *Natural History of Society* (1841), wrote that:

> Savages were considered physically weak, unable to visualise mentally what was not physically present, unable to think in terms of means and ends, unable to count beyond a few numbers – often no further than three. (Cited in Glendenning, 1973, p. 35)

Stressing the perceived superiority of European culture, Leopold of the Belgians felt able to affirm in 1897 that 'the aim of all of us ... is to regenerate materially and morally, races whose degradation and misfortune it is hard to realise' (cited in Glendenning, 1973, p. 35). Nineteenth-century textbook stereotypes of Africans saw the Zulus as 'a constant menace', 'fierce savages' and 'a warlike and savage tribe'. The Asante were 'warlike negroes' and 'a host of barbarians' who caused much 'annoyance' to British traders in the Gold Coast, and the Hottentots were 'brutal and stinking' (cited in Glendenning, 1973, p. 35).

The English, by way of contrast, were portrayed as brave and honest, with one writer asserting that '[y]ou must be truthful if you would be truly English' (Laurie's *English History Simplified,* cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 118) and another claiming that '[t]hey all show the bold, frank, sturdy character which so strongly marks out the Anglo-Saxon race' (Livesey's *Granville History Readers,* cited in Chancellor, 1970, p. 118).

Thus, in the imperial era, in order to justify the continuance of 'the strong arm and brave spirit' of the British Empire, and the ongoing and relentless pursuit of expanding capital accumulation, the subjects of the colonies were racialised in school textbooks as fierce, brutal, lazy children.

The New Imperialism: a postmodern fantasy

I have argued at length elsewhere about the dangers of postmodernism (in academia), specifically about the way in which it acts as an ideological support for global capitalism (e.g. Cole & Hill, 2002; Cole, 2003, 2004c, d). Now firmly in the public as well as the academic domain (and therefore more dangerous), postmodernism is particularly pernicious in its protagonists' advocacy of the 'New Imperialism'. Thus, Cooper (2002, p. 5) argues that what is needed is a new kind of imperialism, one which is acceptable to what he refers to as 'a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values': an imperialism 'which, like all imperialism, aims to bring order and organisation [he does not mention exploitation and oppression] ... but which rests today on the voluntary principle'.

Postmodern imperialism, he argues, takes two forms. First, the voluntary imperialism of the global economy, where institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank provide help to states 'wishing to find their way back into the global economy and into the virtuous circle of investment and prosperity' (Cooper, 2002, p. 5). If states wish to benefit, he goes on, 'they must open themselves up to the *interference* [my emphasis] of international organisations and foreign states' (p. 5).

The second form of postmodern imperialism Cooper calls 'the imperialism of neighbours', where instability 'in your neighbourhood poses threats which no state can ignore'. It is not merely soldiers that come from the international community, he argues, 'it is police, judges, prison officers, *central bankers* [my emphasis] and others'. 'Elections are organised and monitored by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Local police are financed and trained by the UN' (2002, p. 5).

Cooper has in mind the European Union, which is, of course, engaged in a programme that is leading to massive enlargement. If this process is a kind of voluntary imperialism, Cooper suggests, 'the end state might be describes [*sic*] as a cooperative empire. "Commonwealth" might indeed not be a bad name' (2002, p. 5). He concludes that '[t]hat perhaps is the vision, but, in the context of "the secret race to acquire nuclear weapons" and, in the premodern world, the growth of organised crime, including international terrorism, there may not be much time left [for the establishment of this empire]' (p. 6).

While '[w]ithin the postmodern world, there are no security threats ... that is to say, its members do not consider invading each other' (2002, p. 3), that world, according to Cooper, has a right to invade others. The 'postmodern world' has a right to pre-emptive attack, deception and whatever else is necessary. As he puts it:

> Among ourselves we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself. Among ourselves, we keep the law but when we are operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle. (pp. 3-4)

So, what is the background of this leading advocate of postmodern New Imperialism; of the legitimacy of a 'pre-emptive attack' on 'old-fashioned' non-European states? Between 1999 and 2001 he was Head of the Defence and Overseas Secretariat in Tony Blair's British Cabinet Office. Now posted to Brussels in the capacity of what the *Daily Telegraph* (25 October 2003) described as 'right-hand man to Javier Solana, Europe's foreign and security policy supremo ... he retains close links with Downing Street, where his ideas are held in great respect' (http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/excep/cooper.html). Blair is, of course, known for his belief in a benign globalisation (for a critique of this position, see, for example, Cole, 2005). However, while he is widely acknowledged to be Bush's 'poodle', Blair is not generally known for his *intellectual* adherence to postmodern New Imperialism.

