

# Multiculturalism in Europe and America\*

---

JOHN REX

*Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, Coventry  
CV4 7AL, UK*

**ABSTRACT.** Although there is a popular discourse about multiculturalism in Europe and North America which suggests that there is a single set of problems, the political problems which multiculturalism addresses are different in these two contexts. As outlined here the problem in Western Europe is that in liberal democracies and social democratic welfare states two questions have to be addressed. One is that of equality, the other the recognition of cultural diversity. As is shown here a number of important European social scientists have feared that the acceptance of cultural diversity will actually undermine important and valued political structures without improving the condition of minorities. In the United States a different set of problems has arisen. While the Civil Rights movement appeared to be helping Blacks to achieve equality in the sixties, by the late eighties there was a sense of disillusion about this process and the emergence of ideologies based upon separatism which appeared to point to the 'disuniting' of America. Some of these ideologies were what was being discussed under the heading of multiculturalism. A further contrast has to be made with Canada which is often thought of as an arch-exponent of multiculturalism, but in which all problems of ethnic equality are tied up with the specific problems generated by Quebecois nationalism.

## **The wider context of the problem of multiculturalism**

The problem of multiculturalism in Europe and North America has to be understood within a wider world context involving the changes which have occurred since 1945 and since 1989 in relations between the so-called first, second and third worlds. After 1945 the process of uneven economic development led to large-scale migration within and to the countries of the first world, including Western Europe, the United States and the economically advanced settler dominated territories of the former European empires, such as Canada and Australia. This migration process was halted in Europe

\* Keynote Address to a conference on *Comparative Perspectives on Ethnic Relations and Social Incorporation in Europe and North America* organised by The Robert F. Harney Program in Ethnic, Immigration and Pluralism Studies, University of Toronto, 29 September to 1 October 1994.

after the early seventies except for family completion as far as workers were concerned. Japan came to join the first world countries as a centre of economic growth. As capital went in search of labour rather than bringing labour to it, new intermediate areas of economic growth came into existence, most obviously in oil-rich countries of the Middle East and in the Pacific rim. The so-called second world consisting of the communist countries remained outside this migration system, except for small numbers of political refugees, until after 1989, when the breakdown of communism produced economic and political collapse, forcing many of the citizens of these countries to flee from political disorder or to seek economic opportunities which opened up to them in Western Europe and North America.

This article is concerned with a part of this total problem, namely that of the place of various immigrant, refugee and quasi-refugee communities who settled in the economically advanced countries of Europe and North America. These countries grew rich and concentrated on their own prosperity, leaving large parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America to constitute the new third world marked by increasing relative poverty. It is this gap which constitutes the major political problem of the world today. Migration, however, had left the advanced and economically successful countries with their own internal problem of the place which immigrants and their children were to occupy within their political, economic, social and cultural systems.

### **Nation-states and migrant communities**

The nation-states within whose territories immigrants had settled were based upon capitalist economies, even though these were modified by the creation, in varying degrees, of welfare states, and, on the political level, upon some sort of multiparty democracy. So far as their ethnic and cultural composition was concerned they also saw themselves as having national cultures, even though these cultures may have emerged from earlier migrations. The European nations had long historic traditions, while, in the more recently constituted societies of North America, the earliest immigrants had succeeded in imposing their languages and cultures. This did not, of course, exclude the possibility of two or more ethnic or national groups sharing in this domination, as in the case of Belgium, Switzerland and Canada, nor that of some regionally located groups being accorded a degree of autonomy or even of struggling for independence, as in the cases of the United Kingdom and Spain.

The various migrant groups had their own social, cultural and religious points of reference external to the countries in which they settled. They could not, however, be understood as nationalist groups, or even as diasporic communities, necessarily intending a return to some homeland Zion. Unlike the ethnic nationalist groups which re-emerged in the post-

communist world, they were not seeking secession from their countries of settlement in order to form their own nation-states. Rather they were committed to the project of living in other people's countries and the last thing which they wished to do was to secede from them.

So far as the concept of 'diaspora' is concerned, these migrant groups probably all had some concept of possible return to a homeland, and they would, *inter alia*, maintain their contacts with that homeland. At the same time, however, they were likely to be seeking to maximise their opportunities through their kin and cultural networks in their present and possible future countries of settlement, and for some such transnational communities. It was this maximization of economic opportunities rather than a diasporic return that was a dominant motive.

