

The Past Against Our Future

-fighting racism and fascism

The winter of '79 has turned out different from our expectations. The National Front is down, but not out. The Anti-Nazi League has lost much of its momentum. The Government is attacking the black community, but black people are fighting back.

It is necessary to consider the past to be able to decide how best to shape the future.

This pamphlet tries to show how we can go beyond the success of the ANL, by knowing our enemies and knowing ourselves. The Carnival is over but the struggle continues.

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THE PAST AGAINST OUR FUTURE

FIGHTING RACISM AND FASCISM



A BIG FLAME PAMPHLET

50p

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CONTENTS

- All Our Yesterdays** p.3
1. Fascism in Italy and Germany
 2. Fascism in Britain
 3. The role of the working class
 4. Fascist ideology
- Roots** p.11
1. The effects of imperialism on black people
 2. The historical development of racism
 3. Racism in modern capitalism
 4. The state and immigration control
 5. Racialism in the white working class

- Up Against the Wall.** p.21
1. The impact of the crisis
 2. The psychosexual crisis
 3. The appeal of fascist ideology
 4. The role of the extreme right
 5. Racism in British culture
 6. Race and the Labour and Conservative Parties
 7. The increase in state racism
- Fightback** p.30
1. Our political tasks
 2. Racism and fascism are international
 3. The struggle against fascism
 4. The struggle against racism
 5. The anti-racist anti-fascist movement
 6. The present and the future

Introduction

This pamphlet is the product of several years of collective activity by the Big Flame Anti-fascist/Anti-racist Commission. We have tried to break down the separation between 'thinkers' and 'doers', between theory and practice. The authors of this pamphlet have been active both locally and nationally in the struggle against racism and fascism in their trade unions, communities, anti-racist/anti-fascist committees, ANL committees and other organisations. This active involvement has enabled us to continually enrich our theory and understanding so that we can be clearer about how we go forward.

The struggle against racism and fascism has seen an enormous upsurge in recent years, many important events have happened and new forms of struggle have developed. Demonstrations such as Red Lion Square in 1974, the 4000 strong march in Blackburn in 1976, Lewisham in 1977, Leicester and Southall in 1979. The racist murders of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, Altab Ali, Michael Ferreira and many others as well as the tragic deaths at the hands of the police of Kevin Gately in 1974 and Blair Peach in 1979. The appearance of mass activity by the black community in response to racist and fascist attacks. The increase in state racism — tightening the immigration laws, increased use of 'sus', increased harassment of black people by the police. The attempt to build a democratic, national anti-fascist/anti-racist movement based on local committees and the birth of the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism with their mass involvement and massively successful carnivals. The appearance of the Gay Activists Alliance and Women Against Racism and Fascism and the consequent challenge to sexism within the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement.

We feel there is a need to analyse these developments, in order to learn from our successes and failures. The 1920s and 30s need to be re-examined to gain a clear understanding of the nature of fascism as a mass movement. Similarly a look at the history of British imperialism gives us a better understanding of the British racist state of to-day. We also need to recognise that we are not dealing with the capitalism of the 30s. There have been major changes and knowledge gained from the past is not a substitute for analysing the present crisis and current forms of racism and fascism.

Chapter One, *All our yesterdays*, looks at the fascist movements of the past in Italy, Germany and Britain. We feel there is a need to avoid using the term fascism loosely, to describe every form of authoritarianism as fascist, because we are then likely to make the wrong decisions about how to fight it politically. At the same time we try to show that fascism is not

an 'alien' philosophy, that its ideas are frequently more extreme examples of the sort of commonplace and 'common-sense' ideas that already exist in our society.

Chapter Two, *Roots*, examines the historical basis of the racism that exists in our society today. After a detailed examination of the development of imperialism, it attempts to explain the deep-seated racialism of the white working class, and outlines the racist immigration laws that have been introduced by successive British governments over the last two decades.

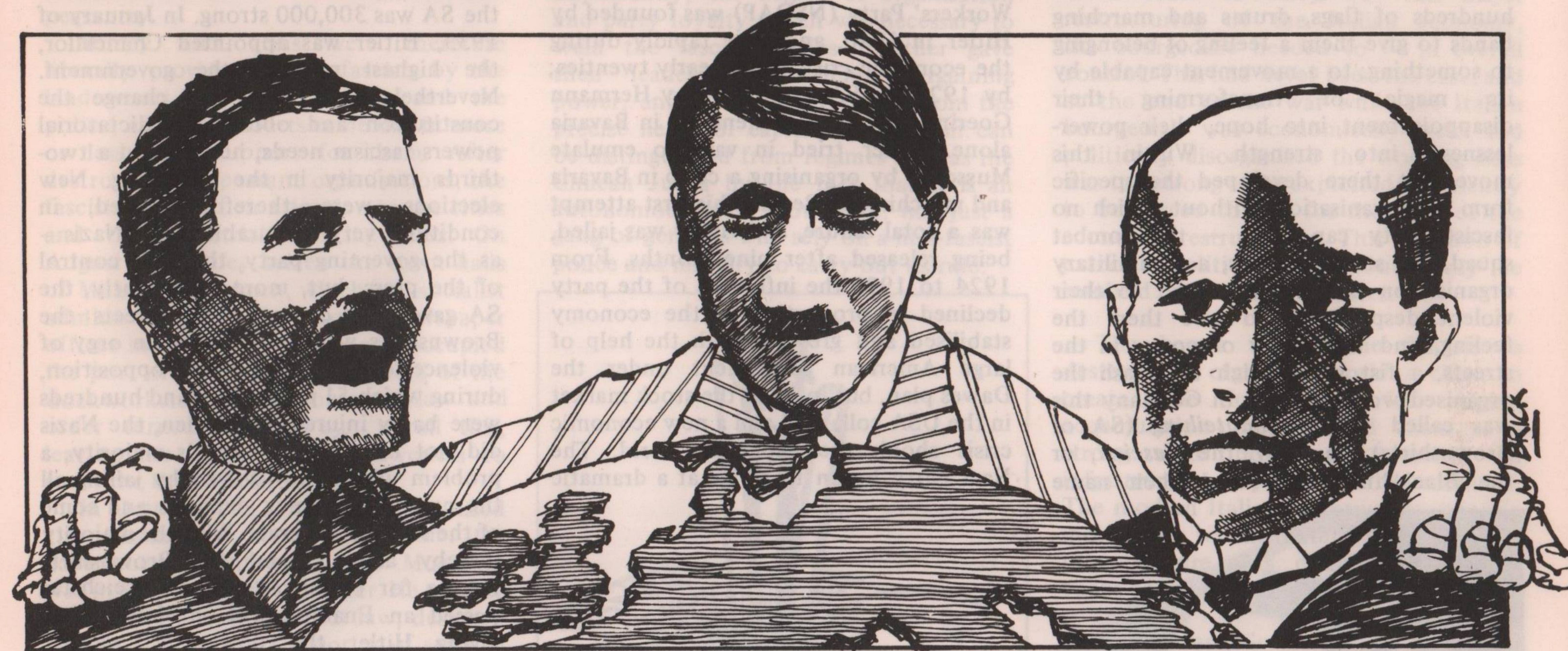
Chapter Three, *Up against the wall*, is an analysis of the crisis today. It examines the general move to the right in British society over the last few years: the attacks on liberal ideas in education, on unemployed 'scroungers', on women's rights, the development of 'scientific' racism and the calls for more law and order to counter black 'muggers'. Although the growth of the National Front and the British Movement are important events during this period we have not done the usual 'expose' on the Nazi background of their leaders. This is covered in many other books and pamphlets, some of which are mentioned in the bibliography. Therefore we have examined some of the more neglected aspects of fascist ideology including the attitudes towards women and sexuality. We also discuss the racism of the British state including the 'sus' and immigration laws in the context of the move towards a more authoritarian form of rule which has been described by some as the 'strong' state.

Chapter Four, *Fightback*, looks at the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement, at its successes and failures. We discuss the importance of international solidarity work, the impact of the women's and gay movements on anti-racist/anti-fascist struggle, the debate over the position of 'no platform for fascists' and the need to support an autonomous black movement. The history of the AR/AF movement is considered from the origins of the various local AR/AF committees, through the growth and decline of the ANL up to the present.

In this pamphlet we have tried to come to terms with the problems we have faced and some we have not faced in the recent past, as a basis for the discussion of where we go from here. We hope that it will not be just another 'nice read' to be put away on the shelf, but will provide a basis for the debate within the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement. There are many questions still to be resolved and we would never claim that this pamphlet contains 'the last word' on fascism and racism. But we do believe that many of the questions we raise have been frequently neglected in the movement and are vital for understanding and fighting racism and fascism.

Ch1. All Our Yesterdays

Fascism from the 1920s to World War 2



Fascism in Italy and Germany

In the introduction we pointed out the political importance of defining clearly and unambiguously what is meant by fascism. In Chapter one we intend to do this by looking at it historically. In particular we shall describe how fascism was able to take over the state in Germany and Italy in the 1930's and explain why it was less successful in Britain.

Fascism as a Mass Movement

Fascism has been called the revolt of the petty bourgeoisie. Obviously there is more to it than that, but it is true that all fascist movements to date have been based on this section of society. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries two historically new and powerful classes developed along with the establishment of large-scale industry — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The first owned the means of production; the second nothing except their ability to work, which they sold to the bourgeoisie to exploit for profit. This division of capitalist society is still with us today, despite our relatively higher standard of living.

There was, and still is, a third class: the petty bourgeoisie, who owned their own means of livelihood. In this class were small tradespeople, shopkeepers, handicraft workers and peasants. This class has for over a hundred years been gradually declining in numbers and power, because of its inefficiency in competition with production-line factories and large scale agriculture. In fact, the *Communist Manifesto*, written in 1848 by Karl Marx, predicted that they would sink into the proletariat and disappear as an independent section of modern society. They remained on the scene, however,

and by the end of the first world war had been joined by a new 'middle class' of engineers, designers, technicians, doctors, managers and so on. Although they had no economic independence, this new 'middle class' considered themselves superior to the working class.

In the years after 1918, the conditions of the petty bourgeoisie and new 'middle class' became worse. In Germany, they were crucified by the collapse of the German mark in the early twenties: tradespeople and small factory owners were bankrupted, while university professors and managers on fixed wages with no union to back them earned less than the workers in the factories. Normally politically reserved, their loss of privileges and social position drove them to extreme measures. Although opposed to big business, which was bankrupting them and forcing them to work for wages, they also hated the working class, who were able, through the strength of their organisations, to maintain their living standards to some extent. The ideology of the petit bourgeoisie was thus both anti-capitalist and anti-labour. More accurately, though, their anti-capitalism was nothing more than jealousy and frustration at failing to become capitalists themselves. For this they blamed finance capital which, through the credit system, they believed was responsible for inflation and bankruptcies.

They saw the solution as a 'classless' society, but not in the socialist sense of the word: they wanted a society based on class collaboration where there was a national interest over and above class interests. So they came to support National Socialism (the full name of the

Nazi party was the National Socialist German Workers Party, or NSDAP). By socialism they meant for the benefit of all, irrespective of class, not the abolition of classes. For them, industrial strife was not due to the opposing interests of conflicting classes, but was the result of communist 'agitators' and 'trouble-makers' who had to be removed. In practice, therefore, their movement was anti-working class; opposition to capitalism stayed at the level of propaganda.

The petty bourgeoisie were joined in the fascist movement by other sections of society. War veterans, especially the officers, were hard hit by unemployment, and looked back nostalgically to the comradeship of the trenches. They were ashamed of losing the war and blamed this on a so-called 'stab in the back' by the traitorous politicians who negotiated the Treaty of Versailles. University students, most of them from privileged backgrounds, had no chance of getting a job, but equally, nothing but contempt for the organised working class. Peasants' sons, forced off the land into the factories too recently to acquire working class consciousness, were also prominent in backing the fascists.

What this diverse group of people lacked, and because of their diversity could never have, was an organisation to represent their class interests. The bourgeoisie had their economic power, the workers the trade unions; they had nothing. Their diverse political interests prevented them agreeing on a political programme, on a rational set of ideas, explanations and arguments. And yet they shared a sense of deep resentment

against the Weimar Republic they lived in. And so they could only build a movement in which faith was substituted for reason, action for understanding, myths for analysis, and scapegoats for real enemies. They relied on symbols to weld them together, on large demonstrations with hundreds of flags, drums and marching bands to give them a feeling of belonging to something; to a movement capable by its magic of transforming their disappointment into hope, their powerlessness into strength. Within this movement there developed the specific form of organisation without which no fascist party can exist — the combat squad, the stormtroopers, a paramilitary organisation to give an outlet to their violent desperation, to give them the feeling, and the reality of power in the streets, a fist with which to smash the organised working class. In Germany this was called the *Sturmabteilung* (SA or Brownshirts), in Italy the *Fascisti*, or the Blackshirts, who took their name

from the Italian word for a bundle of sticks; like the workers they were powerless as individuals, together, they were strong.

Fascism in Germany

The National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) was founded by Hitler in 1920, and grew rapidly during the economic crisis of the early twenties; by 1923 the SA, controlled by Hermann Goering, had 15,000 members in Bavaria alone. Hitler tried in vain to emulate Mussolini by organising a coup in Bavaria and marching on Berlin. This first attempt was a total failure, and Hitler was jailed, being released after nine months. From 1924 to 1929 the influence of the party declined in proportion as the economy stabilised and grew through the help of large American investment under the Dawes plan, but in 1929 the stock market in the USA collapsed and a new economic crisis shook the capitalist world. The Nazi party began to revive at a dramatic

rate as the voting figures in the national elections show:

1928	800,000
1930	6,000,000
1932	13,000,000

By 1932 it was the largest party in the Reichstag, the German parliament, and the SA was 300,000 strong. In January of 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor, the highest post in the government. Nevertheless, in order to change the constitution and obtain the dictatorial powers fascism needs, he required a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag. New elections were therefore called, in conditions very favourable to the Nazis — as the governing party, they had control of the press, but, more importantly, the SA gave them control of the streets: the Brownshirts were set loose in an orgy of violence to intimidate political opposition, during which 51 people died and hundreds were badly injured. Even then, the Nazis did not have the two-thirds majority, a problem which they solved by jailing all the communist party deputies and some of the social democrats. With the majority thereby assured, and the Brownshirts baying for blood outside, the Reichstag passed an Enabling Bill on March 23rd, giving Hitler the power he wanted.

The true anti-working class nature of fascism can be seen from the speed with which the Nazis destroyed the labour movement: the independent trade unions were abolished on May 2nd and the trade union offices and funds were taken over. The trade union leaders were arrested and thrown into what later became known as the concentration camps. On May 10th, the German Workers Front was set up; its leaders were appointed by the Nazis to collaborate with the bosses, the right to strike was abolished and industrial sabotage became punishable by death. On July 14th, the Nazi party was declared the only legal political party in Germany.

Over the next few years the German working class suffered terribly while big business, able to increase its exploitation, made huge profits. The unemployed were given jobs at rates of pay little higher than unemployment benefit and regular workers took a wage cut to pay for it. Fascism reached its logical extreme in the gas chambers of Belsen and Dachau where six million Jews died, together with countless numbers of Poles, communists, socialists, gays, gypsies and democrats.

Fascism in Italy

As with most of Europe, the end of the first world war saw the outbreak of mass working class struggles in Italy. After the 1919 elections, in which the socialist party won the largest number of seats, the factories were occupied by half a million workers in 1920, and the peasants organised themselves into cooperatives and unions to obtain better conditions from the rich landowners. At the same time the first fascist squads were being organised by Mussolini.

Their first operations began in autumn of 1920 as the factory occupations were coming to an end. They operated initially in the countryside, and it was no

coincidence that their first target was the communes of Emilia, which still held economic power in their hands. Their appearance on the scene was a godsend to the capitalists and rich landowners, who were increasingly desperate in the face of the demands of the working class and peasantry.

Money and arms were therefore liberally provided to the fascists by the landowners and industrialists, and the police, army and courts came out in more or less open support for them. After destroying the peasant organisations, the fascists turned their attention to the cities and the industrial working class. On August 22nd they seized the town halls of Milan and Leghorn, which had socialist administrations; they burned newspaper offices in Milan and Genoa, and occupied the port of Genoa, the stronghold of the dockworkers' union. Bourgeois law and order turned a blind eye to all this, leaving the working class powerless to resist the final fascist takeover.

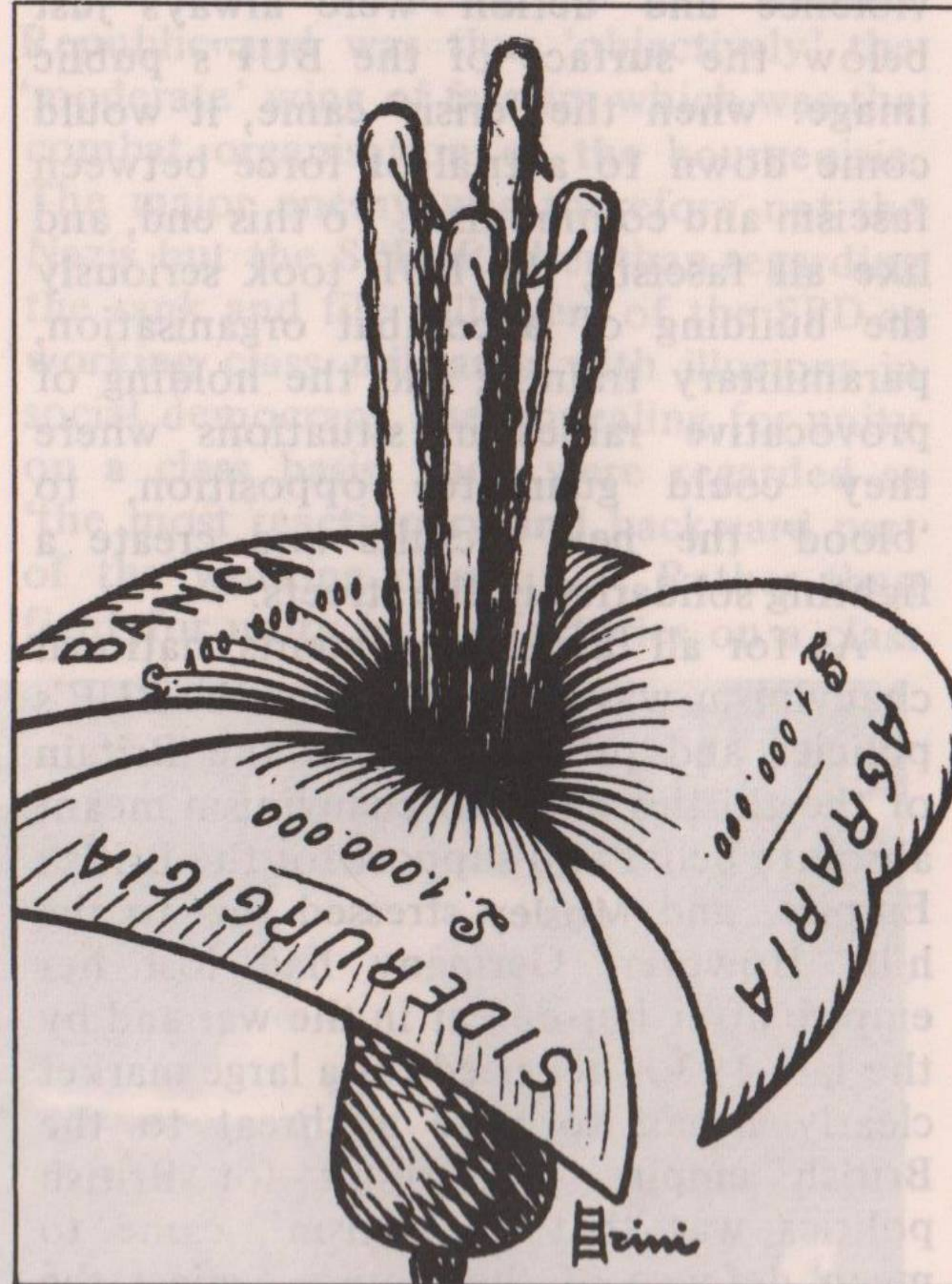
In October 1922, Mussolini organised the blackshirts' march on Rome, the government capitulated and Mussolini was installed as Prime Minister. He quickly introduced a new electoral law, designed to give the fascists a majority of seats in parliament, and the fascist combat squads were let loose again to intimidate political opposition during the 1924 elections. With a majority in parliament after these elections he gradually introduced new laws to break the working class organisations completely and eliminate political opposition. On October 1925, the bosses' organisation, the General Federation of Industry, granted the fascist unions the exclusive right to represent the workers, and in November the right to strike was abolished; the labour exchanges and labour organisations followed. In 1926, all political parties opposed to the regime were dissolved.

Capitalists now had the right to fix wages, and to cut them if they so wished. The result was a cut in real wages for the working class from 1927 to 1932 of over 50%. The unemployed were found jobs in public works at less than the rate for the job, which in turn brought down the wages of all other workers. As in Germany, the smashing of the independent organisations of the working class allowed capitalist profits to increase.

Fascism and Big Business

And so, in Italy and Germany the results of the fascist takeover were clear — destruction of the organised working

class, and booming profits for big business. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to say that fascism was an unwitting tool of the capitalists. After all, large numbers of fascists had been recruited on the basis of opposition to big business. More importantly, the degree of organisation and party loyalty which was necessary to weld the fascist parties together gave their leaders an immense bargaining power, and a partial autonomy from the precise needs of capitalism. Fascism can be distinguished from regimes such as the Chilean Junta by the fact that it is an autonomous mass movement, not just a gang of generals who rely on a non-fascist police and military to carry out its rule.



'The flower of Fascism' by Giuseppe Scalarini: the petals of big business, the banks, and agriculture reveal clubs — the violence of Fascism

Even so, a fascist takeover would have been impossible without the financial and political backing of important sections of the bourgeoisie, so it becomes important to know what it was about the position of German and Italian capitalism which made it resort to fascism rather than stay with bourgeois democracy.

Italy after the war was a mainly agricultural country, not yet capitalised, but with a well developed labour movement. The problems of the bourgeoisie focussed on the twin needs for capital accumulation and an infrastructure on which to lay the basis of a competitive capitalist economy. In

concrete terms this meant electrification, the development of a car industry, an efficient transport system, mechanised agriculture and the means of increasing the exploitation of the workers.