Julie Hyland (2002, p. 4) has argued that Cooper's thesis is fundamentally flawed. This is because central to it is an insistence that there is no longer any real conflict of interests between the major powers. While Cooper places certain reservations with respect to the USA and Japan, he is confident that they all have a vested interest in collectively policing the world. Hyland cites Lenin, who argued that all alliances between the major powers 'are *inevitably* nothing more than a "truce" in periods between wars'. As Lenin put it:

> Peaceful alliances prepare the grounds for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on *one and the same* basis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics. (Lenin, 1975, cited in Hyland, 2002, p. 4)

Cooper argues throughout, she goes on, as if the major powers can simply decide to set aside their differences in order to pursue a common political agenda. However, in reality, imperialism is not a policy but 'a complex set of economic and social relations characterised by an objective conflict between the major powers over who controls the world's markets and resources' (Hyland, 2002, p. 5). The struggle for oil, the source of power, she concludes, has not only been the major factor in Western imperial intervention, but it is also likely to be the key focus of potential conflict between the major powers (p. 5).

That a conflict of interests remains firmly on the agenda is not merely the province of the Left. Leading historian of Empire Dominic Lieven, for example, who believes that 'the ideology of US empire is democratic and egalitarian' (2004, p. 25), cites 'bringing 1.25bn Chinese into the first world' as an indication that the '"the great game" of empire is far from over' (2004, p. 25).

The New Imperialism: the US reality

The key player in the New Imperialism is, of course, not the 'European Commonwealth' but the USA. US imperial hegemony is widely recognised in liberal as well as Marxist circles. Thus as the *Guardian* columnist Hugo Young states unequivocally:

> The problem that Mr. Cooper ignores and that seems not to even trouble Mr. Blair any more is that the only [new world order] currently on offer is for the rest of the globe to be remade in America's image and in the interests of the security of the US and its corporations. If there is any such thing as an acceptable postmodern imperialism, this most certainly is not it. (Young, 2002, cited in Hyland, 2002, p. 8)

This statement underestimates (even in 2002) Blair's allegiance to US capitalism. In concluding that any New Imperialist agenda needs to recognise that 'America is a threat to global order too' (Young, 2002, cited in Hyland, 2002, p. 8), Young also understates the very real threat posed by the USA to the very existence of the world.

Epitomising the essence of the New Imperialism that actually exists is the Project for the New American Century. Proudly and openly Reaganite, it sets out its principles as follows:

> – we need to increase defense spending significantly if we are to carry out our global responsibilities today and modernize our armed forces for the future;
> – we need to strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values;
> – we need to promote the cause of political and economic freedom abroad;
> – we need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.

Such a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity may not be fashionable today. But it is necessary if the United States is to build on the successes of this past century and to ensure our security and our greatness in the next.

'Increasing defense spending'; 'challenging regimes'; 'promoting political and economic freedom'; 'extending an international order' – these phrases make it abundantly clear that, as long as the New Imperialism continues to exist, so too will (imperialist) wars.

As McLaren & Farahmandpur (forthcoming 2005) argue:

> The United States was willing to put the whole world at risk of nuclear obliteration in order to carry out its Cold War anticommunist strategies; and now that communism has fallen onto global hard times that threatens its very existence, the United States places the world at a different – but no less execrable – risk by attempting to push through its neoliberal imperialist agenda that includes preemptive military strikes against any country that is deemed a threat to U.S. corporate or geostrategic interests.

Globalisation and the US Empire

Globalisation is often used *ideologically* to justify the New Imperial project. Globalisation is championed as the harbinger of free trade and is heralded by some, Marxists and non-Marxists alike, as a new phenomenon. It is, in fact, as old as capitalism itself, but it is a phenomenon that alters its character through history (e.g. Cole, 1998).[6] Ellen Meiksins Wood (2003, p. 134) has captured succinctly its current manifestations:

> Actually existing globalization ... means the opening of subordinate economies and their vulnerability to imperial capital, while the imperial economy remains sheltered as much as possible from the adverse effects. Globalization has nothing to do with free trade. On the contrary, it is about the careful control of trading conditions in the interest of imperial capital. (Cited in McLaren & Farahmandpur, forthcoming 2005)

On 17 September 2002 a document entitled *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (*NSSUSA*) was released which laid bare US global strategy in the most startling terms (Smith, 2003, p. 491). The report heralds a 'single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise'. Europe is to be kept subordinate to, and dependent on, US power; NATO is to be reshaped as a global interventionist force under US leadership; and American national security is claimed to be dependent on the absence of any other great power. The report also refers to 'information warfare', whereby deliberate lies are spread as a weapon of war. Apparently, a secret army has been established to provoke terrorist attacks, which would then justify 'counter attack' by US forces on countries that could be announced as 'harboring terrorists' (The Research Unit for Political Economy (RUPE), 2003, pp. 67-78, cited in Smith, 2003, pp. 491-492).