A good example of such a transnational migrant community is provided by migrants from the Punjab. They constitute a world-wide community whose members use their international networks to improve their economic position, even while maintaining some sense of connection with the homeland. There are, however, other possibilities: some migrants may have relatively strong diasporic yearnings for return to a reconstituted homeland and many at least have some kind of 'myth of return', albeit often an unrealistic one; others operate on a less world-wide scale, migrating only to one or to a few countries and retaining realistic homeland links; and, finally, there are a number of diverse situations amongst refugees, who may be aware that they have no prospect of return and must perforce make the best of the opportunities available to them, but, who may, on the other hand, look forward to returning when the injustices imposed on them by some of their fellow countrymen have been brought to an end (Rex 1994b).

If, however, migrant communities have these transnational points of reference, they must also necessarily come to terms with their present societies of settlement. To this end they have to mobilise and negotiate collectively even though they may lose some of their more successful acculturated younger members to assimilation in the society of settlement.

The problem of a multicultural society may, therefore be presented like this: the host nation will have to decide to what degree immigrant minorities should be allowed to enjoy citizenship rights and, whether, in doing so, they should be required to give up their own culture, or to put the matter in a reverse way, whether, if they preserve their own cultures, their cultural distinctiveness should act as a marker for separate kinds of treatment and control. Looking at matters from the point of view of the migrant communities, the problem is that of how far the struggle for equality inevitably involves forsaking their own culture and social networks and losing their more successful younger members. This is the problem which we now have to discuss in relation to West European and North American societies.

The problem of multiculturalism, however, is falsely posed if it is seen as one in which a host culture confronts minority cultures. A third element

which is involved is that of a civic culture which prescribes the terms on which culturally differentiated groups interact. It is possible for a society to accept a civic culture based upon the idea of equality and to require that all groups should adhere to it, without it being required that incoming groups should become emotionally and morally attached to the values and general culture of the host country. Immigrants may, indeed, through their struggles for rights, actually contribute to sustaining the civic culture and identity without becoming acculturated themselves to the national culture and identity.

My previous statements are an attempt to make a general theoretical statement about the problem of the kinds of multicultural contact which we are facing in Europe and North America today. Any such attempt inevitably involves sweeping generalisations and it is relatively easy to point to the peculiarities of the problems of immigrant settlement, as between migrant groups, as between nation-states in the societies of settlement, and as between larger regions. What I am proposing to do in what follows is to focus on some of the differences between Europe and North America and, while still remaining on a high level of generality, to suggest, within the discussion of each of these regions, what some of the main lines of structural differentiation are.

### **The pattern of migrant settlement in Western Europe and the European multicultural problematic**

After 1945 the economically successful countries of Western Europe faced shortages of unskilled labour as well as offering niches for entrepreneurs in areas of business which indigenous entrepreneurs were unwilling to occupy. They also needed professional skills which had to be provided from outside. Professional migrants were, however, not thought of as problematic in their countries of settlement, representing more of a problem to their sending societies, which saw themselves as suffering a brain drain. The main problem groups in the countries of settlement, therefore, were seen to be the largely unskilled immigrant groups and 'pariah' traders.

The different West European countries drew their immigrants from different countries and received different kinds of immigrants according to their historic circumstances. The United Kingdom drew upon Ireland, and then, primarily on former colonial territories in the Caribbean, the Indian sub-continent, East Africa and the Mediterranean. France turned to southern European countries, particularly to Portugal, and to its former colonial territories in the Maghreb and in more distant overseas departments and former colonies, including the Caribbean, Africa and the Far East. Germany, having no former empire to turn to, recruited guest workers from Southern Europe and from Turkey. The Netherlands faced a variety of immigrant problems, including those of returning settlers and their allies

from Indonesia, those of migrants with Dutch citizenship from Surinam and the Antilles, and those of Turkish and Moroccan guest workers. Belgium recruited Italians and then Moroccans. Sweden, already having large numbers of Finns, also began to recruit in the same labour markets as the other North Western European countries. Additionally, all of these countries attracted a variety of asylum seekers and others fleeing from conditions of political disorder.