In order to carry out this major restructuring of the Italian economy, the bourgeoisie needed to be in overall control. This had never been the case, and at the end of the war while the Italian bourgeoisie was economically weak and politically disorganised the working class was too strong to be exploited sufficiently to be forced to pay for the costs of the economic restructuring. This situation of extreme political crisis could only be resolved by extreme measures.

The bosses needed the fascists to destroy the organised working class; to create the conditions for capital accumulation they needed them as a strong state power to establish an infrastructure by dictatorial methods. The modern Italian motorway system is a monument to the extent to which that infrastructure was established, on the backs of sweated labour.

By contrast, Germany in 1929 was one of the most developed capitalist economies in the world and concessions granted to the working class ensured co-operation with the state by a significant section of the class. Nevertheless, there were sections of German capital, notably heavy industry, who faced a crisis of profitability because of the world economic crisis. They wanted a cut in their workers' wages and a market in which to sell their goods. Germany had no overseas empire — it had fought, and lost, the first World War for a 'Place in the Sun'. Further, the inability to maintain a strong government eventually led, through 'Article 48' to the Chancellor taking over from parliament. The Nazi party were clearly attractive for those looking for a strong government.

By destroying working class organisations the Nazis could force down wages, and by massive public spending, particularly on armaments, they could create the necessary market for the goods of heavy industry. This increase in public spending was inflationary, and was of course paid for by the working class through, for example, forced saving, the savings then to be 'lent' to the state for an indeterminate length of time.

Fascism in Britain

In Britain the 'final solution' to the capitalist crisis was not fascism. Why the difference? The conventional explanation is that 'it couldn't happen here', as if to say that there is something essentially 'British' which prevents a fascist takeover. We reject this nonsense and look to the economic, political and social factors which explain the differences. Firstly the economic crisis was less

severe in Britain because to some extent it could be passed onto the colonies of the empire, which provided a source of cheap raw materials and a captive market. Secondly, the British bourgeoisie had learned, by extending the vote in a piecemeal and gradual way over a hundred year period, that universal suffrage and legal reformist parties could contain the growth of working class and revolutionary

organisations.

The British Union of Fascists

The strong belief in parliamentary democracy was a barrier to the development of a mass fascist movement which is itself anti-democratic and anti-parliament. Nevertheless, during the 1930s there was a well organised, and at times threatening, fascist minority called the British Union of Fascists. The BUF





Mosley's verbal attack

was formed in 1932 by Oswald Mosley. At its height, the BUF had a membership, at most of 35,000, concentrated in a few specific areas — London, Manchester, Leeds and the south coast resort towns. It was never able to grow in areas where the labour movement and socialist tradition was strongest — Scotland, south Wales and the north east.

It was able to recruit the support of individuals from the establishment aristocracy and intelligentsia, and for a time the press baron Lord Rothermere and his *Daily Mail*, which constantly heaped praise on the Blackshirts and their policies. Even so, the fascists were never able to win the support of important sections of the ruling class, and in particular of big business. While it recruited some working class people, its turnover of new recruits was high, and workers were put off by the class composition of its leadership, which was mostly ex-army officers, aristocrats and gentry.

The BUF was founded with the publication of 'The Greater Britain', which emphasised a number of themes to attract support from possible sources of discontent. These themes (almost identical with those of the National Front today except for racism) were youth, nationalism, anti-communism, anti-

semitism and an attack on the political establishment, or the 'old gang' as they were called. Like the National Front later, the BUF was essentially opportunist and rapidly ditched policies when they failed to get support.

The BUF was at pains to project Mosley as the 'Leader' ('Führer' in German means leader) inspired by vision and powers denied to lesser mortals, fit to rule directly the destiny of the nation like a political superman. Accordingly, the BUF was a one man show, with Mosley making all the decisions, which were to be carried out loyally by the rest of the organisation. To attract support and create a sense of purpose for the membership, violence and 'action' were always just below the surface of the BUF's public image: when the 'crisis' came, it would come down to a trial of force between fascism and communism. To this end, and like all fascists, the BUF took seriously the building of a combat organisation, paramilitary training and the holding of provocative rallies in situations where they could guarantee opposition, to 'blood' the new recruits and create a fighting solidarity in the streets.

As for all fascist movements, national chauvinism was the bedrock of the BUF's policies and propaganda. In the Britain of the thirties national chauvinism meant absolute belief and support for the British Empire, and Mosley stressed this to the hilt. However, Germany had lost her empire after her defeat in the war and by the late 1930s her need for a large market clearly began to pose a threat to the British empire. The result for British politics was that 'patriotism', came to mean defence of the empire against the threat from Germany. It was impossible in this situation to be a patriot and at the same time support Hitler's fascism. The fascist movement in Britain, led by Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts, foundered on the very rock on which it hoped to build.

It would be tempting, but misleading, to conclude that the BUF failed simply

because of the various objective conditions outlined above; this would be to overlook the role of political movements in making history. It is important to recognise that whereas Germany and Italy had to turn to fascism to bring in state intervention in the economy, very similar state planning was achieved in the USA (Roosevelt's New Deal) and Britain after the war



A Fascist child responds

without such dramatic measures. At the same time, we mustn't forget the clumsiness of the BUF or, most important of all, the opposition of the working class, to which we now turn.

The Role of the Working Class

We have explained why, in Germany and Italy, given the economic and political situation, fascism was the only possibility of restructuring the economy for the continuation of capitalist production. Was then the victory of fascism inevitable in these two countries? In both Italy and Germany one essential condition for the victory of fascism was the political defeat of the working class. For the working class too has a solution to the crisis of capitalism — *SOCIALISM*. And it was very much the revolutionary attempts to overthrow capitalism that scared the bourgeoisie so much that they were willing to surrender at least a significant part of their political power to support the fascists in destroying this threat.

Italy

In Italy at the end of the war the militancy of the working class increased

to reach its revolutionary peak of 1920. A series of strikes by the metal-workers, particularly in the Fiat works in Turin, spread throughout the northern centres. When the owners of a Milan car factory threatened a lockout the workers retaliated by occupying the factory. This spread to other centres and at its peak 500 large enterprises, including the most important ones, were under the control of the workers councils.

Although the working class had considerable power in its hands, neither the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) nor the Italian Communist Party (PCI) understood the need to seize state power. A few intellectuals, particularly Gramsci, did have this understanding. In May 1919 he wrote

'The present phase of the class struggle in Italy is the phase that precedes either

the conquest of political power by the revolutionary proletariat . . . or a tremendous reaction by the capitalists and the governing caste.' With no clear political way forward the factory occupations ended when the employers conceded many of the demands of the workers. The result was a decline in the political power of the working class and an inability to respond to the fascist threat.

Germany

In Germany the working class had achieved considerable power after the first world war and this was expressed in workers councils. However because the councils were dominated by highly skilled workers their aims were concerned with their function as producers only and they distrusted 'politics'. On top of this, the

ability of the Nazis to offer an apparent sexual and social security (see later) and through public works such as the autobahns, jobs for the unemployed (Keynes, the economist-planner, had much praise for the Nazis), made it difficult for the working class parties to make much headway. This was not helped by antics of the two main parties — the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD).

The SPD believed in the parliamentary road to socialism and had participated in governing the Weimar Republic since the end of the war. It believed in legality at all costs. Even when it was clear that the Nazis didn't give a damn about the constitution, even when it was clear that the Nazis would destroy the working class organisations, the SPD leadership did everything within its power to hold back the rank and file followers from mounting effective opposition on the streets. 'Don't provoke the Nazis', they said, 'leave it to the government'. At the same time the ruling class, through the government, was turning a blind eye to the illegal activities of the Nazis and their actions were preparing the ground for a Nazi takeover.



Battle of Cable Street

And when the government itself broke the constitution in taking over the SPD-controlled Prussian government by a coup d'état, the SPD did nothing.

Under these circumstances the KPD were in a position to appeal to the rank and file followers of the SPD for working class unity against the Nazis. Their failure to do so was a result of the disastrous policies of the Comintern. By 1929 the various national communist parties were completely subordinate to the Stalinist leadership in Russia. The theory of 'social fascism' initially put forward by Stalin in 1924 had become the official dogma of the Comintern. According to this theory, social democracy was the major force propping up the Weimar Republic and was thus 'objectively' the 'moderate' wing of fascism which was the combat organisation of the bourgeoisie. The major enemy was therefore not the Nazis but the SPD. Rather than regarding the rank and file followers of the SPD as working class militants with illusions in social democracy and appealing for unity on a class basis, they were regarded as 'the most reactionary and backward part of the working class . . .'. Rather than fight for unity in the factories on a class

basis the KPD set up their own union in opposition to that controlled by the SPD. The results were disastrous.

Divisions within the working class were strengthened, the influence of the KPD in the factories diminished and the working class as a whole was weakened. This policy reached its ludicrous extreme in July 1931 over a referendum. Initially the KPD had gone against its policy of only joining a 'united front from below' and called on the SPD to join with them. When the SPD leadership refused the KPD stood on its head and united with the Nazis in attempting to oust the SPD government from Prussia.

The result of the policies of the SPD and KPD was only to add to the political and organisational confusion of the working class. Effective working class resistance to the Nazi take-over became impossible. A political defeat led to a physical extermination.

Britain

The most famous anti-BUF mobilisation occurred at Cable Street in London's East End on 4th October 1936. Although this didn't stop the BUF finally and there were many other important actions around this period, we can look at what happened up to October 4th to see the forces behind anti-fascism at that time. The major working class organisation was the Labour Party. Its response to the growth of the BUF was similar to the way the SPD responded to the fascists in Germany. The initial response in language similar to today was, 'ignore them and they'll go away'. This changed after the BUF's anti-semitic campaign in the East End to another policy, equally familiar today, of calling on a supposedly neutral state to ban their demonstrations and paramilitary organisations.

Compared to Italy and Germany, the British Communist Party was very small. By the time the BUF appeared on the scene the Comintern had dropped its 'social fascism' policy and was in favour of the 'Popular Front'. The various national communist parties were to attempt to bring the official trade union and social democratic parties into joint activity and pronouncements against the fascist parties. Some Labour Party members did work with the Communist Party but, as Joe Jacobs points out in *Out of the Ghetto*, it was the rank and file, including many non-party members who led the way. Considerable efforts had to be put in to get the CP leadership to drop a planned march in solidarity with the Spanish Republican Movement for that particular day and much of the work to mobilise people for the East End march was done without guidance or official support. As it turned out, hundreds of thousands marched and took up the slogan of the Spanish Republic 'They shall not pass' and stopped Mosley from marching.

Fascist Ideology

Fascism does not appear suddenly out of nowhere, neither are its ideas and beliefs absurdities far different from those in the heads of 'ordinary' people. Many of the ideas are prejudices common in bourgeois society taken one step further. Thus 'we'll always need leaders' becomes unquestioning loyalty to the Führer; 'a woman's place is in the home' leads to women being regarded as breeding machines to provide the nation with soldiers.

Fascist ideology is therefore a thoroughly bourgeois ideology which does not challenge the capitalist system. However, there are contradictions within this ideology which led many to support it in the sincere belief that it was a radical challenge to the status quo. Many fascists, for example, believed that the socialism in National Socialism was for real and believed they were building a party to smash the bosses. In this section we therefore intend to look more closely at various aspects of fascist ideology in order to gain a better understanding of its mass appeal.

The Socialism in National Socialism

Fascist organisations both in the past and present have attacked the capitalist system in outspoken terms. The odd paragraph in *National Front News* would not be out of place in the papers of the revolutionary left. The question then is whether these attacks on the capitalist system are genuine, or just a 'con-trick' to attempt to win support amongst the working class.

What we have to understand is that this anti-capitalist propaganda of the fascists is based on a misunderstanding of what happens at the heart of capitalist production. According to the fascists there are two types of capital – Industrial Capital (or Productive Capital) and Finance Capital. In the former the workers and capitalists jointly produce commodities and justly share the rewards – profits for the bosses, wages for the workers.

Along comes the moneylender (Finance Capital) demanding a share of the bosses' profits on the money in the form of interest on the money loaned to the capitalist. Unlike the boss, who has been productive, the moneylender did nothing, he is a parasite and hence deserves nothing.

In the real world of capitalism this division between Finance Capital and Industrial Capital is not so clear cut. All the wealth is produced by the labour of the workers in transforming the raw materials of production into the finished commodity. That part of the wealth produced by the workers for which they are not paid is divided up between the boss and moneylender. They are both parasites, and in the real world very often the same person or the same corporation.

The point about the theory is that it had enormous political implications for

the German Nazis. Firstly, it enabled the NSDAP to win the support of anti-capitalist workers without at the same time antagonising the bosses. Secondly the real class struggle between workers and capitalists could be obscured under the smokescreen of a mythical battle of labour and industrial capital against 'Jewish' usury. Thirdly it supported the Nazis' racial theory – not only could anti-semitism be justified in racial terms, but also in terms of the allegedly parasitic role Jews played in the economy as financiers.

Other Strands in Fascist Ideology

Fascism is not just a theory of race allied to a theory of capitalist society. It is a theory of social and personal relations with strong ties to authoritarianism and patriarchal forms of social organisation. The authoritarian tradition in German political thought had been dominant since the failure of the bourgeois revolution in 1848. The failure to establish the bourgeois rights and beliefs of the French revolution – a free press, representative government, freedom for political parties etc. – meant the continuation of the reactionary and authoritarian philosophy of the Junkers, the landed aristocracy.



The NSDAP also incorporated into its programme elements of the 'Petty Bourgeois Socialism' of the nineteenth century. Under threat from the development of large scale industry, this movement advocated a return to a pre-capitalist mode of production and the old property relations which went along with them – guilds in manufacture and patriarchal relations in agriculture. These, in fact, became the demands of the Nazi 'Guild Socialists' and inspired the corporations of the Third Reich. The main importance of this item of political programme was its contribution to swinging the petty bourgeoisie behind the Nazi party. Their attention was eagerly directed to the alleged fact that all the large retail stores were in the hands of the Jews, and that this spelt ruin for the small shopkeeper. Thus the anti-semitism of the NSDAP could provide the link between the separate items of their programme and the consciousness of the petty bourgeoisie.

Anti-semitism

Early Christian doctrine forbade its followers from engaging in moneylending for gain, so that this function – called 'usury' – fell to the Jews since they were the only sizeable non-Christian minority

in Europe. The earliest attacks on usury were anti-capitalist, but, because of the Christian doctrine, tended to be couched in religious terms. Christianity, and this was especially true in Germany at the time of the Protestant Reformation, was therefore the greatest persecutor of the Jews.

From the sixteenth century on, anti-semitism became what has been called 'an entire system of religious, political, social, cultural and economic illusion which penetrated into the very marrow of the bones of the German artisan and peasant classes. And because of his role as usurer, as mediating the process of ruin of these classes, the Jew became identified in the petty bourgeois consciousness with social change and the various philosophical and political ideas and institutions which facilitated the breakup of the guild and patriarchal order – democracy, liberalism, republicanism, rationalism, materialism, free trade, capitalism, socialism and revolution' (Robert Black, *Fascism in Germany*). Thus the moneylender appeared as enemy number one to the German peasant, and in so far as he was more often than not Jewish, the equation Jew equals parasite was not difficult for the Nazis to put across successfully.

The threatened world of the German petty bourgeoisie was haunted by the twin spectres of capitalism and socialism, between which its own power was being squeezed. Rather than knowingly take sides with either of these classes against the other, the petty bourgeoisie was more readily wooed by Nazi demagoguery which placed them both in cahoots against the poor shopkeeper and peasant. The linking factor was anti-semitism: 'While Moses Kohn sits in the directors meeting, advocating a policy of firmness', said Hitler, 'his brother, Isaac Cohen, stands in the factory yard stirring up the masses.'

During the latter part of the nineteenth century the so-called science of race had been developing. Writers such as Count Arthur de Gobineau, the 'father of modern racism', and Houston Stewart Chamberlain developed the theory that the 'racial question' was the most important problem in history. This was taken over by the fascists, who saw history as the history of the racial struggle and opposed to the Marxist view that history is the history of the class struggle.

For the German Nazis, the supreme race was the Aryan race and its basis was the German middle classes, those hit most severely during the economic crisis. The whole thing, according to the Nazis, was a 'Jewish Conspiracy of World Government'. The Jews were deliberately sabotaging the economic base of the Aryan civilisation and at the same time weakening the 'purity of the race.'

'It was and is the Jews who bring the negroes into the Rhineland, always with the same secret thought of their own of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily resulting bastardisation... to deprive the white race of the foundations for a sovereign existence through infection

from lower humanity' – Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. (Note that the National Front are careful to blame others – the 'liberals' etc. – for 'bringing in the blacks'.)

This theory was based to a large extent on the 'Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion', which was claimed by anti-semites to be the authentic minutes of a series of meetings of Jewish leaders in which they planned the overthrow of the world. Needless to say, it has been clearly demonstrated that the document was a forgery of the Tsarist secret police in the early years of this century, but it continues to turn up in fascist literature to this day as 'proof' of the 'Jewish conspiracy'.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour

'Marriages between Jews and nationals of German or similar blood are forbidden.' 'Jews are forbidden to hoist the Reich and national flags, and to show the Reich colours. They are on the other hand allowed to show the Jewish colours.'

In the eyes of the NSDAP this threat to the Aryan race had to be removed, and the basis laid for the 'final solution'. As early as 1919, Hitler pointed out that 'Rational anti-semitism's... final objective must unswervingly be the removal of the Jews altogether' (our emphasis). It is clear therefore that the Nazis' attempts to liquidate the Jewish people altogether in the gas chambers of Belsen, Dachau and Auschwitz was not some insane diversion from the true nature of fascism, but a logical result of everything the Nazis stood for, and always had stood for.

The Problem of Understanding Fascism

One of the weaknesses of the anti-fascists of the thirties was their lack of understanding of what they were up against. In general, attempts to explain it were exclusively on the basis of nineteenth century Marxist political economy. Wilhelm Reich, an Austrian Marxist, attempted to go beyond this by looking at the appeal of fascism at a psychological level.

He argued that the German Nazis gained mass support because most people are brought up to fear freedom, have little confidence in themselves, and feel the need for strong leaders. This is doubtless true, but what is controversial about Reich is that he put most of these feelings down to the suppression of childhood sexuality by the authoritarian family.

Now, while we don't accept that a psychological analysis of fascism provides a full explanation, we also reject the 'World Fascist Disease Breeds on Crisis and is Aimed Only at Smashing the Trade Unions' 'theories' of some crude Trotskyists. We firmly believe that Marxists must learn from a feminist understanding of sexuality, sexism and the family and so be able to begin to appreciate the basis of fascism's appeal. That is why in the following pages we complete our picture of fascist ideology by looking at what the insights of sexual politics can teach us about it.



Nazi racist beer-mat: 'He who buys from a Jew is a traitor to his people'

Reich on Fascism

Reich said that the results of parents discouraging any form of sexuality in children is that the child grows up feeling 'guilty', afraid, shy, fearful of authority, obedient, 'good' and docile. This leads in turn to a fear of freedom, to a conflict within the person between instinct and morality which the latter usually wins. Suppression of childhood sexuality is the result of the authoritarian family, said Reich, and this type of family was most often to be found in the petty bourgeoisie. Thus the petty bourgeoisie are predisposed to accept authoritarian regimes and whims of dictators. Reich also suggested that the reason for a significant number of working class people turning to the Nazis was a consequence of them imitating middle class lifestyles. 'The lower middle class bedroom suite, which the rabble buys as soon as it has the means even if he is otherwise revolutionary minded; the consequent suppression of the wife, even if he is a communist; the 'decent' suit of clothes for Sunday, 'proper' dance steps etc. have an incomparably greater reactionary influence when repeated day after day than thousands of revolutionary rallies and leaflets can ever hope to counter'. Therefore, said Reich, socialists and anti-fascists should cultivate the budding revolutionary lifestyles rather than producing more and more doses of 'propaganda against hunger'.

Women in Nazi Germany

Whether we agree or not with some of the links made by Reich is less important than the fact that the sexual politics of fascism was ignored by the majority of its opponents despite its being crucial to the type of society the fascists wanted to create.

Firstly, the German Nazis (as the National Front today) attacked sexual permissiveness, the 'loosening of moral standards' after the war. Along with the rapid industrialisation, it threatened the breakup of the peasant family, the very backbone of the state and its security. This propaganda also gained them the support of the traditionally conservative middle classes and sections of the church. It should be emphasised however, that morality was always secondary to the

needs of the nation and the race. When they first came to power their desire to strengthen the family to increase the population was their main goal, whereas in the later 30s they supported the production of children in any circumstances; in or out of wedlock, it didn't matter.

Secondly, they had to control women's actions and choices if they were to implement their racial policies. Thirdly, women were crucial to their desire to boost the population, thus strengthening the capacity of the nation to wage aggressive imperialistic war.

While schemes to loan money at low rates of interest to women if they married; paid maternity leave and family allowances were intended to strengthen the traditional role of women thereby cutting down their choices, they were addressed to the real needs of women for financial help. As well as those financial incentives, fascism was able to gain support from women through the way it drew on and extended the patriarchal culture that already existed. In its glorification of motherhood it offered a secure role for women where everyday subservience to men and the state was to be looked on as an honour.

Life for those women who continued to reject their traditional role was very difficult. Contraceptive and abortion facilities were removed, although once again these policies were subordinate to the precious racial policies of the Nazis — abortions were freely available to those with 'birth defects', and for non-Aryan women. Despite the mystical propaganda about 'the dignity of motherhood', women were first and foremost breeders of 'racially healthy stock', and women who attempted to be or do anything else were persecuted and, in the case of women having abortions, actually shot.

In institutionalising women's oppression in this way, the Nazis were working in tandem with, and not against, prevailing ideas of 'a woman's place'. We need to remember this; supporting women's liberation is not a diversion from the anti-fascist struggle, it is a central part of it. The same can be said for those movements which challenge the traditional role and image of men.

Masculinism and Fascism

The Nazi wish to foster a 'Master Race' not only led to tight control over women, but in a different way, over men too: true Aryan men had to be soldiers and brothers in combat and fathers to the race.