While the *NSSUSA* states that American diplomats are to be retrained as 'viceroys' capable of governing client states (RUPE, 2003, cited in Smith, 2003, p. 491), the New Imperialism, in reality, no longer seeks direct territorial control of the rest of the world, as did British imperialism, for example, but instead relies on 'vassal regimes' (Bello, 2001, cited in Smith, 2003, p. 494) to do its bidding. This is because capital is now accumulated via the control of markets rather than by sovereignty over territories. The New Imperialism does not require invading forces to stay for lengthy periods of time. It is, therefore, an imperialism *in absentia*. President Bush was thus partly right when he stated in his 2003 State of the Union address that America seeks to 'exercise power without conquest'. He was right in the sense that America does not seek British-Imperialist-type *long-term colonial conquest*. What it seeks is what Benjamin Zephaniah (2004, p. 18) describes as 'cultural and financial imperialism'. This can involve sending in the troops in the short-term, or it can be done without armies.[7] As he puts it: 'They send in men in suits and they colonise the place financially' (2004, p. 18). As Michael Lind, writing from a liberal perspective, points out, this does not stop many neo-Conservatives in the USA hankering after British Imperialism (and in particular the young Winston Churchill) as their model (Lind, 2004, p. 5), as does the aforementioned popular historian and television presenter Niall Ferguson, for whom the British Empire was relatively benevolent. In a recent speech he argued that the American Empire, which 'has the potential to do great good', needs to learn from the lessons of the British Empire. First, it needs to export capital and to invest in its colonies; second, people from the USA need to settle permanently in its colonies; third, there must be a *commitment* to imperialism; and fourth, there must be collaboration with local elites. Success can only come, he concludes, if the Americans are prepared to *stay* (Ferguson, 2004).

Wall Street journalist Max Boot has gone so far as to state that 'Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets' (cited in Smith, 2003, p. 490). This will not, of course, happen. There are three reasons for this. First, this is not necessary (for reasons outlined earlier).

Second, it is not cost-effective. Paul Kennedy (1998) refers to this as 'the problem of imperial overstretch', which results in the dissipation of resources (economic, military and administrative) (cited in Smith, 2003, p. 498). Third, such actions would fail to achieve majority popular support, and would lead to what Waldon Bello (2002) describes as a 'crisis of legitimacy', the inability to convince others of one's moral right to rule (cited in Smith, 2003, p. 498).

The New Imperialism and Racialisation

Just as in the days of the British Empire there is an ideological requirement for racialisation. As Zephaniah states:

> When I come through the airport nowadays, in Britain and the US especially, they always question me on the Muslim part of my name. They are always on the verge of taking me away because they think converts are the dangerous ones. (2004, p. 19)

Islamophobia is a key component of the racialisation connected to the New Imperialism. According to The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI), Britain is 'institutionally Islamophobic', with hostility towards Islam permeating every part of British society (Doward & Hinsliff, 2004). The report produces a raft of evidence suggesting that, since 9/11, there has been a sharp rise in attacks on followers of Islam. Ahmed Versi, Editor of the *Muslim News*, who gave evidence, said:

> We have reported cases of mosques being firebombed, paint being thrown at mosques, mosques being covered in graffiti, threats made, women being spat upon, eggs being thrown. It is the visible symbols of Islam that are being attacked. (Doward & Hinsliff, 2004)

More than 35,000 Muslims were stopped and searched in 2003, with fewer than 50 charged (Doward & Hinsliff, 2004).

Islamophobia, like other forms of racism, can be cultural, biological, or a mixture of both. Echoing the quote from the school textbooks cited earlier, where Asia was denigrated as 'a continent of dying nations rapidly falling back in civilisation' and where reference was made to 'the barbaric peoples of Asia', the former Archbishop of Canterbury recently defended a controversial speech in which he criticised Islam as a faith 'associated with violence throughout the world'. At the Gregorian University in Rome he said that Islam was resistant to modernity and Islamic societies had contributed little to world culture for hundreds of years (www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,1-1052154,00.html).