Obviously there is great variety in these patterns of migration and this summary statement also clearly excludes a number of smaller immigrant minority groups in each of the countries concerned. There are clearly dangers, therefore, in any attempt to make a generalisation about all immigrant problems. What is clear, however, is that there were certain patterns in the way in which these countries defined the 'immigrant problem'. The United Kingdom was preoccupied with questions of colour: the term immigrant was used as a social construction referring primarily to darkskinned people from the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, although, so far as South Asians were concerned, there were also problems of cultural and religious difference within this category. France became increasingly concerned with its Algerian immigrants and with what was often seen as the 'threat' of Islamic identities. In Germany anxieties were focused on Turkish guest workers, who were not necessarily thought of primarily as Muslims, but simply as temporary residents. In the Netherlands there was less colour consciousness than in the United Kingdom, making it possible to assimilate the Surinamese more easily than was the case with British West Indians, but, increasingly, as can be seen from the Report of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, entitled *Immigrant Policy* (1990), the focus of attention was on the third of the immigrant population from Morocco and Turkey.

Of course, it can and should be argued that any intelligent policy towards immigrant settlement would have needed to take account, one by one, of the problems of, and those presented by, each separate immigrant group. Nonetheless it was clear that two related but separate problems had to be dealt with in every case. One was the question of political, social and economic inequality. The other was the accommodation of cultural difference.

### **The emergence of the multicultural problematic**

The relatively straightforward problem of inequality was dealt with in different ways in the different countries and in different policy traditions. Where there was a guest worker policy there could, by definition, be no political equality, though it was still possible for governments and political organisations to argue about the ways in which non-citizens could have equal social rights. Where immigrants had citizenship rights, on the other hand, the primary focus of the debate about equality had to be on combatting racial and ethnic discrimination.

This latter situation was most clearly evident in the United Kingdom, which, recognizing the similarities between the problems of its Caribbean immigrants and those of blacks in the United States, set up relatively elaborate institutions concerned with bringing about 'racial' equality. While such institutions were often appropriate for dealing with black Caribbean migrants whose situation paralleled that of black Americans, they were extended in Britain to deal with the problems of South Asians, whose migration often had a different trajectory and whose problems were primarily those of cultural rather than racial difference. Not surprisingly there was some objection on the part of Asians to having their problems dealt with in this way (Modood 1994) and, when it was suggested that similar institutions should be set up in continental Europe, European social scientists pointed out that the British concentration on 'racial' equality was not really relevant to their problems (Neveu 1994). Generally, they did no more than try to combat discrimination through the normal courts.

A further feature of the situation in continental Europe was an unwillingness to use the term 'race', which was widely thought to be disreputable after the experience of Nazism. Problems of inequality were often referred to as the inequality of ethnic rather than racial groups, though, paradoxically, their inequality was often explained in terms of the 'racism' of majority groups. In the United Kingdom, too, the Marxist sociologist R. Miles (1993) argued forcefully that the focus of attention should be on racism rather than race relations and his view was widely shared by many non-Marxists (Rex 1983, 1986a, 1986b; Wieviorka 1994).

Concern about equal treatment of the members of minority groups was shared by those influenced primarily by French republican ideas, (Wieviorka 1994) and by socialists and social democrats committed to the ideals of the welfare state (Radtke 1994). These traditions were, however, silent on the question of how far cultural difference should be tolerated or encouraged. Indeed, the likelihood was that any tradition which based itself upon the notion of equality would be cautious about the recognition of cultural differences, which might become markers for inequality. The problem facing those who campaign for multiculturalism was therefore to show that the recognition of cultural diversity was compatible with and did not undermine, those institutions which were concerned with guaranteeing equality between individuals and classes.

I have, myself, argued for an ideal concept of egalitarian multiculturalism which deals with both of these questions (Rex 1986c). In doing this, I have found it useful to base the concept on a 1968 statement by the British home secretary in which he defined 'integration' as involving 'not a flattening process of uniformity', but 'cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979). I have suggested that this statement involves the simultaneous recognition of two cultural domains, one a shared

political culture of the public domain, centring around the idea of equality, the other that of a number of separate cultures in the private or communal domain, involving shared language, religion, customs and family practices.

What this concept of egalitarian multiculturalism seeks to avoid above all is the sort of situation imagined by left-wing critics of multicultural policies. What they argue is that multiculturalism has usually been simply a rhetoric which disguises inequality and ghettoisation, or a means of marking groups as minorities so that they can be controlled, manipulated or subjected to unequal treatment (Rath 1991). I agree with these critics that what has usually passed as multiculturalism does have these characteristics (Rex 1991), but this by no means brings into question the *ideal* which I have proposed. It is possible to combine the recognition of cultural diversity with a fight for individual equality, and I would argue that it is only if it does this that any concept of multiculturalism is acceptable in a democratic society.