It was difficult to live up to the usual standards of manliness in Germany after the First World War. Defeat in the war, the scarcity of jobs, the breakdown of traditional values of respect for authority, belief in the family and the virtue of patriotism shattered their ideals of manhood. For those who had fought in the trenches it was worse; they slunk around the beerhalls in self-pity. Goering called them 'fighters who could not de-brutalise themselves'.

Male companionship in the brutal conditions of the trenches had a

profound effect on this generation — they came to place overriding importance on this all-male companionship. A set of ideas that had developed in the pre-war youth movement made a lot of sense to them — **MASCULINISM**. This means thinking that men are great and women are to be despised. Stefan George — an influential philosopher in Germany at the time — for example, advocated the *Bund* (Communion of Men), praising masculine prowess, purity and perfection. He believed in a circle of men, led to a beautiful future by the Führer. Another writer, Bluher, held that humanity had failed to maintain itself on a 'heroic' level because men had allowed themselves to succumb to the 'female' virtues of human kindness, sympathy and charity. Bluher saw male love as the 'unique force for creating the state and its Führer; it should not be debased and squandered on the family'.

Embittered ex-soldiers plus masculinist ideas had a profound effect on the early Nazi party, despite the fact that some of them contradicted other aspects of fascist ideology. The Nazis said 'It is our belief that it is the very masculinity of National Socialism which will most ultimately appeal to every genuine woman, for only this will enable her to become a full woman once more'.

Hitler built up a paramilitary movement from a small nucleus of ex-servicemen into a vast organisation of several millions partly because he was able to offer the impoverished middle class man and later the unemployed a chance to retrieve their lost masculine self-respect. They got a free uniform and entry into a strong and powerful brotherhood — the Brownshirts. It was they who brawled the way along the road to power.

The SA also provided a refuge for many homosexuals attacked by society in the 1920s. However, this 'by-product' of

masculinism was allowed only so long as the Nazis needed it. After taking power, the axe came down on homosexuals too. It started with the 'Night of the long Knives' and the Blood Purge, and ended with the murder of half-a-million homosexuals in the gas chambers. Hitler used the Blood Purge, when Rohm (homosexual leader of the SA) and Strasser (leader of the working class radicals in the Nazi party) and others were murdered, to purge the Nazi party of all those who supported a 'Second Revolution against Big Business', to reassure the army that the SA wasn't getting too strong, and to mark the end of a period when a brotherhood would be used to brawl the Nazis to power. It was the beginning of the period when motherhood was glorified, and was justified as an action by the Party of Decency dealing with 'notorious homosexual perverts'.

Understanding fascist sexual politics is vital if we are to fight fascism. As fascist ideas are little but extensions of bourgeois ideology it follows that fighting those ideas is fighting fascism and is depriving it of the echo it finds in the nationalism, authoritarianism, racism, anti-semitism and sexism prevalent in capitalist societies. We cannot draw a line which separates the struggle against fascism from the struggle against capitalism because they are the same struggle. If we try to draw that line by calling the fight against sexism a diversion, in so doing we weaken our ability to fight the fascists. The attitude we must avoid was very clearly expressed by a woman doctor in the German Communist Party who denounced Reich saying: 'How can you expect us to believe that we, workers' daughters, have a sexual problem? Your theory casts disgrace on the proletariat, sexual problems belong to the bourgeoisie'.



Ch 2. Roots

The Origins and Growth of Racism



The Effects of Imperialism on Black People

If we have to go back to the 1930s to understand fascism, we have to go back much further to understand racism. Racism can not simply be reduced to the prejudiced attitudes — or racialism — of one race towards another. There are many people who are free from explicit racialism, but who help maintain and profit from racism. By racism we mean the whole process of domination and oppression of whites over non-whites which is built into all the major institutions in society — the state, workplaces, housing and so on. Racialism has played a key role in supporting and justifying the racism inherent in these institutions.

In this chapter we will examine the racism of whites against blacks. This racism has its roots in the imperialism of the past and is sustained today by the imperialism of the present. We shall chart its historical development from the early days of plunder and slavery, through the establishment of colonialism to the present neo-colonialism and immigration of black people to Britain. This will lead into a discussion of the racism of the British state and of the white working class. We will show how the images in which black people are presented have changed and that these changes are related to the different ways blacks have been dominated and oppressed.

The British Empire was always racist. While the white colonists of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand were granted representative government,

responsibility for their own affairs, and, finally, Dominion status, black peoples were subjected to the economic and political rule of whites. For blacks, the reality of the imperial connection has been the plunder of their countries' material resources, their people's labour, and the deliberate underdevelopment of their economies by the capitalist west. Imperialism has divided the world into the rich nations and the poor, and the rich are rich because the poor are poor. Resources which belonged to the Third World are siphoned off to enrich the west.

The frequently quoted claim that the European Empires have helped the rest of the world by dragging it into the modern age is a lie. The effect of capitalism on the economies of the third world has been to alter the direction of their development to make it easier to exploit them. For example the railways built in West Africa, and the tarmac roads, were no more than simple feeders linking areas which produced the crops and minerals Europe wanted with the ports on the coast. The British made little attempt to develop communications in such a way that the internal as distinct from the export economy of the colonies would be stimulated. These railways were all directed to the coast, with no links between them, and of different gauges, so that a rationalisation of the railway system of West Africa today is impossible.

Another clear example of the role of imperialism is Britain's encouragement of the opium trade in China which it kept going by fighting wars against those Chinese who saw the link between opium

addiction and subservience to imperialism. Yet another example is India, where British rule reinforced the caste system and the religious beliefs that emphasised the inevitability of poverty and subordination to others. It also led to the effective destruction of the Indian textile industry and its replacement by the textile industry of the north of England.

Overall, the effect of imperialism on the rest of the world was to fix their economies in a role subordinate to the west, both by enforcing through tariffs and taxes one-sided specialisation such as growing a particular crop or mining a particular mineral, and by exploiting the labour of people in their own countries, as gold miners in South Africa or tea planters in Ceylon. And for all those people the experience of western 'civilisation' was an experience of extreme disruption of established ways of life. In some cases, as in the Caribbean, whole peoples were destroyed by diseases imported by the colonists; in other cases, as in North America and South Africa, people were denied the right to their land, which was also the source of their livelihood. And generally, the only beneficiaries of imperialism, apart from the imperialists themselves, were an upper class which filled its pockets with the fruits of oppression and acted as the local police force for western interests. Acknowledging what imperialism has done to black people is the first step in fighting the racist myth that blacks are poor because they are inferior.

The Historical Development of Racism

Early European Imperialism: Plunder and Slavery

Early European imperialism took the form of the primitive accumulation of capital via plunder of wealth, as in the case of the Spanish in South America, and the plunder of people in the slave trade. This capital, together with that gained from the enclosure of land in this country, enabled Britain to industrialise. Thus industrial capitalism was from the start built on the backs of the third world. The readiness of the British government at one point in the 18th century to trade in the whole of Canada to France for the one Caribbean slave island of Guadeloupe, measuring a little over 500 square miles, gives a hint of what was at stake.

From the first, black people were defined as substantially inferior to all Europeans. What was crucial was not blackness, but the meaning given to this blackness. Red hair is also a distinct physical characteristic, but it has never carried any important cultural significance. Blackness had a definite place in European Christian imagery, a place reinforced by the very different religions from Christianity practised by black people. Black equalled evil, death, sin, the forces of darkness, Satan. The slave trade and the plunder of the Aztec and Inca peoples posed obvious problems to the consciences of Christian Europeans. If we were all equal under God, then how come some enslave others and take away their human birthright? The only answer, apart from abolishing slavery, was to declare Africans to be not fully human. To this end the Pope gave his sanction to the Spanish occupation of South America, and the church evolved the doctrine that Africans were descended from a son of Noah's who had attracted to himself God's particular dislike. The definition of blacks as biologically inferior was far more vicious than earlier religious dismissals of them. At least people can change their religion. If the basis of inequality is biological, then it was permanent, reflecting the status of enslavement generation after generation.

When the slave trade was finally abolished, by Britain in 1807, it was not because of criticisms of the racist justifications for it, but because imperialism's needs were changing. The British West Indian planters already had enough slaves by 1807, and wished to keep this advantageous position over the colonies of other countries by denying them further imports of black African labour. The British navy ruled the seas and could thereby enforce this on other imperialist nations. The same planters were in addition beginning to realise that free wage labour was more efficient, as they were not obliged to feed and house waged workers as they were with slaves. Thirdly, the British could not persuade West Africans to take up palm oil production while paying them more for slaves.

However none of these factors would have ended slavery had the hand of imperialism not been forced by the growing threat of slave rebellions. One of these revolts led to the founding of the free black settlement of Palmares in North Eastern Brazil, and yet another shattered the Dutch colony of Surinam, the slaves founding a state of their own and holding it against the Dutch army. The largest of these revolutions took place in Haiti during and after the French revolution of 1789. The slaves took up the demands of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity', only to find there was one law for the French and another for them. They therefore rose, under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, and took possession of the country. Bitter struggles followed in which first the French and then the British armies failed to defeat them.

Although so-called 'humanitarian' arguments were used by the anti-slavery lobby at the time of abolition, they completely failed to challenge the racist view of black people. Wilberforce, the most famous abolitionist, saw Africans as 'fallen men'. By arousing emotions of sympathy, the abolitionists made Africans into objects of pity, which in turn produced contempt.



British troops entering Kumasi in 1874 during the wars on Asante

Colonialism and the 'Scramble for Africa'

English schoolchildren of the last century were taught to sing: 'Wider yet and wider shall thy bounds be set' in honour of the Empire — a warning that British annexations were not yet at an end. Indeed they weren't, and neither could they be. Capitalism could not function as a closed system, but only through interaction with a realm outside itself — a second or third world to provide a market for capital investment and manufactures. Such considerations were uppermost in the minds of the imperialist powers when they met in

1884 at the Congress of Berlin to allocate areas of Africa to the domination of particular powers. They were spurred on at that time by the fear of protectionism — that rival imperialist powers would erect tariff barriers around their colonies, prohibiting other nations from commercial activity in them. It therefore became important to grab as much territory as possible before this happened. Another important factor behind the growth of the European empires was the growing militancy of the various working classes at home. All this led to the 'Scramble for Africa' whereby Africa began the 1890s with only 1/10th of its territory under European control and ended that decade with only 1/10th still independent.

The theme of the need for British colonialism was taken up in an unprecedented quantity of racist propaganda contained in the new mass-produced newspapers of the time. 'Trusteeship', 'The Civilising Mission' and 'the White Man's Burden' were the catchphrases. Writers took up and distorted Charles Darwin's doctrine of 'The Survival of the Fittest', concluding that blacks were less fitted by nature to survive, prosper and improve their conditions of existence. When, through

emancipation, slaves were hurled into market relations in a continuously contracting agricultural sector, their plight was taken by Social Darwinists as triumphant proof of the African's inferiority and incapacity to survive in the so-called 'modern' world. Similarly, the ability of Britain to industrialise and thereby acquire a technological lead over the rest of the world led to an arrogant dismissal of societies which were technologically less advanced. The fact that Britain was technologically advanced because it held other peoples in a state of economic underdevelopment was conveniently ignored.

Colonialism was explained on the grounds that the European's 'civilising mission' was to take over the welfare of 'inferior races', to raise them from their present 'misery' by introducing them to the superior culture of the European. For example Lord Leverhulme said at a dinner in honour of the Governor of Nigeria: 'I am certain that the West African races have to be treated very much as one would treat children when they are immature and underdeveloped. . . Now the organising ability is the particular trait and characteristic of the white man. . . I say this with my experience, that the African native will be happier, produce the best and live under conditions of prosperity when his labour is directed and organised by his white brother who has all these millions of years start ahead of him'.

The White Man's Burden

The fallacy of the notion of a 'civilising mission' is easily demonstrated by the case of India. Before the arrival of British colonialism it had a civilisation and a culture with a very long history.

Colonialism not only destroyed the Indian textile industry and condemned the mass of Indians to a cycle of poverty. It destroyed the way of life and cultural activities which had persisted for centuries. The biggest burden of the white man in India was to convince the Indians that it was the white man that had the burden. This was not unique to India. All peoples suppressed by imperialism had a history that was denied them by the arrogance of the colonialists, and many had a rich and well-developed culture that was either suppressed, kept going for the tourist purposes or only able to re-emerge in new forms, like the reggae/calypso culture in the Caribbean, or the blues/jazz culture in the US. New elites were created in the colonies, suitably educated in the western traditions and culture, who became the state officials and the middle management. In Africa they were said to have 'white faces, black marks'.

For all the European's belief in their own 'civilising mission' they were continually forced to be aware that most of the world did not agree with them. Rudyard Kipling's portrayal of most of the world's inhabitants as 'new-caught sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child', shows that their resistance, even if as devilish as their blackness, was still felt. They were not content to be the childish



Sambos of the white imagination. Many of them did not take being colonised lying down. There was the Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857, the Jamaica uprising of 1865, the Boxer rebellions in China of 1899-1901 and many other examples of 'ingratitude' for the blessings of European civilisation. This resistance to colonialism was taken as further proof of its necessity amidst the production of terms of abuse for the resisters — kaffir, savages, barbarians — which still contribute to

present day attitudes.

We have shown in this section how imperialism left a dual legacy to the twentieth century. It established capitalism as an international system in which oppressor nations (all white) systematically exploited oppressed nations (mostly black); and it built the ideology of racialism to explain and justify itself. Modern twentieth century capitalism has seen changes in the form but not in the essence of these realities.

Racism in Modern Capitalism

During this century imperialism has fused with certain twentieth century forces to thereby change the basis of racist oppression. Since the gaining of formal political independence, black people have been oppressed and exploited both by neo-colonialism in the world as a whole and as immigrants in the capitalist countries where many of them live. These

twin forms of oppression, the acceleration and generalisation of black liberation struggles, and the ideology of racialism are all interconnected. The motor force of all these developments has been the worldwide liberation struggles of black people, so it is with that that we start. When we discuss racism we must always avoid the danger of seeing black people as

its passive victims, when in fact they are constantly struggling in a variety of ways against it.

The roots of black nationalism and the movement towards independence were embedded in the colonial situation where attendance at western schools by some, participation in government, and fighting in European wars exposed the

contradictions in the system and dispelled myths of white superiority. The ensuing liberation struggles were recuperated by imperialism in two main ways – 1. Capitalism had to find another way of exploiting blacks, which it did in neo-colonialism; and 2. Racism had to adapt itself to the new facts of black liberation struggle, black independence and neo-colonialism.

Neo-Colonialism

Third world countries are independent in name only. The one-sided and underdeveloped nature of their economies make them dependent on western capitalism. Political dominance has been replaced by rule through multinational companies and the 'aid' fraud. In a similar way to hire purchase, capital export and the export of goods on credit keeps the third world economies subservient to those of the west. The British government has stated clearly that aid builds up an infrastructure which prepares the way for private investment. The American President of the World Bank was even more specific; speaking in 1965 he said: 'Our foreign aid programme constitutes a distinct benefit to American business. The three major benefits are: (1) Foreign aid provides a substantial and immediate market for US goods and services; (2) foreign aid stimulates the development of new overseas market for US companies; (3) foreign aid orientates national economies towards a free enterprise system in which US firms can prosper'.

Three quarters of world aid and 64% of British aid is 'tied', which means it must be spent on goods provided by the aid-giving country, even when they are available cheaper elsewhere. Aid is also tied politically and may be withdrawn

after a political disagreement between the two countries. The effect of this aid is to pauperise the third world countries as they build up external debts and some are now paying back more to Britain each year than they receive in aid. The third world is impeded from accumulating capital which would allow the development of its economies because of the transfer of the wealth that is produced back to the western countries through the multinational companies which control much of these economies and because of the unequal way in which goods are exchanged between the third world and the west. Without accumulating this capital the underdeveloped countries are unable to switch to producing goods which need expensive, complex technology to make and which are also the most profitable on the world market.

Neo-colonialism has its roots in the various systems of 'indirect rule' to which imperialism has turned when faced with anti-imperialist struggles. In situations where the independence movement was likely to result in rule by a black oligarchy, Britain and others smoothed its path. A Foreign Office memorandum of 1919 remarked that 'The policy pursued by the Germans in Turkey, Russia and elsewhere before the war has shown how it is possible for a foreign people to exploit the resources of a country of which they have not the political control'.

This strategy was not applicable in all situations, however, either because the anti-imperialist movement was led by revolutionaries or because of the inflexibility of particular colonial regimes. Portuguese imperialism, for instance, found it difficult to apply neo-colonialist principles because its form of colonialism

had created a privileged white settler class in Angola, backed up by a fascist regime at home. Similarly, British policy in Northern Ireland had created the Frankenstein of Loyalism, dedicated to preserving its ascendancy and the status quo. In such cases there have been prolonged guerilla wars between independence movements and the imperialist armies.

Aid

Just as imperialism has tried to recuperate independence struggles by use of 'puppet' classes and neo-colonialism, the ideology of racialism has adapted to the new realities. Neo-colonialism is masked by the ideology of foreign aid, referred to in the US as 'Uncle Sam's Santa Claus Policy'. This has been almost totally successful, hence the importance of making clear the reality of neo-colonialism. Most working class people believe that the west is actually helping the poor countries. This belief, when set along the obvious failure of independent black states to escape from poverty and underdevelopment despite 'aid', leads directly to racist explanations. The continued poverty of black countries is taken as triumphant proof of their incapacity for self-government: 'after all, when the leaders they produce are clowns like Idi Amin. . .'. This belief is complemented by the equally erroneous view that Britain 'granted' independence to black peoples. Although a great deal of show was made at the time of presenting the changeover in this way — members of the Royal Family performing the rituals, etc. — the reality was that the only alternative to getting out was to be thrown out.

The portrayal of liberation movements in the third world helps to reinforce racialism in Britain. When they are black 'terrorists' are also presented as barbaric 'savages', and the mass media treat us to frequent doses of 'atrocities' stories. For example the headlines in the British press after the Kolwezi 'massacre' in Zaïre during May 1978 proclaimed '44 whites massacred', 'Britons in peril' and 'Rebel chief says "We'll kill all whites"'. This presented the events as a race war, when in fact many more black people died than whites. This press coverage is of immense help to the National Front and others who step in to mount a 'Defend our kith and kin' campaign over Zimbabwe.

Racism and Immigration

Black people are oppressed as immigrants in the capitalist countries, thereby reproducing within a single country the worldwide domination of imperialism. Black immigration has occurred because of the effects of neo-colonialism on the third world, coupled with the changing labour requirements inside the capitalist countries. For many third world peasants, neo-colonialism has meant the loss of their land and enforced migration to the shanty towns around the major cities of their countries and conditions of infamous poverty. Post-independence mechanisation of agriculture – the so-called 'Green Revolution' – has been at the core of these population movements. Meanwhile in western Europe, the loss of lives and damage to plant and transport brought about by the second world war occasioned a labour shortage, particularly in traditionally low-paid jobs. The same thing was happening all over the capitalist world; in the US the extra labour came from the blacks of the deep south, the whites of the Appalachians and from Mexico and Puerto Rico. In France,



Germany, Scandinavia and the Benelux countries, workers came from southern Europe and North Africa. British capitalism preferred to recruit from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent because the people there were already British citizens and could settle here without the government having to change the Aliens Act. Enoch Powell, Tory Minister of Health, was one of those responsible for the encouragement of black immigration.

Just as the Irish immigrants had come here in the 1840s to provide the labour for the railway boom, post-war black immigration occurred at the behest of capitalism. Indeed, migration is vital to western capitalism, as these figures show:

*Migrant workers
as % of the labour force (1974).*

Belgium	7%
France	9%
Germany	11%
Switzerland	28%
Britain	7%

These workers — 10 million of them — are nearly all drawn from countries underdeveloped by imperialism: Ireland,

Southern Europe, North Africa, India, Pakistan and the West Indies. Imperialism has created the conditions where these workers can choose either to stay in the oppressed nations and barely subsist or migrate to the imperialist nations to do the jobs that white workers won't do.

This immigration has created problems for capitalism – its own racist ideology has been taken in by the white working class, and has resulted in a hostility to black immigration which ran counter to the system's new need for that immigration. More recently, of course, the needs of capitalism – for severe restrictions on black immigration – have swung back into line with racialism.

The oppression of black immigrants as members of the working class

Black immigrants in Britain suffer from a dual oppression — both as members of the working class and as a racially oppressed group. Immigrant labour differs from indigenous labour in several important respects which British capitalism takes advantage of in order to maintain its rate of profit: firstly, by the provision of cheap labour to do the worst



jobs; secondly, by enabling expansion of shift working; and finally by reducing the cost of social services while making lower demands on those services.

They are over-represented in low-paid public sector jobs — a 1968 survey showed that 22.3% of hospital ancillary staff were immigrants, whereas immigrants were only 5.9% of the economically active population. Similarly, immigrants make a lower demand on social services than the rest of the population, partly because they are on average younger, but also because the cost of bringing up an immigrant worker (the cost of education, health treatment, etc.) falls upon the country from which he or she came, and

not on Britain. This factor becomes less important as an increasing proportion of black people were born in Britain and this is behind the state's moves away from reliance on settler immigration and towards the continental model of migrant contract labour.

Thus the position of blacks in the workforce and as consumers of social expenditure puts them in the vanguard of the struggle against all the main attacks on the working class — wage controls, productivity and rationalisation, cuts in the social wage and unemployment. Blacks are in this vanguard position because they are the most exploited section of the working class, a situation

which is compounded by their oppression via discrimination in housing, health and education, and their over-representation in the ranks of the unemployed.

Racist ideology has succeeded to some extent in explaining the position of blacks at the bottom of society as a consequence of their 'natural' inferiority, and suitability for shitwork, but such justifications run thin in the face of the struggle of blacks against the place allotted to them. This means that racists have to actually deny a lot of this discrimination, while simultaneously justifying other aspects of it under the slogan of 'Britons first'.

