

how
to
beat
the
racists

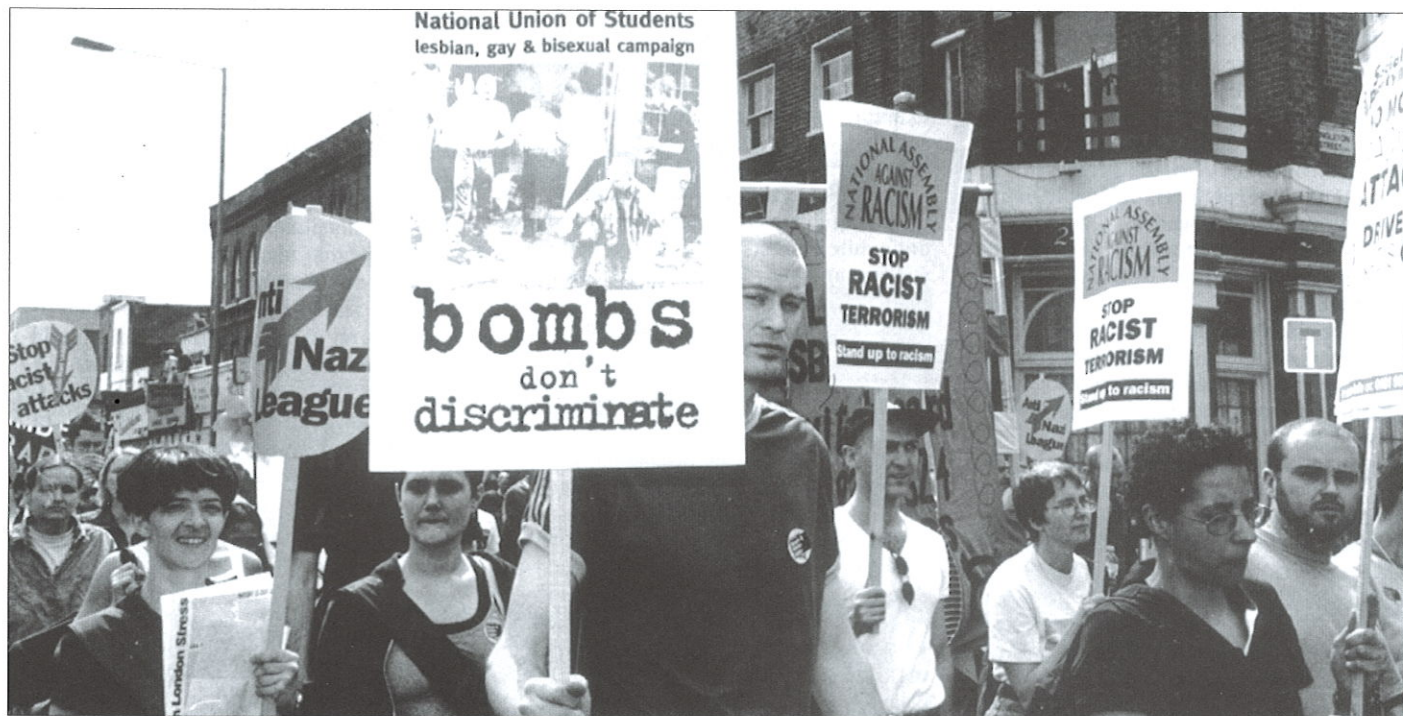
a workers' liberty pamphlet £2/£1

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Demonstration in Brick Lane, London, following neo-Nazi David Copeland's 1999 nailbomb campaign

Cut the roots of racism! Fight for a workers' government!

"It's been quite fun to watch Government ministers and the Tories play the race card. It legitimises us."

British National Party leader Nick Griffin

"The emancipation of the working class is the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race or sex."

Karl Marx

IN the 2001 General Election, the fascist British National Party more than tripled its average share of the vote. It won almost 12,000 votes across the two constituencies of Oldham, including 16.4 per cent in Oldham West, the highest ever percentage vote for a fascist party in a British parliamentary election.

Although the far right in Britain is still very small, results like these raise the spectre of it winning the kind of mass support fascist organisations enjoy in other parts of Europe.

The BNP is an racist organisation; but not everyone who voted for it is a hardened racist. Many would in the past have

voted Labour, but switched to the BNP to protest against the poverty and deteriorating conditions all around them – conditions which capitalism breeds and about which the Labour Government has done absolutely nothing. With New Labour increasingly moving to the right many people felt that no-one represented them; the BNP claimed it represented them.

In the face of mass unemployment, poverty and homelessness – and in the absence of a mass movement against these things – working class people of all colours can be persuaded that those physically or culturally different from them are to blame. In Oldham, the BNP had electoral success because it was able to convince thousands of white workers that the persecuted, disadvantaged Asian community, rather than the bosses or their government, were responsible for unemployment, poor housing and a crumbling Health Service.

Although it is vital to condemn racism, condemnation is not enough. Labour, the Tories and the Liberal Democrats all claim

to be anti-racist. However, none of these mainstream parties will do what is necessary to undermine the conditions through which racism grows. What is needed is a programme to fight poverty: taxing the rich to provide the jobs, homes and services which working-class people – black or white, British-born or immigrant – need. Instead, the mainstream parties play us off against each other, scapegoating asylum-seekers, single mothers and unemployed "benefit scroungers" as it suits them.

The Government's policies on asylum and immigration have helped create a climate in which racism can flourish. Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union and supporter of the Blairite Government, was moved to make this judgement in April 2000: "By heralding measure after measure to stop people entering Britain, the Home Office has given life to the racists."

When the Government defines asylum seekers as undesirable, they thereby stigmatise black people already living in

4 Introduction

Britain. Is it any wonder, then, that racist attacks, police racism and other forms of discrimination are commonplace?

The fascists follow in the tracks cut by official state racism. They are able to succeed because the labour movement is weak, unconfident after the defeats of the 1980s and the experience of New Labour in government, and headed up by weak trade union leaders unwilling to challenge the Tory policies of the "New Labour" Government.

Our movement has so far not been capable of organising an effective fight against the thousands of social atrocities which workers in Britain are subjected to every day.

Our movement will rise again, it will

Join the Socialist Alliance

To join or for more information, write to: Socialist Alliance, PO Box 121, Coventry CV1 5DA.

Membership is £6 (or £3 concessions) for a year, payable to "Socialist Alliance".

Please include your name, address, phone number, email address and details of any relevant labour movement organisations you are a member of.

For more details, visit www.socialistalliance.net

recover its confidence and fight back. But right now the labour movement neither fights consistently on immediate issues – the destruction of the Health Service, for example – nor offers the prospect of a socialist society as an alternative to the capitalist system.

Nevertheless, as history has shown, only the labour movement can offer black and white workers a vision of a better society, and act to make that vision a reality. No other force can destroy the seeds from which racism and fascism grow.

If it were just a matter of a few freaks and lunatics, organising on the fringes of society, then racism and fascism could certainly be fought by occasional marches, a few posters, liberal speeches against racism and a bit of street-fighting here and there.

But if – as is the case – these social diseases grow organically out of the rottenness of capitalist society, out of the conditions which capitalism creates, then the only serious anti-racism and anti-fascism is the struggle for socialism – a society organised around the principles of equality, workers' democratic control, and freedom from all exploitation and oppression.

Only a government which serves the interests of the majority – of the working class – will be able to cut out the social roots of racism and fascism. The struggle

against racism is inseparable from the labour movement's struggle for a workers' government.

Class is central. Black, white and Asian workers have far more in common with each other than with the bosses in their own communities.

White workers who listen to the poison the tabloids pump out, and who persecute and scapegoat black people, divide and weaken our class movement.

Black and Asian workers who listen to the cultural nationalism of the black middle classes are also turning in the wrong direction. The black middle class whips up support for its own advancement within the capitalist system. "Representatives" like Labour MP Keith Vaz will not militantly back the interests and struggles of black and Asian workers and youth.

Even the left does not always take the fight against racism and for the rights of black people as seriously as it should. The purpose of this pamphlet is to convince labour movement activists of the importance of the fight against racism, and anti-racists of the importance of the labour movement – and the fight to transform it once more into a militant force for human solidarity and progress.

Sacha Ismail

Faz Velmi

A programme to beat racism

THE Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights for the following programme among socialists and activists in the trade unions, the Labour Party and the Socialist Alliances. We advocate they fight against capitalism and for a workers' government. Only by providing positive working-class solutions to the racism and poverty which capitalism breeds can the labour movement unite workers regardless of race and stop the fascists' attempts to scapegoat black people, asylum-seekers and others.

Socialists must be part of the basic organisations of the working class, the trade unions, and help turn them outwards to campaign on the streets and the estates.

- A decent home for everyone! Stop the sell-off of council housing; government money should enable councils to undertake a programme of compulsory purchase of empty properties, renovation, and house-building, to create new homes at affordable rents, for all who needs them.

- Jobs for all! Cut the working week to 35 hours without loss of pay; create useful jobs by restoring and expanding public services; provide training and re-training at union rates of pay.

- Restore and extend the National Health Service and the welfare state.

- Jobs, training or education for all young people, with union rates of pay or an adequate grant.

- Free secular state education – from nursery to university – for all.

- To pay for this: tax the rich and the big corporations, cut arms spending, take control of the banks and financial institutions.

- Defend and extend civil liberties; scrap the anti-trade union laws; fight to make the police accountable to elected local committees; fight to replace the bureaucratic, hierarchical capitalist state by a government based on accountability and workers' control.

- Scrap the immigration laws! No more deportations!

- Fight for real equality in employment and housing. The allocation of council housing should be on the basis of need, not race under the disguise of a "sons and daughters" policy; special training programmes should ensure real equality in employment for ethnic minorities.

- Equality in the labour movement. No toleration for racist prejudice; union campaigns to recruit and integrate ethnic minority workers.

- Labour movement support for black communities' self-defence; united black and white workers' defence squads to beat back the fascists.

The labour movement must stand up and fight! That is the only way to beat the bosses and the racists. If you agree with our ideas and what to help fight for them in the labour movement, join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

Scapegoating refugees

Labour's new racism



No one should have to live here!

ANTI-ASYLUM bigotry is now the main cutting edge of British racism. The myth of masses of "bogus" asylum seekers descending on "soft touch" Britain and "pushing their way to the front of the queue, to get preferential treatment", has been peddled by every tabloid, and every pub bigot.

The main perpetrators — the people who make this racism seem reasonable and respectable — are the leaders of the mainstream political parties. New Labour and the Tory Party have attempted to out-do each other in a battle to devise ever more draconian policy proposals, and ever more vicious targeting of some of the most vulnerable people in Britain.

Stan Crooke looks at New Labour's record.

IN the early hours of 5 August 2001 Firsat Yildiz, a 22 year-old Kurdish asylum-seeker, was stabbed to death in the Sighthill housing scheme in Glasgow. Two days, later another asylum-seeker was stabbed in one of the high-rise flats on the scheme.

These were no isolated incidents. Over the preceding 14 months, 70 attacks on asylum-seekers living in Sighthill had been reported to the police. But this figure represents only the tip of the iceberg. A doctor in the local health centre reported that almost every day he had to treat asylum-seekers who had been attacked on the street.

Politicians, the media and the police were quick to condemn such instances of

street-level violence. Such condemnations were in contrast to their silence about the more pervasive, legalised violence inflicted on asylum-seekers by successive governments — Tory and Labour alike.

Around 1,700 asylum-seekers are held in prisons or detention centres at any one time. Most of them are held in prisons — where they can be locked up for up to 23 hours a day — rather than detention centres. Those detained include refugees who have been victims of torture and imprisonment in their own country. New Labour plans to create a further 1,800 places for the detention of asylum-seekers.

In 1998 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights visited the UK to inspect detention conditions for asylum-seekers. Its report raised eight matters of concern and made 15 recommendations. Five of the matters of concern and 12 of the recommendations continue to be completely ignored by the UK authorities. The rest have been only partly addressed.

Most asylum-seekers, it is true, are not detained. While awaiting the outcome of their asylum application most asylum seekers are "supported" by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). But this is little better than a system of open detention.

Asylum-seekers are given one no-choice "offer" of accommodation, usually on a run-down isolated housing scheme. The Sighthill scheme in Glasgow — suffering from high unemployment, widespread drug abuse, poor housing conditions and basic grinding poverty — is a typical

example.

People on that estate complained — truthfully or not — about asylum seekers getting fridges, cookers and washing machines. The reason why they complain is clear. It is because they either do not themselves have these very basic things or what they do have is worn out. Replacements cannot be afforded.

It is crime that people do not have such things! It is tragically foolish that they blame people even worse off than they themselves are.

Equally poor was the accommodation provided in Liverpool by Landmark, a private company contracted to provide accommodation for NASS. One asylum-seeker housed in Liverpool recently won a court case that his rights under Article 3 of the European Human Rights Convention (the right not to suffer inhuman or degrading treatment) had been breached by the poor quality of the NASS accommodation.

Until April of last year asylum-seekers received financial support from the Benefits Agency or their local Social Services Department. Asylum-seekers who have arrived in the UK since then receive vouchers. The total value of the vouchers is just 70% of Income Support rates.

Only one of the vouchers, worth £10, can be exchanged for cash. The rest must be exchanged directly for purchases in shops. The Government has stipulated that no change may be given if the value of the purchases is less than the value of the vouchers offered.

The vouchers are issued to the asylum-seeker only as long as they remain in the NASS accommodation with which they have been provided. Thus, the vouchers not only condemn asylum-seekers to poverty. They also confine them to their allocated NASS address.

The NASS system is about punishment, not cost-cutting. It is more expensive to administer than state welfare payments or Social Work payments. Absurdly, the costs of the NASS administration last year (£6.1 million) were greater than the value of the NASS vouchers issued (£5.1 million).

Government procedures for dealing with asylum claims are designed to undermine the asylum-seeker's chances of succeeding. Applicants are allowed only 10 working days to complete — in English — a lengthy questionnaire about their claim. At short notice, applicants are instructed to attend a Home Office interview — sometimes hundreds of miles away from their NASS accommodation — about their asylum claim.

Failure to return a questionnaire in time or failure to attend an interview results in

rejection of the claim for "non-compliance". In the past 12 months the number of non-compliance refusals has jumped from nine per cent to 27% of all rejections.

Asylum-seekers whose claims are considered to be "manifestly unfounded" simply on the basis of the applicant's nationality are sent to Oakington Detention Centre in Cambridge. Countries on the Oakington list, where there is supposedly no real risk of persecution, include Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, China, Zimbabwe and Iraqi Kurdistan – all of which have appalling human rights records.

Given that such claims are assumed to be "manifestly unfounded" even before they have been explained, their rejection is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Of the 6,812 claims dealt with at Oakington to date, just 33 were granted refugee status.

After exhaustion of their rights of appeal – savagely reduced by legislation

passed in 1999 – asylum-seekers are in line for deportation. Dissatisfied with what they regard as the Tories' inadequate performance in kicking out asylum-seekers, New Labour has promised that it will deport 30,000 rejected asylum-seekers this year.

This systematic and escalating attack on asylum-seekers – the increased use of detention, the allocation of inadequate housing, the infliction of a sub-poverty-level standard of living, the knee-jerk rejection of asylum applications, reduced rights of appeal, and mass deportations – has been accompanied by ever more hysterical denunciations of refugees.

"Asylum-seeker" has been made synonymous with "scrounger" by the press. In boasting of its commitment to produce a fall in the number of new asylum claims New Labour has identified asylum-seekers as a problem to be contained. The Tories have talked of the country being "flooded" by asylum-seekers. The fascist British

National Party has jumped on the bandwagon, by denouncing asylum-seekers as a threat to the British way of life.

Such denunciations of asylum-seekers by politicians and the media have rightly been condemned by TGWU union leader Bill Morris for "giving life to racists". And it is asylum-seekers who are paying the price – some with their lives – for the politicians' anti-refugee demagoguery.

Racist attacks on asylum-seekers can never be excused. When Glasgow City Council proposed evicting a tenant for racially harassing asylum-seekers, it was a serious mistake for Scottish Socialist Party MSP Tommy Sheridan to promise barricades to prevent the eviction, and for the Socialist Workers Party to circulate an Open Letter in opposition to the eviction.

But, at the same time, the real culprits – those who have whipped up an atmosphere of hatred towards asylum-seekers and thereby legitimised violence against them – should be exposed and challenged.

Immigration: Their lies, and our replies

1. Britain is a "soft touch" for asylum seekers

But who could reasonably think that asylum seekers living on 70% of income support, paid in vouchers, while being forcibly "dispersed" to areas where few people speak your language, housed in accommodation no-one else will touch and being prevented from working, means Britain is a "soft touch"?

Britain is regarded as a mean and inhospitable place by many of the world's most vulnerable people. And that is a national disgrace.

2. Britain is being "flooded" by asylum seekers and immigrants

Asylum seekers – refugees, in non-jargon language – are, in fact, a tiny proportion of the population – a much smaller proportion of the population than in most European countries.

Britain's draconian legislation keeps it that way. These laws are some of the most severe in the world. Families are separated and "primary" immigration (that is, immigration by those who are not joining their immediate family in Britain) was ended by legislation passed in 1971.

Still, what if there were large numbers of immigrants coming to Britain. Would that really be a problem?

Migration across the European Union is now unrestricted. No one thinks this immigration policy is a problem. That is because these immigrants are mainly white. The "problem of asylum seekers" is code for a "problem" with black people.

British immigration laws are drenched

with racism – they are directly and explicitly designed to keep out black Africans, West Indians and people from India and Pakistan.

3. Britain is "full up", and to accept many more immigrants would cause poverty and hardship for those already here.

Clearly conditions in many inner-city areas are intolerable. But overcrowded housing, unemployment and a deteriorating National Health Service are the result not of immigration but of years of cuts, and underfunding, first by the Tories and now by New Labour. If every asylum seeker were deported tomorrow these problems would remain and the capitalist class would simply have to find a new scapegoat to take the blame.

The problem is run by a capitalist government pledged to protect profits at the expense of the poor. That government must be replaced by a workers' government which will solve the housing crisis by renovating or building homes for all.

4. More immigration leads to unemployment.

During the post-war boom in the 1950s the British capitalists, who were short of labour, ran recruiting campaigns in Africa and the West Indies. Black workers came to work in Britain's low paid basic industries.

When the economic boom slowed down, the door was closed using new immigration laws. Black people were no longer welcomed by the British bosses. And then black people, perversely,

began to be blamed for a crisis emerging in the capitalist system – a crisis which they had nothing to do with, and no control at all over!

There is now a recession in manufacturing industries – cars and textiles. Who is to blame? Black and Asian people? That's ridiculous! Blame the government and their friends – they and their system cause unemployment!

Rather than turn inwards and fight each other, workers should look to a workers' solution, a united solution to this crisis.

Unemployment could be solved by cutting the working week, with no loss of pay, so that all workers, black and white, have work. Who will pay? Make the capitalists pay!

The top five per cent of the population own 37% of the wealth while the bottom 50% own only eight per cent of the wealth. Make the capitalists, not other workers, pay.

The answer to housing shortages is to renovate or build more homes. There are about a quarter of a million unemployed building workers.

Fight for toleration and united action! Workers of different cultures and backgrounds can and must get along. If we are divided, only the bosses will benefit. If the labour movement works to unionise immigrant workers, to win a cut in the working week, and to fight the ruling capitalist class, then we will all benefit.

Police injustice – UK

By Alan McArthur

POLICE lawyers have been strong-arming cinemas to stop them showing *Injustice*, a powerful new documentary on deaths in police custody which exposes corruption and cover-up at every level of the criminal justice system.

The film names officers responsible for deaths in custody and calls for them to be tried for murder. It follows the families of the dead through their attempts to establish the truth, documenting how, time and again, they meet a wall of official secrecy.