It may still be asked why cultural diversity should be encouraged if individuals are in any case offered all the gains and benefits of equality in a modern democratic society. In answering this question I have given three reasons (Rex 1994a, 1994b): the first is what I call the Durkheimian one, namely that some kind of intermediate group between the individual family and the state is necessary to provide the individual with moral and emotional support and to prevent a situation of anomie (Durkheim 1933); the second is that individuals need the networks and cultural ideals which their group offers if they are to have the solidarity which is necessary in their fight for equal rights, and that it is this solidarity deriving from ethnic mobilisation, rather than the benign behaviour of governments, which can act as a guarantee of equality; the third is based on the utilitarian argument that we do not know whether new cultures may not have some objective validity, and that the possible gains of recognising them outweigh any possible dangers.

There is, of course, a danger in reifying minority cultures and I do not want to suggest that they should be recognised in unchanging traditional forms, but I know of no ethnic minority culture which has this form. What strikes me about them is that they themselves are a response to circumstances and that, while they are always in some measure concerned with maintaining cultural forms for the reasons given in the previous paragraph, they are also shaped by their experience as individual members of a minority group engaged in the struggle to achieve equality. What we may say happens is that as a result of their struggles for equality the civic culture becomes part of the minority culture.

A further point to be made here is that ethnic minority communities do not simply act on their own. They enter societies in which other disadvantaged groups are engaged in the struggle for equality and they must necessarily interact and form alliances with these groups. Indeed, within an

established class and party system, they cannot act without the aid of these groups. What they have to counter, however, is the process of what Parkin (1979) calls 'double closure'. This is what happens when an indigenous group fighting for equality and having made gains for itself, seeks to exclude others from benefiting from those gains. In joining in class struggles immigrant minorities have to form parties within parties and unions within unions to ensure that their interests are defended.

One other realistic point has to be made in reviewing European experience in dealing with the question of multiculturalism. This is that the indigenous majority culture cannot be seen simply as one amongst a number of cultures. Nor should it even be argued that this culture will inevitably be modified through absorbing into itself bits and pieces of new minority cultures. There are, of course, superficial elements of minority cultures, like those concerned with cuisine, which do affect the majority culture, but they are unlikely to transform it fundamentally, and there are many cultural and institutional features of the societies in which immigrants settle which they will, therefore, have to accept as providing the framework in which they now have to live their lives. *Inter alia*, these include the official language of the society, its economic institutions and its criminal and civil laws. Accepting these and living within their constraints is the price which immigrants have to pay, and are usually willing to pay, for the advantages of immigration. On the other hand, I believe that it is to be expected that immigrant minorities will make their contribution to a developing national culture through their campaigns against injustice and through their own 'high', literary, or aesthetic cultures.

Finally, I should like to make clear what the egalitarian ideal of multiculturalism means when it uses the term 'integration'. It does not simply mean proportionate representation in educational and economic institutions, as the recent Dutch report referred to above appears to imply. Nor does it simply mean legal citizenship. For my own part, I would draw on another idea from Durkheim's *Division of Labour*. This is Durkheim's argument that a modern society based upon organic solidarity must have a moral basis. In criticising Spencer's view of economic exchange, he writes 'the image of the one who completes us becomes inseparable from ours ... It thus becomes an integral and permanent part of our conscience ...' (Durkheim 1933: 61-2). Similarly, I would argue that, quite apart from the warm moral and emotional support which groups provide for their members, the nature of the relationships between minority groups and national societies on the political level must itself be moral. The individuals who negotiate with one another do not simply have an external relation with each other; they become united in their consciences and their pursuit of justice. Only when this sort of relationship exists on the public level, will what I mean by integration have been achieved. Integration should therefore be seen as a moral and social psychological question.



### **Multiculturalism in the North American experience**

What I have said above reflects some of the issues which have arisen in the discussion of multiculturalism by politicians and social scientists in Europe (for a more detailed discussion of the problems which have arisen amongst social scientists, see Rex and Drury 1994; Rex 1995). Multiculturalism in North America, however, raises different issues. This is due primarily to the different historical circumstances of multiethnicity in Europe and North America. These historical circumstances are usually seen to include the obvious fact that unlike the European nation-states which are 'homeland states', the societies of North America are societies of immigrants, but there are also other more specific differences between the two cases which will be discussed below in relation to the cases of the United States and Canada.