The State and Immigration Control

Why immigration controls exist

Immigration control is, first and foremost, *labour control* — a means by which capitalism regulates the rights of working class people in line with its requirements for labour. The jobs which immigrants were brought here to do — low-paid, and often involving shiftwork — were being created by the increasingly automated, integrated and capital-intensive production process. Thus the employment of blacks fitted in precisely with the needs of advanced capital, with its capital-intensive work processes which need to be used round the clock to give a return on the capital employed. By the early 60s labour shortages were limited to professionals such as doctors and skilled manual workers. British capitalism's pressing need to increase the productivity of labour reduced the demand for unskilled workers. The little skilled labour that existed in the black commonwealth was recruited, and after 1964 only those blacks whose training was paid for by their home country and with some qualifications for jobs already available in Britain were allowed in. Moreover, as rationalisation was accelerated in the name of productivity, the ensuing structural unemployment meant that British capitalism could generate its reserve army of labour internally and had no further need for immigrants.

These developments were anticipated by capitalism, as is shown by the various policies adopted during the 1960s and early 70s. The context in which these policies were adopted may be summarised as follows: firstly, since the mid-60s there has been no need for black immigration to the UK; secondly, that blacks have, for the most part, citizen rights, and are numerically strong. This makes it politically impossible to make them leave the country. Moreover, they perform crucial roles in several sectors of the economy. Thirdly, the problem for capitalism is therefore how to control those blacks already here so that they do not pose a threat to the system.

The Successive Immigration Acts

The history of the successive Immigration Acts can be summarised



fairly briefly. Up until 1962 there was no restriction on immigration from the former colonial Empire. As a result of successful lobbying from right wing Tory M.P.s and papers like the *Daily Telegraph*, the first Act to Limit Immigration was passed. It eliminated the right of Commonwealth citizens to come to Britain without work vouchers. At first sight it did not seem to be particularly anti-black at all, but both its inspiration and its implementation at ports and airports definitely were so. The Labour opposition swore to repeal it. When Labour came to power in 1964 with a majority of four, it was increasingly aware that it was reckoned to be pro-black, not least by white working class

voters. In August 1965 they renewed the Act they had sworn to repeal, and reduced the number of work vouchers for those coming from the Commonwealth to 8,500 working males per year, their dependants, and the dependants of those already here. In November 1964, Sir Frank Soskice, the Home Secretary, stated, 'The Government is convinced that effective control is indispensable. That we accept and have always accepted'.

The so-called era of 'mass' immigration was over by 1965, but the competition between the main parliamentary parties to be seen to be 'touch on immigration' had begun. Little effort was made to disguise the racist character of immigration controls. Roy Hattersley said in March 1965, 'I now believe there are social as well as economic arguments for control... we must impose a test to decide which immigrants are most likely to be assimilated into our national life'. He went on to say such a test would fall most heavily on Pakistanis. In 1968 Labour acted again, introducing another Immigration Act to screw down to 1500 households a year the entry of East African Asians with British passports. Racist agitation over the Kenyan Asians got the bill through both houses of parliament in five days flat!

In 1971 the Tories brought in another Immigration Act which added new and more vicious dimensions to the snowball process. It systematised and regularised all the unpleasant informal practices of Immigration officials over the last ten years. The Act gave the state administrative powers, outside parliamentary checks, to allow in or exclude just as many migrant workers from any one country as it chose. The presence here of migrant workers was made dependent on their keeping their job, so tying them to harsher labour discipline. Automatic citizenship for new migrants from the Commonwealth after five years' residence was cancelled, thereby giving sanction to police raids and harassment of blacks in supposed searches for illegal immigrants and discreet provisions were made for deportation. Most important of all the Act introduced a distinction between two

types of immigrants. There were 'patrials' who had a connection of birth, residence or through their parents with the UK and had the right to enter Britain, and 'non patrials' who would be allowed entry in even more limited numbers but with no right of settlement.

The successive Immigration Acts fall into a number of phases: encouraging and allowing the *external immigration* of the 1950s and early 1960s; imposing constraints and restrictions on immigration through *external controls* from the early 1960s to the early 1970s, so that by the latter date primary immigration (i.e. mainly male workers not involving dependents) had all but stopped; and imposing *internal controls* both directly repressive and ideologically 'deflective', through the 1970s and increasingly in recent years. The 1971 Immigration Act and the present Tory proposals (see Chapter Four, 'Fightback') show the British state casting an envious eye on the system of 'Gastarbeiter' ('guest worker') which operates in other EEC countries. These workers are recruited from southern Europe, North Africa and Turkey with no citizens' rights / right to vote, enter the country freely, etc) and can be simply sent home if a recession comes, or if they become too militant.

'Immigrant' and 'Immigration' have come to be — with the recent addition of 'mugging' — the words summarising and condensing the politics of racism in Britain. Newspapers even talk about 'Immigrant babies born here' — a contradiction in terms, until you realise that 'Immigrant' is usually the term the white British use to avoid admitting that they are *anti-black*. As a term, it focuses on their foreignness, and their 'lack' of an English culture. They appear, as Enoch Powell put it, as 'an unprecedented invasion of the body politic', or, as Margaret Thatcher put it, as 'swamping' our British culture. It is taken for granted that immigration is the problem. The only question is how much it should be reduced by.

Race Relations

During the 1960s and 1970s the state's has been to balance the deep-seated racialism in British society, on the one hand, and the growing strength of the black working class, on the other, in a way which created least disruption of the capitalist economy and political system. It set out to achieve these ends by the 'unifying' strategy of simultaneously promising to the indigenous white population that no further blacks would be allowed in the country except as dependents (and this too would quickly come to an end) and promising to blacks the prospect of justice within the system including possibilities for self-advancement.

The race riots which took place in Notting Hill in 1958 (stirred up by fascist agitators) signalled the emergence into public life of racism. They were followed in 1963 by the sensational election in Smethwick of an overtly racist Tory candidate. The riots of blacks in Los Angeles in 1965 equally signalled the



The welcome given to Ugandan Asians

emergence of blacks as a political force in the advanced capitalist states. In Britain the tone was set by the newly elected Labour Government, which after it had screwed down black immigration still further, introduced the 1965 Race Relations Act. This avowedly set out to redress the grievances of blacks, whilst at the same time educating society as a whole to accept blacks as an essential part of the economic life of the nation. In practice the Race Relations Act has had a negligible effect and the few people who have been successfully prosecuted under it have often been militant blacks.

Thus started the state's concerted attempts to counter black militancy by adopting a strategy similar to that which produced a black elite in the old colonies. A whole variety of semi-state bodies such as the Community Relations Commission were established at both a local and a national level. All these bodies had virtually no power. Their main purpose has been to *monitor* development *on behalf of* blacks, to *deflect* protest through *proper* channels recognised by the state, and thereby to *control* black struggles by a process of *mediation and representation*. This is their overall function and purpose. They have had a certain amount of success but they need to be seen by the black communities themselves as representatives — this they have largely failed.

In addition to the ideological and political role fulfilled by the CRCs etc, the state has, probably with more impact, sought to alleviate the conditions in which blacks found themselves in the 'deprived, inner city areas' where they are concentrated. Thus considerable amounts of state money have gone into urban programmes. Such a strategy serves an important second purpose of providing jobs for those members of the black community who put themselves forward or show militancy of 'leadership capacities'. Thus the state provides a ready channel to places higher up the job hierarchy for aspiring blacks. Along with this go attempts to create and foster a sizeable black petty-bourgeoisie and even bourgeois layer. Even if some of the local CRCs have on occasions made useful contributions to the anti-racist struggle, this does not affect the state's original intentions for those bodies. The state's attempts to integrate blacks should be borne in mind when we consider the other side of its strategy — that is repression — to which we now turn.

Living on the Front Line

The developing consciousness of blacks began to manifest itself in the industrial field in the early 1960s. The disputes not only grew numerically, but in the 1970s several of them became national causes — Mansfield Hosiery in

1972, STC in 1973, Imperial Typewriters the following year and Grunwicks in 1976. In these struggles black workers were struggling against the wages and shitwork involved in being a specially oppressed section of the working class, and so inevitably had to fight the racism of the trade unions and of white workers. The strength of these industrial struggles was often that black communities organised around the disputes in the same way that mining villages have traditionally done.

This went hand in hand with an increasingly militant fight against the general harassment by the police, using the sus and immigration laws (in Chapter Three, 'Up Against the Wall', we shall discuss these examples of state racism in more detail). The ensuing mass trials of young blacks — the Cricklewood 11, the

Islington 18, the Lewisham 21 etc. — took on, increasingly, the character of the black community *as a whole* against the police. The older first generation blacks (who have often, mistakenly, been seen as playing a reactionary role) sided strongly with their youth against the police.

The developing black culture has also been a battleground between the state's racism and the black community. The biggest clashes have been at events like the Brixton Reggae festival of 1973, and the police attempt to break up the Notting Hill carnivals of the late 70s. There have been countless other raids on black clubs and parties. Reggae and Rastafarianism have played a key role in giving young West Indians in Britain their own sense of cultural identity and solidarity.

All these three levels — industrial

militancy, resistance to the police, and the struggle for a specifically black culture — together constitute a generalised political resistance, despite the lack of any major autonomous political organisations. Thus, the situation of twenty years ago, when black immigrants, anticipating that they would probably return home before long, were generally 'grateful' for the job opportunities available in Britain, and had various illusions about 'British fair play' has been transformed into one which has no easy resolution for the ruling class. Their attempts to persuade blacks to 'return home' have had little effect. Now more than 40% of blacks were born here and know no other country. This young generation, as the state has long since realised, will increasingly refuse to settle for second class status.

shortage and this has become even more important with the end of the boom and the growth of unemployment. It was widely believed, although there is no reliable evidence which supports the claim, that the new immigrants were 'green labour', with little knowledge of established working practices in industry, and that the bosses were able to use them to undermine many of the improvements in working conditions which had been won through struggle in the past. Few of the militants saw that if this was indeed a problem, then the way around this was for unions to take on board the fight against racist exploitation of black workers. The sectionalist history of British trade unionism made it unlikely that white workers would suddenly see through the policy of divide and rule.

If immigration threatened in some ways white workers, part of the responsi-

The changes in working class communities

Another reason for racialism has been the changes happening in traditional working class communities. Because of the concentration of job opportunities in certain areas, the low wages paid to black people and their consequent inability to pay the rent on better properties, and the inevitable need of new immigrants for mutual support in a strange land, they have found themselves in some of the worst housing in the country. Given the total unwillingness of the state to increase the already inadequate services and amenities in these areas in proportion to the number of immigrants, inner city whites have also seen their living conditions deteriorate.

Equally important, the communities into which black immigrants came were

didn't know how to use toilets is one example of a story which spread rapidly.

In this climate Enoch Powell was taken up as a hero by many of the working class. 'Powellism' was much more complex than is usually realised and was, in some ways, a rebellion against the establishment and "the middle class." Many working class people felt that they were being judged from on high by liberal and Christian consciences in suburban ivory towers. Indeed, much of the opposition to Powell, and virtually all of it which was given access to the media, was of the 'One race, the human race' variety. This apparent line-up of forces has made it relatively easy for organised racialists to manipulate class hatred and nail us with the image of middle-class do-gooders who 'don't know what it's really like.' The Race Relations Act was seen as a denial of free speech to whites and unfair

Photo: Peter Slepokura



The funeral procession of Michael Ferreira passing Stoke Newington police station

Racialism in the White Working Class

Some people on the left regard racialism as nothing other than 'false consciousness' which the bourgeoisie has 'conned' the workers into believing. Tariq Ali, for example, has said in *Socialist Challenge*: "There is no real material basis for working class racism in Britain. It is today the accumulated ideological product of Britain's past", and the Revolutionary Communist Group has echoed this in the issue of its journal on 'Racism, Imperialism and the Working Class': "Only the working class, is capable of a relentless and uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism, since it is the only class which has no interest in the maintenance of Imperialism." Both contain elements of the truth: yes, the

accumulated ideological product of Britain's imperialist past is the bedrock on which modern racialism is built, and yes no other class but the working class is capable of reconciling its own class interests with an anti-imperialist struggle, but *not only did the racialism of the working class have a material basis to it in the last century, it still has today.*

Ernest Bevin once said "I am not prepared to sacrifice the British Empire because I know that if the British Empire fell, . . . it would mean the standard of life of our constituents would fall considerably." Indeed, in many cases, the only reason why nineteenth century British bosses were able to pay wage rises was the extra profits they got from

Imperialism. This meant that British workers, though they did so with markedly less enthusiasm than the petty bourgeoisie, tended to side with their bosses and the maintenance of Imperialist exploitation. This is well documented. Exceptions, like the Lancashire textile workers' selfless opposition to the south in the American civil war, indicate only that such class collaboration is not inevitable.

There are also material reasons for the racialism of white workers towards black immigrants in post war Britain. Capitalism encouraged immigration precisely to undermine the bargaining position of workers by creating competition for jobs where before there had been a labour

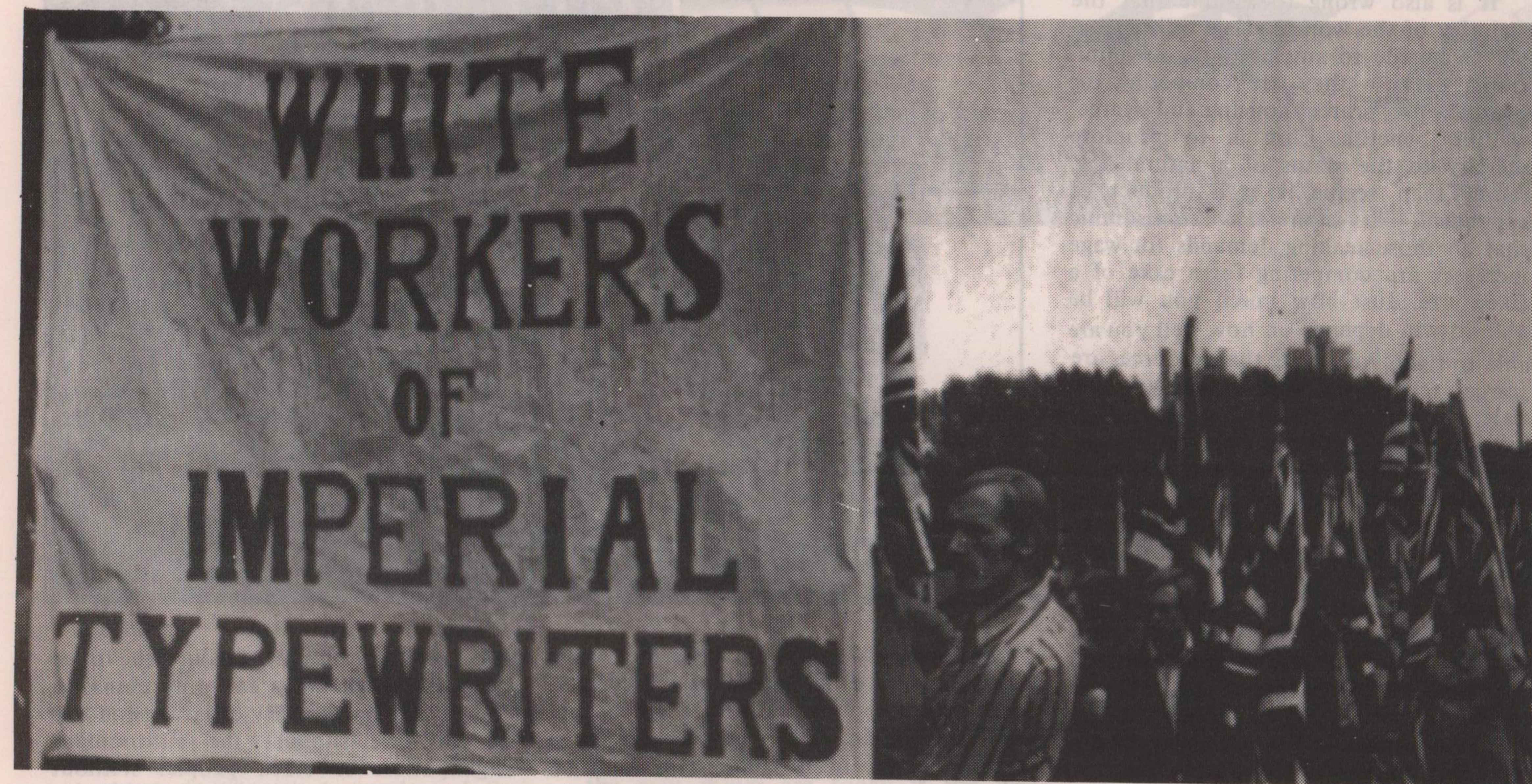
bility lies with white workers whose racialism allowed this to happen. Most of the responsibility lies with the capitalists and the media who used racialism as a weapon in the class struggle. *None of the responsibility lies with black workers for coming here.* White workers were soon able to turn the presence of blacks to their advantage enforcing 'apartheid' in job levels, by keeping the better jobs for themselves, and making sure that when there were redundancies it was not them who became unemployed. This meant that when black workers became more militant fighting against low wages, lousy conditions and non-existent promotional prospects, they ran straight into opposition from white workers at Imperial Typewriters. Like their predecessors in the nineteenth century many white workers identified their interests with maintaining their privileges over black workers.

all most of the people in them had ever known. The same families had lived next door for generations, and life revolved around the boozers and corner shops. As those who were able moved out onto the new council estates which were being built, those who remained had new neighbours who didn't speak their language or share their culture. Most of them were too set in their ways to try to understand the newcomers. Many whites began to feel that their areas were being 'invaded' by blacks, and that they were being driven out of all they had ever known. Rumours abounded in such circumstances to fill the gaps in the knowledge of the 'strangers'. Racialism in such situations was often little more than an expression of fear and helplessness, and frightened people can tell some pretty imaginative rumours. Rumours about individuals soon became generalisations about all immigrants. The belief that Pakistanis

discrimination making employers and landlords prefer blacks. Similarly, a large number of white tenants believe that blacks spend a much shorter time on council waiting lists, and it has little effect if we point out that statistics show the opposite — many working class people are quite justifiably sceptical about statistics, especially 'official' ones, since they have so often been used against them.

No 'blaming' black people

Of course black people are not responsible for the decline in inner city areas. The very fact that blacks have moved into these areas is the *expression* of a process which is *caused* by capitalism. However, black people present a much more obvious, and *visible*, target. As we shall see in Chapter Three ('Up Against the Wall') housing is only one aspect of working class life which has got worse



with the crisis and which is attributed to blacks. Rather than blacks reducing the living standards of whites, white workers have often gained from racism as it gives them better access to the housing and other facilities that are available.

This analysis of the material roots of racialism in no way 'blames' black people, nor does it 'excuse' the white working class as right to feel threatened by black workers. What it does argue is that, in a situation of competition for 'scarce' resources, whites do have an interest in keeping blacks behind and below them. But what must be added is that white workers have another, *greater*, interest in rejecting racialism. It is wrong to pose this as a difference between long and short term interests; if it were so all we would have to offer in the here and now is moralism and propaganda about the need for socialism.

It is also wrong to assume that the majority of the working class will inevitably be hostile to any minority of immigrants because they are competing for 'scarce' jobs, 'scarce' housing and 'scarce' welfare benefits. This is to promote scarcity to the status of a natural law, rather than seeing it as a product of capitalism. This is the same as assuming that all those making demands for wage increases are competing for a cake of a fixed size. Just how much you will be able to win depends on how well you are able to fight. Accepting that resources are scarce, relying on waiting lists and the state to dictate the form in which 'services' are provided for you and believing that by fighting you will only lose more are characteristics of a working class forced back on the defensive. If racism is to be challenged successfully ways have to be found to bring whites and blacks together so that it is apparent that by struggling together they are stronger. Simply shouting at people that they have got the enemy wrong, that it is capitalism which is to blame, won't change anything. It doesn't speak to the fears and desires which are the basis of racism.

The consequences of contemporary racism

In this chapter we have argued that contemporary British racism is historically specific. It is not the same thing as American racism, South African racism or even nineteenth century British racism. Imperialism remains its root cause, but its

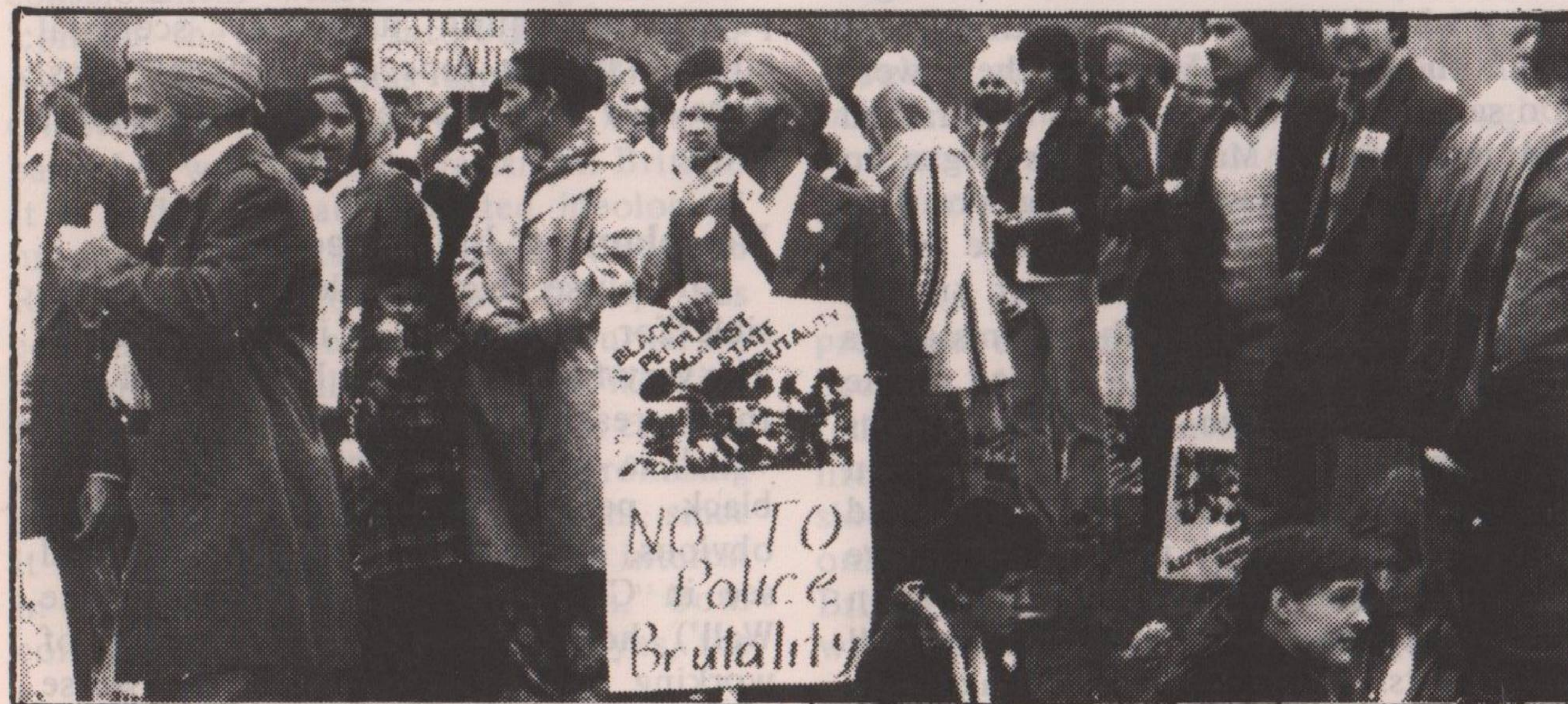


dual oppression. They have the worse jobs and face the racism of our society. Therefore simple calls for 'Black and White - Unite and Fight' are inadequate character has been significantly modified by black immigration in Britain. It should also be clear both that the racism of the white working class frequently has a material basis *and* that fighting racism is in the interest of *all* the working class.