Police lawyers have been scaring cinemas into cancelling showings of *Injustice* by threatening to sue for libel. Film-makers Migrant Media have responded by arranging backup "guerrilla screenings" at alternative, makeshift venues.

The film's director, Ken Fero, told *Workers' Liberty*: "We will show the film and keep on showing it. We want these stories told – and we want the police officers responsible convicted. We won't back down – however long it takes.

"If the police or individual officers sue us for libel, all the evidence in these cases will come before a court and they will have to justify why it was not murder."

Injustice focuses in detail on the cases of three black men, Brian Douglas,



Brian Douglas: killed by the police

Ibrahima Sey and Shiji Lapite – all killed by the police in the mid-1990s – and was made in conjunction with their families. It also tells the stories of David Oluwale, Joy Gardner, Wayne Douglas, Christopher Alder, Roger Sylvester, Sarah Thomas and Harry Stanley.

Brian Douglas, stopped by the police in Clapham, south London, in May 1995, received a blow to the head with a police baton so hard that it was the equivalent of falling 11 times his own height onto his head – despite the fact that he had been backing away in fear from PC Mark Tuffy, the officer who dealt the blow. Brian then spent 15 hours in a cell at Kennington Police Station with a fractured skull and was given no medical attention. He died in

hospital a week later.

Ibrahima Sey, a Muslim from the Gambia, was taken to Ilford Police Station, east London, in March 1996 after a domestic row. He was held down and beaten by several officers, resulting in severe bruising on his forehead and stomach, and had CS gas sprayed in his face. He died from asphyxiation.

Shiji Lapite, a Nigerian asylum seeker, was stopped by two police officers – Andrew McCallum and Paul Wright – in Hackney, north-east London, in December 1994 for "acting suspiciously". The officers claimed they found crack cocaine at the scene. One of them held Shiji in a headlock while the other kicked his head: a witness reported that, as Shiji was put into a police van, his head was "lolling about".

At the inquest into Shiji's death, McCallum and Wright claimed he was "the biggest, strongest, most violent black man they had ever seen". Yet their only injuries were a bite mark on the shoulder of one and a small scratch on one of the other's fingers. Shiji was 5' 10" tall and of medium build.

No police officer has ever been convicted for a death in custody.

● For details of showings of *Injustice*, or for more information, visit www.injusticefilm.co.uk

● For details of any of the cases listed here and to join the campaign for justice, contact the United Friends and Families Campaign: 07770 432439. The campaign demands a public inquiry into deaths in custody.

Free Mumia abu-Jamal!

MUMIA Abu-Jamal is a former Black Panther and an award-winning journalist. Mumia has been on death row since 1982, after he was wrongfully sentenced for the shooting of a police officer. New evidence, including the recantation of a key eyewitness as well as new ballistic and forensic evidence, points to his innocence.

For the last 19 years, Mumia has been locked up 23 hours a day, denied contact visits with his family, had his confidential legal mail illegally opened by prison authorities, and been put into punitive detention for writing his book, *Live From Death Row*.

His case is currently on appeal before the Federal District Court in Philadelphia. Mumia's fight for a new trial has won the support of tens of thousands around the world, including Nelson Mandela, the European Parliament, and Amnesty International.

Mumia abu-Jamal's fate rests with all those people who believe in every person's right to justice and a fair trial.

● www.mumia.org

Mumia's case was rigged:

● The Judge, Albert Sabo, has sentenced more people to death than any other sitting judge in the US.

ting judge in the US.

● The public defender didn't interview a single witness in preparation for the trial, and didn't have funds for defending the case.

● The prosecutor removed 11 qualified African Americans from the jury. He also argued for the death penalty because of Mumia's membership of the Black Panther Party, a practice later condemned as unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court.



● The racial bias of Philadelphia's courts has resulted in 120 people on death row, all but 13 non-white.

America's racist death penalty

● The imposition of the death penalty is racially biased.

● Nearly 90% of persons executed were convicted of killing whites, although people of colour make up over half of all murder victims in the United States.

● In Illinois, Oklahoma and North Carolina, killers of white victims are four times more likely to receive the death penalty than the killers of black victims.

● As of 1 January 1997, African Americans made up 11 of the 13 people

executed by the state of Alabama.

● African-Americans make up half of the death row populations in North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Delaware, Mississippi, and Virginia; over two-thirds of the people on death row in Pennsylvania, Illinois and Louisiana; and more than three out of four people waiting to be executed in Federal and US Military prisons.

● Sixty per cent of the persons on death row in California and Texas are either Black, Latino, Asian or Native American.

● Ninety per cent of the people US government prosecutors seek to execute are Black or Latino.

Solidarity with the Roma people

By Cathy Nugent

DURING 2000, hysterical media debate about asylum seekers targetted gypsies, specifically Roma people from eastern Europe. The Roma people share the same roots, but are made up of many culturally diverse groups world wide. Not all gypsies are Roma. Roma asylum seekers in Britain are generally fleeing from persecution in the Balkans and eastern Europe.

The persecution of Roma is centuries long and acute. For example, Roma were kept as slaves in the Balkans right up to the 19th century. And the Nazis built on Europe-wide "pass laws" (compulsory ethnic registration) for gypsies, to attempt to solve the "gypsy problem".

The Nazis claimed Roma were an inferior race and should be gassed to death — somewhere between 200,000 and half a million gypsies lost their lives through starvation and disease in concentration camps or through murder.

European society is still scarred by the effects of this genocide against the Roma. It has scarcely been acknowledged as an historical fact, still less recognised as the enormous tragedy it was. Consequently, virulent racism against Roma is thoroughly acceptable and commonplace. Racism against Roma and gypsies in Europe is found even among people who would regard themselves as "liberal", or even anti-racist. Roma are seen as irrevocably "different", perennial troublemakers and habitual criminals. They deserve whatever "retaliation" comes their way...

In a world still riven with national division, the Roma people seem destined to be forever punished — for not "fitting in", or conversely, for "standing out". They are accused of not wanting to be part of this society but then they are stopped from participating in it. Without a homeland of their own — and in the past they had no aspirations to one — the Roma have struggled to maintain their existence as a peculiarly marginalised national minority in many different countries.

WHEN Roma from the Czech Republic first came to Britain in 1987 they received a very hostile reception from the British press. "Gypsies Invade Dover Hoping for a Handout" screamed one headline. The papers touted the line of British immigration authorities (a line still maintained today) that there is no evidence of discrimination in the Czech Republic, and therefore Roma are not entitled to asylum.

This is an outrageous lie — the facts about discrimination against Roma are well known. Unfortunately, successive UK governments have been keen to preserve their relationship with countries like the Czech Republic — where Roma face some of the worst persecution.

The common — racist — complaint in



the press hysteria is that gypsies have "alien" customs and life-styles (begging for instance). Such racist attitudes are built upon long-time prejudice against Roma and other travelling people in the UK (Irish travellers are not Roma but are treated in the same way).

These racist ideas state: gypsies have always refused to integrate into a "host society"; this is wilful, unreasonable behaviour; these people are sly; they want to be "foreign". Labour Minister Paul Boateng demonstrated this unthinking racism when he told the media that Romanian Roma could not expect to keep their culture (of begging) when in Britain. With his articulate barrister tones he said: "They can jolly well think again."

Paul Boateng wouldn't dream of adopting such a stance towards any other group. Such attitudes are more extreme in eastern Europe where there are large communities of Roma.

IN Europe, the Roma have been decreed illegal residents in their own property (Austria), banished beyond municipal boundaries (Czech Republic), been subject to racist discrimination in schooling (Serbia), hounded and beaten up by the police (Romania, Bulgaria).

A recent OSCE report highlights physical attacks on Roma: in Croatia, a 49 year old man is thrown onto rocks and kicked; Molotov cocktails are thrown into the bedroom window of three sleeping children in the Czech town of Tanvald; a 16 year old Macedonian girl and her brother are attacked outside their school; and so on, and so on.

In many instances of skinhead violence police are reluctant to investigate the crimes as being racially motivated and when these cases are prosecuted the courts do not automatically return the appropriate verdict — even when people have been murdered. Yet the courts do not hesitate to mete out punishment against Roma. Sentencing policies against Roma are

often especially harsh.

Racist attacks are most prevalent in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and the Slovak Republic, but they have also occurred in Albania, Austria, Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Serbia.

Violence is also meted out by the police.

Roma can be excluded from public schooling. In certain countries of central and eastern Europe, Romani children have been put into "special schools" for the mentally disabled. The effect is to automatically disqualify Romani children from admission to certain secondary and tertiary educational institutions. Of course a large percentage of Romani children avoid school because they are made to feel unwelcome. For the same reason parents will keep their children out of school.

Rates of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, poor health (e.g., tuberculosis) and infant mortality are extremely high among Roma. The ghettoisation of Roma into "settlements" only serves to exacerbate these problems.

High unemployment among Roma does not just occur in the poorer central and eastern European countries. In the Czech Republic, where the general unemployment rate is 10%, 70% of Roma are unemployed. Roma communities have been particularly hard hit by the collapse of Stalinist command economies and the transition to market economies. As state industries and agricultural concerns closed or were privatised, Roma tended to be the first to lose their jobs.

Politicians are often very blatant about repeating the racial stereotyping. For instance a former Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Vladimir Meciar referred to the Romani communities relatively high birth rate and publicly evoked the spectre "that this [population] ratio will be changing to the benefit of Romanies. That is why if we don't deal with them now, then they will deal with us in time..." There is a dreadful paranoia being stirred up here. In the end such remarks do — in the minds of brainless idiots — legitimate racist attacks. Indeed the so-called criminality of "gypsies" has been used to excuse criminal attacks against them.

When 18 year old Slovakian Roma Mario Goral was beaten unconscious, doused in flammables and set alight and died, Ján Slota, the leader of the Slovak National Party, dismissed the crime as a reaction to "high Gypsy crime rates".

The labour movement in Britain needs to make itself aware of the dangerous situation for Roma in Europe, to arm itself with the arguments against the politicians who stir up hatred against all asylum seekers, to expose racism against all gypsies, and to be prepared to organise solidarity — particularly with those Roma seeking asylum in Britain.

The police after Macpherson

Still armed and dangerous



By Sacha Ismail

ANYONE who has reported a robbery to the police knows how ridiculous the claim that they exist to stop crime is. The police do not exist to deal with the social problems bred by capitalist society, but to

Representative?

THE police claim that their organisation "only" reflects the racism of society as a whole. That they are not in fact representative of society is shown by the very small numbers of black people in the police. Just under seven per cent of the UK population is from an ethnic minority, but only 2.2 per cent of police officers. In inner-city areas, where most black people live, this phenomenon is even more pronounced. In Greater Manchester, 2.5 per cent of police officers are black, compared to 7.1 per cent of the whole population; in the West Midlands Metropolitan region, around Birmingham, 4.6 per cent compared to 17.1. In West Yorkshire, including Bradford, only 2.6 per cent of the police force – but 9.6 per cent of the population – are from an ethnic minority, while in London the equivalent figures are 2.3 and 25.1 per cent!

The Macpherson Report notes that a black person is nearly eight times more likely to be stopped and searched, five times more likely to be arrested and seven times more likely to die as a result of police actions than a white person.

defend capitalism itself. That means that they are also defenders of the racism which the system breeds. It is no accident that so many police officers are themselves virulent and active racists, or that the police force has a serious problem with "institutional racism".

Contrary to what senior police officers have repeatedly claimed, police racism is not just a reflection of racist attitudes in society at large. The police are deliberately separated from the rest of society, sheltered from democratic accountability, given wide-ranging and arbitrary powers and run in a hierarchical and authoritarian way, so that they will be a reliable force against strikes and demonstrations. They are trained not only to defend the ruling class with physical force, but to believe and enforce ruling class ideas. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they reproduce reactionary prejudices such as racism at double-strength.

The police are one of the most bigoted groups in society, yet they have the power to harass, frame and even kill with near immunity. The police thug who killed Blair Peach on an anti-racist demonstration in Southall in 1979 has never been caught – because other police officers shielded him. More recently, the police officers who shot Derek Bennett in Brixton in July 2001 have not been named and are still at work. The ever-growing list of beatings, shootings and deaths in police custody – and the fact that black people, so under-represented in the police force, are disproportionately represented among the police's victims – is a powerful and disturbing reminder of what the police stand for and are capable of.

In 1999, years of stubborn campaigning

Police violence – the facts

● THERE have been 555 deaths in police custody in England and Wales since 1990. In 89 per cent of cases where a court or inquest found the police guilty of unlawful killing these involved a black victim.

Still not a single police officer has ever been convicted of an offence in relation to these deaths.

According to Inquest, the independent campaign against deaths in custody and for democratic accountability of the police, black people accounted for 19.3 per cent of deaths in police or prison custody between 1991 and 2001.

● Figures from the Police Complaints Authority (in an in-house whitewashing body that sees the police investigate themselves) show that in the year up to March 2001, the organisation dealt with 5,211 reports of police assaults – or one reported assault for every 25 police officers in England and Wales. Of those complaints that were pursued (fewer than half), less than five per cent resulted in a misconduct action. Only 11 officers were thrown out of the force.

● There have been 25 fatal shootings by the police in England and Wales since 1990 – yet not one police officer has ever been convicted.

by the family of Stephen Lawrence and their supporters finally forced the bourgeois establishment to admit that the police force is "institutionally racist". The Macpherson Report on how the police dealt with the death with the racist murder of Stephen, on 22 April 1993 in Eltham in south London, concludes plainly that the investigation "was marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers". Even a representative of the cravenly pro-police Blair Government admitted that it was "outrageous" that the officers responsible had escaped disciplinary action.

The Macpherson enquiry found that the police officers responsible for investigating the Stephen Lawrence case had deliberately wasted time, ignored crucial evidence and treated Stephen's family and his friend Duwayne Brooks – rather than the men who killed him – as criminals. It also found extensive evidence of wider "institutional racism" in the police –



Free Satpal Ram!

SATPAL Ram is serving a life sentence for defending himself against a racist attacker. On 16 November 1986, after going out for a meal in Birmingham, he was attacked by a group of six white men wielding broken bottles. He attempted to defend himself with a small knife he used at work to open packages, and wounded one of the attackers. When the man, who refused medical treatment, died shortly afterwards, Satpal was arrested on a charge of murder.

Before his trial, Satpal was allowed only one, 40 minute consultation with his barrister, who advised him to change his plea from "self-defence" to "provocation" and not to speak in his own defence. Thinking his lawyer was acting in his best interests, he complied. At the trial, most of the evidence came from Satpal's attackers because the main defence witnesses (the restaurant staff) spoke mainly Bengali and were not fluent in English. Satpal's lawyer did not request an interpreter. Vital evidence was not heard and the all-white jury found Satpal guilty of murder.

Ever since, Satpal has fought to overturn his conviction and has consequently been labelled a "disruptive prisoner". He has been subjected to solitary confinement, beatings and movement from prison to prison. Despite attempts to break his spirit, he continues to read and educate himself, and has steadfastly supported the campaigns of other prisoners fighting for justice. At his first parole hearing in December 1997, Satpal had already served a year over his recommended tariff. He is still waiting to hear whether his case can be heard again by the Court of Appeal.

What happened to Satpal Ram is indicative of the racism and brutal authoritarianism of Britain's criminal justice system.

● To send Satpal a message of support, write to: Satpal Ram [E94 164], HMP Littlehey, Perry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 0SR

● Free Satpal Ram Campaign, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH. Or PO Box 30091, London SE1 1WP. Telephone: 07947 595367. e-mail: freesatpalcampaign@hotmail.com

essentially, that the police use their powers to persecute black communities, and especially young black men.

The Metropolitan Police responded by promising to clean up its act, under the slogan "Protect and Respect". Yet the measures proposed in, and resulting from, the Macpherson report were more about protecting the police than Britain's black communities. The aim was to stop the police being overwhelmed, by grassroots racism on the one hand and militant anti-racism on the other. A dose of "institutional anti-racism" was proposed, to moderate the racism of the police and make them more acceptable and credible in the black communities. The establishment wanted to restrain freelance racism so that the larger racism underpinned by immigration and asylum laws, and the mass unemployment of a rotten, dog-eat-dog capitalist society, could continue without uncontrollable disorder.

The problem, as Doreen Lawrence put it, is the police policing themselves – the complete absence of democratic accountability with which the police operate. The Macpherson Report, despite the starkness of its findings, did nothing to change this situation. It proposed no new measures of democratic control over or even monitoring of, police operations. Attempts by local councils to use existing Police Authorities to win accountability or at least constrain the police's freedom of action – for instance in South Yorkshire during the miners' strike – have always failed, because the Police Authorities are utterly toothless bodies and the police force was not designed to be democratically accountable. Far from proposing democratic control of the police, Macpherson did not even aim to curb existing police powers, insisting, for instance, that the law on stop-and-search should remain unchanged. In the absence of accountability, the pious wish that the police become more "sensitive" to racism will remain utterly utopian.

Similarly, "codes of conduct" against racist behaviour have been more than off-

Racist attacks

ACCORDING to Home Office figures, the number of reported racist incidents (attacks or harassment) grew from 4,383 in 1985 to 12,222 in 1996, 13,151 in 1997, 13,878 in 1998, 23,049 in 1999 and 47,814 in 2000.

Although this growth can be accounted for partly by an increased willingness to go to the police in the aftermath of the Macpherson Report, it is probably still the case that only a minority of racist incidents are reported.

set by recent moves to increase police powers. Just as the police currently use their "stop and search" powers disproportionately against black people, so they will use the new powers granted by the Terrorism Act and other pieces of legislation in a racist way. The police remain what they were when Stephen Lawrence was killed: armed, racist and dangerous.

Many in the labour movement have learned why young black people hate the police only when they themselves have been attacked. It is a lesson that the whole labour movement must learn. When Labour MPs and trade union leaders call for more police, bigger truncheons and a general crack-down on "crime", they are siding with a racist gang against working-class – and in the first instance black working-class – people.

To win socialism we must defeat the bosses. In order to do that we must oppose, fight and, one day, break the police force which defends them. In the short term, until the labour movement is ready to defeat and provide an alternative to the police, we should side with those at the sharp end of police brutality racism and do all we can to curb and weaken police power.

What we say

SOCIALISTS side with all victims of police harassment and law-breaking and campaign for justice. Ultimately, we want elected bodies of people to police their own communities. Immediately, we fight to make the police accountable and limit their ability to harass ethnic minorities, young people and the labour movement.

Workers' Liberty demands:

- The right to live free from police harassment;
- The outlawing of stop-and-search procedures by the police;
- An end to prosecutions based

solely on confessions;

- An independent, elected and properly resourced police complaints authority. (Complaints against the police are currently dealt with by a powerless complaints body which relies on the police itself);

- Elected bodies to control the police, with power over operational policy and budgets. (Existing Police Authorities have little power, are only partly elected and can be ignored by the police);

- Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism and Terrorism Acts;

- The disbandment of all armed units, Special Branch (the British political police) and the immigration police.

Workers can unite, do unite

By Jim Denham

EVEN in the midst of bitter industrial struggles, it is not uncommon to hear white trade unionists expressing racist views. In the 1970s the National Front could boast a number of shop stewards among its membership – including in the British Leyland Longbridge plant, then the largest and arguably best organised factory in Britain.

Nevertheless, trade unions are vitally important in the fight against racism and fascism. Trade union campaigns and industrial struggles that emphasise the common class interests of all workers can at least begin to break down prejudice.