#### *The United States*

In the case of the United States, the problems which emerge are those which have resulted from three different types of colonialism and several different types of immigration. The three types of colonialism are those which involve (1) the conquest of the native peoples and the occupation of their lands, (2) the establishment of plantations with slave labour brought involuntarily from Africa, and (3) the settlement of wave after wave of European immigrants during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who were thought of as entering some kind of 'melting pot' as they gradually abandoned their own cultures in favour of a single Anglo-Saxon-based culture. Following this European migration, however, there were two other migrations, that of Mexican and Latino workers who were more likely to retain their Spanish language as well as relatively close connections with their countries of origin, and, that of a variety of different types of Asians whose cultures were more alien from those of the first settlers than that of the Europeans had been, and many of whom came as secondary entrepreneurs, filling minor trading roles.

American political ideology in the form of the American creed was largely based upon a political design of incorporating European immigrants. This involved the notion of the 'melting pot' through which people of diverse national origins became one nation. This melting pot, however, did not deal with the problems of those descended from slaves after emancipation. As Ringer (1983) has shown, from the very outset, the notion of 'We, the people' excluded 'others' and the 'American Creed' was not thought of at its inception as applying to them. The major political problem facing the United States in 1945, at the time when Europe was dealing with its diverse groups of immigrants, therefore, was that of how its black population could achieve equality with whites, and enter a society whose institutions had been designed to deal primarily with the problems of European immigrants. It was this movement for civil rights which came to dominate political thinking

about intergroup relations, rather than that of a diversity of cultures. It was only with the coming of the so-called Hispanics from Central and Latin America that the question of multiculturalism returned to the political agenda, though, as I shall argue below, in a somewhat perverse form.

The history of the United States since the 1950s has involved, first, the placing of the question of civil rights for black Americans on the political agenda, and, secondly, disillusionment with the process, both amongst whites who feared that positive discrimination gave an unfair advantage to blacks, and amongst blacks who felt that the civil rights movement had not given them real equality. At this point there was increasing hostility to blacks amongst whites and also a claim by blacks that, since the civil rights movement had not given them true equality, some further initiative was needed.

For some, this further initiative involved continuing to pursue ever more detailed policies of affirmative action. As against writers like Glazer who had withdrawn their support for the further continuation or elaboration of such policies (Glazer 1983a; 1983b; 1988), or Wilson (1980; 1987), who seemed to be arguing for class-specific rather than race-specific policies, some, like Steinberg (1986), argued that the structural position of the so-called underclass amongst blacks was different from that of other underclasses and that further structural adjustments of a race-specific kind had to be made to enable blacks to achieve equality. The aim of these policies was to deal with the structural consequences of the historic wrong which had been done to blacks by slavery and, subsequently, by racial discrimination.

What was remarkable about the civil rights programme was that, although the United States was, as compared with Europe, an individualistic and market-based society in economic matters, so far as human rights and the promotion of equality was concerned, its governments and its courts were in fact highly interventionist, and it was from the United States that Britain adopted its models, atypical in Europe, for the promotion of racial equality. Moreover, when there was disillusionment with the outcome, it was still possible to argue for continued and ever more detailed forms of interventionism.

A different response, however, began to emerge amongst some black intellectuals in the late eighties. This was that blacks had not benefited from increased educational opportunities, particularly in higher education, because the curriculum was not sufficiently 'multicultural'. In making this point they suggested that black American culture, rather than being simply a variant of American culture, was a distinct culture in the same sense as was that of the new Hispanic settlers.

Such views transformed the debate about equality in the United States. Previously, notwithstanding the reservations expressed by writers like Ringer to the effect that the American creed had not applied to blacks, the predominant view was that of Myrdal, who had seen in the institutions of the Supreme Court the means whereby blacks could claim for themselves

the equality to which all Americans were entitled according to the American creed. Essentially, it involved a view of the United States as one nation. This was a view very close to that which I had been arguing for in Europe. The shared political culture of the public domain was that which the Supreme Court could be called upon to guarantee, even if cultural differences amongst different immigrant and racial groups were accepted in the private and communal domain.

That these assumptions were no longer universally accepted by the late eighties was made clear in Hacker's important book, entitled *Two Nations: Black and White: Separate, Unequal, and Hostile* (Hacker 1992). Though the implicit reference of Hacker's title was to Disraeli, he did not suggest, as Disraeli had done, that the unity of the nation could be restored. What his account suggests is that white public opinion and black public opinion no longer envisage a compromise. Whites have reverted to seeing blacks as outside of their nation and black thought has become increasingly secessionist.

There is, of course, a great deal of truth in Hacker's account of contemporary political opinion amongst intellectuals at least amongst whites and blacks. The particular point which I would like to make, however, is that the argument of black intellectuals merges the discussion of equality and inequality with that about multiculturalism. It would seem to rest upon an argument, rejected in an important book by a black school teacher in Britain, that black failure in the schools resulted from poor self-esteem which could be corrected by multicultural education (Stone, 1981).