The divisions within the working class between skilled and unskilled workers; men and women; and whites and blacks include real differences in power and privilege. Black workers suffer from a

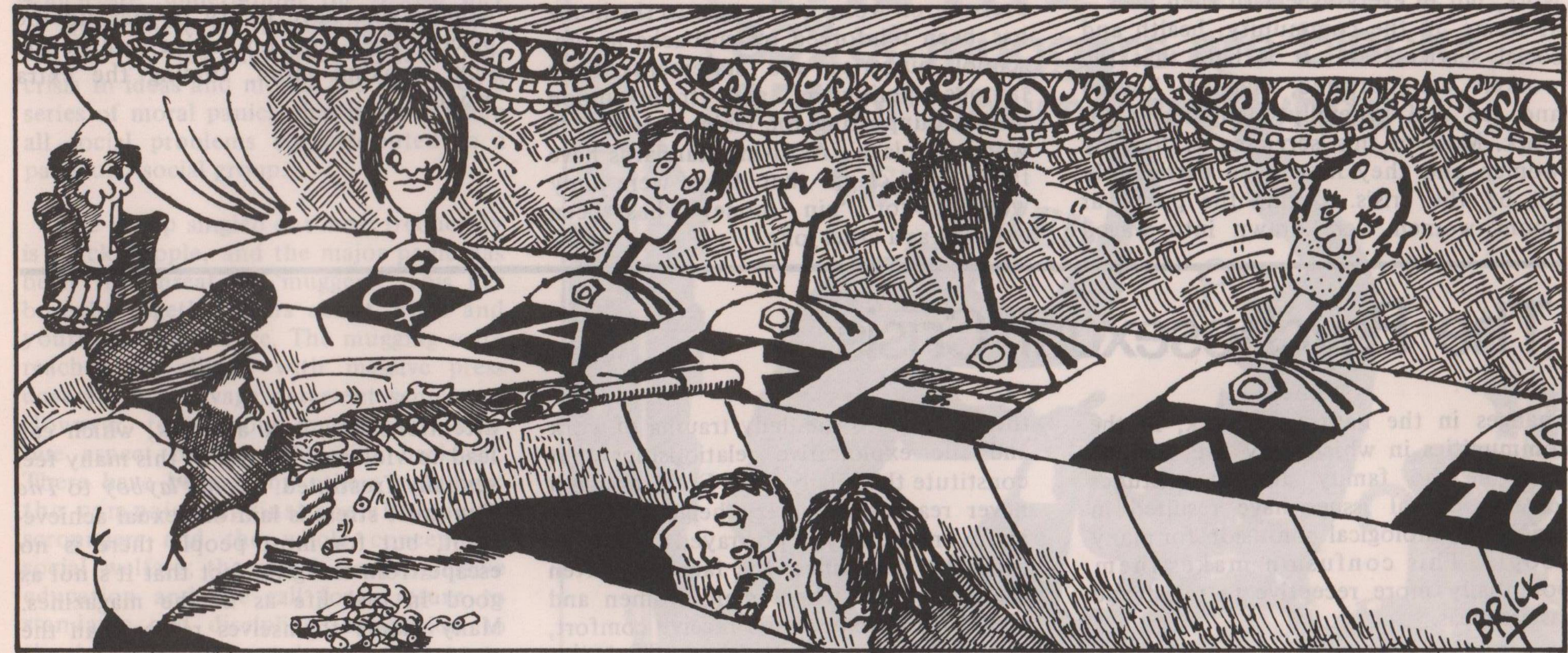
because unity usually favours the most powerful. Real unity can only come on the basis of an equality of power and this is why we support the autonomous organisation of black people. Without such unity the working class will always be divided against itself and will never be able to succeed in achieving a society which meets its needs.

Similarly our support for liberation movements in the third world should not be for purely moral reasons, because it is something we 'ought' to be concerned about. The capitalist exploitation of the third world results in super profits and cheap labour with little or no trade union organisation or political rights. An unorganised factory within a multinational company is a threat to all the workers in the firm, whether the factory is down the road or in South Africa. British workers therefore have more than moral reasons for solidarity with third world struggles. Many black workers already see themselves as part of an international working class. Their morale, their willingness to fight, their politics as a whole are significantly influenced by events abroad. It is important that all workers come to feel the same way.



Ch 3. Up Against the Wall

The Crisis and Racism and Fascism



The Impact of the Crisis

The first two chapters have given an account of the historical development of fascism and racism. We now have to examine their role in Britain today. To simply refer to 'the crisis' is not enough to explain their resurgence. We have to analyse what it is about the present crisis which creates the space for fascism and racism to grow. This chapter takes in turn various aspects of the crisis and discusses them with this in mind. It looks at changes in the nature of work, how the crisis affects women, changes in the family and sexual relations, the right wing backlash in ideas and morals and their connections with the rise of fascist groups and the increasing racism of the state and the main political parties. We are considering racism and fascism together because it is important to see their connections. However, it is also important to emphasise that they are distinct problems, and the dangers they represent are not the same. The final chapter will show that the strategies necessary to fight fascism and racism are different.

The current crisis of British capitalism is very different from that in the 1930s. There is no question of a 'return to the thirties', because the economic and political problems, as well as the 'solutions' being attempted by capital, are not the same. Too often anti-fascist propaganda restricts itself to describing the events of the 1930s and labelling modern extreme right groups as Nazis. It is also vital to develop an analysis which explains the present crisis and the rise of fascism and racism today.

It is a feature of capitalism that it continually goes through periods of crisis. What is at stake in much more than purely 'economic' difficulties with the rate of profit. Crises affect the whole capitalist system; they concern the balance of power between classes. They are periods in which the capitalist class attempts to regain the initiative by attacking the position of strength workers achieve during periods of economic growth. This means not only a reduction in working class living standards; but also renewed attempts to convince people that the way things are today is the best, indeed the only possible way they can be. At the same time as capitalists look for a solution to the crisis the differences between them come to the surface. All manner of different explanations of the crisis and remedies for it replace the apparently consensus politics of the preceding boom. The growth of racism and fascism has occurred in the context of a crisis which is simultaneously an economic crisis, a political crisis and a crisis of ideas.

The changed nature of work

The most frequently used remedies to crises have been incomes policies, cuts in public expenditure and the restructuring (or reorganisation) of the process of production. Changes in the labour process include the introduction of new technology, reductions in the numbers of workers, speed ups, tougher disciplinary measures and so on. This restructuring reinforces two tendencies in modern

capitalism: the deskilling of work and structural unemployment. These are far from being totally new developments, but with the crisis they have become more widespread and severe.

In the early stages of capitalism production was largely performed by artisans who retained control over how they did their job. Since then there has been a gradual deskilling of work. Jobs have been divided up into a series of limited tasks carried out by different workers which makes them easier to replace. The precise manner in which the work is done is dictated by management, while simultaneously control over workers becomes increasingly indirect through the demands on them by machines. The process takes its most advanced form in high speed, continuous flow, assembly line production as in the motor industry, but it has not been totally uniform. We should not forget that craft skills survive in many fields such as engineering.

Structural unemployment is another feature of the contemporary working class. Unemployment is used as a deliberate tactic by the State in the crisis. With the introduction of new technology like microprocessors it will increase even more. Thus large numbers of people, particularly the young, will find themselves unemployed for long periods. The resulting hardship and boredom leaves many resentful and open to simple explanations for their plight, such as 'It's the Blacks who have taken our jobs'. For those still at school with only the dole queue to look forward to things appear much the same. The effect of cuts in

spending on education is to make school even more boring, repressive and irrelevant. For some children and their parents the obvious explanation for the crisis in education is the presence of black children in the schools.

Women and the crisis

The crisis does not only affect people at work, but in every aspect of their lives — at home, in the community, health and social services, etc. It is here that the workers are nurtured, cleaned, housed and fed and generally made ready for work. Most of this 'servicing' is done by women and they have been particularly hit by the crisis. During the post war boom women were drawn into waged

work in the expanding economy. They had advantage to capitalists that they could be paid less and were traditionally less militant (although, as with black workers, this is now rapidly changing). The right of women to waged jobs is much less widely accepted than that of men. Therefore with the crisis they have often been the first to lose their jobs. The pressure on women to return to the home has been reinforced by cutbacks in pre-school nurseries and statements from famous politicians and trade union leaders supporting the claim that it is 'a woman's place'. As living standards have fallen the claim that they were only working for 'pin money' has been exposed as a cruel joke.

The Psychosexual Crisis

Changes in the nature of work, in the communities in which they live, in relations in the family and in attitudes towards sexual issues have resulted in serious psychological confusion for many people. This confusion makes them potentially more receptive to racist and fascist ideas.

The masculine role of the breadwinner

Perhaps the most important material change which has fostered this personal insecurity is the decline in the masculine role of the breadwinner. For skilled craftsmen their work has always been an enormous source of pride and identification. They have been brought up to the ideas of 'doing a man's job' and 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' and taking as an insult the suggestion that they are workshy or a slacker. Deskilling is undermining this pride in work and threatening male identity. The new mass worker sees the workplace only as somewhere he is controlled and subordinated, while those without a job sometimes totally lose any sense of identity. The traditional male role is further threatened by the growing organisation of women and their achievement, at least on paper, of some 'equal rights' with men. Men can no longer see themselves as the providers when women are often earning a considerable proportion of the family income.

Changes in the nature of working class housing parallel those at work. In the past there were tightly knit communities where those engaged in the same 'craft' lived together, as in the coalmining, steel and shipbuilding industries. With bombing in the war and post-war rehousing many of these communities have been destroyed. Living in substandard housing or in alienating high rise estates is another pressure which increases insecurity.

Crisis in the family

Strain is also apparent in the family with increased violence against women and children, more suicide, more divorces and so on. For many it is the family which is

the antidote to the daily trauma of work and the exploitative relationships that constitute their daily lives. Even though it never reaches the dizzy heights of love and tranquillity portrayed in the romantic magazines, the family is often the one place where men, women and children can expect and receive comfort, affection and understanding. That the family is also a focal point for people's anger and frustration and is the institution in which they pass on their stunted emotions in the name of love, only proves that the best guarded cave is not a complete refuge from the terrifying experience of capitalism.

The relationship of men to their sons has changed. They are no longer able to pass on a skill to them and feel they lack the respect of their children. They can't understand the purely instrumental view of work many of the young have ('I'm only in it for the money'). Their wives going out to work and the more independent lives women are leading today threatens them. They feel their masculinity is at stake. Some men withdraw into themselves, while others try to assert themselves more to obtain the power and

Women also feel the crisis as unwaged, domestic workers. With less money to feed, clothe and entertain the family, their worries increase and they have to work harder to make ends meet. When the welfare state is cut — when school meals become more expensive and less nutritious, when hospitals close or when prescription charges go up — then it is women who have to try to pick up the pieces. They end up taking care of the sick, cooking more, finding the extra money.

attention they lack at work, which can lead to violence. On top of this many feel sexually frustrated. From *Playboy* to *The Sun* great stress is laid on sexual achievement, but for most people there is no escape from the grim fact that it's not as good in real life as in the magazines. Many blame themselves rather than the rigid sexual stereotypes imposed by bourgeois society.

The family has come under challenge from various directions by those who are not persuaded that a mortgage, fitted carpets and a Ford Escort are all that life can and should offer. Radical elements in youth culture, from the Beats to the Hippies to the Punks, question the basis of the capitalist work ethic. Openly naming the capitalist system as sick they refuse to attach the conventional value to work, family or success. A more fundamental challenge which is less open to commercial reappropriation comes from the women's and gay movements. They involve a thorough reappraisal of your personal history, your family and, for many, of the whole society in which you grew up and which is stopping you from becoming what you want to be.



The right wing backlash

The 1970s have seen a significant movement in the climate of ideas to the right. There is a widespread belief that 'British society is coming apart at the seams.' The threat is seen to come from 'the enemy within', those radical and alien groups which are 'undermining the British way of life'. There are increasing calls for a return to a 'law and order' society. This crisis in ideas and morals has produced a series of moral panics, that is scares when all social problems are attributed to a particular social group.

The group singled out most frequently is black people, and the major panic has been the threat of 'muggers'. This has brought together fears about crime and youth as well as race. The mugging scare reached its climax with massive press coverage and savage deterrent sentences. However, fears about mugging are only one aspect of the right wing backlash. There have been many others including: the campaign against social security scroungers and the whole concept of social welfare; the attack on progressive education and the call for a return to standards and discipline; opposition to the 'permissive society' and attempts to reverse previous reforms on abortion and capital punishment.

Racism and crisis

There are numerous possible responses to the fears, anxieties and insecurity we have described. Fundamentalist religion has been a long standing solution with its propaganda which typically leads with questions like 'Depressed? Lonely? Worried?' More modern religions like Divine Light, the Moonies and Transcendental Meditation offer the same comfort for young people that fundamentalism provides for the old. Then there are the 'chemical' solutions: 10 million tranquillisers and anti-depressants taken daily, 7 million of them by women; the ever increasing incidence of alcoholism and heroin addiction; etc. All these solutions affect the self in abstraction from any social context. Another organised response is to join one of the groups of the extreme right, but before we deal with fascism there is the much more widespread response of racism.

Racism provides plausible explanations and apparent remedies to the problems which trouble people. Challenging racism simply by denouncing it as morally wrong is unlikely to be very effective when the problems they face are real. Of course they are misperceiving those problems, but it isn't that they are being unusually dense in blaming the blacks. The major forces that affect our lives aren't immediately obvious, but present themselves to us in ways which partially conceal and distort them. Misperception is inherent in the nature of capitalist social relations themselves and not simply false consciousness. Therefore racist explanations are deeply entrenched and will only



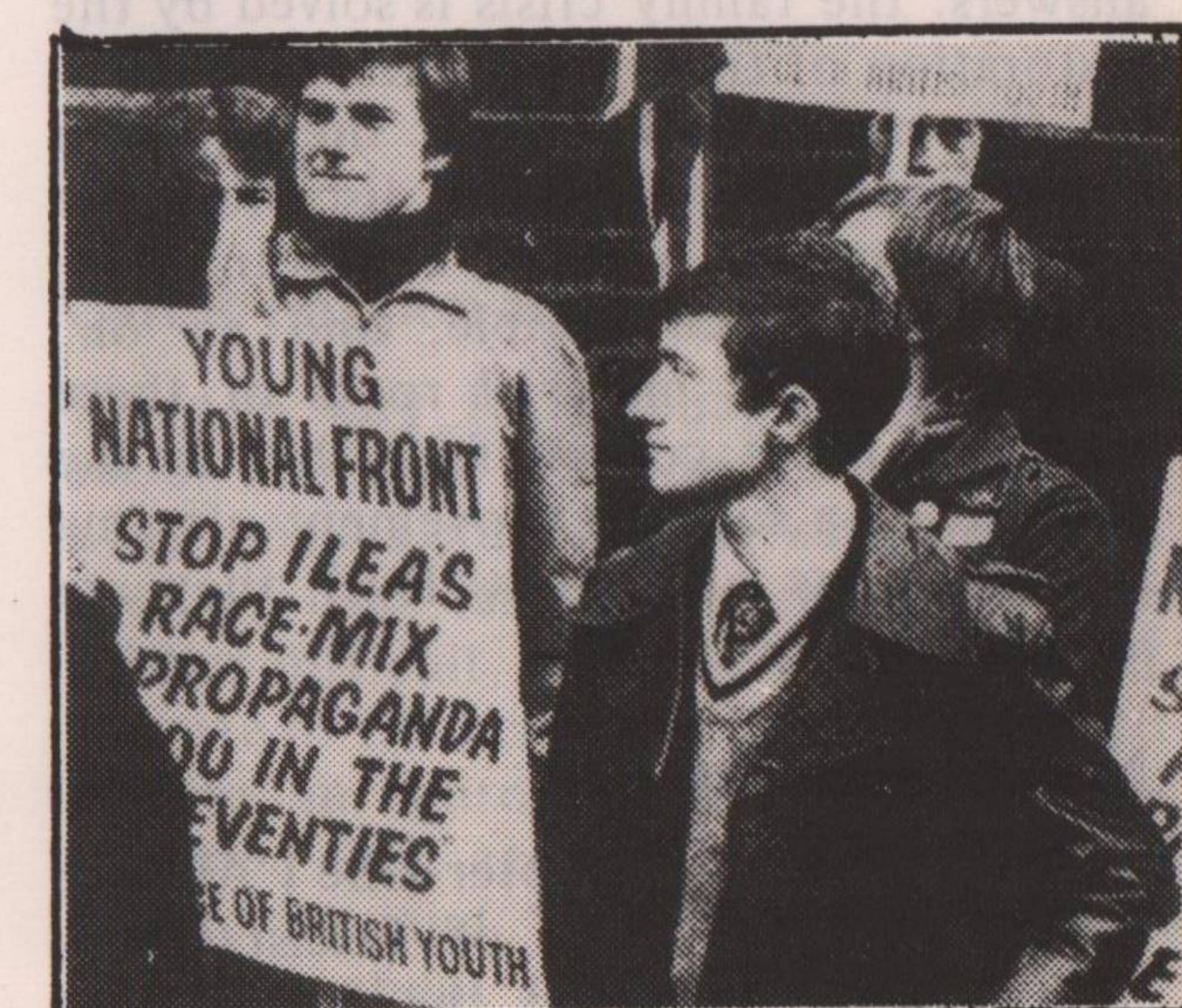
be abandoned if alternative explanations provide some immediate assistance in overcoming their problems.

Making another group the scapegoat is frequently a way of projecting your own fears and anxieties onto a hated other. Concern about the sexual potency of another racial group may relate to your own sexual worries. Many of the older generation are worried about the young who seem to reject all their values. Rather than admit the gulf between them and their own children, they externalise the problem and denounce black youths as lazy and good for nothing.

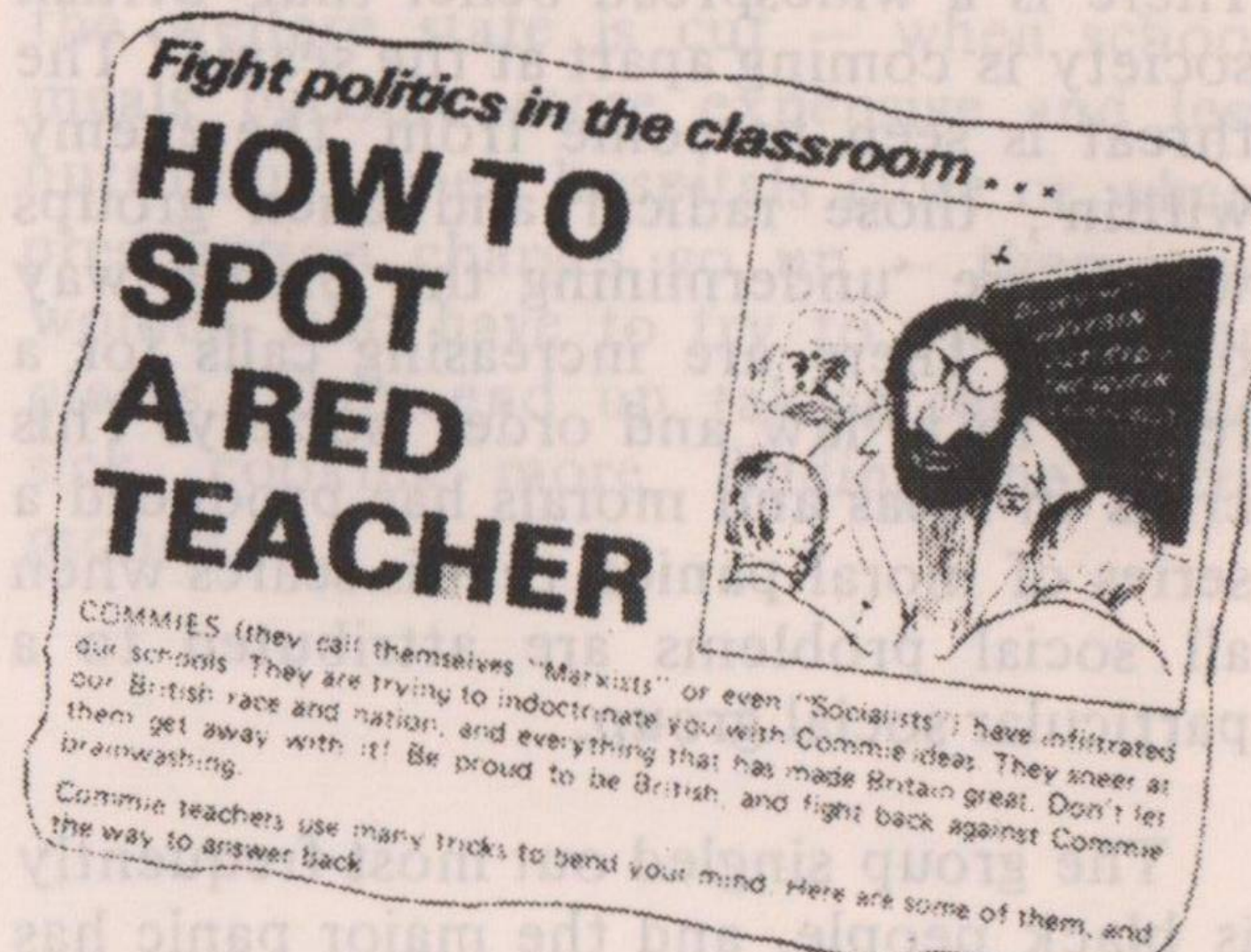
In many ways racism is an extension of the culture of male working class kids. For youth the crisis means unemployment and cuts in expenditure on facilities for them. They have little to do apart from roaming the street looking for excitement. Great emphasis is placed on masculinity. You have to demonstrate your toughness by responding to any challenge or you lose face. The other side of great loyalty to a group of mates is suspicion and hostility to outsiders. To make the area around your home your own territory you engage in aggressive displays against rival gangs. Given what was said in Chapter Two ('Roots') about the way lack of familiarity and understanding of those with a different culture can turn to hostility, it is easy for the divisions between rival gangs to be racial ones and to be justified by racial stereotypes. Here there are differences between attitudes towards West Indian and Asian kids. West

Indian kids are usually respected for their toughness whilst Asian kids are often targets because they are seen as weak and cissy and Asians are generally regarded as rich and successful. This is another example of feelings of racism and class hatred being deeply intertwined.