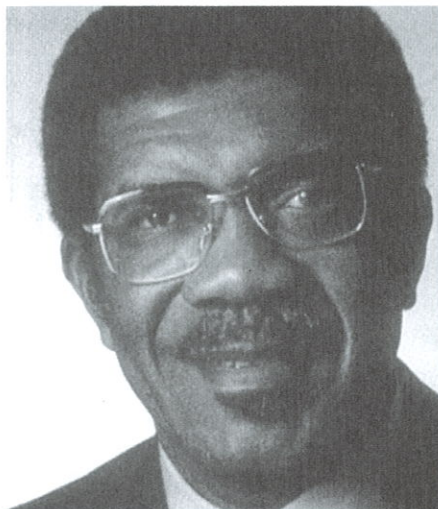
The great miners' strike of 1984-5 was a classic example of this. The mining industry and the communities attached to it are almost exclusively white. Some NUM activists, from South Wales in particular, had by their own admission never met a black person socially. Inevitably, many NUM militants had backward views about race, and some were downright racist.

The strike changed attitudes fundamentally. Flying pickets found themselves in towns and cities with large black populations, and discovered that black people were often their strongest supporters. It became widely known among NUM activists that black and Asian inner-city areas were the best places to hold street collections; that black shop stewards were often the best contacts in industry; and that Sikh, Hindu and Muslim temples and mosques were far more likely to offer support than white churches.

In mid-1985, some months after the end of the strike, I ran into a group of NUM members from South Wales, all dressed in their best suits, at the entrance of a Sikh temple in Birmingham. They had come to pay their last respects to the temple's head priest, who had given them support during the strike, and whose funeral was that day. Some of those same miners had habitually used terms like "wog" and "Paki" 12 months before.

Something very similar happened in the firefighters' union, the FBU, as a result of their first national strike in 1977-8. Although the union was led by left-wingers in and around the Communist Party, its rank and file was traditionally quite reactionary. Almost exclusively male and white, the fire service was an example of "craft unionism" at its worst. Many firemen (and they were all men) came into the service from the police, the army and the navy. Jobs were not advertised and family dynasties were commonplace.

In this environment, "soft" racism was the norm, and organised fascists were able to operate fairly openly. According to one FBU activist, "The strike changed all that: our members were brought into contact with the wider labour movement for the



The election of Bill Morris as General Secretary of the TGWU showed that a programme of workers' unity has resonance.

first time and we found that black people were often our strongest supporters.

"Black stewards at places like Lucas were to the forefront in organising collections and meetings for us. Sikh temples gave us support while the 'white' churches turned us away.

"It didn't do away with racism overnight, but it made people think and forced the racists to at least keep their heads down.

"The process was helped by the fact that after the strike the service opened up considerably, and many more black people started joining. One of the obvious reasons why racists and NF supporters had been able to flourish was that there were virtually no black people in the service. If it hadn't been for the strike, the fire service would have continued as before."

Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, is the most prominent black trade union official in Britain. His decisive victory in the 1991 election for General Secretary represented a big step forward for anti-racism and for common decency in British society.

Morris had fought his way through the hierarchy of the TGWU, starting off as a shop steward in the West Midlands motor industry in the 1950s and 60s. It can't have been easy for him, representing mainly white workers in an industry where racism was rife. By all accounts, his rise in the union was due to the respect he won, even from racists, as a competent, dedicated and fairly militant steward.

When Morris became a leading union official, for years he was the victim of a vicious whispering campaign from the union's shadowy but influential right wing. The gist of it was: "Bill's a nice enough bloke, but he's not really very bright, is he? He's not up to the job. He's only got where he is because he's black."

During the contest for General Secretary in 1991, the anti-Morris campaign got nastier. An unofficial leaflet circulated in Midlands engineering factories, carrying the slogan "Don't let the coon call the tune". Morris's opponent, George Wright, went on record condemning this filth; but, given the extensive contact he and his supporters had with the national press, he might have been a little more up-front about disowning his racist supporters.

Morris emphasised workers' unity across ethnic divisions. A defeat for him would have been conclusive proof that racism remained potent in the trade union movement. He won decisively.

The fact that he has not been a militant or effective leader since then (and has been particularly weak in recent years) does not make Morris's victory any less important. Moreover he has been one of very few trade union leaders to criticise racist Labour Party policies, using his position to oppose the Blair Government's persecution of asylum-seekers.

The election of one General Secretary does not eradicate racism in the trade union movement, any more than the election of a number of black mayors and judges has mended the position of most US black people. But it does show that a programme of basic workers' unity has a resonance in the British working class.

Racism is not invincible. The last few years have seen inspiring examples of working-class action against racism, which, though small in scale, show the huge possibilities of class unity against prejudice.

In the run-up to the 1997 General Election, postal workers in a number of offices refused to deliver British National Party leaflets. Since then, postal workers have regularly refused to deliver fascist election material, and in 2000 the national conference of the Communication Workers' Union voted to support them, forcing Royal Mail to retreat from its attempts at disciplinary action against militant postal workers.

In 1999, a thousand TGWU members at Ford's Dagenham plant walked out in protest at the victimisation of Indian worker Sukhjit Parma by a racist foreman. The management at Dagenham had long refused to admit that it had any problem with racist harassment or discrimination; the walk-out forced it to the negotiating table in a matter of hours.

Union-backed black workers at Dagenham have won court cases against racist discrimination they have suffered while working at the car plant.

Working-class unity can prevail. Back in 1968, TGWU dockers in London marched in support of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech. In the 1990s, members of the same union elected the first black General Secretary in Britain and downed their tools in protest at management racism. There is hope!

What is fascism?



In order to beat the fascists we need to understand what they are — what fascism has been, and what it is now. Daniel Murphy outlines the arguments.

THE first fascist regime came to power in Italy in October 1922 under Benito Mussolini.

A more virulent form followed in Germany — Adolf Hitler's National Socialists (Nazis for short). Hitler ruled from 1933 until the defeat of Germany at the end of the World War Two.

The Nazis were extreme nationalists, racists and anti-semites. They were to be responsible for the murder of many millions of Jews, gypsies and socialists who were gassed in the death camps.

How could such people come to power in one of the most advanced countries of

Europe? And what distinguishes fascism from other right-wing regimes? Take the example of the German Nazis.

1. By 1932 the Nazis polled nearly 14 million votes, somewhat more than the combined total for the two German workers' parties — the Social Democrats (reformist, right-wing socialists similar to the pre-Blair British Labour Party) and the Stalinist Communist Party.

The Nazis were not just vote-gatherers. There were also 400,000 members of the Nazis' paramilitary wing, the SA. This is what distinguishes fascism from, for example, a right-wing military government.

A fascist movement is a mass movement of people who accept its ideas and are willing to fight for them.

2. Hitler came to power in 1933 with the backing of the big German capitalists. But the bosses had thought long and hard before giving the Nazis their full backing.

In 1930 only a small handful of industrialists actively supported Hitler. *The base of the Nazi party rested on the middle classes and sections of the unemployed — people who were being ruined by the onset of the third major economic crisis since the end of World War One.*

3. The German workers' movement was powerful but *the politics of the Social Democrats, the real leaders of the mass of the workers, were not up to the job of solving the crisis in the interests of the working class.* They dithered and provided no answers.

The middle classes — the petty official, the small shop owner or trader — and the unemployed would have followed the lead of the workers if they had been able to believe that the Social Democrats could solve inflation and unemployment. Instead they looked elsewhere — to the Nazis.

Nazi anti-semitism and hatred of foreigners became popular because the reformist "socialism" simply had no programme for dealing with the economic crisis. They too stood for the existing capitalist system, reformed a little bit here and there. Because the socialist alternative to capitalism, to slump and to poverty had no place in the politics of the main working-class party, the nationalist, fascist, racist "alternative" attracted the support of desperate people.

4. Like Mussolini before him, Hitler mixed anti-socialism with demagoguery about the corruption of big business. He appealed to the anxiety of the middle class who feared socialist confiscation of their property even as they were being bankrupted by the banks and pushed out of business by the big firms.

But Hitler's actual role was to smash the labour movement to bits, and so solve the crisis in the interests of capitalism. The bosses backed Hitler because they concluded that it was necessary to use the most violent measures to defeat the working class.

5. Why did the capitalists hesitate? Fascism is an extreme solution to the capitalists' problems and it is one over which the capitalists have not got direct control. Once Hitler's police state had control he also controlled the capitalists.

Hitler smashed the German workers at the price of driving Germany headlong towards a world war which was an eventual disaster for many of the capitalists.

What lessons can we draw from Germany?

1. The workers' movement must provide answers to the crisis. The New Labour Government is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Our anti-fascism must include campaigning for a workers' government — that is, for a general socialist solution to the problem which the fascists demagogically exploit.

2. Germany shows that you cannot trust right-wing "democratic" politicians to help fight fascism. From 1930 to 1932 the Social Democrats gave active support to a right-wing government under Brüning, but Brüning simply prepared the way for the Nazis.

Organisations like the Anti-Nazi League are wrong to put Tory politicians on their platforms. The presence of Tories limits what anti-fascists can say about how to

Trotsky on fascism

Demonstrations are not enough

"To bar the road to fascism, to bar it once and for all, it does not suffice that workers oppose it physically at

demonstrations; it does not suffice to denounce its infamies in Germany and Italy. Today we defend ourselves against the rise of reaction, but... to be efficacious this resistance must transform itself into a struggle for power."

Leon Trotsky, "Conversation with a Dissident from Saint-Denis", *Writings* 1933-4, p292.

fight fascism.

3. At different times the German Communists tried to compete against the Nazis by using anti-semitism and by appeals to nationalism. Leaders made speeches against "Jewish bankers". In the early 30s, they made concessions to Nazi politics by talking of the need for a "people's national revolution" against foreign oppression. By doing so they merely fertilised the ground for the mass growth of fascism.

The nationalism (and sometimes anti-immigrant racism) of the French Communist Party in the 1970s and 80s had exactly the same consequence. It fertilised the ground for the growth of Le Pen's Front National.

In a similar way the little-Britain, anti-Europe nationalism of the British labour movement helped the growth of the National Front during the 1970s. We need internationalism! We need a movement which will, for instance, campaign against all immigration laws, thus challenging the root racism of British society – institutional racism.

4. We must rely on the strength of the labour movement, our own strength. The German Social Democrats looked to the police to stop the Nazis, and for the state to ban them. The police were eventually merged with the fascist paramilitary organisations, and our movement went down to defeat without a shot being fired by the workers' organisations!

A state ban against the fascists for a short period in 1932 allowed the Nazis to present themselves as the persecuted and did little to damage them. After the ban was lifted they rioted against the workers' movement, killing dozens.

We must be prepared to defend ourselves.

5. The crazy politics of the Communist Party helped the Social Democrats to keep their hold over the workers' movement. They had a 'theory' which labelled the Social Democrats as "social fascists" – a type of Nazi. What this meant was that they were unable to distinguish between the reformist socialists and the fascists!

In conclusion

History never repeats itself exactly. Yet we are in the middle of a mass growth of European fascism – in Germany, in Belgium, in Austria, in Italy and in France and eastern Europe. It is likely that fascism will grow in Britain too. Many of the conditions exist: easily scapegoated minority groups in society; an inadequate labour movement; a weak, often sectarian revolutionary left, who make much noise, but who offer young people no perspective of changing the wretched leaders of the labour movement and therefore offer them no prospect of a real solution.

British fascism is still weak, but it can grow very fast if we let it. Hitler got only two-and-a-half of every hundred votes in the 1928 election...

If we do not learn the lessons of the past, we may well find ourselves reliving the nightmares of the past.

Time is short!



The battle for Cable Street

ON 4 October 1936 the workers of London's East End fought and won the Battle of Cable Street, preventing Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists marching through a working-class area with a large Jewish community.

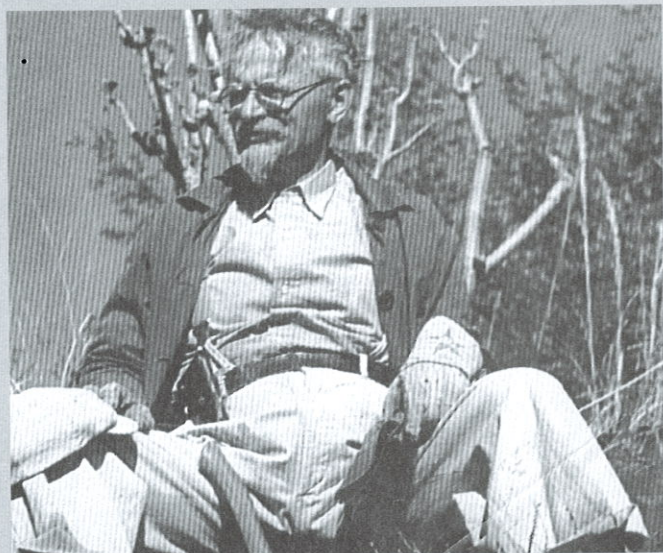
The main fighting that day took place between the police – 6,000 were protecting thousands of fascists – and up to 250,000 workers, including anti-fascist activists from the Communist Party, Labour Party and Independent Labour Party, as well as Jewish anti-fascist organisations. The anti-Nazis painted the slogan "No Pasaran" (They Shall Not Pass) – an anti-fascist slogan taken from the struggle in Spain against Franco – all over the East End.

After 1934 the BUF had turned to virulent anti-semitism. They built branches in the East End but never over-ran the area.

They were stopped by workers' action.

Trotsky on fascism

Leon Trotsky, writing before and after Hitler came to power, tried to warn the labour movement about the policies of the, then very strong, German Communist Party, policies which proved to be disastrous. He advocated a policy of the "united front". His writings have a lot to tell us about the nature of fascism and how to fight it.



For workers' unity against the fascists

"No matter how true it is that the Social Democracy by its whole policy prepared the blossoming of fascism, it is no less true that fascism comes forward as a deadly threat primarily to that same Social Democracy, all of whose magnificence is inextricably bound with parliamentary-democratic-pacifist forms and methods of government..."

"The policy of a united front of the workers against fascism flows from this situation. It opens up tremendous possibilities to the Communist Party.

"The social crisis will inevitably produce deep cleavages within Social Democracy. The radicalisation of the masses will affect the Social Democrats. We will inevitably have to make agreements with the various Social-Democratic organisations and factions against fascism, putting definite conditions in this connection to the leaders, before the eyes of the masses... We must return from empty official phrase about the united front to the policy of the united front as it was formulated by Lenin and always applied by the Bolsheviks in 1917."

Leon Trotsky, *The Turn in the Communist International and the German Situation*, 1930

No to state bans!

"The struggle against fascism, the defence of the positions the working class has won within the framework of degenerating democracy, can become a powerful reality since it gives the working class the opportunity to prepare itself for the sharpest struggles and partially to arm itself... to

mobilise the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie on the side of the revolution, the create a workers' militia, etc. Anyone who does not take advantage of this situation, who calls on the 'state', i.e., the class enemy, to 'act', in effect sells the proletariat's hide to the Bonapartist reaction.

"Therefore, we must vote against all measures that strengthen the capitalist-Bonapartist state, even those measures which may for the moment cause temporary unpleasantness for the fascists.

"We have to take strong measures against the abstract 'anti-fascist' mode of thinking that finds entry even into our own ranks at times. 'Anti-fascism' is nothing, an empty concept used to cover up Stalinist skulduggery."

Leon Trotsky, "Bourgeois Democracy and the Fight Against Fascism", *Writings 1935-6*, p242.

"Bonapartist" here means dictatorial, authoritarian

The causes of fascism

"The magnates of finance capital are unable by their force alone to cope with the proletariat. They need the support of the petty bourgeoisie. 'For this purpose it must be whipped up, put on its feet, mobilised, armed. But this method has its dangers. While it makes use of fascism, the bourgeoisie nevertheless fears it.

"Under the conditions of capitalist disintegration and of the impasse in the economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie strives, seeks, attempts to tear itself loose from the fetters of the old masters and rulers of society. It is quite capable of linking up its fate with that of the proletariat.

"For that, only one thing is needed: the petty bourgeoisie must acquire faith in the ability of the proletariat to lead society onto a new road. The proletariat can inspire this faith only by its strength, by the firmness of its actions, by a skillful offensive against the enemy, by the success of its revolutionary policy.

"But, woe if the revolutionary party does not measure up to the height of the situation!

"If the revolutionary party, in spite of a class struggle becoming incessantly more accentuated, proves time and again to be incapable of uniting the working class about it, if it vacillates, becomes confused, contradicts itself, then the petty bourgeoisie loses patience and begins to look upon the revolutionary workers as those responsible for its own misery.

"All the bourgeois parties, including the Social Democracy, turn its thoughts in this very direction. When the social crisis takes on an intolerable acuteness, a particular party appears on the scene with the direct aim of agitating the petty bourgeoisie to a white heat and of directing its hatred and its despair against the proletariat."

Leon Trotsky, *The Only Road for Germany*, September 1932.

A short history of black people in Britain

THE history of black and Asian people in Britain is a history of racism and of resistance to racism. The victims of racism often received white working class solidarity and had the backing of radicals and socialists. *Workers' Liberty* surveys the history.

Individuals and small groups of black people have been living in Britain for at least 500 years. But only after the 1650s did their numbers begin to rise significantly.

When the "triangular trade" began, manufactured goods went from Bristol, Liverpool and London to the African coast, where textiles and guns were bartered for black slaves. The slaves were taken across the Atlantic to the Leeward Islands, Surinam and Jamaica, and there exchanged for sugar, spices and rum. These goods were then brought back - on the third leg of the "triangle" - to Britain, and sold.

It was an enormously profitable trade - one product of which was the creation of black communities in the slave port towns, as slaves and black sailors found their way to Britain.

BY 1800 the black population of Britain was probably around 10,000, from a general population of 9 million.

The first black political leader in Britain was Olaudah Equiano who was kidnapped by slave traders as a child. By saving from petty trading he bought his own freedom for £40. Equiano travelled widely; in Britain he participated in the - largely white - abolitionist movement, wrote a key, popular expose of the slave trade, *Interesting Narrative*, and joined the radical London Corresponding Society.

One of the five poor and determined radicals hung after the "Cato Street" conspiracy, in 1820, was a black man, William Davidson. A black tailor, William Cuffay, was a hero and martyr of the Chartist movement - transported with two white comrades to Tasmania in 1849 he died there, in a workhouse, in 1870.

THE British slave trade was only abolished in 1807; slavery itself in 1833. Racism, which had developed as a justification for slavery, continued, expanded and mutated to justify Empire. Peter Fryer writes, "From the 1840s to the 1940s Britain's 'native policy' was dominated by racism. The golden age of British Empire was the golden age of British racism too... the flood-tide of racism never completely submerges the image of black as 'man and brother'... kept alive by three distinct traditions: humanitarian abolitionism; radicalism; and working class solidarity."

Indeed, there has been a strong tradition of white racism in Britain, but there is also a strong current of anti-racism and solidarity, too. For example, during the US civil war (1861-5), the British government was sympathetic to the slave-owning Southern states. The British workers were generally for the North and abolition (Karl Marx, for example, reports on attending large workers' meetings called to back the Northern states), and even at great cost to themselves: the workers of old Chartist centres of north-west England suffered tremendous hardships because the North was blockading the slave ports and stopping the flow of cotton to the British textile industry. But they stood solid "for Lincoln and liberty"!

THE first Asian elected to parliament was an Indian man, Dadabhai Naoroji - a campaigner against British policy in India - and, although elected as a Liberal (in Finsbury in 1892), he was a good friend of HM Hyndman, the British Marxist pioneer and campaigner for colonial independence. The Indian intellectuals in Britain were mostly radicals - Hyndman was invited to open the Indian Home Rule headquarters, in Highgate, in 1905. Indian revolutionaries found support on the left.