A more biological Islamophobic racism is revealed by Jamal al-Harith, a British captive freed from Guantanamo Bay. He informed the *Daily Mirror* that his guards told him: 'You have no rights here' and went on to say that:

> [A]fter a while, we stopped asking for human rights – we wanted animal rights. In Camp X-Ray my cage was right next to a kennel housing an Alsatian dog. He had a wooden house with air conditioning and green grass to exercise on. I said to the guards, 'I want his rights' and they replied, 'That dog is member of the US army'. (http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/allnews/content_objectid=14042696_method=full_siteid=50143_headline=-MY-HELL-IN-CAMP-X-RAY-name_page.html)

Such treatment is sustained by racialisation. Indeed, the a-priori racialisation of Muslims as sub-human terrorists serves to facilitate their torture, rape, humiliation and degradation. This is currently being revealed (May 2004) as having occurred on a massive scale and having apparently been developed by intelligence services over many years. In particular, the humiliation of the body stands in stark contrast to the Muslim importance of covering. Racialisation under conditions of imperialism is fired by what Dallmayr (2004, p. 11; see also Cole, 2004e) has described as 'the intoxicating effects of global rule', which anticipate 'corresponding levels of total depravity and corruption among the rulers'.[8]

Whither Imperialism Education?

In contemporary societies we are in many ways being globally *mis*educated. The Bush and Blair administrations' propaganda war about 'weapons of mass destruction', aimed at masking New Imperialist designs and capital's global quest for imperial hegemony and oil, is an obvious example.

As we have seen above, 'information warfare' is a key imperialist strategy. How, then, does this relate to schooling? Tied to the needs of global corporate capital, 'education' worldwide has been reduced to the creation of a flexible workforce – the openly acknowledged, indeed lauded (by both capitalists and politicians), requirement of today's global markets (e.g. Cole, 2004e). Business is in schools, both in the sense of determining the curriculum and exercising burgeoning control of schools as businesses (Allen et al, 1999; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 1999a, b; McLaren, 2003; McLaren & Farahmandpur, forthcoming 2005).

An alternative vision of education is provided by McLaren. Education should, he argues, following Paulo Freire, put 'social and political analysis of everyday life at the center of the curriculum' (McLaren, 2003, p. xxix). If we are to return to the teaching of imperialism, past and present, with integrity in English schools, the syllabus must, I would argue, incorporate the following *in addition* to a critical analysis of the actual events themselves.

First, there must be a thorough and critical analysis of theories of imperialism – classical, Keynesian, postmodern *and* Marxist (e.g. Barratt Brown, 1976). Second, there should be a discussion of the way in which British Imperialism was taught in the past, and why. Third, and allied to this, school students need the skills to deconstruct pro-British Imperialist and/or racist films and/or television series, which are still readily available in the age of multiple-channel digital television. Fourth, at a national level students need a critical awareness of how British Imperialism relates to, and impacts on, racism and racialisation both historically and in the present (including the ability to make links with xenophobia, xeno-racism and xeno-racialisation).[9] Fifth, at a global level students will need skills to evaluate the New Imperialism and 'the permanent war' being waged by the USA with the acquiescence of Britain. Boulangé (2004) argues that it is essential at this time, with the Bush–Blair 'war on terror' and Islamophobia in many European cities reaching new heights, for teachers to show solidarity with Muslims in schools today. For 'this will strengthen the unity of all workers, whatever their religion' (p. 24), and this will have a powerful impact on the struggle against racism in all spheres of society, and schools in particular. In turn, this will strengthen the confidence of workers and students to fight on other issues.[10]

I will conclude with a quote from Ferguson (2003):

> Empire is as 'cutting edge' as you could wish ... [It] has got everything: economic history, social history, cultural history, political history, military history and international history – not to mention contemporary politics (just turn on the latest news from Kabul). Yet it knits all these things together with ... a 'metanarrative'. (CD, Audio)

For Marxists, an understanding of the metanarrative of imperialism, past and present, does much more than this. It takes us to the crux of the trajectory of capitalism from its inception right up to the twenty-first century; and this is why Marxists should endorse its teaching. Of course, the role of education in general, and teaching about imperialism in schools in particular, has its limitations and young people are deeply affected by other influences such as the media and peer culture. However, if we do not reintroduce an *honest* evaluation of imperialism in British schools, the World Cup of 2020 may well be a repeat performance of the events of two years ago. If imperialism education is introduced in schools, the football crowds supporting England against a possible African or Asian team will at least have some awareness of the implications and ramifications of their words, deeds and actions. The choice is between a continued enslavement by an ignorance of Britain's imperial past or an empowered awareness of it.