The crisis has reinforced all the factors leading to racism in the white working class which were discussed in Chapter Two ('Roots'). With unemployment rocketing competition for the remaining jobs becomes even more desperate. With massive cuts in state spending the availability of housing, health services and welfare benefits is further reduced. Moreover under the Social Contract of the Labour government a climate of austerity was created where 'scarce resources' were accepted as given. It is then inevitable that resentment is directed at your fellow competitors.



The Appeal of Fascist Ideology



If racism is a common response in the crisis, how many people go further and see fascism as providing the solution? What is it about fascist ideology that attracts them? Many analyses of fascist groups focus on the background and intentions of their leaders without considering the motives of the ordinary members. They are seen as deluded and pawns in the hands of the leaders. Or alternately we are given a vulgar materialist explanation which entirely ignores their motives. It is enough to say there is a crisis which creates certain living conditions which automatically lead to the 'sick and crazy' ideas of fascism. However, there can be no proper understanding of the growth of fascism unless it includes the aspirations and fears which fascist ideas meet in the minds of those who support it. One reason why the Nazi party was able to create a mass movement in Germany was that it met, in a totally mystified way, the psychological needs of significant layers of German society. To dismiss fascism as 'irrational' fails to grasp the mixture of ideas, emotions and mysticism which gave it the ability to speak to the 'inner cores' of men and women, young and old in a capitalist society in crisis.

We have to see how extreme right wing groups in Britain today such as the National Front explain and provide answers to the crisis as we have described it. More effectively than the left, fascists have understood the deep fears and worries of people outside the workplace, in their personal lives. They also provide answers: the family crisis is solved by the restoration of traditional roles, in particular the patriarchal father; the crisis in education by bringing back discipline; the crisis in housing and the community by repatriating black people, and so on. analysis of the material roots of these problems is, of course, false; but in the absence of a socialist movement offering real solutions on a mass level, they are bound to make gains.

Nation and race

As we showed in Chapter One ('All Our Yesterdays') the basis of fascist philosophy is the race and the nation, and

these notions are used by fascists today. Some people have drawn a direct parallel between Jews in Germany in the 1930s and blacks in Britain today. But as David Edgar argues 'the slogan "Hitler blamed the Jews, the Front blames the blacks" is an oversimplification, in that, strictly the NF blames the Jews for the blacks' (*Racism, Fascism and the Politics of the National Front*, p. 120). It is not the blacks who are seen as the main threat. The presence of black people in Britain and the consequent 'depletion of our racial stock' is attributed to the Jews. 'All those who oppose multi-racialism should attack the politicians who promote it, not the immigrants, who are merely its victims' (*Spearhead* July 1977). Blacks are not seen as active initiators, but are essentially passive, either followers of blind instinct (muggers and rapists) or the innocent victims of professional agitators (in industrial disputes like Imperial Type-writers and Grunwick).

It is not necessary here for us to refute the NF's arguments about nation and race, but we have to examine their enormous psychological appeal. The loss of empire is still of enormous significance to many

people in Britain. Every school student is taught that 'Britain was once great' and knows that we are now the poor relations of countries in Europe and the Third World we once dominated. The psychological kernel of nationalism, in its fascist form is that the nation stands for manhood. The loss of the empire and the low status of Britain today is equivalent to the Englishman's loss of his virility. John Tyndall, Chairman of the NF, has quoted approvingly an American neo-Nazi who equates liberalism with weakness and contrasts it with 'the inexorable movement of Time, Destiny, History, the cruelty of accomplishment, sternness, heroism, sacrifice, super-personal ideas... Liberalism is an escape from hardness into softness, masculinity into femininity' (*Spearhead* March 1977). The fear of weakness says much about the anxieties and insecurities of fascists.

The 'natural role' of women

On sexual issues modern fascists again reiterate the positions of their predecessors. Gays are perverts who have no place in British society when it is made into 'a land for decent people to live in.' The



Big Flame Photo

natural role for women, according to them, is bear and look after children. They assert that the characteristics of women are biologically rooted. The NF has published an article by a member of the French extreme right which claims that these characteristics are 'submission, passivity, sensibility, tenderness and intuition' (*Spearhead* January 1978).

One quarter of the membership of the NF are women. How are we to explain its appeal to them? The fascists attribute to women the role of the main source of the well being of the family. This can strike a real chord with the many women who are denied any other potential opportunity

for emotional fulfillment. The virtual deification of woman as mother can give a new confidence and pride. Fascist propaganda also addresses itself to women's fears of mugging and rape. The message of *National Front News* is contained in headlines like 'Immigrant crime: white women are muggers' main targets.' The South London Women Against Racism and Fascism Group have analysed a leaflet put out by the NF candidate, Helena Stevens, in the 1978 by-election in Lambeth Central, which demonstrates how effective this message can be. Unlike the impersonal tones of anti-racist propaganda, it adopted the style of a problem

page and spoke directly to the problems women faced. This does not mean the way their problems were explained was correct (muggers being identified with black youth), but accounts for their appeal.

The emphasis on the 'natural role' of women makes men the undisputed head of the household. It restores to them the dignity and power, which as we have seen earlier in this chapter, they have lost. The trappings of fascist groups — uniforms, drums, marching, flags — and the attacks on Jews, blacks, gays and socialists, all restore to men confidence in their masculinity.

The Role of the Extreme Right

We have shown that there are elements of fascist ideology which will make fascism attractive to some people. We still have to answer the question: how many people will be drawn towards it? The membership of the largest fascist group, the National Front, is about 18,000. It has stood candidates in Parliamentary elections, its best performance being an average 3.2% of the votes in the constituencies where it stood in February 1974. The question which immediately comes

to mind is — can the NF go on to become a mass movement and threaten to take over state power as the fascists did in Germany and Italy in the 1930s? There is no magic checklist of factors which tells us under what circumstances this can happen, but what we can do is point out some of the key differences between the situation now and in the thirties. No simple predictions can be given as the future depends on people and how their struggles develop, not any neat laws of history.

Can it happen here?

There is very little reliable information about the class composition of the NF, which makes comparisons with the social base of the fascist movements in the thirties difficult. What we can say is that the size of the peasantry has continued to decline in Europe (in Britain it disappeared long ago); and while the petty bourgeoisie and 'new middle class' may complain about the effects of the crisis



Photo: Community Press

on them, they are not under anything like as intense pressures as in the 1930s. Many of the latter have even joined white collar unions like ASTMS, APEX and TASS. As for the NF its nostalgia for the past is very different from the Nazi party's confident vision expressed in its art and architecture. Hitler once said that the mass of people can never be mobilised under the banner of defending the status quo, you must conjure up a new and better future.

The most important differences concern the capitalist and working classes. Under the spectre of the Russian revolution the capitalist class did not have the confidence to make concessions and significant sections of it backed the rise of fascism. Today parliamentary democracy is extremely well established in Europe (particularly in Britain) and there seems little necessity for capitalists to take the risk of fascism, which has a momentum of its own. Finally while the British working class has failed to counter the capitalist offensive of the seventies, it has by no means suffered the defeat working classes in Europe experienced around the years of the Depression. Taken together all these factors make it extremely unlikely that the NF will succeed in taking over the state. This still leaves us with another question: What will be the role of fascist groups in the immediate future?

The threat from the NF

One of the main reasons the NF gains support is its racism. But it doesn't regard the issue of immigration as an end in itself, it uses it as a means of attracting people towards its nazi ideas. This prevents it from taking full advantage of the extent of popular racism. There are many who resent blacks for taking 'their' jobs and houses, but don't accept the full argument of blacks being genetically inferior. They see the blacks as the main enemy and find the whole theory of the Zionist conspiracy difficult to swallow. Much of the NF's support comes from



Photo: Community Press

the young, but again its fascist ideology tends to undermine its potential appeal. On the one hand a Young National Front leaflet has described schoolkids as 'probably the most oppressed section of British society'. On the other the NF places great emphasis on the need for discipline and a former chairman, John Kingsley Read, has stated 'If the National Front came to power we would whip juvenile delinquents until the skin comes off their backs.' Despite the NF's attempts to organise Rock Against Communism gigs there is an immense gulf between some of the punks it attracts and its staid, puritanical leadership. All these contradictions, as well as the success of anti-fascists in making the label 'Nazi' stick to the NF, make it unlikely that it will grow significantly in the near future.

Even if the number of members of fascist groups remains at the same level,

this doesn't mean that they are not a serious threat. Firstly there will be continuing attacks on blacks, gays and the left as this is an essential part of developing a fascist cadre. This requires the black community to organise its self defence and others to take adequate precautions to protect their marches and events. Secondly although those drawn to the left and to fascist groups usually come from very different backgrounds, there is a danger that people dissatisfied with the present political system will turn first to the NF because it appears to offer a radical alternative which involves a smaller break with the dominant ideology and culture than the left groups. Finally racism remains one of the main factors dividing the working class and groups like the NF enable it to continue to thrive. In particular they exert a pressure which encourages the Labour and Conservative parties to adopt ever more racist policies.

Racism in British Culture

If what was said in the previous section is correct, then the main danger in Britain today is not fascism but racism. The remaining sections of this chapter will detail the all encompassing nature of contemporary racism, looking in particular at racism in the main political parties and the state. Racism permeates every aspect of British culture from jokes to school text books, from children's stories to the very language we use. Two areas stand out: theories of education and the mass media.

'Scientific' racism

In the last ten years since the Black papers on education liberal educational ideas have come under increasingly severe attack. Part of this trend has been the work of psychologists like Eysenck and Jensen who have claimed that intelligence is genetically inherited. 'Intelligence Quo-

tient' tests are said to prove that black children are less intelligent than white children. Racists, in particular the National Front, have used this work to try to substantiate their views on the racial superiority of white people.

The results of IQ tests can be disputed on a number of grounds. The questions asked favour those from a particular cultural background (the advanced capitalist countries, middle class, white), but a full critique goes further than a call for questions without cultural bias (even if this were possible). Intelligence is not some abstract thing people possess prior to specific situations in which they apply it. Mental skills are constantly being constructed and transformed by the situations they are in. Thus the whole idea of IQ tests 'measuring' some given property of the testee is problematic. There are other reasons to explain why

large numbers of black children apparently 'underachieve' at school. Many West Indian youths reject the terms the schools set for success. Their peer group solidarity leads them to resist collectively the discipline which would fragment them into individuals competing against each other.

Racism in the media

There is no deliberate conspiracy to present black people on television and in the press in a derogatory way, but any programme involves the selection of information and images through a particular set of assumptions. The less these are consciously examined the more likely it is that these will be the taken for granted racist categories widely held in British society. Thus in light entertainment programmes all foreigners are made to appear funny, all cultural differences



the basis for ridicule. Black people are presented in terms of stereotypes — as stupid, lazy scroungers and so on.

Racism in the treatment of news is less obvious than drama, but just as pernicious. Headlines like 'Gang of black youths attack elderly lady' draw attention to the race of those involved when it is of no relevance. Whenever blacks appear in news items they are invariably the starting point of a problem. Usually the problem is immigration. The

Race and the Labour and Conservative Parties

Tories

The positions being taken by the two main political parties demonstrate the ideological shift to the right in Britain. In the case of the Conservative party this has been a response to the failure of the Heath administration to control the unions and stay in power. Race has been a key issue in moving the party to the right with the popularity of Enoch Powell and the rise of the NF. The present position of the Tories was most clearly expressed by Margaret Thatcher on the *World in Action* programme in January 1978: 'People are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture... We must hold out the clear prospect of an end to immigration.'

Tory policies are not simply a cynical exploitation of racism, but a return to the principles of free enterprise capitalism. They reject the two-pronged strategy described in the previous chapter ('Roots') of combining ever tighter immigration laws with measures to improve 'race relations'. The Tories believe it is up to immigrants to adjust to the customs of their 'country of adoption.' The new Conservative government has come into office pledged to further strengthen immigration controls and to review the 1976 Race Relations Act.

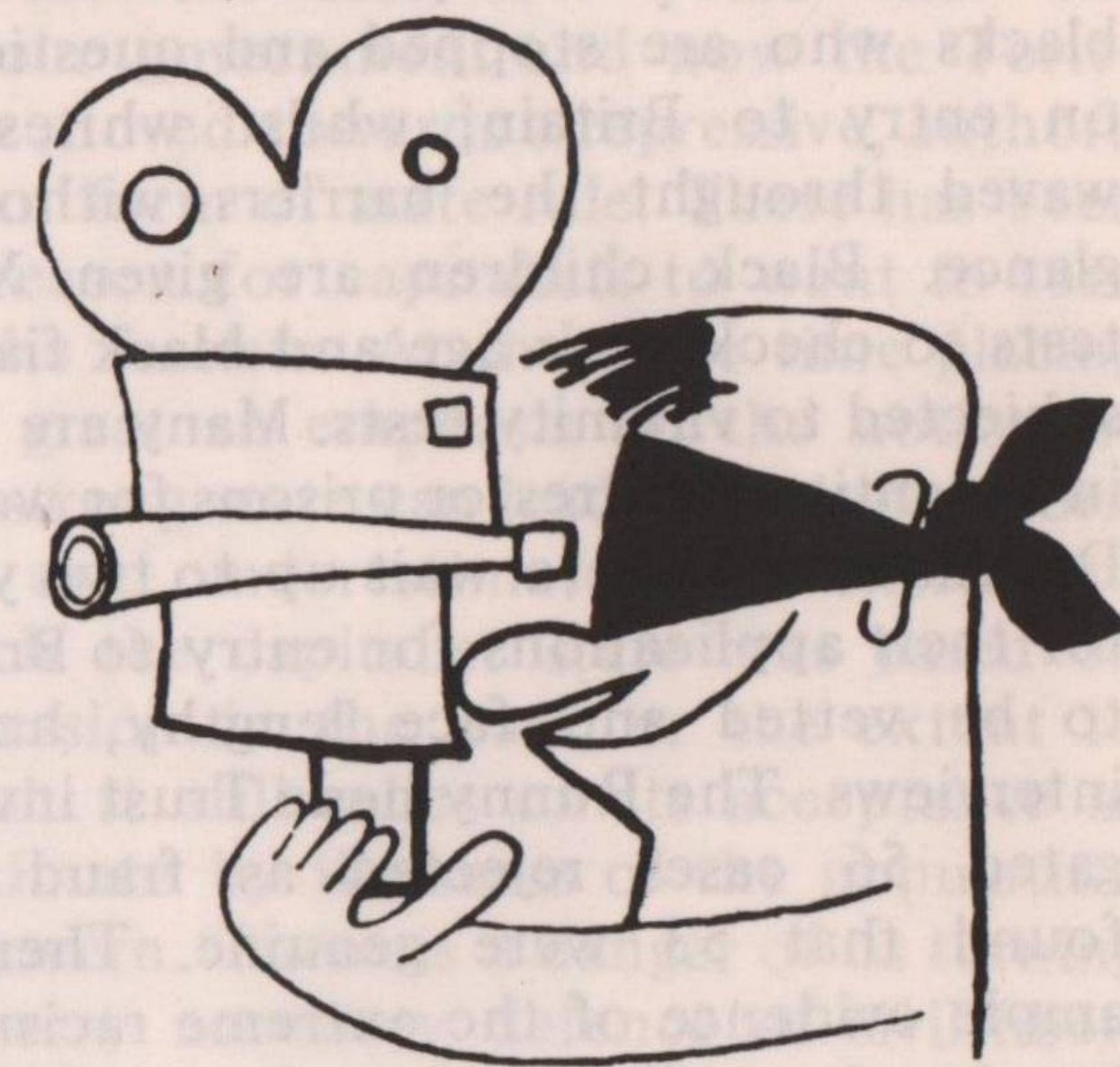
Labour

The previous Labour government attempted to head off rebellion by black people with various schemes to co-opt the black petty bourgeoisie (Commission for Racial Equality, Race Relations Board, etc) and various short term employment projects. That this apparently more 'liberal' strategy is nevertheless racist is confirmed by various statements from Labour MPs. The Home Secretary Merlyn Rees was asked on *Weekend World* in

way it is posed is as a question of numbers ('how many immigrants are there?') which excludes any other issues. After immigration the next most common type of story concerns violent crime. The word 'mugging', which is so common, has been applied to such a wide variety of offences that the only meaning it has left is a street crime committed by blacks.

Very rarely do you see black people on current affairs programmes. Even if the issue involves race, then there is usually only one black, invariably an establishment figure, amongst a host of white politicians, police and 'experts'. Increasingly NF and other extreme right wing leaders are interviewed on television, airing their racist views in a confident and relaxed manner. Compare this with the hard ride given socialist or black militants on their rare appearances on the screen. Hugh Green, the previous governor of the BBC, stated that you can't be neutral between racism and anti-racism. His successor Michael Swan regards the extreme right as part of the spectrum of

debate and uses the highly dubious justification that exposing their views may cause them to change their minds. Instead this coverage can only serve to increase their importance and respectability. Following the logic of the BBC's notion of 'balance' the more vocal and extreme the far right becomes the more attention it is given.



February 1978 'What you really mean is that immigration control is a device to keep out coloured people?' He replied 'That's what it is... I don't think we should hide it and that's what people are concerned about.' Sid Bidwell, left Labour MP, wrote to *The Guardian* in March 1978: 'It has always been worth a try to take coloured immigration out of the cock pit of the two-party conflict in the interests of race relations. If during the next General Election, it appears that a Tory Government would be more realistic on this issue than a Labour Government, I think this would be a major matter leading to a Labour defeat.'

The various policies designed to improve 'race relations' provide no real antidote to racism as they serve only to

manage unemployment and discrimination rather than challenge them. But if the Labour leadership accommodates itself to racism, what about the party as a whole? The 1977 Labour Party Conference passed a strongly worded anti-racist motion and several left Labour MPs have given their support to the Anti-Nazi League. However, one reason for this support is the fear of the NF taking Labour votes. The Labour left has been much less vocal in its support for anti-racism compared with anti-nazism. Some of the Labour left, like Sid Bidwell, support racist immigration controls, and it has certainly been very muted in its handling of the issue with no major challenge being made to the Callaghan leadership.



Tony Benn addresses November 1979 demonstration against racist immigration laws

Photo: Community Press

The Increase in State Racism

The main threat to black people in Britain comes not from the fascists but from the state. In Chapter Two ('Roots') we mentioned some of the forms of state racism and over the last few years it has grown even more. Immigration control remains the most important form. It is blacks who are stopped and questioned on entry to Britain, whilst whites are waved through the barriers without a glance. Black children are given X-ray tests to check their age and black fiances subjected to virginity tests. Many are kept in detention centres or prisons for weeks. Dependents have to wait up to two years for their applications for entry to Britain to be vetted and face lengthy, hostile interviews. The Runnymede Trust investigated 56 cases rejected as fraud and found that 53 were genuine. There is ample evidence of the extreme racism of immigration officers, but the problem is not that the 'wrong people' are attracted to the job, it is the job itself. Immigration laws were passed to prevent black people entering Britain, so that it is inevitable that any officer with a low 'refusal rate' will be carpeted and forced to mend his/her ways.

For blacks already in Britain there is the racism of the police and the courts. Under the 1971 Immigration Act the police have the right to check people to see if they are illegal immigrants or overstayers if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion. In practice they stop black people in the street or go on 'trawling



Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

missions' raiding houses in black areas. The other major charge used by the police to harass black youth is SUS ('being a suspected person loitering with

intent to commit a felonious offence'). Conviction does not usually require any other witnesses apart from police officers and no robbery has to take place. This law is overwhelmingly applied to blacks compared with whites. The attitude of the police towards blacks was clearly conveyed in the warning given by David McNee, the Police Commissioner for London: 'Keep off the streets and you won't get into trouble.'

The Labour government's Green Paper on Nationality in 1977, the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration in March 1978 and the proposals made by the Conservative party in opposition a few weeks later, all agree on the need for tighter controls on immigration. It is likely that the nationality laws to be introduced by the new Tory government will reduce the civil rights of black people and legitimate a stepping up of police harassment of black communities. The Tories are known to be considering 'a system of internal control of immigration', in other words identity cards and pass laws.

The state has become the most persistent and powerful enemy confronting black people. In its many guises it lies behind the majority of the problems they face every day.

The strong state

The increase in state racism should be seen in the wider context of the emergence of what has been called the 'strong state.' Since the end of the boom many countries, from West Germany to

India, have moved towards a more authoritarian form of government while leaving parliamentary democracy intact. An example of how far it is possible for the strong state to develop is provided by West Germany. Since 1972 there has been a policy of Berufsverbot (the 'professional ban') which excludes from employment in the civil service those whose 'loyalty to the constitution' is said to be in doubt. 1,300,000 people have been investigated and about 4,000 banned or dismissed from employment. Reasons have included participating in the anti-nuclear movement and living in a flat with a member of a left organisation.