Pan Africanism began as a political current following a conference held at Westminster Town Hall in July 1900. One of the conference papers used a phrase the black American writer and campaigner WEB DuBois was later to make famous: "The problem of the 20th century is the



Jayaben Desai, led the Grunwick strike in 1976

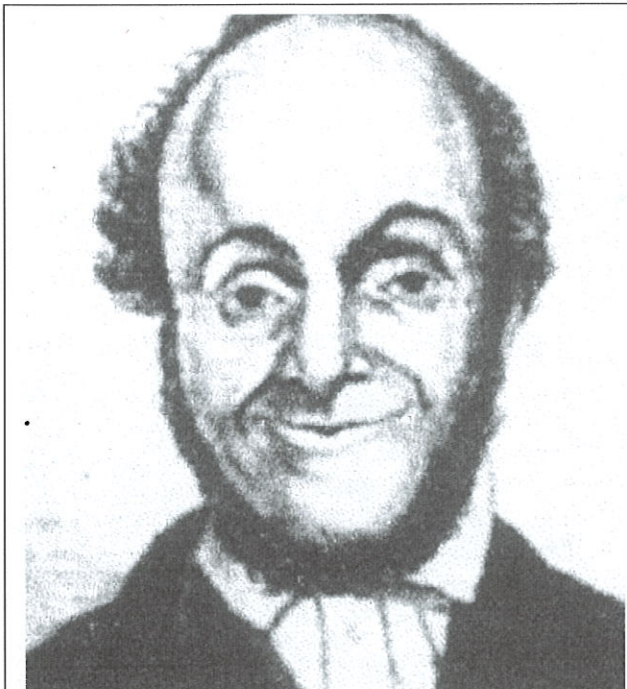
problem of the colour line."

The outbreak of war, in 1914, meant work for black workers in munitions factories. By 1918 there were about 20,000 black people in Britain.

After the war, and against a background of unemployment, there were race riots in Tyneside, Cardiff and Liverpool. At the start of 1919, 120 black workers were sacked in Liverpool after whites refused to work with them. Racist campaigns which were reflected even in the militant mainstream left paper, *Labour Herald*, were replied to by the US socialist Claude McKay in Sylvia Pankhurst's revolutionary socialist paper *Workers' Dreadnought*.

In 1922 the Indian revolutionary Shapurji Saklatvala became MP for North Battersea. He left the Independent Labour Party to join the Communist Party in March 1921 and was elected on a Labour Party ticket. He lost the seat in 1923, but won it back with local Labour Party support and against the wishes of the national party, keeping the seat until 1929.

George Padmore, the Trotskyist CLR



William Cuffay

William Cuffay (1788-1870) was an important figure in the mass workers' organisation the Chartists, which fought for the vote for working class people.

Cuffay was the son of a slave. He served an apprenticeship as a tailor and became an active trade unionist. After being sacked for involvement in a strike, Cuffay became convinced of the need for universal suffrage and the need for working class representation in parliament.

Cuffay joined the Metropolitan Tailors Charter Association in 1839. In 1842 he was elected to the five man Chartist national executive. Later that year he became president of the London Chartists.

Cuffay was on the "physical force" wing of the Chartists and was arrested in 1848 and accused of plotting an armed rising. He defended himself bravely in court but was convicted and "transported" for life to Tasmania. Even after he was pardoned he stayed in Tasmania and continued his political activity.

William Cuffay died in poverty in a workhouse in 1870.

James and Jomo Kenyatta were all active while living in Britain in the 1930s. Anti-colonial movements in Africa and the West Indies were linked via a pan-African centre in Britain.

ON 22 June 1948 the *Empire Windrush* docked at Tilbury with 492 Jamaican workers on board. The workers quickly found jobs — there was a shortage of workers: the *London Evening Standard's* report was headlined "Welcome Home".

Over the next few years others followed. By 1958, 125,000 West Indians had arrived. There were about 55,000 Indians and Pakistanis living in Britain. All these workers were British citizens — the 1948 Nationality Act had granted citizenship to all those from Britain's colonies and former colonies.

These workers faced discrimination and "colour bars" which prevented them entering some pubs, clubs and other facilities. They often had to take the dirty jobs, and the night shifts.

Half the white population had never met a black person and over two thirds held a "low opinion" of black people.

In 1958 there were race riots in Nottingham and London. Black militants attacked a fascist HQ in London in retaliation. The British Trotskyists proposed that the trade unions create workers' defence squads to stop the racists in such places as Notting Hill.

Over the next 10 years racist agitation grew, demanding an end to black immigration. Peter Griffiths, Tory candidate in Smethwick in the 1964 General Election, beat a Labour minister on the slogan "If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour".

Labour both tightened the immigration rules and passed a weak Race Relations Act. In 1968 Labour panicked and passed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in three days of emergency debate, restricting the entry into Britain of Kenyan Asians — British passport holders who were being expelled from Kenya, the victims of "Africanisation".

Tory MP Enoch Powell made a bid for the leadership of Britain's racists. His "Rivers of Blood" speech predicted blood, violence, packed maternity wards and national disaster if black immigration was not halted. Dockers and Smithfield meat

porters marched in support of Powell. Racist violence spiralled and, in 1971, the Immigration Act (which came into force in 1973) ended primary immigration.

In the 1970s the fascist National Front grew. The anti-Nazi Kevin Gately, a student from Warwick, was the first person killed on a British demonstration since 1919 as anti-Nazis fought fascists in Red Lion Square, London.

Rock Against Racism was founded by anti-racists who were outraged by racist remarks made by David Bowie and Eric Clapton. In 1977 the Anti-Nazi League was formed as an umbrella group of over hundreds of local anti-fascist initiatives.

Between 1976 and 1981 there were 31 racist murders in Britain.

In the 1960s and early 70s there were many instances of racism in the unions — discrimination against black workers and even racist strikes.

The turning point was the Grunwick strike where a largely Asian women work-

force struck — against an Anglo-Asian employer — to demand union recognition in 1976-7. The women were backed by mass mobilisations of building workers, miners and electricians who fought the police on mass pickets alongside the Grunwick workers.

By the mid-70s there were two million black and Asian people in Britain, in a general population of 57 million.

POLICE violence and malpractice against black people escalated. The political police, the Special Branch, kept a watch on black activists, leading to the Mangrove Nine trial in 1971. A black radical meeting place, the Mangrove in west London, was repeatedly raided, and following a demonstration nine leaders were arrested. The defendants were acquitted by a white jury, some of whose members later went out drinking with the defendants.

The 1976 Notting Hill Carnival was attacked by police.

The notorious "Sus" laws were used to systematically stop and search black youth. A major explosion of anger — rooted in racism and poverty — took place in the summer of 1981. Handsworth, Toxteth and Brixton erupted in rioting.

At a set-piece confrontation in Southall 3,000 riot police and mounted police attempted to protect a fascist meeting booked for Ealing Town Hall from 5,000 anti-Nazis. Three hundred and forty-two, mostly Asian, people were arrested and white anti-fascist Blair Peach was killed by the police.

Asian youth organisations were formed. In areas such as Southall, west London, these youth groups were capable of fighting and beating the fascists. On 3 July 1981 Asian youth fought the police and burned down a west London pub which was being used to hold a Nazi skinhead gig, and ran 300 fascists out of the area.

Police in Newham, east London, and in Bradford attempted to criminalise Asian youth in the 1980s for the "crime" of self-defence against racist attacks.

SINCE Grunwick, the attitude of the British trade unions has shifted. Bill Morris was elected to lead the TGWU in 1991. Now the TUC organises anti-racist festivals and marches.

Some of the more offensive manifestations of popular racism — for example, in 1970s TV sit-coms — and some common racist language have gone from "respectable" conversation.

Many of these changes — in attitudes as well as government laws and formal union policies — have been won by "from the ground up" campaigning in which white and black workers have stood side by side.

On the other hand, both Tory and Labour governments have run racist campaigns on asylum; immigration rules are strict. The police, having made nods in the direction of equality following the Lawrence case, and the Macpherson Report, continue to arrest, brutalise and even kill black people.

United against racism, we can win!

The roots of anti-semitism

By Dan Katz

ANTI-SEMITISM, or anti-Jewish prejudice is an ancient form of racism. Unlike modern anti-black racism, the roots of which lie in the trade in slaves and the rise of capitalist colonialism, going back perhaps 400 years, anti-semitism dates back to conflicts inside the Roman Empire.

In AD 313 the Emperor Constantine the Great gave Christianity supremacy inside the Empire. The Christians used their new power to persecute their Jewish rivals. The Jews were blamed for what was for Christians the worst crime in history: "The Jews killed Christ".

The Christians wanted a clear line of demarcation between the Jews and those they might "seduce" into their faith. On this basis, the Jews were excluded from many jobs, driven into ghettos, made to wear special clothes to distinguish them from others. The Jews began to fill the jobs which others did not want. They filled particular economic roles in medieval societies. For example, the job of money-lender, considered sinful but necessary to the functioning of the economy, was allowed to Jews. The money lender was a disgusting figure to the peasant who has borrowed in order to live and must pay back what he borrowed and a lot extra in interest. And so the Jews, forced into a particular role, reinforced the prejudice against them. That is often the lot of the oppressed.

In a similar way, black slaves were denied schooling and then were blamed for their ignorance.

In many countries in Europe the Jews met terrible fates. In Germany, 146 Jewish communities were wiped out during the year 1298 after the Jews of one town were accused of a "ritual murder".

The Jews were expelled from various countries — England in 1290, France in 1306 (and then again more completely in 1394), from Spain in 1492, Portugal in 1497, Naples in 1540, Vienna in 1690, and Bohemia in 1745.

The French Revolution of the late 18th century ushered in the ideas of the rising capitalist class — democratic ideas of liberty and equality. At its high point the French revolution freed both the black slaves in French colonies and the Jews from the laws which discriminated against them. Jews in Western Europe emerged from the ghettos, as citizens. The Jews in Eastern Europe and Russia remained downtrodden.

After 1881, in Russia, a country with a massive peasantry under economic pressure from the coming of capitalism, a new wave of terrible massacres took place — "pogroms" devastated 160 Jewish communities in that year. The Jews were particularly vulnerable in Tsarist Russia. There were 600 laws against them. They were forced into a particular area — the Pale.



Anti-semitism is not a thing of the past: desecrated Jewish graves, Oldham

A new Jewish response emerged, that of the Zionists, separatists who wanted a Jewish state for the Jewish people where they would be safe from the anti-semites. Jewish socialists like Leon Trotsky opposed the Zionists, arguing that Jew and non-Jew should unite in the workers' movement, oppose the Russian Tsar and fight for socialism and equality for all. The Russian Revolution of 1917 won equality under the law for the Jews. The Bolsheviks, the party of Lenin and Trotsky, fought to make formal equality a living reality.

In the late 19th century, traditional Christian anti-semitism began to be bound up with the rabid nationalism which was generated as the European powers expanded — and murdered — their way across the globe.

Anti-semitism filtered into the workers' and socialist movements. "Jewish bankers" were blamed for a crisis which was the fault of the capitalists as a whole. This was rightly described by leading socialists as "the socialism of idiots".

Of course, Jews were mostly poor. And it was the poor Jewish workers, fleeing the pogroms in eastern Europe, who were the first victims of British immigration laws. The first immigration law was not directed against black people: the Aliens Act of 1905 aimed to keep Jews out of Britain. Shamefully, it was supported by some in the labour movement.

Amid the crisis and chaos of post World War One Europe, a new threat emerged. In Germany the Nazis led by Hitler developed a vitriolic anti-semitism. Nazi anti-semitism was so contradictory and downright mad that they blamed the Jews both for Bolshevik-Communism and capitalism.

The defeat of the European labour movements in the 1930s led directly to the victory of the fascist barbarians and the greatest crime ever committed the genocide of 6,000,000 Jews — an attempt to

exterminate a whole people.

After the Holocaust the Zionists grew to become a majority amongst the Jewish people, stimulated by continuing anti-semitism in Europe. For example, Jewish Holocaust survivors returning to Poland in 1946, to their former homes, were met with further massacres. Anti-semitism continues to this day as a powerful force in Poland.

There is a powerful mutant strand of "left" anti-semitism which treats Israel as a peculiarly bad state and which would deny to the Israeli Jewish people the same rights as to other such peoples — the right to a state. These pretend-left politics combine traditional ideas with the "anti-imperialism of idiots" and a type of "anti-Zionism" which originated in Stalin's USSR.

There is also a noticeable strand of anti-semitism in the black movement.

For example, Louis Farrakhan has said that his organisation, the Nation of Islam, is attacked by the media because Jews "control the mass media, newspapers, the radio".

Believing it reasonable to use the word "Zionist" to cover up anti-semitism, Farrakhan peddles the craziest of crazy conspiracy theories, one which is also popular on the left — the theory that "the Zionists" made a deal with Adolf Hitler to massacre their own people!

So, anti-semitism continues as a dangerous, powerful force even amongst radicals and socialists. We must confront it and fight it wherever we find it.

The "socialists" who excuse the anti-semitism of people like Farrakhan on the grounds that "the racism of the oppressed is not the same as the racism of the oppressor" not only patronise black people but also betray the anti-racist cause they want to serve. All racism — including black anti-semitism — is poison. It must be fought and wiped out.

Oldham, Burnley and Bradford: The threat from the fascist BNP

On 26 May in Oldham there was bitter fighting between Asian youth and the police. The riot followed weeks of racist provocation from fascist groups and decades of poverty – affecting both Asian and white workers – and a deep sense of alienation from mainstream politics.

On 24 June rioting began in Burnley. In mid-July, Bradford erupted. In both towns the fascists had been active.

In the General Election the BNP's vote averaged 3.9 per cent over 33 constituencies. They scored over 16% in Oldham and over 11% in Burnley.

Workers' Liberty discussed the issues with Nick Lowles, joint-editor of the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*.

The underlying issues – segregation, deprivation, alienation and racism – were similar in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. Local issues made each riot slightly different.

In Oldham there had been a great deal of media coverage about an attack on a 76-year-old white man, Walter Chamberlain, who had been assaulted on his way back from a rugby match. The attack followed a report on the Radio 4 *Today* programme which suggested that young Asians had tried to create "no-go" areas in Oldham. To some observers the attack on Mr Chamberlain seemed to reinforce the radio programme's findings.

A week after the attack, 450 Stoke football hooligans, in town for a match, joined up with local Oldham thugs to run through Asian areas, attacking people and smashing cars. The police intervened – but only to push back the young Asians. Over the next few weeks fascist groups such as the National Front and Combat 18 came into Oldham to stir up trouble.

On the night of the major fighting the Nazis were met by a massive backlash from young Asian people.

Inter-community tensions have been steadily on the increase for the last few years – racist violence has been increasing. But a racist tradition stretches right back to the 1960s and 70s, when Asian men came to Britain to do the jobs that white workers didn't want – the dirty work, and the night shifts which became known to the racists as "the Paki shift".

In Oldham the housing is very segregated. This physical separation has helped the

stereotyping of communities.

The method of dividing Regeneration Budgets provides an area of conflict as poor white areas compete in "beauty contests" with poor Asian areas for money. The Asian areas tend to be more deprived, and money will sometimes be directed there – which helps to sustain the myth of "preferential treatment for Asians" – a basic racist lie which sustains the anger and resentment of local whites.

The British National Party (BNP) has targeted Oldham, holding their rally in the local Conservative Club a few months before the rioting. Their agitation is a factor, too. In the General Election they got 12,000 votes across two Oldham seats.

Burnley was a bit different. There was a fight over loud music, a small incident that blew up. There was an element of "copycat" in Burnley.

But here too there had been BNP-fascist agitation for the previous two years. In Burnley the BNP took 11.25% of the vote in the General Election.

In Oldham and Burnley the sense of identity and stability created by the mills and the old factories has gone, as a result of the decline of the textile industry. What's left is part-time, low-paid work, perhaps many miles away.

Both white and black people are unhappy and uncertain.

Bradford was a bit different again. In July, Asian people battled with riot police after a planned National Front rally. The following two nights saw white teenagers take to the streets.

Bradford has low wages and low spending, falling house prices and a degree of dereliction in the city centre. Six wards have long-term unemployment rates of over 25%.

Where is the BNP growing and why?

IN the 1970s the fascists had a strong base in the Lancashire mill towns. The BNP are targeting areas where they have had success in the past – deprived white working class areas in the north west, the Midlands and in east London. They are concentrating their resources, often all-white wards.

They fix on all-white estates. In Ecclehill, in Bradford, where the BNP held a meeting of over 100 people the day before the riot, the ward is 98.8% white.

The BNP are presenting themselves as

the voice of the white working class, while the Labour Party is writing off poor areas. There is a political void and in a few areas of the country the BNP are moving in to fill it.

New Labour has ignored its traditional base. Worse, in some towns, the Labour Party and the Liberals have deliberately ignored racism because they know that some of their own support is racist.

Parallels have been made between the riots 20 years ago (in Handsworth, Brixton and Toxteth which involved young – often unemployed – black youth) and these riots in textile towns which have suffered from factory closures and rising unemployment over the last 20 years.

There are some similarities. But the differences are important too. The 1981 riots were in large part directed against the police. In 2001 – in Oldham, especially – there is a big element of white and Asian communities being in direct conflict with each other.

This is a very serious, worrying difference.

What should the left do?

THE BNP election results are frightening given they were able to get 16% of the vote in Oldham with little work on the ground and only 10 active members in the town.

It highlights one problem the left faces – presenting anti-racist and socialist views as a real alternative to white workers. The far left often appears distant and abstract. If we are going to beat the BNP we need campaigns based on local issues.

The left should take note of the BNP's policy which is, in contrast to the left approach, to adopt a version of the Liberals' "community politics" strategy. They aim to systematically work in local campaigns and in tenants' groups. In some areas they do local bulletins taking up everything from parking and dustbins to the question of the proposed local hostel for asylum seekers.

The have set up a Media Monitoring Unit which constantly writes to local papers and gets BNP members to phone in to radio shows.

Contrast the Socialist Alliance campaign – it was very much based on rather distant propaganda. For example: re-nationalise the railways is a fine demand, as



Oldham fascists

long as we understand that it does not have much purchase on white workers in some of the most deprived areas who need detailed answers to their local problems of housing, social services and jobs.

In some areas there is a real prospect of getting local fascist candidates elected as councillors. Stopping them is tremendously important. The BNP will now be able to capitalise on any council victories and use them to make themselves seem more and more respectable, and give themselves a platform.

The left needs to make sure it doesn't help the BNP to get elected by splitting the Labour vote – although clearly that doesn't mean the left shouldn't campaign for socialist policies.

And the left needs to consider its tactics, carefully.

Some groups have suggested that we need a big anti-racist march in Oldham, which would march through the estates.

If that happened it would be dangerous and probably counter-productive. Such a march might bring anti-racists into direct physical confrontation with hundreds and hundreds of white workers.

There are roles for marches and carnivals and street stalls. But running a stall in the centre of town and getting a few middle class shoppers to sign a petition is the easy work; going to Asian areas and telling them the BNP is bad and racist is also easy. The harder work is day-to-day graft in white areas in organisations like tenants' associations.

The key thing is to undercut the racist message by answering the real problems people face. The left must accept that the white workers in these areas do have real concerns.

The BNP were in Sighthill, Glasgow, a few weeks ago [scene of many attacks on asylum seekers: see page 5]. Here there is some of the worst housing in Scotland.

Then a tower block gets re-developed and "outsiders" are put in. That is guaranteed to create great resentment.

And to respond to this simply by saying "Asylum seekers are welcome here" is plainly inadequate. It doesn't answer the question the white workers are up in arms about – bad housing, for which the refugees are being scapegoated. Simply telling such people not to vote for the BNP because they are racists often has little purchase.

To be effective, we must couple anti-racism to the fight for better services, jobs and high quality housing for all.

And we must understand that not every BNP voter is a hardened racist. Whites vote BNP for various reasons – yes for racist reasons, but also as a protest against the mainstream parties which ignore or patronise them, and because they have been let down by other parties.