The new black radical line of argument was not, however, simply about education; nor was it confined to articles in academia. Rather it surfaced in political discussion amongst blacks of the teachings of Louis Farrakhan, leader of the nation of Islam; about the candidacy of Jesse Jackson in the presidential election; and in such events as the disturbances between blacks and Jews in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. In these arguments many black leaders argued that blacks were a distinct cultural group and, to all intents and purposes, a separate nation. It is difficult to understand what is meant by this, however, since it does not usually rest upon a notion of a return to an African Zion. Blacks are usually seen as constituting a separate nation *within* the United States.

An important difference between the American and the European situations is that, while, as we have seen, Europeans were cautious about the use of the term 'race', all parties in the United States continue to use the term uncritically. Radical critics like Steinberg (1994) speak of 'the liberal retreat from race' and even blacks who advocate separatism, arguing that blacks have a separate culture, still see themselves as racially distinct. Indeed many of them adopt what Europeans would see as a 'racist' assumption, that they are culturally different because of differences of 'race'.

The response of traditional liberal opinion to black separatist political ideologies was predictable, and it has been clearly stated by Arthur

Schlesinger, Jr. in his *The Disuniting of America* (1992). According to Schlesinger, American society has been created out of the merging of immigrant cultures in a new nation which is held together by its acceptance of European culture and the English language. This society works because it has held together diverse groups within a single set of institutions. What he sees as happening now is a questioning of this ideal, on the one hand through the coming of Hispanics who do not accept the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture, and, on the other, through the secessionist teachings of radical blacks which he describes. Against this subversive tendency towards disunity, his own view is that what has held and what only can hold America together is a recognition that its political unity is to be found in adherence to a European culture (which, it was suggested during the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas, Columbus had brought with him from Europe). The very notion of multiculturalism, therefore had to be opposed.

What is questionable about Schlesinger's argument is the notion that the unity of the United States depends upon its adherence to *European* culture. This is very different from the view which I have suggested that the shared political culture of the United States is to be found in the bundle of rights which have been won and could still be won through the courts. It is misleading to think of this bundle of rights as simply the product of European culture. It has been achieved through a process of struggle by classes and immigrant groups fighting for their rights and is far from simply being a European import. What they amount to is the civic culture of the United States. Instead of recognising the contribution which non-European minority groups have made to the development of American civic culture, Schlesinger simply dismisses them as dangerous and inferior in his final angry, and some would say, 'racist' chapter.

One can nonetheless understand Schlesinger's argument against the disuniting of America, and, stripped of its Eurocentric perspective, it is one which is accepted by most black Americans other than academics and ideologists. The latter do not see their hope as lying in some kind of imagined secession, but are still concerned with winning equality within a single political system.

Multiculturalism moreover need not be, as Schlesinger imagines, a movement for disunity. The various European immigrant communities in the United States in the past have fulfilled all the functions which I suggested minority cultures and networks should do in Europe. They provided a moral and psychological home for immigrants over several generations; they provided a basis for political mobilisation in a democracy (the more important in the United States because of the relative weakness, *vis-à-vis* Europe, of class-based organisations); and they also enriched the complex new entity of American culture.

It is possible to see similarities in the possible ideal of an egalitarian and democratic form of multiculturalism which might be fought for in the

United States and Europe. Indeed, it might be argued that American history has provided a better political environment for its realisation than European history has done. There is a shared political culture based upon the idea of equality there and the various immigrant cultures have been able not merely to coexist with it, but to fortify it. The disillusionment of the blacks, and, to a lesser extent that of some of the new minorities, however, has brought this ideal into question and multiculturalism has, for some at least, become a disuniting ideology.

### *Canada*

Canadian society shares some of the structural problems of the United States, but does not share all of them. It also has certain distinctive problems of its own. Thus, when we turn to Canada, we find the same problem of the rights of the native peoples, the same creation of a settler society of European immigrants, and the same problem of the later arrival of Latin Americans and Asians. It does not, however, share with the United States its history of slave plantations and of civil war between two colonial systems. Nor did its break with Britain take the form of a revolutionary war of independence.