There are several factors which make West Germany different from Britain and it is unlikely that we will see anything along the lines of Berufsverbot here in the foreseeable future, but there are plenty of indications of a move towards more of a 'law and order' society. This is seen most clearly in relation to Northern Ireland. The Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1973 gave the police the power to detain for seven days without trial and for people to be sent to jail for membership of a 'prescribed organisation'. In the same year no-jury Diplock courts were introduced. These have a conviction rate of 94%, of which 80% are based solely on alleged 'confessions' by the accused. There are continual random raids on 'terrorist affected' (i.e. Catholic) areas and it has been estimated that details of nearly half a million people (one third of the popu-

lation) are kept in the army's computer.

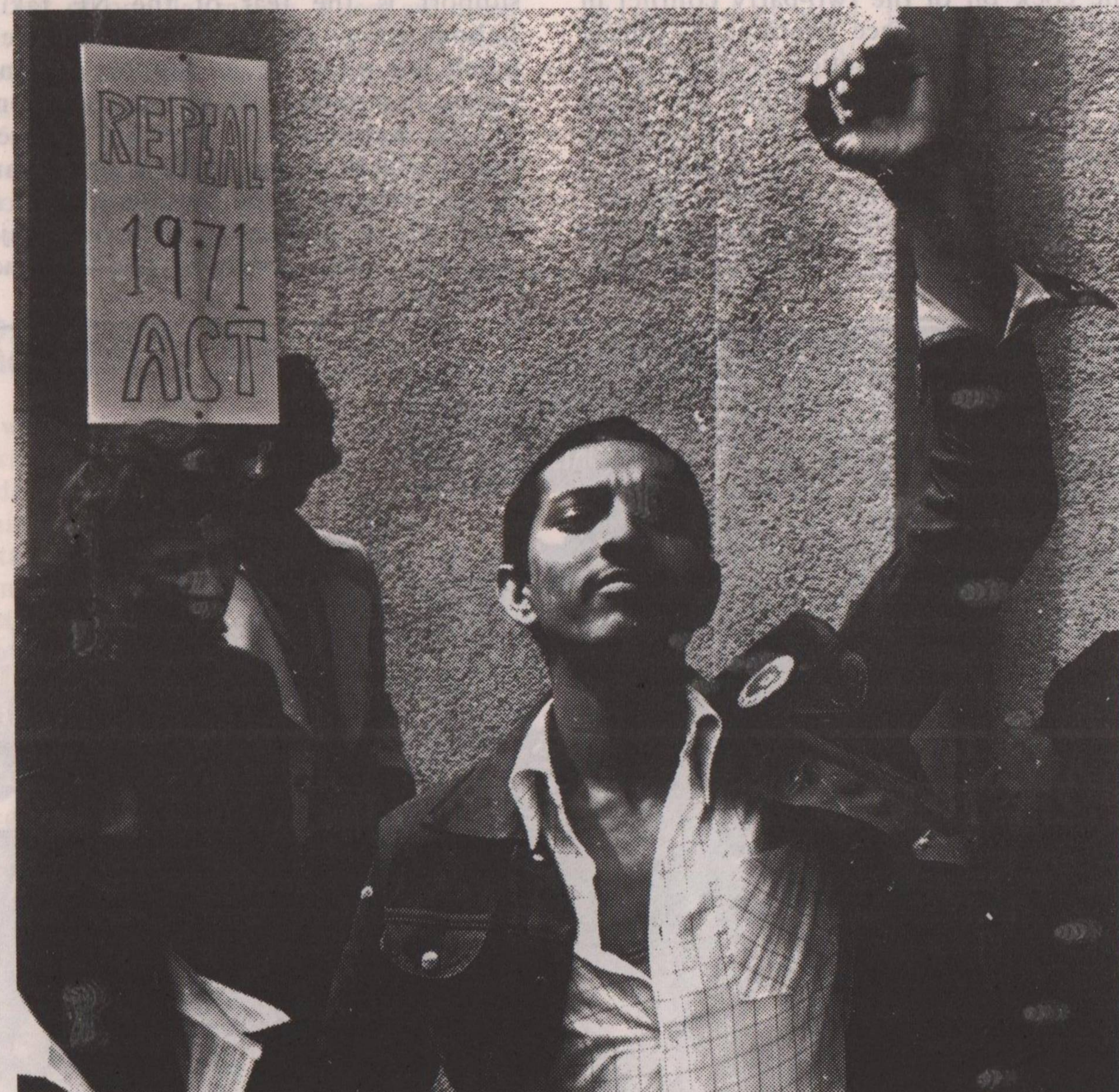
Back in Britain there have been a whole series of measures enacted which chip away at the freedoms traditionally associated with liberal democracies: the erosion of the right to squat and occupy through the Criminal Trespass Act, prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act, the banning of demonstrations under the Public Order Act and so on. The new Tory government is pledged to make another attempt to make trade unions subject to legal sanctions while Special Branch monitoring of militants has increased. There has also been a massive rise in expenditure on security forces. All these measures have been introduced in a piece-meal fashion which has prevented opponents from mounting a co-ordinated campaign against them. This 'softly, softly' approach has proved far more effective than any crude, obvious attack on the working class.

Racism and fascism today

In this chapter we have tried to isolate those aspects of the crisis which create the space for fascism and racism. We have concluded that there is little likelihood of the present fascist groups like the National Front being in a position to take over the state or even of them growing significantly in the immediate future. However, they do represent a danger with their attacks on blacks, gays and the left; by helping to maintain divisions in the working class and encouraging the major political parties to move to the right on

race. This means that anti-fascist struggles must continue to be an important part of the activities of socialists. On the other hand we must make greater efforts than in the past in anti-racist struggles and this means fighting the racism of the state. It is the racist immigration laws, the racism of the police and of the courts which are the greatest day to day problems for black people.

Over the last few years first the Labour government and now the Tories have moved towards a repressive, authoritarian form of state rule. There has been no reason for capitalists to want to turn to the fascists. At the same time placing too great an emphasis on the notion of the strong state can lead to serious errors. We can underestimate the extent to which the capitalist state was based on repression in the past, or the extent to which it still relies on its acceptance as legitimate by the mass of the population to govern. There is a danger of us turning the very necessary defence of civil liberties into a far too uncritical defence of the liberal state as against the strong state. The greatest mistake of all would be for us to present the strong state as an unshakeable monolith. The move towards this form of state is, at least in part, an acknowledgement of ideological and political weakness. It is a way of the state legitimating itself by constructing a series of 'internal threats' which it therefore has to take strong measures to repress. If it had total popular consent in its rule this would not be necessary.



Abdul Azad after a successful campaign to prevent his deportation under the immigration laws



Photo: Peter Slepokura

Ch 4. Fightback

The Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Struggle



Our Political Tasks

Black immigrants have been fighting British racism from the moment they stepped ashore in this country; this continued a tradition established in the countries they came from. That struggle has attracted the attention of white socialists since the 'race riots' of 1958, the Smethwick By-Election of 1964 and more particularly since the formation of the National Front in 1967 and Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech the following year. Our record since leaves a lot to be desired, although to call it a total failure would be a crude and unfair simplification. In this final chapter we try to come to terms with some of the problems we have faced, and some we have not faced, as a basis for discussion of where we go from here. We feel that many of these problems flow from the lack of any such discussion.

The escalation of the struggle in recent years has made the wood difficult to see for the trees – the pressing need to organise next week’s demonstration has consistently upstaged attempts to place our day to day practice within a wider set of theoretical perspectives. To many sections of the Left, anti-racism and anti-fascism are simply reducible to ‘Smash

the Front'. Big Flame is within that increasingly significant part of the movement that thinks this position is inadequate. We would outline the following points as the political tasks for an anti-racist, anti-fascist movement.

1. Politically defeating organised fascism and organised racism by making them organisationally insignificant. In the short term this means combatting the National Front and British Movement.
2. Combatting racialism within the white working class, including the racialism of the white left.
3. Support for the growth of an autonomous black movement as the first step to real class unity.
4. To challenge the basis of fascism's appeal, in particular the false security to be found in reactionary sexual relations and a reactionary culture.
5. Fighting the state's racism, particularly the immigration and sus laws.
6. Support for struggles against imperialism, emphasising the connections between them and the challenge to racism within Britain.

Most white activists concentrate almost exclusively on the first of these

tasks. We hope to be able to argue why *all* of them are necessary.

Big Flame argues that an anti-fascist movement must simultaneously be anti-racist. While fascism feeds off racism, there are *many* more racists than fascists and many racists who oppose fascists. For most black people it is the *racism of the state* – its police, its immigration and sus laws, its educational policies – which affects them far more than attacks by the NF. The white left's response to NF harassment of black people, as at Brick Lane, may be poor but it is generally a lot better than our response to state harassment of black people. While an anti-racist movement must be built, we shouldn't fall into the Communist Party's trap of concentrating on 'Unity against Racialism' and underplaying the importance of the anti-fascist fight, nor should we do the reverse, as the Anti-Nazi League did, of concentrating on the Nazis. Both struggles are essential and while being closely related they sometimes demand different approaches. In this chapter we want to look at the international context of racism and fascism and examine both the 'anti-fascist movement' and the black movement in Britain.

Racism and Fascism are International

It is a fantasy to suppose that an anti-fascist anti-racist movement can be successful without taking an anti-imperialist stand. Fascist movements gain succour from their brother organisations elsewhere, so must the anti-fascist movement. For example, the NF have praised the Chilean Military Junta which, although not strictly fascist, is on the 'right' lines. On the other hand, the over-

throw of the Portuguese dictatorship, prompted by the defeat of Portuguese imperialism in Angola and Mozambique, gave birth to a significant international solidarity movement, attempting to hammer home the defeat and encouraging popular socialist developments there. This mirrors the inspiration British antifascists derived in the '30s from the struggles in Spain. The watchword *'they*

shall not pass' crossed national boundaries.

Ireland

In Ireland, Britain's oldest colony, the British bourgeoisie has used vicious anti-Irish racism – jokes, for example – to justify its systematic exploitation of Irish agriculture and industry over hundreds of years. The magazine *Punch*, in 1848,



THE IRISH FRANKENSTEIN

portrayed the leader of the Young Ireland Movement, John Mitchell, as a vicious monkey, while Roy Mason, former Northern Ireland Secretary, continued this tradition claiming the troubles in Northern Ireland to be 'ingrained' and part of 'the Irish temperament'. The British State has learned many lessons from the last ten years of military occupation of Northern Ireland, later applied in Britain itself. The Special Patrol Group and the use of riot shields for control of civil disorder both surfaced first in Northern Ireland.

Fascist groups like the NF have a clear allegiance to the Loyalist forces in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Volunteer Force, for example, regularly reproduces articles from the NF's *Spearhead* and more 'practical' support has been noted in combined NF-UVF gunrunning enterprises. When the NF established their offices in Belfast, the UVF wished 'every success to the NF in Northern Ireland and trusts that it may grow from strength to strength'. *Loyalist News* has regularly echoed fascist ideas: 'The time will soon be ripe when the Republican scum will make their final effort. Already the signs are manifesting themselves, this time we must give them the *final solution*' (18.1.71)

The NF broke up an NCCL meeting in Manchester in 1977 whose aim had been to oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In 1979 the combined ranks of 400 NF, BM and Loyalists harangued the Bloody Sunday march in London which mourned the murder of 14 civil rights marchers in 1972 in Derry by British Paratroopers, and also attacked a Troops Out march in Glasgow. The anti-fascist movement must urgently draw the link between racism and fascism and lend its support to the United Troops Out of Ireland Movement and campaigns against the PTA. The joint UTOM/ANL march through East London in the summer of 1979 was a hopeful sign but the low priority given to it by the Left shows there is much to be done.

Southern Africa

Racist media coverage of Southern Africa, and particularly of Zimbabwe, of

the 'drug-crazed terrorists murder white missionaries' variety may well encourage people in this country to support Smith or Muzorewa; but its *primary* effect is to harden attitudes towards blacks in *this* country. Racist whites will talk in the same breath about sending 'them' all home and shooting 'them' in Rhodesia. The NF realise this. Their first major growth in 1972 was a result of cashing in on the hysteria against the Ugandan Asians. And they've undoubtedly got their links with fascists in Southern Africa who provide both finance and increasingly new recruits fleeing from the liberation struggle. The Afro-Caribbean community in Britain understands the link very well. Many of its members feel strong emotional and ideological links with the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and are aware that the defeat of racism can only strengthen *their* position in Britain.

That the ANL conference passed a motion (despite the opposition of the Steering Committee) calling upon it 'to use its resources and membership to publicise the liberation struggle and to actively support initiatives taken in this country by the Patriotic Front, or groups who work in solidarity with it' indicates that at last the anti-racist movement is beginning to take opposition to imperialism seriously. Not before time – racism in Britain doesn't just have its roots in Britain's imperialist past. It's also a legacy of the failure of socialists in Britain to build an effective anti-imperialist opposition – the chickens always come home to roost.

We're here because you were there

The anti-racist and anti-fascist movement must take up struggles against imperialism. Firstly because the success of these struggles lessens the room for manoeuvre of British and other capital. The recent events in St. Lucia, Grenada, Dominica and Nicaragua are important in this respect. Secondly, the choices open to the immigrant working class in Britain are enhanced by the weakening of imperialism's grip in places like Southern Europe, Ireland and the Caribbean. Lastly, racist consciousness must be undermined by constantly explaining the real issues surrounding anti-imperialist struggles.

This is no *moral* issue or one of political 'purity'; for an anti-fascist movement to gain ground it must tackle the various bases for racist and fascist appeal and must not cut itself off from the anti-imperialist struggle. This realisation is growing in Britain – the UTOM/ANL demo and a desire to commit the ANL to support for the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe show this. But there is much more to be done. In particular we should:

1. engage in solidarity work against the kind of regimes that give encouragement to racism and fascism — S. Africa, Chile etc.
2. where possible try and draw the links between Northern Ireland and the anti-fascist struggle.
3. attempt to understand and give support to the most progressive aspects of struggles where immigrants come from, most especially the Caribbean, India / Pakistan and Southern Europe.



Picket of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Constitutional Conference, September 1979

The Struggle against Fascism

It would be a mistake to believe that fascism has no popular appeal or is just the preserve of lunatics. It doesn't appear from nowhere but is the extension of the everyday racism, nationalism, authoritarianism and attitudes to work and sex which have been fundamental to twentieth century capitalist societies. This has many important applications which those doing anti-racist work are only just beginning to think about. It means seeing as central to our practice the undermining of the ideas on which the foundations of fascism are built. Obviously, racism is an important keystone in the fascist edifice and we've argued the need to tackle it already, but it's not the only one. We should never argue that a political challenge to the NF or BM is a choice between 'Smash the Front' or Fight Racism or Fight Sexism. It's necessary to constantly challenge the material divisions of power within the working class from which fascism feeds and oppose fascism in a qualitatively different way; not reproducing the sexism, racism, nationalism and so on in the way we fight.

Fascists attempt to resolve the crisis in sexual relations (see Ch. 3 'Up Against the Wall') by re-inforcing reactionary sexual stereotypes — the dependent Mother, the Protective Male — in the service of Master Race and Nation. The Anti-fascist movement is cutting its own throat on those occasions when such stereotypes are glorified 'in the cause of anti-fascism'. The streetfighting man, who like St. George slays the fascist dragon to 'protect the helpless maiden' does only damage to the struggle. Slogans like 'We are the IS Boot Boys' and comments like 'We smashed the NF — they were a load of cissies' must be dispensed with.

Anti-fascist propaganda

The general tendency of anti-fascist propaganda over the last decade has been to equate the NF (quite correctly of course) with Nazis. However there has also been a neglect of fascism's oppression of women and gays and a constant danger of reinforcing an unwanted 'spinoff' from our NF=Nazis propaganda, the common misunderstanding that the NF are putting forward an alien, unpatriotic philosophy imported from Germany. Some of our propaganda has bordered on being anti-German. Of equal importance is the low level of understanding of fascism apparent in much anti-fascist propaganda. A useful, if unnecessarily obscure article in *Wedge* magazine showed this up — whereas the fascists have their 'World Jewish Conspiracy' theory we have a 'Fascism as a Disease' equivalent.

The language used by anti-fascists is often a real barrier to our understanding. Terms like rat, vermin and scum are common and suggest that fascists are essentially evil. This is not a view of people who are the product of specific historical circumstances but of people who have a fixed, unchangeable set of

characteristics. It is essentially an irrational account of irrationality; theological rather than Marxist. Calling someone 'vermin' means saying 'kill it' which leads to the sort of abuses of 'No Platform' we will discuss below. This view gives no guide to how we can attempt to convert the followers of the NF. This problem is usually got round by making a division between the leaders who are 'evil' and the followers who are simply 'misguided'. Thus the real appeal that fascist propaganda has to its followers is denied. Such an attitude is counterproductive and cuts us off from communicating with people. On many demonstrations, for example, 'scum' is chanted at anyone who makes hostile remarks, as if they were all hardened fascists. A perfect example of what anti-fascist propaganda must avoid comes from two *New Musical Express* journalists writing in *Socialist Worker* who manage to reinforce nearly every reactionary stereotype:

'Face to face, they're fat, fortyish, wizened Nazi wankers having flaccid fantasies of butch, blond Bavarian boys resplendent in leather hot pants — they're male menopause Boy Scouts who've been flouncing through selected high streets under a red, white and blue swastika since 1974.' (29.4.1978)

Anti-fascism and sexual politics

Fortunately, however, there is a significant trend in the opposite direction. One of the richest developments in the anti-fascist movement has been the organised intervention of feminists and gay socialists. Sweeping aside the notion that women and gays are victims to be protected, a variety of women's and gay anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations have sprung up, such as Women Against Racism and Fascism, Gays Against Fascism and later Women and Gays against the Nazis. It is these groups which have been mainly responsible for challenging the 'Smash the Front' Boot Boy tactics of much of the anti-fascist movement.

Reflecting the increased consciousness

and organisation of black women in Britain who have played leading roles in strikes like the ones at Imperial Type-writers and Grunwicks, in struggles against racist schooling and the sexist interpretations of the already racist immigration laws, there has been a recent growth in black women's organisations. The National Black Women's Conference in March 1979 was soon followed by a mobilisation against state harassment of black people and the number of black women's groups seems to be growing. Women Against Imperialism groups too are considering women's struggles in the context of imperialism. Although not recognised generally as part of the 'anti-fascist movement' this is exactly what these groups are. Without, them, the struggle against fascism would be immeasurably weaker.

Alien culture?

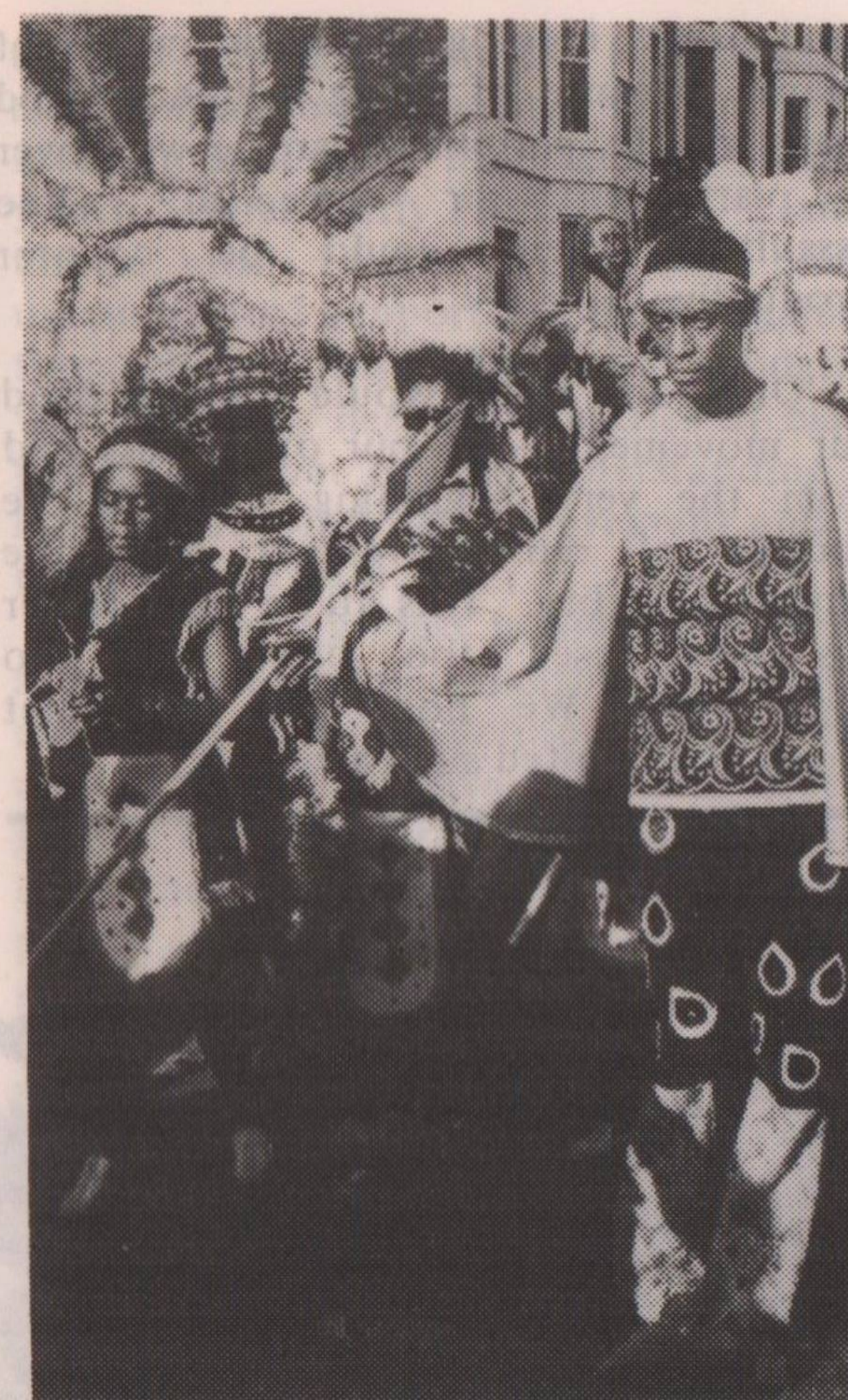
Margaret Thatcher believes there's a threat from an 'alien culture' and the new right wing backlash seeks to re-establish traditional morals and values. This is not something we can ignore to concentrate instead on the bread and butter issues. Every day people are struggling with what kind of social surround gives them comfort and stimulation. Youth especially have taken up a fight for a new culture, again and again. One of the greatest strengths of the anti-fascist movement recently has been its ability to provide a taking off point for a progressive culture and an alliance has been made between anti-racist and anti-fascist sentiments and this cultural endeavour.