Surely we need to look to the unions... TRUE. But there's reluctance in these organisations.

Many of the unions are not in good enough shape to lead the fight.

The work the unions need to do is not so much getting members onto the streets, but political education plus providing a lead on the key questions of housing and jobs.

How big is the BNP? How have they re-shaped themselves?

THE BNP now has about 3,000 members with 1,500 activists. In 1997 they had less than 600 members.

The BNP have re-packaged themselves. They have toned down the violent image. The BNP sit back while other far-right groups such as the National Front stir up trouble, then move in to reap new political support.

They are becoming a lot more profes-

sional. They have an impressive web site. They use the media well. They are also being helped by sections of the media who give the BNP a platform. The worst example is Radio 4's *Today* programme. During the Oldham events BNP leader Nick Griffin was on *Today* three times in one week.

Two years ago they realised that their programme of compulsory repatriation and the image of putting black people in trucks, and of mass deportations, was a real barrier to winning mass support.

They've softened their image, but not changed their underlying ideas at all.

The BNP – as a tactic – now says it will simply offer money to black people to "go home". They stress that this would be a voluntary "offer". But no BNP member really believes that any black people would be allowed to stay under a BNP government.

Their 2000 manifesto states that jobs should go to "white native Britons" first.

On a public level the BNP has dropped all reference to Jews. But only four years ago Nick Griffin was writing that the Jews controlled the British media. Griffin wrote a pamphlet called *Mindbenders*, listing Jews who work in the media and alleging the Jews controlled the media, and brainwash the British people into accepting multi-culturalism.

Nick Griffin doesn't believe that the Holocaust happened, and for the hardcore fascists in the BNP anti-semitic conspiracy theories are at the very core of their world view.

Often his anti-semitism is wrapped up in "anti-Zionism". Because of the events in the Middle East these views could become more central. It is important that the left does not play into fascist hands by using ill-considered "anti-Zionism" propaganda.

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The roots of racism

By Jeni Bailey

Modern anti-black racism has relatively recent roots, in the history of slavery and colonialism.

Racism did not start as a divide-and-rule trick imposed by the ruling class. The racist *practice* of slavery and colonialism came first; racist *ideas* came later.

When the slave trade started in the 16th century, the British capitalists took slaves and sold them like cattle, bullied them and beat them. Then, they began thinking of them as subhuman.

That is the natural way of things for slave owners. When Britain conquered territories and peoples and assumed the right to rule and make decisions for them, British people began to believe those peoples were inferior.

The roots of modern racism can be traced back to the planter class of slave owners. Although fear and suspicion of the stranger and the outsider had existed before, it had not been fear on the basis of skin colour.

In the ancient world there were many societies based on slavery. But there was no idea comparable to "race".

The ancient Egyptians looked down on the black peoples to their south, but they were just as scornful of other, lighter-skinned, neighbours. Egyptian artists caricatured the captives taken in war – but the peculiar dress of the Libyans or Hebrews was held up for ridicule as much as the features of the black southerners.

In Greek society the slaves were frequently of the same colour as their owners. There were many white slaves from the north and the east.

In Rome any citizen might become a slave and any slave a citizen. Slaves came from every province and every skin colour – so did the Emperors, of whom some were black.

There is nothing "natural" about anti-black racism in the psychological-biological make-up of whites. This can be seen today by watching the way young children of different skin colours play together quite happily.

Racism was a product of the beginnings of capitalism. As Karl Marx summed it up: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning

of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins... The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mothercountry and were turned into capital." Pre-feudal slavery was wedded to the most modern merchant capitalism in a drive which helped produce the capital for the future industrial revolutions.

Tens of millions of African slaves were taken across the Atlantic. The population of Africa remained stagnant in the period 1650 to 1850, while that of Europe nearly doubled.

The slaves were part of the "triangular trade". Boats took slaves to the plantations, brought sugar back to Europe, and then took manufactured goods to Africa.

In the beginning there were Indian slaves and white indentured labourers too as well as Africans. Black slaves were taken from Africa as a simple commercial decision: it was cheaper than going

elsewhere. The reasons were economic, not racist.

Racist ideas squared an ideological circle for the capitalists. Their anti-feudal revolutions took place under the banner of liberty. Yet there was no liberty for the slaves.

Paradoxically, it was because capitalism had developed the ideas of universal human rights and equality – the same ideas that would later inspire the revolts of the colonial and enslaved peoples – that it also developed the ideologies of racism. Previous societies had had slavery and conquest – but their rulers had no need for general theories of racial superiority to justify the slavery and conquest.

The poor had no rights, whatever their skin colour and whatever their ethnic origin. There was no need for special theories to cancel the human rights of a special category of poor people.

Under the pressure of economic compulsion – the economic need for slavery – writers and thinkers developed the gut reactions of the planters into fleshed-out theories.

Those theories are as recent as the 18th century. Black people were called sub-human, allowing the bourgeoisie to have their "liberty" and their slaves too.

Pseudo-science said black peoples were inferior – because of head shape or some other rubbish.

Some of the ideas that were developed were perversions of real facts.

Take the racist view that black people are "lazy". In fact the slaves were not lazy, they were just rebelling.

In modern capitalist society the basic form of revolt is the workers' strike; the basic form of revolt in Stalinist society, where unions were forbidden, was absenteeism and, perhaps, throwing a spanner into the nearest machine. The equivalent on the plantation was: I am damned if I am going to work hard.

The slaves were not "lazy", they were fighting back! But, perversely, their struggle was turned back on them.

Colonialism and the slave trade also wrecked societies and civilisations. Much of the African past was destroyed.

Colonial intervention in India reduced a fabulous treasure-house, the world's leading industrial nation, to backward poverty.

Europe reduced Africa and India to poverty – and then built a whole racist ideology that the peoples of Africa and Asia were naturally "backward". In Ireland the British state brutalised the people and then blamed them for their own condition. They were described as "unstable, childish, violent, lazy, feckless, feminine and primitive".

But it is not true that only white men made slaves. The black Iraqis on your television screen during the Gulf War were



The brutality of slavery



Britain in the 1960s: the "colour bar"

brought there by Arab slave traders. The Arab trade in African slaves started earlier and finished later than the European trade, and probably enslaved more people. The history is not a simple black-versus-white one; in fact the African trade depended on the co-operation of the many African chiefs who benefited from it.

At the same time, there was opposition to slavery, in the name of human equality, from white radicals. In Britain, for instance, during the American Civil War, the workers were solid for the Union despite their government siding with the slave-owning South, and despite the unemployment caused by the Northern blockade of the South and the consequent lack of cotton for the Lancashire mills.

In the heyday of the British Empire, racism and nationalism penetrated every part of intellectual life.

They had the effect of pinning the workers to the bosses in the mistaken belief that they had more in common with Queen Victoria than with the Indian poor. Frederick Engels wrote to Karl Kautsky in 1882: "You ask what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general: the same as the bourgeois think. There is no workers' party here, you see, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the

feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."

Many labour movement leaders campaigned to restrict the entry of Jews fleeing eastern European pogroms at the end of the last century. The first modern immigration act was passed against the Jews — the Aliens Act of 1905.

Immigration laws have been one of the major mechanisms of state racism over the last 40 years. After World War Two, capitalism expanded, and the British bosses toured Africa, the Caribbean and India looking for workers to work in British industry.

As the boom slowed the racist right mobilised. It was led by Winston Churchill, the supposedly great leader of British democracy in World War Two. In 1955 Churchill proposed "Keep Britain White" as a Tory election slogan. The Metropolitan Police described "coloured people" as "work-shy and content to live on National Assistance and immoral earnings".

Black workers found "colour bars" in clubs and housing. Black community organisations began life as self-help groups in response to this racism.

Racist attacks became more common, and in 1958 there was a riot led by organised racists in Notting Hill, west London. The Immigration Act of April 1962 began the current process of formal racism — laws which discriminate against black people. Immigration Acts of 1968 and 1971 completed the process, barring almost all immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean and India except those joining close family here.

In addition to legislation there have been assaults from the right: "If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour" was a Tory election slogan in 1964. Margaret Thatcher said that "this country might be swamped by people from a different culture" before her election victory in 1979, taking some of the political ground from under the fascist National

Front who, during the 1970s, organised some thousands of white British people.

On the street the police have posed a constant threat to black people. A Policy Institute report from 1983 shows that in the Metropolitan Police racism is "expected, accepted and even fashionable". Racist stereotypes have moved on to target black youth as drug dealers and criminals. Take the *Evening Standard's* coverage of Operation Bumblebee police "crackdown on crime". The *Standard's* reporter went with police on a raid: the young woman "claimed she was 18" and her partner's wall was "covered in Bob Marley posters". Got the message?

More recently, and despite the past, the Macpherson Report's denounced the police as "institutionally racist".

But the story of racism is also the story of struggle and resistance. In the last 40 years the battle to confront all forms of racism has broadened out.

The fight against racism must be bound up with the struggle to replace capitalism with democratic, working-class socialism. As Malcolm X said: "you can't have capitalism without racism."

Unemployment

UNEMPLOYMENT among black people is now two percentage points higher, at 13%, than at the beginning of 1990, while unemployment among white people dropped back to the low point — 6 per cent — reached in 1990.

This trend suggests that black workers were hit harder by recession than white workers, and that they did not benefit to the same degree from the subsequent upturn.

Unemployment among black people since 1990 has been fairly uniform from a gender perspective, with the rate increasing from 11 to 13% for both sexes. In contrast the unemployment rate for white women in the same period fell from 6 per cent to 5 per cent and this means that the gap between the unemployment rates for black and white women has widened considerably in the 1990s, from 5 percentage points in 1990 to 8 percentage points in 1999.

People from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities continued to have the highest rate of unemployment, at 18%, and this increased by one per cent since 1990. Women from these two ethnic groups have a very high unemployment rate — 21% — although there has been some decline since 1990, when it was 25%.

The largest increases in unemployment during the decade have occurred among people from the Afro-Caribbean community. Overall, the unemployment rate for Afro-Caribbean people increased from 12% in 1990 to 15% in 1999.

Source: TUC report, 1999

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X

By Dion D'Silva

"I'll be honest with you, I was terrified. I owe my life to that preacher and so do all the other white people who were there." So spoke a policeman outside the home of Martin Luther King in Montgomery in January 1956. King's home had just been firebombed. Yet, as he surveyed the damage, he spoke to an angry crowd that had gathered: "We must love our white brothers no matter what they do to us... what we are doing is just — and God is with us."

The birth of the modern Civil Rights Movement was the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955/56. The local preacher, Martin Luther King, threw himself into organising and leading the boycott of buses which had separate sections for white and black passengers. The black churches were the only arena where black people could gather in number quite freely, and discuss tactics and strategy.

The boycott was the first of many that spread across the towns and cities of the American South. There were demonstrations, sit-ins, voter registration drives and freedom rides involving thousands of people. In 1963 there were over 930 protests in 115 cities, with more than 20,000 arrests. The undisputed national leader was Martin Luther King.

His strategy was guided by his Christian belief in non-violence. He sincerely believed in "loving your enemy". If confronted with violence you should "turn the other cheek". He was also greatly influenced by Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience for Indian independence. The activists involved in demonstrations at lunch counters which refused to serve black people were obviously brave individuals who believed in this idea of shaming their oppressors. Their official guidelines were:

- Show yourself friendly at all times
- Do sit straight and face the counter
- Don't strike back if attacked
- Don't laugh out loud
- Don't hold conversations.

Malcolm X was quite scathing of this approach: "Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone: but if someone puts a hand on you, send him to the cemetery. That's a good religion. In fact, that's the old time religion." Malcolm reflected the anger of the northern ghettos.

The predominantly southern Civil Rights Movement was not so confident. Often they looked for the help of the Federal Government to sort out the racist political leaders of the South. These racist Dixiecrats had control of the local state, police force and media. Violence, even in self defence, was ruled out as impracticable. Black people would come off the worst.

Even though Martin Luther King looked towards help from Washington and the outside world, he was prepared to put pressure on them by organising mass demonstrations. He always stayed true to this even though he played a balancing act between the conservatives and radicals in the movement.

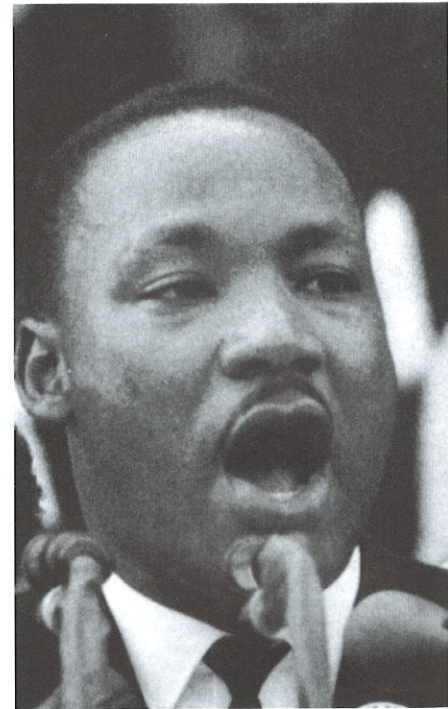
The ever-so-liberal Bobby Kennedy tried to buy him off. Kennedy wanted the civil rights movement to concentrate on voter registration — hoping for more votes — rather than organising demos and sit-ins.

It culminated in the march on Washington in 1963. Over 250,000 people marched and heard Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech. However, the more conservative elements objected to any radical statements critical of the Democratic Party. These same people saw the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as the pinnacle of their achievements. For them it was now "out of the streets and into the suites", meaning the executive suites of top companies.

At the time Malcolm X was in the Nation of Islam. He referred to the "farce on Washington" as a one-day integrated picnic. Nevertheless, Malcolm's split with the Nation was due to his wish to get involved in the movement more directly. The notion of civil rights seemed rather limited to him. He argued for "human rights" and the involvement of emerging independent African nations through the United Nations.

Even after he was murdered in 1965, Malcolm's idea had a resonance in the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King talked about tackling the root causes of racism. He realised that the movement needed to spread its support to the North and, in particular, black workers. But even he was shocked by the reaction he received when trying to organise in Chicago.

King began to distance himself from the Democratic Party. There was even



talk about him standing independently in the 1968 elections. He recognised the need for a social programme and came out clearly against the Vietnam War. The movement organised campaigns for social welfare for poor whites, blacks and Hispanics. Significantly, King was killed in Memphis in 1968 while he was supporting a strike of black dustmen.

Spike Lee ends his film *Do The Right Thing* with quotes from both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. The old man character in the film seems to represent the worthy but old-fashioned ideas of Martin Luther King, whereas the angry youth are the continuation of Malcolm X's ideals. The message is: Martin Luther King was okay for his time, but now we should look towards Malcolm X and his legacy.

The attempt to stress the continuity and similarities between King and Malcolm X is understandable. The official, liberal view has always portrayed King as the honourable black leader and Malcolm X as the dangerous and violent one.

Malcolm X has made two important contributions. Firstly, his stress on self-defence. His comment on this bears a resemblance to Trotsky's remark "for every lynching, we should kill 20 lynch-ers". The official movement never mentioned self-defence, indeed they often looked to the support of federal troops.

Secondly, Malcolm was hostile to the state and its institutions. He castigated black people for voting Democrat. However, the organisation he built after he broke with the Nation of Islam, the Organisation for Afro-American Unity (OAAU), was always rather small, and a black, independent organisation is not in itself progressive.

Martin Luther King was often criticised for being an "integrationist". Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz, argued that the slogans "Black and white together/We shall overcome" were no

longer relevant: "Integration has failed — now we have to rule ourselves."

But socialists share a type of "integrationist" approach. We can learn from Martin Luther King's attempt to build a mass movement of black and white for social progress. In the late 60s, there was tremendous potential. A movement that built links between King's Poor People's Campaign and the Anti-Vietnam War Campaign, and had answers to social problems of black, Hispanic and white workers could have been a threat to the racist Democratic and Republican parties.

When Martin Luther King was shot in 1968, many US cities erupted in anger. Malcolm X had said "the white man had better be glad that Dr King is leading a non-violent revolution. There are those who are waiting for him to fail. Then the revolution will begin". Unfortunately, it didn't happen in 1968.



Civil rights march, Washington

Was Malcolm X a socialist?

Martin Thomas looks at George Breitman's book, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (Pathfinder, £7.95)

THIS BOOK, written over the year after Malcolm X was murdered in February 1965, sets out to prove that from June 1964 until his death "Malcolm was a revolutionary — increasingly anti-capitalist and pro-socialist as well as anti-imperialist".

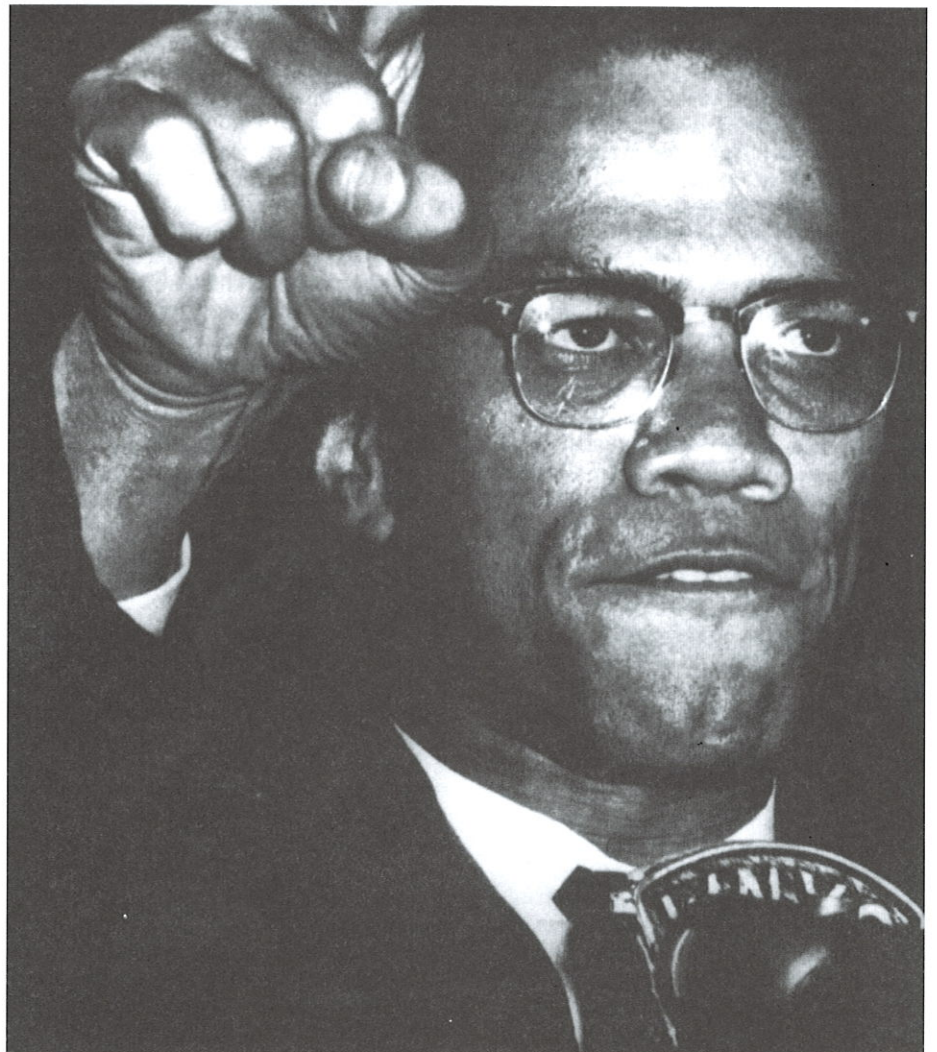
On one level, it is solid and convincing. Shortly before his death Malcolm said plainly that his struggle was not "a racial conflict of black against white, or... a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter".