The distinctive feature of the Canadian situation, however, was the fact that it was not simply a British colony. Although the French were defeated militarily, there were from the outset two distinct societies or two so-called founding nations. Inevitably this meant that any discussion of multiculturalism was certain to be bound up with the question of the relationship between the two founding nations, and with the continuing resistance of Quebec to Anglophone ascendancy, and to political domination of the English in Canada as a whole. There were some parallels here to those of the multinational state in Britain, called the United Kingdom. In that case one had a nationalist movement amongst the Welsh concerned with questions of language, amongst the Scots, which was largely resolved through a degree of administrative autonomy, and in Ireland where there was overt political resistance, sometimes involving the use of violence. Potentially the relation of Quebec to the rest of Canada reflects all of these problems.

In fact the major structuring feature of the Canadian situation is the existence of Quebecois nationalism. This nationalist movement is directed to attaining some degree of political autonomy from the rest of Canada and is quite different in its goals from those ethnic minority movements which come into existence amongst dispersed immigrant minorities as well as amongst Francophone Canadians outside Quebec. In some ways Quebec nationalism stands in the way of the achievement of a universal multicultural policy across the whole of Canada, while, in Quebec itself the political issue of autonomy or independence leaves little space for attention to be paid to questions of multiculturalism for non-Francophone minorities in Quebec.

The question of multiculturalism across Canada as a whole has arisen against this specific background. In fact, it arose incidentally in the course of an enquiry into the question of bilingualism and biculturalism as between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. Having raised this question, however, the commissioners, not being content with *ad hoc* solutions but seeking general principles, went on from dealing with the Quebec case, to a more general discussion of the rights of other cultural and linguistic minorities.

There is, of course, an important difference between the position of these other minorities and that of Francophone Quebec. They are often dispersed across Canada and do not have the nationalist aspirations of the people of Quebec. Nor, one should point out, do the immigrant minorities have a political problem of a kind which presents itself to the native people. These later immigrants have the problem of seeking to remain in Canada, but having to define their relationship with the uneasy coalition of the two founding nations who control the political system.

The attempt to resolve these problems and to deal simultaneously with the problem of the founding nations and the native peoples, on the one hand, and that of accommodating later immigrants on the other, was resolved in terms of a formula which suggested that Canada was a multicultural society within a framework of bilingualism.

To a very large extent this 'solution' of the problem of later immigrant minorities was a matter of rhetoric. While the notion of a multicultural society seemed to suggest shared control of the political system, and a modification of what I have called the shared political culture of the public domain, there was never any real belief that this would be the case. What was really being suggested was simply the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity in what I have called the private or communal domain.

Perhaps, however, there is more to it than this. The notion of two domains, one public and political, the other communal or community based involves a degree of oversimplification. It is largely based upon the experience of European nations within which there are well established cultural forms which cannot be regarded as belonging to one amongst many cultures. In a newer society like Canada, based itself upon immigration and in which national culture was itself split between French and English traditions, it was easy to accept the notion that, on a non-political level, the national culture could be modified by new inputs from other groups.

What was happening, then, behind a rhetoric of multiculturalism which suggests shared political control, was actually much simpler, namely the benign recognition by governments of cultural diversity on a non-political level. Such diversity could easily be encouraged and funded without any threat to the political system.

The easiest things to fund in this way would be the aesthetic culture of minority groups and the purely symbolic ethnicity which takes the form of exotic festivals, which go on long after a group has settled and which

threaten no-one. It is not possible, however, to deal with the associations of immigrant groups without encountering other problems of a more political nature. Immigrant communities maintain connections with homeland politics and may, through their associations, have external political goals; they will be concerned with assisting later immigrants of their own ethnicity to solve their immigration problems; they will be involved in social and pastoral work dealing with the family problems of their members; they may feel that they have a distinct identity which they wish to preserve; and they will be concerned with fighting against ethnic discrimination. Thus, what appear as innocent cultural organisations are likely to have some political dimension. On a policy level, therefore, the national and provincial governments have to decide how far they are willing to extend their funding to support activities of this nature. The view which I have taken in relation to immigrant communities in Europe is that supporting them in this way does not threaten, and may enhance, democracy. Obviously, however, there will always be argument between those who support this view and those who are only willing to recognise a simpler, more benign and cultural form of multicultural policy.

If, however, there are problems of this kind in dealing with immigrant communities from Europe, they are even more likely to be evident in the case of the more visible minorities. This has proved to be the case. Recognizing that its black people are likely to suffer from the racism and racial discrimination suffered by blacks in the United States, Canada has had to supplement its multicultural institutions with others, dealing specifically with the problems of visible minorities or problems of 'race relations'. Similarly, it has not easily been able to fit new minorities from Asia and Latin America within the framework of a purely cultural multiculturalism. Many of the political problems which have arisen in relation to minorities who are distinguished by cultural and racial markers in Europe are likely to recur in Canada.