With respect to the New Imperialism, it could either have been accepted as 'common sense', inevitable or even benign, or it could be under constant challenge. Education, by default, might aid its progress, or it could contribute to a critical awareness of New Imperialism's manifestations and, from a Marxist perspective, the need for its demise and replacement with a transformed world order.

Postscript

This article is being sent off for publication in the immediate aftermath of the victory of George W. Bush in the US election (November 2004). Already, Bush has declared that the war on terror will continue 'until the enemy is defeated', while British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon has warned Britons to expect more wars 'for the foreseeable future'.

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Notes

[1] In the run-up to 2004 European Football Championships (Euro 2004) in June, three million St George flags were sold (*Daily Mirror,* 9 June 2004). The fact that this coincided with the European and local elections in Britain provoked a debate in the press as to whether the flag was a racist symbol or not.

[2] It is informative here to take snapshots from three centuries of British colonialism and exploitation in Nigeria. This began in the nineteenth century when multinational corporations pushed the British Government to take active control of large areas of Africa in order to compete with France. In 1885 and 1886 the European powers cut Africa into boxes. One of these new boxes was Nigeria, a potentially rich country exploited by British companies and corporations with the help of the Imperial Army (Douglas, 2000). In 1895 the drums and containers of the United African Company, which was trading in palm oil, were attacked by local people who felt they were being exploited. When the company reported that some local 'savages' had invaded their trading post, Britain sent in the navy and, when the men ran away, retaliated by killing over 4000 people, mainly women and children (Douglas, 2000).

In 1937 Shell arrived in Nigeria, looking for crude oil rather than palm oil. The company found it in 1956 and proceeded to exploit the local people. The 1967 'Biafran Civil War' was a direct result of the blocking by Shell (in order not to lose its control of the oil) and the British Government of the threatened secession of the eastern region of the country.

On 30 March 2001 the Nigerian-registered *MV Etireno* set sail from Benin bound for Gabon. However, it was turned away from the capital Libreville after the Transport Ministry issued a statement claiming there were 250 Nigerian children on board who were destined to be used as slave labour. In the event, only 23 children and 20 adolescents were found on board. Questions remain as to whether there were more children on board, and, if so, what happened to them. What remains a fact is that some 200,000 children are sold into slavery every year in West and Central Africa. They end up working on plantations, on farms, in factories and in sweatshops. In addition, thousands of young girls from Nigeria and elsewhere end up as child prostitutes in Europe, having been shipped from Nigeria via the United Kingdom (Johnson, 2001, pp. 1-2).

[3] As Hill (2001, p. 8) has pointed out, the influence of ideology can be overwhelming. He cites Terry Eagleton (1991, p. xiii) who has written: '[W]hat persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermin is ideology.' The pertinence of this observation resonates throughout this article.

[4] I am interested here in the utilisation of the Marxist concept of racialisation to understand racism over time rather than with the relationship between racism and capitalism per se: e.g. the 'possible' existence of racism in pre-capitalist or post-capitalist social formations.

[5] This section of the article draws on Cole, 2004a, which deals with the historical and contemporary manifestations of racialisation, institutional racism and schooling in Britain (for contemporary manifestations see also Cole, 2004b; Cole & Stuart, 2005).

[6] Globalisation is also universally heralded as inevitable (Cole, 1998, 2004c, d, 2005). Thus, Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* writer who has become America's official explainer of globalisation, likes to compare the process to the dawn: there is no escaping it; objecting to it is futile; and it shines alike on the just and the unjust (Purdy, 2004, p. 28).

[7] It seems that John Howard is pursuing the same policy in the South Pacific, sometimes with troops, sometimes without (Pilger, 2004, pp. 13-14).

[8] It seems that torture and humiliation were also routine practice in Afghanistan as well as in Guantanamo Bay (Campbell & Goldenberg, 2004: www.guardian.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,1284,1245236,00.html).

[9] The term 'xeno-racism' is Sivanandan's. As he puts it:

> It is a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe's doors, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a 'natural' fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but 'xeno' in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism (A. Sivanandan, cited in Fekete, 2001).

Elsewhere, I have described the ongoing *process* of racialisation that accompanies this new form of racism as 'xeno-racialisation' (Cole, 2004b).

[10] In many ways the Muslim communities of Britain are being made scapegoats in a similar fashion to the 'black youth' in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Hall et al, 1978; Cole, 1986). Echoing Boulangé (2004), Madeleine Bunting (2004, p. 15) has argued that it is crucial that socialists make allies with Muslims as a show of solidarity, particularly at a time when there is a battle going on as to what kind of religion Islam is.

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