"I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those who do the oppressing... but I don't think it will be based upon the colour of the skin, as Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad had taught it."

Anyone who uses Malcolm X as authority for narrow black nationalist politics is being disloyal.

In his last year Malcolm became willing to work with the (liberal-led) mass civil rights movement.

He called for a struggle of both black and white people, not black people alone. "When the day comes when the whites who are really fed-up — I don't mean these jive whites who pose as liberals... — learn how to establish the proper type of communication with those uptown [in Harlem] who are fed-up, and they get some co-ordinated action going, you'll get some changes... And it will take both."



He dumped the Black Muslims' vague talk of a "black state": "No. I believe in a

society in which people can live like human beings on the basis of equality."

Immediately after quitting the Black Muslims, he summed up his philosophy as "black nationalism" – but by January 1965 he had rejected that: "I haven't been using the expression for several months."

He dropped the Black Muslims' line of promoting black capitalism, in a way which Breitman shows must have been deliberate and considered – though he never openly argued against it, and never came out clearly with an alternative.

He denounced capitalism: "You can't have capitalism without racism... You can't operate a capitalistic system unless you are vulturistic; you have to have someone else's blood to suck to be a capitalist..." He told Breitman's comrade Harry Ring that he "felt it necessary for his people to consider socialist solutions to their problem. But as the leader of the movement, he said, it was necessary to present this concept in a way that would be understandable to his people and would not isolate him from them".

The basic statement of his Organisation of Afro-American Unity, in June 1964, had cited "the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the USA and the Bill of Rights" as "the principles in which we believe"; but in December 1964 he urged the OAAU to look wider: "The man doesn't want you and me to look beyond Harlem or beyond the shores of America".

He told the OAAU to consider socialism because, he said, that was the system that the new independent countries in Africa and Asia (and Scandinavia, too, he said in passing) were using to get rid of poverty and provide a decent life and decent education for everyone.

That those countries were not as he thought them to be does not undo the importance of Malcolm's preaching of social provision for need in place of "vulturistic" profit. Unfortunately, however, Breitman's own illusions here blur the argument of the book.

He weaves his presentation into a general notion of "the tendency of revolu-

tionary nationalism to grow over into and become merged with socialism", and thus blurs over both Malcolm's sharp change of direction in 1964-5 and the deep differences Malcolm still had with working-class socialists.

Breitman was a Trotskyist, a long-standing member of American Socialist Workers' Party (no relation to the SWP-Britain). When the SWP went Castro-Stalinist in the early 1980s, he fought against the turn and, nearly 70 years old, was expelled. He knew that the new states in Africa were not socialist at all.

All that, however, was blurred in his mind by a concept which he shared with all the "mainstream" Trotskyists of the time: that a great process of "colonial revolution" was sweeping the world which somehow had an inbuilt and semi-automatic tendency to "grow over" into socialism, and within which class issues were secondary details.

Malcolm's identification with Third World states was thus, for Breitman, an identification with the "colonial revolution" and *ipso facto* an identification with a movement or process tending towards socialism. Moreover, for Breitman, Malcolm was also himself an example of that movement or process.

Breitman's general summings-up, as opposed to his detailed documentation, therefore blur Malcolm's change of direction. And Breitman gives a very blurred picture of the socialist view which he says Malcolm was moving towards.

THE SOCIALIST answer to racism is black and white workers' unity on a programme of eliminating disadvantage by levelling up at the expense of the capitalists and capitalism. The principle of unity should not stop socialists supporting black people who start struggles against racism before any large number of white workers are ready to back those struggles; revolutionary unity can be established only by building on struggles, using them as a lever to change consciousness, not by dampening them down to get "unity" in silence and stillness.

Nevertheless, class unity remains the basic principle.

Breitman mentions this issue quite clearly. "It is important to note that Malcolm... was talking about [an alliance with] 'militant whites', not white workers... He did not share the belief of the Marxists that the working class, including a decisive section of the white workers... will play a leading role".

But Breitman's blurred vision stops him developing this, or another important point he makes: "class questions are often expressed in racial terms", that is, "racial" issues often have to be demystified by exposing class issues inside them.

Breitman concludes: "Malcolm was not yet a Marxist." Not yet! But it was not only a matter of time!

Malcolm was not a Marxist. Whether he would have become one if he had lived longer depends on whether he would have become convinced on the key issues separating the sort of socialism at which he had arrived (with various state-capitalist and bureaucratic regimes as models, and without any special connection to the working class) from Marxist working-class socialism. It was not just a matter of trundling a little further along an automatic conveyor-belt.

ON another level Breitman misses the point.

Malcolm was beginning to think and read about socialism. He was not, and could not have been, anywhere near producing a new socialist strategy against racism.

For a dozen years before that, he had had a strategy against racism – the "Black Muslim" strategy of building black self-respect and pride, encouraging racial separation, and using black resources to build up black (capitalist) businesses in black communities. Malcolm had rejected that strategy.

Malcolm was and is a great political figure not because he offered strategic guidance. His most famous slogan was "Freedom – by any means necessary". The phrase "by any means necessary" shattered all the liberal taboos about non-violence and not demanding "too much", and the black-separatist taboos too. In place of all talk of gradually scaling down racism, bit by bit, it put the basic human demand: we will not tolerate any racism any longer!

It was a revolutionary principle. But it said nothing about which means were suitable and effective! It offered no strategy.

All it did was to open the way for clear thinking about strategy – and that was a great thing to do, especially at that time and in that place. Malcolm opened the way for others (and for himself, in his last year) to think for themselves.

And to string together "Malcolm X's strategy" from whatever selection of Malcolm's statements suits your prejudices – black-nationalist, Muslim, or socialist – is not the best way to think for yourself. It is not the best way to learn from Malcolm X.

Black trade unionists today

- Nearly 300,000 black workers are members of a trade union or staff association, or 28%, compared to 30% of the general workforce.
- African-Caribbean workers are more likely to be in a trade union than anyone else, including white employees. Thirty-six per cent of African-Caribbean employees are members, with the next highest membership rate being 30% for white employees. The lowest rate of unionisation is to be found amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers, at 16%.
- Black women are more likely to be trade union members than women workers in general. Twenty-nine per

cent of black female workers are members.

- Black male workers are less likely to be in a trade union than male employees in general, with 27% in membership compared to 32% of the general male workforce. The sharp fall in black male trade union membership between 1993 and 1997 (down from 37 to 27%) suggests that the recession affected black male trade unionists to a greater degree, forcing many workers to move into non-unionised employment.
- Older black workers are much more likely to be trade union members. For example, nearly half – 48% – of those aged 50-59 are in a union, compared to 38% of all workers in this age group.

Source: TUC analysis of 1997 Labour Force Survey

What is the Nation of Islam?

THE Nation of Islam (NoI) was founded in 1930 as a peculiar fusion of Islam and a conservative variant of black nationalism. The NoI considered whites to be devils and that the answer to American racism was the promotion of black business, racial separation and the creation of a black state.

Black historian Manning Marable describes how the NoI came to be "re-founded" by Louis Farrakhan in 1981:

"[In the 1970s] Most black radicals, influenced heavily by Malcolm X's public separation from and feud with the Nation in 1964-65, still viewed the organisation with a great deal of scepticism.

"... [Elijah] Muhammad [NoI leader] attempted to establish closer links with the US government and other foreign interests in an effort to resolve his group's ongoing political and economic troubles. By making peace with Chicago's political boss, Richard Daley, the Nation was able to eliminate most of the police surveillance and harassment against the sect.

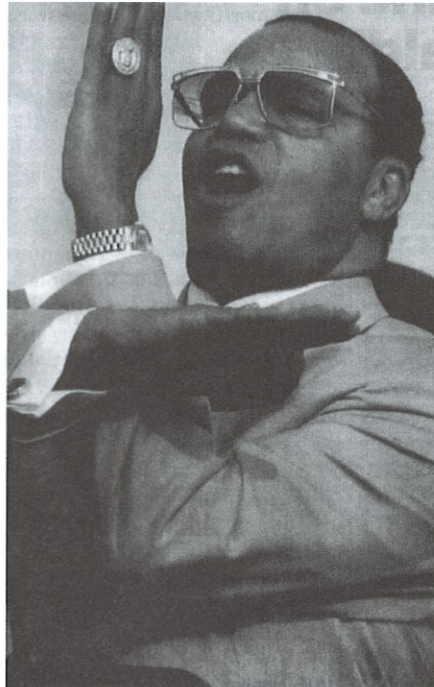
"Imitating the FBI, Nation of Islam members in Philadelphia destroyed that city's Black Panther Party headquarters in retaliation for the group's public advocacy of Malcolm X's ideas.

"In 1972, Muhammad negotiated a \$3 million interest-free loan from [Libyan dictator] Colonel Muammar Kadhafi which was used to expand Black Muslim enterprises. Despite these gains, the Nation of Islam was still plagued by internal dissension.

"One of the Nation's most dynamic and powerful ministers, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis (Ernest McGhee) denounced the Nation as a corruption of the true faith, Sunni Islam, in 1972. Khaalis declared that Muhammad was 'a lying deceiver' and stated that their leader 'who inspired former dope addicts and prostitutes to monklike lives of sacrifice, discipline and hard work, was instead stealing his followers' money and leading them to hell'. For devout defenders of Muhammad, Khaalis' challenge could not remain unanswered. On 18 January 1973, at least five armed gunmen, all members of the Nation of Islam, entered Khaalis' Washington, DC, home and butchered five members of his family.

"With Muhammad's death in 1975, the leadership of the Nation of Islam passed to one of his sons, Wallace. Quickly and efficiently, Wallace Muhammad 'Malcolmised' the [sect ... a] mixture of racial mythology and religious dogma promulgated by Elijah Muhammad was abandoned in favour of the orthodox teachings of Islam; whites were permitted to attend services and in some instances even joined the group...

"Yet these dramatic changes did not



occur without more dissension. Louis Farrakhan, perhaps the most charismatic minister in the Nation after the departure of Malcolm X, had quietly left the Nation by 1978. In February 1981, Farrakhan announced the creation of the 'old' NoI under his direction, following the tenets of Elijah Muhammad. Several thousand blacks soon flocked to Farrakhan's group." (*Race Reform and Rebellion*, p 177-8)

The following Farrakhan has built up since 1978 is particularly suprising because of the part he played in the NoI's feud with Malcolm X. In December 1964, writing as Louis X, Farrakhan wrote, "Malcolm shall not escape... Malcolm is worthy of death." Malcolm was shot down two months later in February 1965.

In 1994, Malcolm's widow, Betty Shabazz, was asked on WNBC-TV if she thought Farrakhan had anything to do with her husband's killing. She answered: "Of course. Yes... Nobody kept it a secret. It was a badge of honour. Everybody talked about it. Yes."

Moreover, Farrakhan's NoI has continued Elijah Muhammad's tradition of links with the fascist right — believing that the Nazis, who also want racial separation, have something in common with the NoI.

In June 1961 a delegation of American Nazi Party members attended the NoI's convention in Washington DC. In 1962 Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell, dressed in full Nazi regalia, declared to the NoI Chicago convention: "Elijah Muhammad is to the so-called Negro what Adolf Hitler was to the German people... Heil Hitler!"

Malcolm X, who had been ordered to

represent the NoI at a meeting with the fascists in 1961, later wrote to Rockwell, "This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist Black Muslim movement". (*Malcolm Speaks*, 1965). In 1964 Malcolm had offered to send people to the Deep South to "give the Ku Klux Klan a taste of their own medicine".

But in 1985 Farrakhan repeated Elijah Muhammad's mistakes by allowing Californian Klan leader Tom Metzger to attend an NoI rally in Los Angeles. The NoI accepted a \$100 donation from this racist scumbag. Farrakhan has also declared that "Hitler was a very great man" (at a rally for Jesse Jackson, 1984).

The organisation Louis Farrakhan now leads has tacked towards the Democratic mainstream during the 1990s. It remains right-wing, anti-white and anti-Korean (some Korean people run shops in black areas in US cities).

Farrakhan is anti-abortion, anti-gay and wants to see schools separated by sex. Some of the NoI's meetings and rallies are closed to women.

The NoI is also profoundly anti-semitic. In the past it has distributed the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Russian Tsarist police forgery which claims to show that a Jewish conspiracy exists to control the world. The NoI has its own "Protocols" — *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* claims that: Jews ran the African slave trade; Jews were the major owners of slaves in the US; Jews raped black women; that during Reconstruction, Jews preyed on freed black slaves. Like many anti-semitic texts the NoI claim it is based on the works of "respected Jewish authorities".

In fact the *Secret Relationship* is a lying mess in which facts are misrepresented and notorious anti-semites — such as Dostoyevsky — are quoted to prove a point. (In fact Jews were a very small minority of whites in the Deep South and owned, as a proportion, less slaves than other groups of whites.)

Farrakhan believes the Jews control the media and that Judaism is a "dirty religion".

Farrakhan's deputy, Khalid Muhammad, called Jews "bloodsuckers of the black nation".

Speaking in February 1994, Khalid Muhammad said: "God will kill my enemy... that old no-good Jew, that old impostor Jew, that old hooknose, bagel-eating, lox-eating, Johnny-come-lately perpetrating a fraud, just crawled out of the caves and hills of Europe, so-called damn Jew... I will never apologise to this bastard — never."

The NoI and Louis Farrakhan are bad news.

The cult of the gun

THE Black Panthers are the most representative example of revolutionary black nationalism. Dan Katz looks at two books, written by participants. Bobby Seale's *Seize The Time* (Vintage, 1970) and Elaine Brown's *A Taste of Power* (Pantheon, 1992)

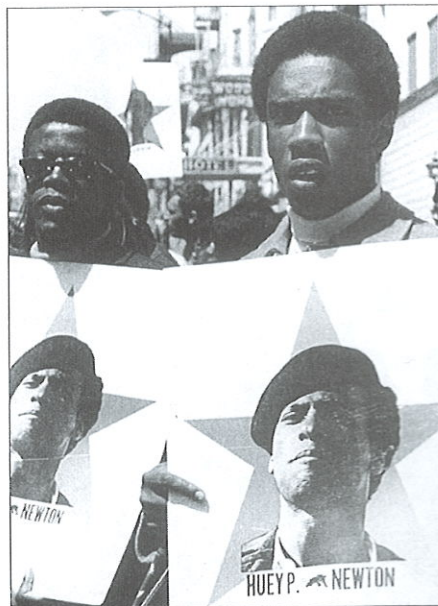
"HUEY [Newton – the central Panther leader] said 'I've got my gun. What are you going to do with yours?'... And Huey's calling the pigs swine, dogs, sharecroppers, bastards, motherfuckers, with his M1 in his hand. And daring them, just daring them!" These are the words of Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panthers.

"I've got my gun" was a beautiful, defiant thing for a black man to say in racist 1960s America, where gun-happy white racists were armed to the teeth. And the Panthers grew rapidly because they proved as good as their words. They policed the police. Following two high-profile stunts with guns – as a security team for Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow, at San Francisco Airport, and then at the California State legislature in Sacramento, in May 1967, in a protest against restrictions on the use of firearms – their daring and bravery became widely known.

Panther leader David Hilliard explained that "there were only seven real Panthers... After Sacramento thousands of Brothers signed up".

The Panthers were not just a black-only party, they set out to base themselves on the "lumpen" black youth – young people of the inner city slums – rather than black workers. The Party was built on a minority of a minority, around men like Bunchy Carter, former leader of the 5,000-strong Slauson gang.

The political background was the US's war in Vietnam and, centrally, the growth of a mass civil rights movement and the radicalisation of black youth in the



American inner-cities. Year after year in the mid-1960s the black ghettos rose up against poverty and the police, and the Panthers were part of that movement, an expression of the times.

The response of the US state was repression on a vast scale. FBI boss J Edgar Hoover declared that "the Black Panther Party is the single greatest threat to the internal security of the US". Hundreds were arrested and scores killed as the Black Panther Party was infiltrated by the state and set up by their provocateurs.

Solidarity with the struggle against racism and in opposition to the government-sponsored harassment of the Black Panther Party is basic for socialists.

But how should the Panthers' ideas, policies and strategy be assessed? Had the Panthers got a viable policy to defeat the racist state? Could they end racism?

If a reader cares to be critical some answers already exist in *Seize The Time*. Beyond the immediate questions of guns and the police and the Panthers' community programmes, there is not a lot of politics. The Panthers never precisely state what is wrong with government policy, or how the Panther's Ten Point political programme could be carried out, or by whom.

Take this scene from *Seize The Time*: Huey and Bobby decided to get cash to buy guns. They found a man who will sell them cheap copies of Mao's *Little Red Book*. They took the books to the University campus and made a big profit. What about the politics of the *Little Red Book*? Huey decided that not all of it was applicable to America, and crosses some of it out with a pen! Nevertheless, this is what they had been selling!

What this passage shows is that the gun came first and the politics further back. In essence the Panthers were a proud, dramatic, armed, semi-suicidal defiance of the brutal power which crushed black people. They sacrificed themselves on behalf of America's brutalised black poor, whom they tried to inspire with the will to resist and fightback. Politically, they were little more than that. Certainly they were not politically coherent.

On these central, political matters, Elaine Brown's book takes us no further forward. She has nothing but uncritical, a-political, glowing praise for Huey Newton.

And on the Panthers' Stalinism – their praise for the Chinese and North Korean police states – Brown's book is terrible. Written in 1992, after the 1989-91 revolutions in Eastern Europe, she is still uncritical of Panther illusions in Stalinism.

Nevertheless, it is not that the Panthers were even real Stalinists – rather that they simply lined-up with those who opposed their own enemy, the US government.

What *A Taste of Power* does do is provide a much more complete – honest – picture of the Black Panthers, warts and all.

Elaine Brown is a good witness. She was in the building when Ron Karenga's cultural nationalists killed leading Panthers, Bunchy Carter and John Huggins. She was there when Huey Newton confronted Farrakhan (seemingly they came close to killing each other after Farrakhan's Black Muslim organisation bad-mouthed the Panthers). She was forced across the world – essentially kidnapped – by Eldridge Cleaver. She ran for office with Bobby Seale. For years Elaine Brown was at the centre of it all.

Brown shows that there was clearly a cult of the gun, and a cult of their leader, Huey P Newton. Brown describes the Central Committee as "a body of men with titles but no power. They had begged Huey to lead them, guide them, take charge of the party and their lives, the way men always do with their gods".

The Panther Programme (1966)

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.
8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

The Panthers' disputes — political and other — were regularly solved by violence. In a confrontation over the production of the Panthers' paper Brown ran up against Bobby Seale. Seale had her taken down to the basement and whipped. And Brown accepted it: "Punishment was always an act of violence... if we had been in Bolivia with Ché we would be shot for violations of rules." True, but somewhat besides the point.

Later, Brown was a witness as Huey Newton drove Bobby Seale out of the Party. Newton had Seale whipped with a bullwhip in his Penthouse apartment. Huey says "you have violated the trust of the party" — Huey Newton identified the Black Panther Party with himself. "You are no longer chairman... In fact, I no longer want you in this party." Huey tells Seale he is now homeless: "Be out of your house — my house — by morning."

The Panther regime Brown describes owes more to the structure of a gang than that of a political party.

When Brown takes over the Panthers in 1974, there is no vote. Huey Newton just hands over power to her in the same way he put her onto the Central Committee. Brown assembles several hundred leading Panthers and tells them: "I have control over all the guns and all the money. There will be no internal opposition I will not resist and put down. If you don't like what we're going to do here this is your chance to leave. You'd better leave because you won't be tolerated."

By the early 70s the Panthers had become big business. They looked for money to fund their community-based Survival programmes, taking "donations" from legal and not-so-legal businesses. The programmes gave a lot of children some schooling they would not have received elsewhere. A lot of people got fed when they would have gone hungry. But the money went elsewhere, too. When Brown visited Huey Newton in Cuba, she says she took him \$10,000.