In international debates like this the danger is that we can oversimplify our problems. Canadians sometimes suggest that they have much to teach other countries who face severe problems of ethnic conflict. Perhaps, indeed, they do, but what I am suggesting is that they will have more to teach if they do not base their case on a somewhat simplistic model of the support of ethnic minorities on a purely cultural level. On the other hand, Europeans and Americans who have faced up to some of the difficult political problems of intergroup relationships and their experience in dealing with these problems may be highly relevant to the Canadian situation.

## **Conclusion**

What I have done in this article is to look comparatively at the kinds of debate on multiculturalism in three very different contexts. What emerges from this is

that there can be no simple general theory of multiculturalism. This would be even more obvious if I had attempted to deal with the problems of the recently collapsed communist world or with those of post-colonial societies. This is not to say, however, that we might not look for a much more sophisticated theory which takes account of the complex variables which are to be found in individual cases. I also conclude that there is the possibility of developing an ideal of egalitarian multiculturalism for nation-states which takes account both of the inevitability of a struggle for individual equality and of the value of cultural diversity. I would, also, however, go back to my first point, namely that these internal problems of the nation-state have also to be set within a wider theoretical framework, in which, important though it still is, the nation-state is not the only focus of political action.

## References

- Durkheim, E. 1933. *The Division of Labour in Society*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Glazer, N. 1983a. *Ethnic Dilemmas 1964–82*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Glazer, N. 1983b. *Ethnic Pluralism and Public Policy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Glazer, N. 1988. *The Limits of Social Policy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hacker, A. 1992. *Two Nations: Black and White: Separate, Unequal and Hostile*. New York: Scribners.
- Miles, R. 1993. *Racism after 'Race Relations'*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Modood, T. 1994. 'The End of Hegemony: The concept of Blacks and British Asians', in Rex and Drury 1994.
- Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy. 1990. *Immigrant Policy*. The Hague: NSCGP.
- Neveu, C. 1994. 'Is "Black" an exportable category to mainland Europe? Race and citizenship in a European context', in Rex and Drury 1994.
- Parkin, F. 1979. *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. London: Tavistock.
- Radtke, F.-O. 1994. 'The formation of ethnic minorities and the transformation of social into ethnic conflicts in a so-called multi-cultural society: the case of Germany', in Rex and Drury 1994.
- Rath, J. 1991. *Minosering: De Social Constructe van Etnische Minderheden*, Ph. D. Thesis, University of Utrecht.
- Rex, J. 1983. *Race Relations in Sociological Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rex, J. 1986a. *Race and Ethnicity*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Rex, J. 1986b. 'The role of class analysis in the study of race relations – a Weberian perspective', in J. Rex and D. Mason (eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rex, J. 1986c. *The Concept of a Multi-Cultural Society. Occasional Papers*, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
- Rex, J. 1991. 'The political sociology of multi-cultural societies', in *European Journal for Multi-Cultural Studies* 2, 1, Stoke, Trentham Books.
- Rex, J. 1994a. 'Ethnic identity and the nation-state: the political sociology of multi-cultural societies', in *Social Identities* 1, 1.
- Rex, J. 1994b. 'The second project of ethnicity: transnational migrant communities and ethnic minorities in modern multi-cultural societies', in *Innovation* 7, 3.
- Rex, J. 1995. 'The response of European social scientists to the concept of multi-culturalism' to be published in *Anthropologie et Societes* (Montreal).



- 
- Rex, J. and B. Drury (eds.). 1994. *Ethnic Mobilisation in a Multi-Cultural Europe*, Aldershot, Avebury.
- Rex, J. and S. Tomlinson. 1979. *Coloured Immigrants in a British City*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ringer, B. 1983. *We the People (and Others)*. London: Tavistock.
- Schlesinger, A. Jr. 1992. *The Disuniting of America*. New York: Norton.
- Steinberg, S. 1986. 'The underclass: a case of colour blindness', *New Politics* 2, 3.
- Steinberg, S. 1994. 'The liberal retreat from race', *New Politics* 5, 1.
- Stone, M. 1981. *The Education of Black Children in Britain: The Myth of Multi-Cultural Education*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Wieviorka, M. 1994. 'Ethnicity as action', in Rex and Drury 1994.
- Wilson, W. 1980. *The Declining Significance of Race*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

