

Castles and Kosack on Ethnic Inequalities

A Marxist explanation of ethnic inequality

Reserve army of labour

- A pool of workers that capitalism can draw on when labour is needed
- Ethnic minority and migrant workers are often placed in insecure and poorly paid work
- They can be hired and discarded more easily than core workers
- This helps employers control labour costs and maintain profits

1 Capitalism needs a flexible, low-cost workforce



2 Migrant and ethnic minority workers are recruited into low-paid, insecure jobs



3 They become a reserve army of labour



4 In economic growth they are used as cheap labour; in recession they are the first to lose jobs



5 This keeps wages low and increases competition between workers



6 Ethnic minority workers are separated from the white working class



7 Division weakens class solidarity and helps capitalism continue

Division from the white working class

- Capitalism benefits when workers are divided rather than united
- Ethnic minority workers may be blamed for unemployment, lower wages, or pressure on services
- Racism and discrimination create tension between groups of workers
- This prevents a united working-class challenge to capitalism

Summary

Castles and Kosack argued that ethnic inequality is rooted in capitalism. Ethnic minority and migrant workers are used as a reserve army of labour, filling the least secure and lowest-paid jobs. At the same time, racism and competition divide them from the white working class. This benefits capitalism because it weakens class unity and helps maintain exploitation and inequality.

Key concepts

- capitalism
- reserve army of labour
- class division
- racism
- exploitation
- working-class solidarity