She adds that she spent \$10,000 in a

clothes-binge.

At the end of Brown's book the Panthers are collapsing into the capitalist Democratic Party, the destination of so many of the US's radical movements. Brown attends high powered business lunches and gets wrapped up in the wheeling and dealing of bourgeois politics.

Here the problem of nationalist — black rather than class — politics unwinds itself. How to move beyond black community-based politics — resting on one in eight of the US's population — to politics capable of answering broad social and governmental-level questions? For, of course, a minority of one in eight — as African Americans are — can not alone take decisions for the over-all society in which they are immersed.

The Panthers rose and fought at a time when American socialists were utterly marginal and the white workers were quiet, hostile, or full of hatred for black people and their movement. That was the tragedy of the Black Panther Party.

"No-platform" and free speech

By Violet Martin

OUR basic policy is free speech. The capitalist class has a partial interest in free speech — within limits. The working class has a much more profound interest in free speech. Socialism means the defeat of entrenched power by the mobilisation of long downtrodden millions of people who at last dare to have thoughts and dreams other than those handed down by official society; thus it needs free debate. And free speech (real free speech, not the limited free speech available in a society where a wealthy minority monopolises the media, education, leisure...) is a vital part of the socialism we fight for.

Of course, we know that history proceeds through class struggle. We are not pacifists, abstract idealists or dogmatists. The needs of the class struggle stand higher than any democratic principle; moreover, there is no God, no umpire standing above us, to impose democracy on the contending forces in the class war.

But we are not short-sighted pragmatists, either. Any political party, at any time, obviously appears likely to have short-term gain from suppressing and silencing those whose views it detests. Any but the most short-sighted, or most determinedly totalitarian, political party will, however, consider the danger in such action of isolating itself and turning the sympathy of democratically-minded but non-partisan people towards its opponent. Socialists will consider the additional danger of any short-term gains compromising the long-term aims of working-class democracy.

Bureaucratic and suppressive methods of maintaining left-wing control in trade

unions have frequently undermined the strength of the union and, sooner or later, rebounded.

In the student movement in the 1980s, "no platform" policies against right-wingers paved the way for advocates of "identity politics", or demagogues, to brand the left as racist, sexist and homophobic. Policies of "no platform" for fascists, racists, or right-wingers of one sort or another spiralled into great confusion. The Easter 1986 conference of the National Union of Students saw one low point. One faction of leftists wanted "no platform for Zionists"; the conference enforced "no platform for idiot anti-Zionists" by banning a badge which compared Zionism to fascism.

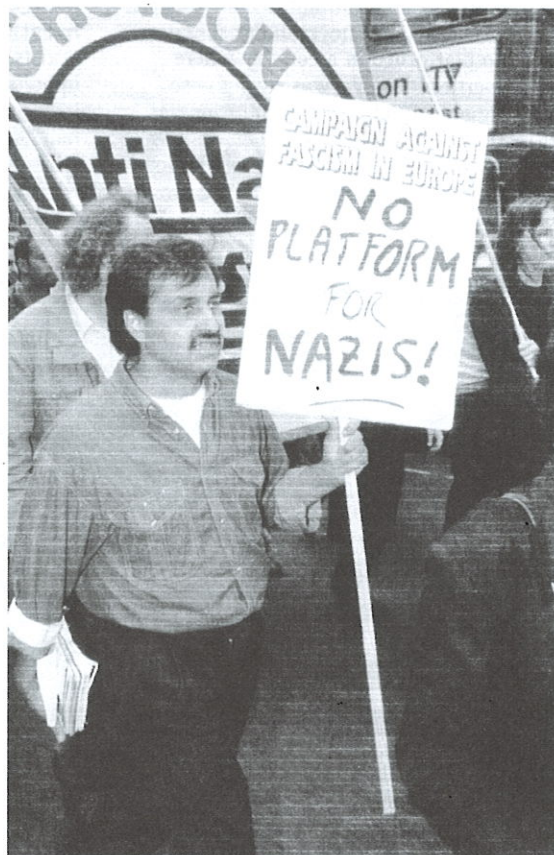
Fascism is different

Fascism is different from other strands of right-wing politics, in that it threatens, immediately and physically, the very existence of working-class organisation and, often, the lives of oppressed minorities. The basic Marxist policy against it is:

- Mass working-class mobilisation for socialism as the answer to the crisis of capitalism which breeds fascism;

- A workers' united front for physical self-defence.

Trotsky argued against any support for bourgeois state bans on fascists on the grounds that they would be ineffective and inevitably, by increasing the repressive



powers of the bourgeois state, facilitate blows against the workers. Nevertheless, he argued for the fight against fascism to be carried out in a civil-war spirit, with no tenderness for any democratic right of the fascists.

Why does not that contradict our general position for free speech? In more or less normal bourgeois-democratic politics,

working-class socialists have a framework to operate mostly through peaceful agitation. Even in the best bourgeois democracy we usually need a constant struggle to stop our own democratic rights, even our formal rights, being nibbled away. Short of civil war – which must, of course, be fought as civil war – we have no tactical interest in attacking the democratic rights of other forces within the bourgeois democracy, even those we abhor. Here and there it may be possible to secure the suppression of right-wing forces when they are outside the currently dominant bourgeois consensus. Often we will shed no tears. But to champion such suppression places us on the shaky ground of demanding the silencing of those outside the bourgeois consensus when we, in fact, are outside that consensus ourselves. It will rebound on us just as soon as our voice becomes annoying or threatening enough for the capitalist class.

The American experience

Unless free speech is free speech for ideas that someone finds repulsive or offensive, it is not free speech; and we need free speech.

James P Cannon explained this well in his pamphlet *Socialism on Trial*. The US Trotskyist movement which he led organised many big and militant demonstrations against fascists, but never under slogans like “no platform”. In a country where civil liberties ideology was strong – so they argued – and anti-communism was at least as strong as anti-fascism, to be seen as going for the forcible suppression of the speeches and meetings of the far right could only isolate the socialists,

make them appear anti-democratic, and open them to witch-hunts. It was better and more effective to take a stand on the right to self-defence and to counter-demonstrate.

In Minneapolis in the 1930s they organised a workers' defence guard. It never said it wanted to stop the fascists meeting or marching – only that it wanted to defend the labour movement. But the fact of its existence led the local fascists – the “Silver Shirts” – to declare that they were afraid to meet or march in Minneapolis.

“No platform” for racists?

Violent racist groups should be fought according to the laws of war, even if they are not strictly fascists. However, the general slogan “no platform for racists” creates more problems than it solves. Racism is a widespread ideology. Any working-class activist knows that you have to argue with racists, not just proclaim that they are beyond the pale. We should argue in such a way as to make clear that we do not see racism as a normal difference of opinion; and we supplement argument by actions and by support for various forms of autonomous black organisation. All that is different from “no platform”.

So also is a rule in a trade union or other working-class organisation barring racist or sexist comments in meetings different from “no platform” for racists or sexists. There must be a grey area between upholding standards of civilised behaviour inside the labour movement, on the one hand, and upholding the rights in the wider society of speech and advocacy which the bourgeois consensus does not consider civilised. And a grey area, too,

between general racist (or other reactionary) ideas at one end of the spectrum, and direct incitement to violence at the other. But grey areas between different things do not mean that there is no difference between them. If we slip into advocating “no platform for racists” on the grounds that racist ideas are repulsive, offensive, lead ultimately to violence, etc., then why not “no platform for sexists”, “no platform for Zionists”, “no platform for Arab chauvinists”, “no platform for Tories”, “no works by D H Lawrence in public libraries”...?

Fascism is different from other strands of right-wing politics. It grows from the start by violent, unlawful attacks on its opponents and scapegoats. And its forces are irregular, street-fighting groups:

they can be defeated by the working-class movement short of a full-scale civil war against the state.

The classic Marxist discussions are focused on defending working-class buildings, meetings, demonstrations and newspapers against fascist bands. They relate to situations where the fascists are so strong that a slogan of “no platform for fascists” is senseless. But their spirit is clearly not one of a purely defensive stance or waiting for the fascists to strike the first blow. Trotsky wrote about workers' defence guards going out to smash fascist meetings.

Fascism is a movement of immediate civil war against the left, against those whom the fascists choose to scapegoat, and against the working class, and war must be fought as war.

It does not follow that “no platform” is the best slogan to express that thought, still less that it is a principle.

War knows tactics other than the offensive. There is no principle which says that socialists have to strive to break up every fascist meeting. Such a “principle” would just consume our energies in endless chasing after right-wing cranks, and in ill-chosen battles with the police. Tactically, it would also put us in a position where we seem not to be striking blows in a war for democratic rights against the fascists, but to be starting our own war against democratic rights.

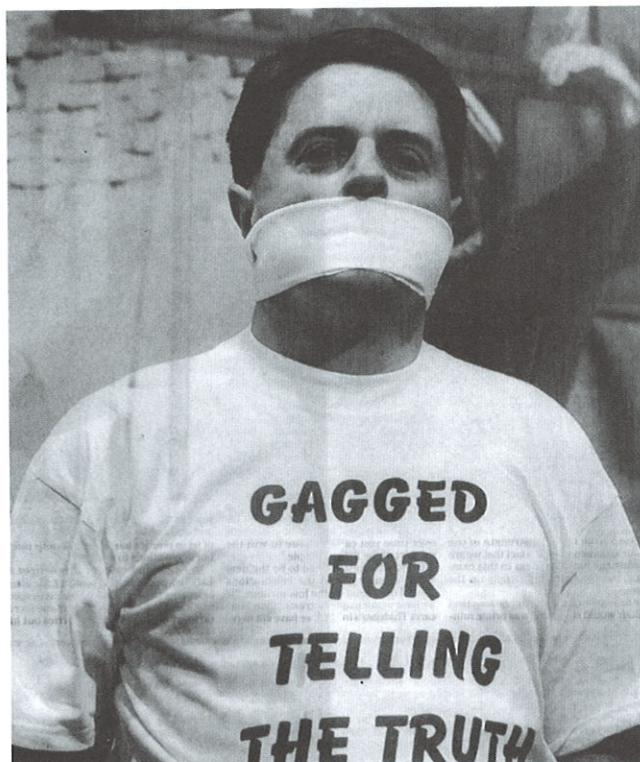
The French left

In France, in 1973, one of the biggest revolutionary socialist groups, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), mobilised many thousands of people to try to stop a meeting of a fascist fringe group in Paris. The result was a very violent battle with thousands of police, and the outlawing of the LCR. The LCR suffered a major setback, and its later comments indicate that its leaders came to conclude that its tactics in 1973 had been foolish. Though brave, those tactics certainly did not stop the fascists.

Until 1983 the fascists remained a more or less isolated minority, not particularly weaker than in 1973 but not particularly stronger either. Then, in 1983, they rapidly gained electoral strength on the back of mass disillusion with the Socialist Party-led government elected in 1981. The Front National (together with its recent split-off, the MNR) has retained about 10% of the vote in France, sometimes more, ever since then.

For small left groups to attempt to “no platform” the French fascists now – exclude them from public life by sheer force of militant demonstrations – is not feasible. More energetic “no platform” tactics back in the 1970s – but how could they have been more energetic than the LCR's? – would not have prevented the mass disillusion with the Socialist Party-led government.

All that could have made a difference was the building-up of the working-class left to a stature where it could more successfully appeal to the disillusioned.



Fascist scum like BNP leader Nick Griffin try to make political capital out of state bans.

Self-defence is no offence

THE best way to "reason" with the thug who comes after you with a knife or a broken bottle in his hand is — as Leon Trotsky once put it — to "acquaint his head with the pavement". There is no guarantee that bouncing fascist heads off pavements will make them see sense or turn them into decent human beings, but there is no other way to "reason" with them. And it is better for fascist heads to learn the hard "lesson of the pavement" than that the heads of innocent black people, Jews or trade unionists should.

The right to self-defence is basic. That means that we have the right to stop fascists from beating and killing by any means necessary. It also means that we have the right to go on the offensive, to seek them out, when that makes sense.

Against this, the argument "leave it to the police" is sheer nonsense. To put it at its weakest: the police are not reliable.

It is a matter of fact that the police do not stop racist attacks; nor are they successful in catching those who carry out racist attacks.

It is a simple matter of fact that there is widespread racism in the police force itself

— virulent, active, persecuting racism. A large proportion of racist attacks on young black people are carried out by police officers who pick on them, harry them, and beat them in the streets because they like picking on black people.

Blair Peach, a white London school-teacher, was killed on an anti-racist demonstration in 1979 — not by a fascist, but by a policeman who hit him on the head with an illegally weighted truncheon. Though many serving police officers must know the identity of that murderer, he was never caught.

The police also defend the racists and fascists. The police are no reliable defence against racists and fascists.

In such conditions what should anti-racists in the labour movement do? Ideally we should set up trade union defence squads, made up of both black and white anti-racists. Essentially such defence squads would be flying pickets against racism. Such pickets — now outlawed by the Tories in industrial disputes — were a powerful weapon in the great strikes of the 1970s. That would be the answer to racism of a healthy labour movement

determined to stop its enemies dividing it in order to rule it.

The truth is that the labour movement lacks self-confidence now. We live in a country where the trade union movement is only half-legal, hemmed around with anti-union laws which are the worst in Europe.

That means that the socialist left should argue within the labour movement for such defence squads, patiently explaining why it is in the interest of white as well as black workers to smash the racists and to unite black and white workers against them.

It means that practical, immediate defence work against racists and fascists in places like Oldham has to be the work of militants from those communities directly threatened by the fascists and of individual socialists and trade unionists.

If black and Asian youth, threatened by violent racists or fascists, take action to defend themselves and their communities — they are right to do so.

Self-defence is no offence. The greatest crime would be peacefully to let the fascists grow and develop.

Lewisham: a turning point

ON 13 August 1977 the National Front tried to march through Lewisham in south east London, where many black people live.

The All-Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, a local umbrella group for the various anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigns, organised a counter-demonstration. As 3,000 anti-fascists occupied Lewisham High Street and the areas surrounding it, the police appeared on the streets in full riot gear for the first time in post-war Britain. Four thousand policemen equipped with horses, batons, motor vehicles and helicopters only just managed to keep the National Front from being lynched!

In the mid-1970s fascist marches and left-wing counter-demonstrations were frequent occurrences. What was different in Lewisham was that local black youth, in large numbers and without any prior organisation, fought back against both the fascists and the police. Their hatred of the latter had been enflamed by the recent arrest of local black activists, the decision to let the NF march go ahead and the way the march and counter-march had been handled.

The fascists got the roughest ride they had had for a long time. So did the police.

Hurling stones, bottles and smoke



bombs, large numbers of black youth joined the left-wing forces trying to break the police lines behind which the fascists were marching. The NF was prevented from reaching Lewisham High Street; police vehicles advancing on the anti-fascists were immobilised and smashed; and Ladywell Police Station was besieged for almost half an hour. The police found themselves under attack from the same young people they

had been harassing and bullying on the streets of Lewisham for years.

The Socialist Workers' Party and the Anti-Nazi League, which was then in the process of being formed, claimed credit for "The Battle for Lewisham", but that was nonsense. The Battle of Lewisham was won by local people coming out in solidarity with anti-fascist demonstrators, and above all by Lewisham's black youth.

The Anti-Nazi League

The poverty of "anti-fascism"

By Mark Osborn

EVERYBODY knows that the Anti-Nazi League is run by the Socialist Workers' Party, and entirely controlled by it.

The ANL of the late 70s was also controlled by the SWP. Nevertheless, it was a much broader affair than the reborn, post-1992, ANL.

SWP control means that the ANL exists first to serve the SWP and act as a source of recruits. It exists secondly – a poor second, sometimes – to fight racism and fascism.

It will only fight racism and fascism in ways that do not cut across SWP plans. ANL anti-racist activity is conceived of exclusively as demonstrations and ritual confrontations – and not at all as an activity that also tries to rouse the labour movement to fight the conditions that breed racism.

Using the broadest and vaguest idea of anti-racism, the SWP is willing to unite with Tory and Liberal politicians who make noise against "Nazis" but will do nothing against the conditions – in East London and Oldham for example – which allow the Nazis to gain support.

The poverty of ANL anti-fascism was underlined by the events of 1993-4 in Millwall, east London.

In September 1993 the BNP fascist Derek Beakon won a council by-election in Millwall. The background was a terrible local housing shortage which had been presided over by a right-wing Labour council and, then, a Liberal administration. Local white and black people felt let down by the mainstream parties, and some white workers had begun to look for a BNP, racist solution – homes for whites, at the expense of local Asian workers.

The BNP was beaten in the Millwall council elections of 1994 (Beakon was defeated despite increasing his vote). In the run-up to the election most of the socialist left canvassed for Labour (the local ward party was left-led and the Labour Party in Tower Hamlets ran on a special programme which promised the provision of 1,000 new homes).

The ANL-SWP, however, simply said "Don't vote Nazi", and they refused to canvass for Labour. This was particularly dangerous in an area where there were only three parties which could win the seat – the Liberals, Labour or the BNP. "Don't vote Nazi" meant the SWP didn't care if anti-Nazis voted Liberal or Labour!

To make such an elementary mistake is to have failed to understand the basic,

socialist anti-fascist policy: we must mobilise the labour movement to stop the Nazis (and the 1994-Labour Party, based on the unions, was clearly to be supported against both the capitalist Liberal Democrats and the BNP!).

An anti-racist campaign organised like this can have only a very limited usefulness (except for the SWP). It can often play a very harmful role.

The old, 1970s ANL did a great deal of damage to black-white relations precisely because its prime concern was not fighting racism and fascism, but building the SWP. It is a story that should not be forgotten.

The ANL held very successful rock concerts, to which tens of thousands of young people came. Such a concert was the big ANL event in October 1978.

Back in 1978 the National Front, which was very powerful, announced that it would "march" on the Bengali community in Brick Lane, in east London, during the time set for the carnival. Despite appeals from many individuals and groups – including people living in the area where the fascists planned to march – the SWP-ANL leaders refused to alter their plans. Their party in Brockwell Park was to go ahead while, across London, the fascists would be left to confront the East End Asian community.

The rock carnival with big name bands would draw vast crowds of youth – potential SWPers! That was the name of the game the SWP-ANL leaders were playing. Defending Brick Lane could not be allowed to interfere with that.

The Anti-Nazi League revealed itself as



a campaign run by people not primarily concerned with its supposed goals at all, but with the "hidden agenda" of the SWP.

The carnival went ahead and the fascists marched on Brick Lane, to be met by local people and leftists called to the defence of Brick Lane – by *Socialist Organiser* [forerunner of *Workers' Liberty*] and others.

Large numbers of black activists were thereby alienated from and poisoned against the "white left" by the SWP-ANL's performance. The ANL went into a decline and was soon wound up. The SWP turned to something else.

The new ANL, re-launched in the early 90s as an SWP party front organisation, should be trusted as far as those responsible for the grim fiasco of the old ANL deserve to be trusted. They are the same people.

How Europe underdeveloped Africa

By Chris Reynolds

When Africa was not "backward"

In the Middle Ages, Ethiopia was not underdeveloped. Walter Rodney — a black Marxist historian assassinated in 1980 as he tried to build a working-class party in his native Guyana — wrote: "The kings distinguished themselves by building several churches cut out of solid rock. The architectural achievements attest to the level of skill reached by Ethiopians as well as the capacity of the state to mobilise labour on a huge scale.

"Fine illuminated books and manuscripts became a prominent element of Amharic culture. Equally fine garments and jewellery were produced for the ruling class and for the church... Craft skills were developed in a number of spheres."

Other countries which are today stricken by poverty — Egypt, for example — were once the world's greatest centres of civilisation.

When Portugal first established itself as a colonial power in what is now famine-stricken Mozambique, the local Arab-African city states there, with their "fine stone houses and the air of elegance in the local courts and markets" were "a world comparable, if not superior, in material culture to Portugal".

The European powers had certain advantages over the peoples of Africa and Asia — a more dynamic economic system, more centralised state power, and better military technology — that enabled them to make their conquests. But overall there was no great superiority.

Francis Quesnay, a Frenchman, wrote of China in 1767: "No one can deny that this state is the most beautiful in the world, the most densely populated, and the most flourishing kingdom known." Scientific discoveries in China reached a remarkable level.

In Zimbabwe, when the 19th century white colonists found the ruined buildings after which the country is now named, they assumed that they must have been built by previous white invaders. They could not believe that black Africans were capable of such achievements.

When Britain first took control of India, in the 18th century, the country was thought of not as a sea of poverty, but as a fabulous treasure house in the Orient. The ordinary people were somewhat poorer than in Britain, but by a factor of per-



This is imperialist rule. British-Egyptian troops quell the nationalist Wafdist uprising in Cairo in 1919.

haps 2:3 rather than the 1:10 or 1:20 of today. The luxury of the ruling class was probably greater than that of Europe's ruling classes.

The economics of colonialism were responsible for today's economic gap between the average living standard in Britain and in India. At independence in 1947, the conditions of the Indian peasantry were roughly the same as they had been 200 years earlier — maybe a little better, maybe a little worse.

The colonial era which had enriched thousands of British investors and administrators left the Indian peasants stuck in absolute poverty.

Underdevelopment is nothing to do with a lack of talent or energy by the people of the country. Like modern industrial development, it is the product of an economic system, capitalism.

Before the 18th century or thereabouts, economic differences between parts of the world were much smaller than today. Or, to be more accurate, they were differences of a different sort.

Some societies — ancient Egypt, ancient

Greece, ancient China — reached a much higher level of culture than others. But this was a difference that mostly concerned the ruling classes.

The ruling classes might have literature, baths, roads, great temples and palaces, a varied and delicate diet, beautiful clothes and jewels — or not.

Whatever happened in the wealthier spheres of society, the mass of the people did nothing more than scratch a bare living from the land.

Today we have the inverse situation. The wealthy have much the same technology, culture and luxury at their disposal in every country. But the standard of living of the working people ranges from the Western worker's material comfort and relatively easy access to culture, to the African peasant's age-old poverty and illiteracy. A luxury hotel in Ethiopia provides the same service as a luxury hotel in New York. Even in Ethiopia — one of the world's half-dozen most underdeveloped countries — such industry as there is can use recognisably similar technologies to those in the advanced countries.

Capitalism has created — for the first time in history — the productive potential to free humanity from want.

It has created freely-moving international technology and wealth. In the richer capitalist countries, strong trade unions have won seriously improved living standards for many workers. Yet even in the US some two million people are destitute. And the average worker's wage in Indonesia, for example, has, on a generous estimate, one-tenth the buying power of a US wage. For millions of people in Africa, in India, and even in Latin America, life is as harsh and as precarious as it was 500 or 1,000 years ago, if not more so.

The story of development and underdevelopment is the story of how capitalism's drive to expand production has worked its way through unevenly, creating huge material advances in some areas while simultaneously it creates ruin elsewhere.

The white man as cannibal

The decisive turning point in creating the present pattern of the world came in the 16th century. A new economic system — capitalism, the system of wage labour and of continuous accumulation and reinvestment of profits — emerged decisively from the neo-feudal societies of Western Europe. As yet, it was not industrial capitalism. The Industrial Revolution and large-scale factory production were still in the future. But this earlier capitalism — commercial capitalism — had its own technological revolution, with printing, more developed firearms, and ocean navigation.

For centuries until then the central net-

works of trade had been the coastal shipping routes of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. But now the cities of the Arab world — until then the greatest on earth after China — and of Italy were eclipsed. As ships began sailing the open seas regularly and relatively easily the new centres of trade were the seafaring powers of the Atlantic — Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England. They also established themselves in the Indian Ocean. Karl Marx summed this up as follows:

"The discovery of gold and silver in the Americas, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins, are all things which characterise the dawn of the era of capitalist production [in the 16th century]... The colonies provided a market for the budding manufactures, and a vast increase in accumulation which was guaranteed by the mother country's monopoly of the market. The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother country and were turned into capital there."

The rise of capitalist civilisation in Western Europe thus went together with the destruction of previous civilisations in other parts of the world. Black Africa's particular blight was the slave trade. "To discuss trade between Africans and Europeans in the four centuries before colonial rule [i.e., from the late 15th to the late 19th century] is virtually to discuss

slave trade," as Walter Rodney puts it. Millions of Africans were forced into the status of human cattle and shipped overseas. Probably more than 10 million arrived alive in the Americas or Europe; maybe as many again died *en route*. The population of Africa stagnated from 1650 to 1850, while Europe's nearly tripled and Asia's more than doubled. Africa had handicraft industries, and trade based on them. But the handicrafts could not compete. They were displaced by the new trade of human beings against European manufactured goods. The African peoples were split up into small warring groups and statelets as rival chiefs would make war on each other in order to capture prisoners for the slave trade. With the European traders, from their coastal forts and bases, also encouraging these wars and divisions, the African peoples had no chance of establishing relatively strong, large states such as had arisen in Europe.

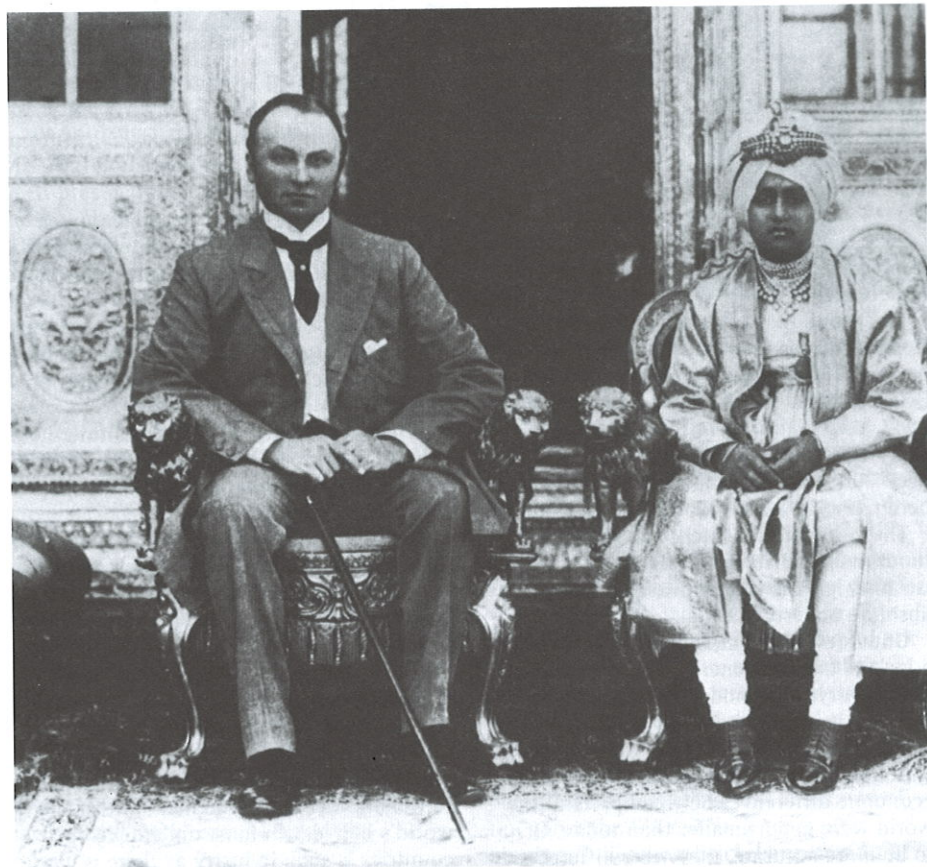
The slave trade was also the underpinning of modern anti-black racism. Suspicion and fear of strangers dates back long before the 16th century, and anti-Jewish discrimination was already well established in Europe. Systematic, widespread prejudice and discrimination based on skin colour started with the slave trade (though it did not reach full pitch until the late 19th century). The white slave-traders and slave-owners, adjusting the ideology of the 'rights of man' to fit in with their economic activity, declared that black people were naturally primitive and inferior. Even worse, some black people were bludgeoned into accepting this, or half-accepting it. Racism itself, in turn, became something of an economic factor in the underdevelopment of black Africa.

The slave trade declined in the first half of the nineteenth century. A new chapter opened in Africa: in a sudden "scramble" at the end of the 19th century, practically the whole continent was divided up as colonies for the European powers.

The economic system established under colonial rule had three main features: limited capitalist enterprise, cash-crop farming linked to European trading companies, and forced labour. Mines — gold and diamond in South Africa, copper in Zambia, etc. — and capitalist farms or estates (especially in the areas where many whites settled, like South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya) employed wage-labour.

Railways and ports were also built. Rail networks were started in the 1880s and 1890s, and mostly completed by the early 1930s. Capital investment in black Africa was, however, much lower than elsewhere in the Third World. Up to 1930, for example, only 2% of British capitalism's overseas investment was in Africa, while 14% was in India, 43% in the rest of the Empire, and 22% in South America.

The wage labour was often casual labour, and the methods primitive. The great majority of the African population were still formally independent peasants. But they were driven increasingly from traditional subsistence farming (i.e. producing mainly for their own consumption) towards cash crops. "The African peasant",



Imperialist rule. The British Raj.

as Walter Rodney records, went in for cash-crop farming for many reasons. A minority eagerly took up the opportunity to continue to acquire European goods... Many others... took to earning cash because they had to pay various taxes in money or because they were forced to work... Examples of Africans literally being forced to grow cash-crops by gun and whip were to be found in Tanganyika under German rule, in Portuguese colonies, and in French Equatorial Africa and the French Sudan in the 1930s... The laws and by-laws by which peasants in British East Africa were required to maintain minimum acreages of cash-crops like cotton and groundnuts were in effect forms of coercion by the colonial state, although they are not normally considered under the heading of 'forced labour'. Forced labour was also used to build railways! roads, and ports.

These elements were combined in different ways and in different proportions in different parts of the continent. But they meshed together in a single system – and one which had very little impetus towards raising productivity.

Force was required to tear Africans away from their traditional livelihoods and create a labour force for capitalist exploitation. But the forcible methods of the colonial regimes did not completely destroy the traditional structures of the African economy, nor were they intended to. Collaboration with tribal chiefs provided the Europeans with a cheap method of administration. And the continuation of some subsistence farming allowed them to pay extremely low wages and prices for cash-crops. Subsistence farming would keep the African workers alive, while wages or cash-crop sales enabled them to pay their taxes and debts and buy a few European goods. The companies which controlled trade in the cash crops, like Unilever, brought huge profits back to Europe. Capitalist profiteers geared themselves into pre-capitalist forms of exploitation; they grabbed the proceeds of the peasants' surplus labour, done under pre-capitalist conditions, and, by selling the goods in Europe, transformed them into capital. The Africans suffered the evils both of capitalism and of the pre-capitalist forms. They suffered the ruthless pressures and insecurity of the capitalist market economy, transmitted through the trading companies; and the isolation, primitive conditions, static technology and traditional hierarchies of pre-capitalist societies.

The Europeans certainly did not bring capitalist civilisation to Africa. Hardly any schools or hospitals were built for the black population until after the Second World War. In Nigeria in the 1930s, for example, there were 12 hospitals for 4,000 Europeans, and 52 hospitals for at least 40 million Africans. Literacy was higher in Nigeria than in other colonies, yet only 12% in 1952.

There was a flurry of "development" spending after World War Two. Partly the colonial powers were responding to the fact that the old colonial economy was

breaking down (under the impact of the drastic decline in primary-product prices in the 1930s) and something of a permanent wage-worker class had emerged. Also, they became convinced that independence was inevitable, and made efforts to create a reliable African middle class to which power could be transferred. But it was too little, too late, and not very useful anyway. After winning independence the new African states had a terrible heritage to overcome.

How Britain ruined India

When black Africa was put under colonial rule in the late 19th century it had already been shattered and devastated by four centuries of the slave trade. But the India conquered by the British from the mid-18th century was a great and splendid empire. European trading bases had existed in India since the early 16th century, but they had exported manufactured goods from India – for India "had an industrial sector producing luxury goods which Europe could not match."

The Mughal Empire – the regime before the British conquest – had not been a progressive system. A tiny elite, mostly alien in origin (Persian or Afghan) and in religion (Muslim), lived in luxury through extremely heavy taxation of the peasants. But the British continued many of the evils of the old regime and added some new ones.

Under Mughal rule, all land had been owned by the Emperor. The peasants were guaranteed the hereditary use of their plots, but could not sell, buy or sub-let land. Members of the ruling class would be allocated districts where they held sway as tax-collectors for the Emperor: these positions were not hereditary. The British half-transformed this set-up. In Bengal and some other areas, the Mughal tax-collectors were given a status which was half landlord, half tax-collector. This landlord/tax-collector class rapidly expanded under British rule, generating a sub-class of middlemen. In southern India, where Mughal rule had decayed well before the British conquest, the British worked differently. There, the higher caste peasants were given quasi-smallholder status, but with the colonial government as overlord.

Karl Marx commented: "In Bengal we have a combination of English land-



The post-colonial situation. Poverty in Pakistan

lordism, of the Irish middlemen system, of the Austrian system, transforming the landlord into the tax-gatherer, and of the Asiatic system making the State the real landlord. In Madras and Bombay we have a French peasant proprietor who is at the same time a serf and a metayer [share-cropper] of the State. The drawbacks of all these various systems accumulate upon him [the peasant] without him enjoying any of their redeeming features." The peasants had no access to resources to improve their agriculture. And if by chance they should get access, the benefit of any improvement would immediately be confiscated by the landlord or middleman, who was a parasite interested only in luxury consumption rather than capitalist-type investment for expansion.

According to all modern research, Marx was mistaken in his belief that the British had also allowed the decay of irrigation works established under the Mughals. The Mughals' irrigation works were slight, and were in fact expanded in certain districts by the British. Overall, however, agricultural productivity increased barely at all, or maybe even decreased, during two centuries of British rule.

Above the relentless peasant poverty, the British replaced the Mughals as a ruling class. The British administrators retained the same vast luxury, display, and armies of servants. By the 1930s, about one-tenth of India's whole national income was flowing to Britain, and another slice was being consumed by the British administration in India itself. The mainte-

nance, in modified form, of the old social structures in the countryside enabled cheaper and easier rule. Britain's land reform, wrote the Governor-General in 1829, "though a failure in many other respects, and in most important essentials, has this great advantage at least, of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of the British dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people". But there was after all a difference between Britain and the Mughals. The Mughals wealth was used for luxury and display alone. The wealth of the British was capital. Sizeable amounts of capital were invested in India. A big railway-building programme was undertaken in the 1850s. In 1870, 21% of all Britain's overseas capital stock was in India.

Karl Marx wrote: "I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expense the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But... you cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion... The railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry." Marx qualified this prediction:

"All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the people.

"But what they will not fail to do is lay down the material premises for both. Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation? The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the new ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

In any case, the growth of factory production in India was very slow. There was a spurt of industrialisation around the First World War, and steel production was started then, much earlier than in most Third World countries. The Indian capitalist class by the time of independence in 1947 was far stronger than any capitalist class in black Africa. But from the 1920s to independence the industrial percentage of India's workforce actually declined. The stark poverty of the peasantry limited the

home market. The British in India, and the Indian elite, preferred imported goods. And, perhaps crucially, Indian industry lacked the state protection and sponsorship which has been crucial to every infant industrial capitalism. Every industrial capitalist power since Britain has developed with tariffs guarding its infant industries and a large measure of state intervention. Even in Britain, state contracts during the Napoleonic Wars were a big factor in the Industrial Revolution. But the Indian capitalists did not have a state of their own. They were ruled by a British state, which would always help British capitalists first. For a short period after World War One, the British did adopt a policy of helping Indian industry. But it was quickly ditched, especially when the great world slump after 1929 left British industry clamouring for the Empire to be made its protected market.

The French writer Claude Levi-Strauss aptly describes India as the British left it: it was "as if history and economics had managed to establish, indeed superimpose their most tragic phases of development on these wretched victims: the shortages and epidemics of medieval times, frenzied exploitation as in the early years of the industrial revolution, and the unemployment and speculation of modern capitalism".

Internet resources

Some of the most useful anti-racism, ethnic minority and immigration-related websites:

Anti-Nazi League

www.anl.org.uk

National anti-fascist campaign, dominated by the Socialist Workers' Party but occasionally organising some important action.

Barbed Wire Britain

www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk

National network of campaigns against the detention of asylum-seekers.

Black Information Link

www.blink.org.uk

Information exchange for black community groups.

Campaign Against Racism and Fascism

www.carf.demon.co.uk

Campaigning anti-racist magazine with a very useful links page.

Campaign to Close Campsfield

www.closecampsfield.org.uk

Community campaign to free the asylum-seekers detained in Campsfield House, near Oxford.

Campaign to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

www.mumia.org

Campaign to free the black radical journalist, framed and sentenced to death by

the American state.

European Roma Rights Centre

www.errc.org

Information centre for and about Europe's Roma.

Free Satpal Ram Campaign

www.asiandubfoundation.com/satpal

Campaign to free the Asian man imprisoned for defending himself against a racist attack.

Immigration Index

www.immigrationindex.org

Comprehensive statistics on immigration and asylum; a good antidote to the racists' lies!

Injustice

www.injusticefilm.co.uk

The film about deaths in custody which the police have tried to suppress.

Inquest

www.inquest.org.uk

Campaign against deaths in police custody, with useful statistics and briefings.

Institute of Race Relations

www.homebeats.co.uk

Research centre which publishes the journal *Race & Class*.

Jewish Socialist Group

www.mjh163.dircon.co.uk/jsg.htm

Socialist group based on the principle of Jewish self-organisation.

Mal Hussein Campaign

www.blink.org.uk/campaign/mhussein.htm

Campaigns to expose and end the ongoing harassment of Lancaster shopkeeper Mal Hussein and his partner Linda Livingstone.

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

www.ncadc.org.uk

National campaign against the deportation of immigrants and asylum-seekers from Britain.

National Civil Rights Movement

www.ncrm.org.uk

National umbrella group for various anti-racism and justice campaigns.

Ricky Reel Campaign

www.iansmith.co.uk/justice/index.htm

Campaigns for justice for the family of the young Asian man whose death at the hands of racists was dismissed by the police.

Searchlight

www.searchlightmagazine.com

This magazine acts as a research centre and point-of-contact for the anti-fascist movement.

Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign

www.blink.org.uk/campaign/stevlaw/main.htm

The official website of the Lawrence family campaign.

Trade Union Congress equality pages

www.tuc.org.uk/equality

Information on the TUC's campaigns for female, black and LGB workers.

New pamphlets from Workers' Liberty

Why you should be a socialist
50p

Radical Chains — sexuality and
class politics £1

We only want the earth —
global capitalism and the
environmental crisis £1.50

The lighting of a fire: education
and class politics

(by the Workers' Liberty
Teachers' Group) £1

Malcolm X 80p

How to fight elections — a case
study £1

EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS

Globalisation, imperialism and
the "New economy" — special
issue of Workers' Liberty maga-
zine £1.95

Marxism and Black nationalism
— a cuttings file £2.50

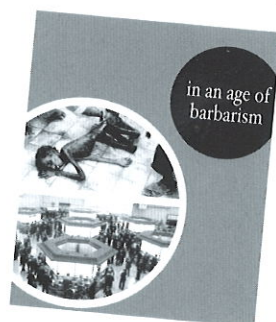
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