The background of the ANL's (and Rock Against Racism's) popular support has been the opportunity it provided for the flowering of an anti-authoritarian youth movement, a movement which involves many working class youth, both black and white, identifying to an important extent with each other and with anti-nazism. At the same time there continues to be an important



Picket of the Home Office by Asian women's organisations, Feb. 1979

Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)



Notting Hill Carnival, August 1977

growth of an independent black culture. Examples range from reggae and the Notting Hill Carnival to black poets like Linton Kwesi Johnson and writers like Farrukh Dhondy with his book *East End at Your Feet*. On a whole number of levels challenges are being made to the dominant bourgeois culture.

No platform for fascists

Having gone to great lengths to criticise the commonly held view that all you need to do to defeat fascism is to prevent them from organising we would emphasise the vital importance of *No Platform for Fascists* as one essential aspect of our political work. By *No Platform* we mean that Fascists must be stopped from using public platforms such as Town Halls and television. Although fascism grows through the cracks in capitalist life and therefore attacking its roots must be our priority, fascist organisations can still grow on their own. We must constantly prevent them from organising.

The political slogan *No Platform for Fascists* achieved by our own efforts follows from an understanding of the nature and goals of fascist movements. Firstly, fascist parties, unlike say the Conservatives, do not accept the democratic rights to organise independently and discuss politics won by the working class. Why should we allow 'free speech' to those who would take it from us? Weighed against the lives of millions of people, the fascist right to 'free speech' is cheap rhetoric. Secondly, violence is to fascist parties as heads are to human beings and every fascist movement has its 'combat organisation', for example Hitler's *Stormtroopers* or the NF's *Honour Guard*. These are the organisations used to attack, intimidate and demoralise all those who oppose them. Fascism will try to demonstrate its strength and power, its Master Race nature. While the NF at the moment

appears to seek power through parliamentary channels its long-term goal necessitates violence. Thirdly, fascist parties are built on extreme authoritarianism, with unswerving loyalty and blind obedience to their leaders. There is simply no place for rational debate and discussion with them.

This understanding leads us to our *No Platform* position. Some support the Labour Party and Communist Party view that we should 'Ignore them and they'll go away'. All history has shown they won't just go away. Militant *No Platform* activity — picketing their meetings, counter mobilisations to their marches and so on — are absolutely necessary to diminish their influence and disrupt their organisation. Our activity has contributed to the decline of the NF's vote, kept the majority of members off the street by driving a wedge between the hardcore and the thousands of racists who voted NF. Further, we should ensure that fascist organisations are not allowed to freely attack any individual or group, *whatever the issue*, since such actions are a way of training their combat organisations, boosting their morale and dividing their opponents. We should adopt a second policy, *support for any group or individual threatened with fascist violence, whatever the issue*.

No Platform by our own efforts

Many anti-fascists have adopted a policy of asking the police, local councils or the Home Secretary to ban the NF marches under the Race Relations Act. BF believes that this policy which means handing over to the state the power to take crucial decisions is dangerously mistaken. History has shown, that in the final analysis, the bourgeois democratic state will not prevent the fascists from taking power. But more importantly such bans are likely to rebound against socialists. The Public Order Act of 1936 was the state's response to a call for banning the BUF — but it didn't work at the time and ever since the Left has found itself more frequently impaled on its spikes than the right.



Picket of NF meeting, Blackburn 1976

More recent events clearly show how these bans make the socialist and working class movements suffer most. For example, the widespread calls from reformists to ban the NF's march in Hyde on October 8th 1977 was used by Chief Constable Anderton as an excuse for the most blatant collusion between him and Webster, giving the NF the freedom of Longsight, while holding up the Left in Hyde and Stockport with 9,000 police and helicopters at a total cost of £270,000 to the taxpayer. On 22nd February 1978 Metropolitan Police Commissioner McNee announced the banning of an NF march due to take place in Ilford three days later. At the same time he banned all marches for two months — including several progressive marches. Under these circumstances, to claim the ban on the NF as a 'partial victory' is nonsense. Several weeks later the police tried it on in Leeds. The banning of the NF march was extended to include the traditional May Day Rally. Leeds Trades Council decided to ignore the ban, and there were several arrests. The lesson is clear. We must have nothing to do with calls to the state to ban the NF. We must build a mass independent anti-fascist movement to stop the fascists.

But what when the police outnumber us?

Since the Lewisham anti-NF demonstration the police have consistently thrown thousands of people and pounds into the field and the anti-fascist movement has not had the force to physically stop the fascists. However, the slogan of *No Platform* has been *politically* implemented when our mobilisations have sent much smaller numbers of fascists scuttling down the side streets protected by thousands of police. It dents their Master Race image.

An important part of future activity must therefore be to keep up the pressure and maintain the situation where the fascists can't hold marches without massive police protection. The ANL had had a bad record on this count, the leadership fearing to offend its influential

establishment supporters. When 80,000 gathered in Victoria Park (East London) in April 1978 the NF were allowed the day before the unprecedented freedom of the streets of Central London. Worse still, in September 1978, as Carnival 2 gathered its even greater numbers against racism in Brockwell Park, the ANL leadership hindered support for a call to defend Asian areas in the East End against an intimidating NF march. Just over a year later, the ANL leadership was chasing along to catch up with the movement, late in the day supporting calls for No Platform in Leicester and Southall.

The abuse of No Platform

While we support No Platform we must be wary about some of the abuses of the demand. One is to believe that counter-mobilisation alone is sufficient to defeat fascism. Another is to glorify violence against the fascists, setting up 'goon squads' for revenge and individual acts of violence against fascists. Tit-for-tat operations against individual fascists at their work or home do not advance the struggle and place the whole anti-fascist movement in danger via reprisals. The

hard core ideological Nazis will not change because of being beaten up and many of the periphery can be won over by argument or ostracism, while assaulting them could be counter productive.

'Only one thing would have stopped our movement - if our opponents had from the very beginning smashed the nucleus of our movement with the utmost brutality.' This quote from Hitler has been used too often and too approvingly. We hope this pamphlet shows how limited such a view is.

The Struggle against Racism



The racism of the state has been constantly underestimated by the white left and anti-racist movement. In Chapters Two ('Roots') and Three ('Up Against the Wall') we have already examined it in some detail. However, the new Tory Government is intensifying this racism and bringing in more legislation to back it up. They are strengthening the racist division present in existing immigration laws between 'patrial' and 'non-patrial' in new immigration law proposals and a new Nationality Act (which had its origins in the previous Labour Government); Starting from the false problem that there are too many 'non-patrial' (i.e. usually black) immigrants able to get in and too many able to 'slip through the net' by simply lying

about the numbers, there are new plans to intensify counter measures against illegal immigrants, and 'remove some of the possible sources of future immigration'. The new Nationality Act threatens to make many black Britons stateless. The families of black people will be divided, as husbands and fiancées are refused entry, and the entry of dependents, including teenagers and grandparents is restricted. These are just a few of the measures that will strengthen racist feeling, and threaten the position of all black people in Britain.

Already we have seen several successful campaigns to contest the increasing racist harassment sanctioned by these laws such as the successful campaign against the deportation of Abdul Azad.

The size of the demonstration called by a very wide range of organisations within the black community on 25th November 1979 has shown the strength of feeling on this issue. Following it, much work needs to be done to build good, local campaigns. The role of the white left is clearly to energetically support such initiatives against state racism from the black community. Its other main task should be to make a much greater effort to tackle the racialism of the white working class.

Support for an autonomous black movement

One of the most enriching experiences for the whole working class in Britain over the last decade or so has been the development of struggles confidently waged by sections of the black working

class. There has been the emergence of autonomous organisations, both of black revolutionaries and more generally black youth, particularly Asian. Big Flame, unlike most of the white left, offers unconditional support for these organisations. We do this both out of solidarity with the daily needs and battles of black people and out of our understanding of how the revolutionary movement and its party will be built.

The working class is divided because, although the whole class is oppressed and exploited, certain sections have greater material power relative to others. Thus in general factory workers have more power than the unemployed, men have more power than women, older workers have more power than school students. What is most relevant here is that white workers have more power than black. Because of the rewards that go with these power differences the more powerful are, in general, reluctant to give up their relative

privilege. *Class unity* cannot develop until certain struggles have been won by black people, and white working class people have realised that their real interests lie in taking power from the bosses. *Class unity* can only be maintained on the basis of the strength of those sections which are at present weak, because only then can the weaker sections force the fact of their relatively greater oppression onto the political agenda.

Most white leftists will say that current black organisations are too local, lack national cohesion and that they do not advance what we call revolutionary politics. This is the sort of arrogance black militants have come to expect from us. The white left continually confuses 'separatism' with a political concept of 'autonomy'. While the influence of the autonomous groups is growing, that of the separatist, black nationalist groups is declining under the influence of *class* issues brought to the fore by the crisis.

The autonomous groups see the issues of race and class as intertwined, accepting the need to overthrow capitalism and imperialism with unity with the white working class on their own terms. The need for the socialist wing to grow within the black movement is crucial for the development of revolutionary politics in Britain, but there is no way these can be forced by 'interventions' from white groups.

When black people decide to join (white) left groups they play an essential part in educating white revolutionaries and developing the political line of the group. But we would argue that the prime role for any black members would normally be, wherever possible, to contribute to the growth of the autonomous revolutionary tendency in the black working class, and that this is where the political activity of the vast majority of black revolutionaries will and should take place.

The Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Movement

Big Flame believes that the fight against racism and fascism must take the form of *broad front* organisations which bring together those in the Labour Party, Communist Party and revolutionary groups like ourselves. This is for two reasons. Firstly unity is necessary if the struggle is to be at all effective. No single party or group can achieve much by itself. Secondly working inside broad fronts gives us the opportunity to argue in front of more people for our revolutionary politics rather than reformist positions and convince them that only the former can successfully challenge racism and fascism. Examples of broad front organisations are the various Committees or Campaigns against Racism and Fascism which sprung up all over the country in the mid 1970s.

Before 1976 the numbers involved were very small. On the numerous occasions when the reformists were unwilling to organise opposition to the NF demos, a hardy band of anti-fascist activists spent untold weekends galivanting all over the country; running down backstreets in pursuit of the fascists. We became obsessed with the problem of numbers. The number of demos organised by the NF gave us little breathing space in which to convert the necessary numbers to a No Platform position, so we solved the problem in the short term by organising regional bodies, such as the North West Anti-fascist Committee, so as to centralise our ability to produce propaganda and draw on wider areas for demo fodder.

This was followed by the establishment of the National Anti-racist Anti-fascist Co-ordinating Committee and brought significant improvements in our surveillance of the fascists and our knowledge of developments around the country, as well as our ability to transport the already committed around the country. The spring and summer of 1976 marked an important watershed in the

AF struggle in the country: 4000 anti-fascists, 50% of them black, marched in Bradford against the NF; and a few weeks later a similar-sized demo opposed the NF march against Relf's imprisonment in Birmingham. Blackburn anti-racist Alliance broke the back of the National Party with its demo in September.

This escalation of the struggle owed little or nothing to the strategy of the Anti-fascist Anti-racist Committees; it comprised the mass emergence of black people onto the streets to oppose fascist marches and activity on their doorsteps - the NF made the mistake of provoking the black community directly and has been paying the price ever since, for, as black people have arisen in their self-defence they have inspired large sections of the white working class to take a stance against fascism.

The forces paraded at Lewisham in 1977 summed up the new stage of

struggle. The NF, hoping it could march through and intimidate a predominantly black area, was faced by a massive mobilisation of black people to defend their area, a considerable force of white anti-fascists, including women, gay, youth, trade union and other contingents. We almost stopped the NF marching at all, as it was they managed a short trot. The police vowed never to allow anti-fascists to deprive them of control of the streets again.

The national ARAFCC Conference

Anti-fascist/anti-racist activists, meeting in the National ARAFCC, decided that the time was ripe to create a national body to co-ordinate the AF/AR work that was already happening. The draft aims of this new organisation, to be formed at the conference in June 1978, were 'to wage and help to co-ordinate a struggle against racism and fascism in all their aspects', to build 'the



Anti-fascist demonstration in Blackburn, 1976



Police protect the NF at Lewisham, August 1977

widest support amongst the working class' and to build 'mass mobilisations against the racists and fascists'.

Coming as it did at a time of the escalation of the struggle and the relatively recent entry into it of women, gays, black organisations and trade unionists, the conference was almost bound to explode. There were those including feminists who were involved because of the centrality of sexism to fascist ideology and practice, gays because they were increasingly the target of fascist attacks, trade unionists who had come to understand fascism's historical role of destroying independent working class organisation, and black groups reflecting the new found confidence of the black community. Virtually everyone had different reasons for being there, and this proved to be more important than what we had in common. This was not helped by an overtight agenda with much competition for speaking time and little chance to get to know each other's perspectives. There was also a deep division between those who wanted a National Steering Committee elected at the Conference and those who wanted a delegate committee based on the existing local AF/AR committees. Given all these conflicts it is not surprising that this attempt to build a unified and democratic organisation failed.

Arise the ANL

However, probably the main reason for this failure was the rapid growth of an alternative organisation, the Anti Nazi League. The ANL represented a radical and welcome departure from traditional forms of AF activity. For the first time the AF struggle began to develop into a

mass movement. Its alliance with RAR, the enormously successful Carnivals fused together a mass cultural movement, expressed through music, and a political campaign and gave us a bridge to tens of thousands of people, particularly the young. The campaign overflowed with energy and enthusiasm, it was successfully carried into all sectors of society. Trade union branches against the Nazis, Women against the Nazis, Gays against the Nazis, and particularly in some towns, football supporters against the Nazis which began successfully to fight back against the racism of many football supporters which was threatening to become a very important recruiting ground for the NF. The campaign has undoubtedly played a major role in the massive electoral decline in the NF and driven a wedge between them and many potential supporters.

At the same time the ANL failed to deal with many of the problems and weaknesses apparent in past practice and has compounded this with the creation of quite new ones. For the SWP the ANL was an attempt to counteract the media's 'Red Fascists' smear which had followed Lewisham, while for some in the Labour Party it was a chance to counteract NF electoral gains in Labour strongholds. These motivations account in large part for the two key weaknesses of the ANL — its failure to adopt the No Platform position in practice, and its failure to tackle racism. Many racists such as Sid Bidwell have been able to pose as anti-racists by associating themselves with the ANL.

Those of us who held a No Platform position and recognised the importance

of anti-racism failed to organise ourselves so as to be an effective force within the ANL and influence its development. Had the ARAFCC Conference not collapsed, we would have been far better placed as an organised force within the ANL, but, as it is, the only organised force inside the ANL seemed to be the SWP. Unfortunately, it seems to be true that the ANL is fading away since the general election. This was most obvious in the failure to mobilise full opposition to the murder of Blair Peach and the Southall trials, i.e. at the point where the state displaced the NF as the main antagonist. We need to understand why this is happening if we are to draw full benefit from the experience of the ANL.

To the winter of '79

Much of the explanation lies in the attitudes of the Labour Party and the SWP. Labour saw the ANL primarily as an electoral machine for fighting the NF at the ballot box, and consequently allowed it to stagnate last winter during the long wait for the election. Electoral work is only one amongst other tasks, but even for just this purpose the decision to keep the ANL on ice until the election was a mistake — many ANL supporters were allowed to drift away and did not return in May 1979. This need not have been the case, and in some areas like Nottingham the local activists managed to keep the mass of supporters involved with the ANL.

As for the SWP, it has become increasingly clear that its decision to concentrate on building an anti-Tory campaign in the trade unions has involved pulling out of the ANL. Obviously it is wrong to expect any socialist organisation

to devote all of its energies to just one area of class struggle but, having done just that in relation to the ANL since 1978, the SWP's more or less complete withdrawal since leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Had the SWP a much wider conception of ARAF work than sticking the Nazi label on the NF it would realise that there is no clear line to be drawn between anti-racism and anti-fascism and the rest of the class struggle. The example of sectoral AF/AR organisations like Rail Against the Nazis shows how combatting divisions within the workforce can contribute to building rank and file solidarity. It is crucial to integrate these aspects of the struggle together at a time when the Tories are launching simultaneous offensives against trade unions and black immigrants.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to reduce the question of the ANL's decline to the attitudes of Labour and the SWP. The rest of the revolutionary left sought to change the ANL in the wrong way — by committing the ANL conference to a whole list of advanced political positions in preference to fighting for those positions amongst rank and file ANL supporters. As a consequence of this 'revolutionary socialism', the rump of the ANL has some very good paper positions but little or no practice based on them. Again, important exceptions indicate that things could have been different; Merseyside ANL, for instance, publishes a regular bulletin of articles taking up the historical roots of racism and the need to fight the immigration laws, thus making membership of the ANL there a real educational, involving experience; a bridge between a gut hatred of fascism and socialist consciousness.

For all these reasons the ANL has failed in practice to go beyond the task it initially set itself of simple opposition to the NF. Having set themselves such a narrow task the leadership of the ANL saw little reason for carrying on after defeating the NF at the ballot box. No doubt the ANL or something like it will rise again when the Fascists pick themselves up from the floor, but we question whether the ANL type of organisation, despite its successes, is sufficient in



combatting fascism. It reproduced many of the old faults and added some of its own. Crucially, it failed to take up racism. At the time of writing it seems probable that the ANL's decline has gone

too far for anti-racists to base our fight against the immigration laws on it, and yet there is no credible alternative to the ANL for fighting fascists, nor is there likely to be.

The Present and the Future

The Tory government's actual and proposed restrictions on immigration and nationality have evoked an opposition which has already gone beyond these immediate attacks to challenge the racist immigration laws already passed. For two decades the racists have had it all their own way over immigration. The success of the ANL and the demonstration on 25th November 1979 against immigration laws are the bedrock on which we can, and must, build a movement which will attack the roots of British racism. Moving from defence to attack is the only way to consolidate the successes of the ANL.

November 25th marked the advent of

a new force in British politics — large numbers of black people taking to the streets to oppose immigration laws. The future of that movement will depend to some extent on how much support white anti-racists can win for it in the white working class. Unfortunately, the response of much of the left to this development has been a simplistic repetition of 'No to all Immigration Controls'. We have to find ways of doing anti-racist work amongst whites parallel to the black movement, and keep our noses out of black politics except when asked for support.

Big Flame regards all immigration

controls as racist and incompatible with communism, but disagrees with those who want to demand adherence to the slogan 'No to all Controls' as a condition for taking part in the campaign against the new proposals. There are enough problems getting unity around opposition to the 1971 Immigration Act. Getting the 'correct', 'principled' political basis first and trying to build the movement second is a recipe for condemning ourselves to the margins of politics. Similarly we must avoid the manipulative, patronising attitude of much of the white left towards black organisations believing they can teach the black movement how

to achieve unity. A more worthwhile task is the hard work of fighting the arbitrary arrests, detention and deportations of black people right now as part of our opposition to the existing laws.

Don't abandon ship

What also concerns us is the number of socialists who are abandoning anti-racist and anti-fascist work for 'the struggles of the moment' against the cuts and the Tories' attacks on the unions. As we have already said, AR/AF work should not be compartmentalised off from the rest of the struggle. Chapter One showed how Fascism and Fascist ideology are linked to Capitalism; that Fascist ideas are more extreme versions of what passes for commonsense in this society.

Chapter Two established that our society is drenched in racism derived from Imperialism past and present. That racism, in all its manifestations, is an ongoing barrier to the development of working class unity and to our ability to organise and struggle for our needs. Slogans such as 'Blame the bosses, not the blacks' barely touch the surface of racist ideas; that approach is based implicitly on the assumption that racism can be put down to the current Capitalist crisis; it can't. It is no good simply proving to whites that black people are not to blame for unemployment and housing problems so long as whites consider that they deserve rights over and above those of blacks. Accepting that blacks should be below you makes it easier to accept that bosses and others should be above you. It is in this sense that a race which enslaves another cannot free itself. A phenomenon like racism which has been built and refined over hundreds of years cannot be countered by a quick campaign around catchy slogans.

While racism and fascism are more than simple expressions of capitalist crises, they can take on new and more dangerous forms during such periods. Chapter Three looked at the specific form they have taken during the present crisis and argued that this crisis is much more complicated than a matter of economic difficulties, but also included political, ideological and psychosexual dimensions. It concluded that fascism is not the main danger, but racism and particularly the state racism most obviously expressed in the immigration laws.

At the moment it is the struggle against immigration laws which is taking off; last year it was the ANL. The tragedy is that often different sets of people have been involved in the two struggles, thus reproducing the sectional nature of post war class struggle. Anti-racism will no more 'deal with the NF in passing' than the ANL made serious inroads into racism. We need to do both, and to link up AR/AF work with struggles in the workplace and of women, tenants, gays, the unemployed, and youth, and against imperialism. It that sounds like creating a mass socialist movement, that's because we need one. Fascism succeeds because socialism fails; the reality of racism and the danger of Fascism will be with us for as long as Capitalism and Imperialism survive.



(Above) Sit down in Brick Lane, August 1978

(Below) March in Southall in memory of Blair Peach, May 1979



Photo: John Birdsall

Photo: Union Place Collective

Recommended Reading

CHAPTER ONE

Big Flame, *Fascism and Sexuality* (Big Flame)
Daniel Guerin, *Fascism and Big Business* (Monad)
Joe Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto: My Youth in the East End, Communism and Fascism, 1913-1939* (Janet Simon)
Maria-Antoinetta Macciocchi, 'Female Sexuality in Fascist Ideology', *Feminist Review* No. 1, 1979
Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Penguin)
Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism* (CSE Books)
Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (Croom Helm)
Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder)
Mihaly Vajda, *Fascism as a Mass Movement* (Motive)

CHAPTER TWO

Johnson Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation* (Longman)
Michael Barratt Brown, *The Economics of Imperialism* (Penguin)
Michael Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (Hutchinson)
V.G. Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson)
V.G. Kiernan, *Marxism and Imperialism* (Edward Arnold)
David Killingray, *A Plague of Europeans* (Penguin)
National Association for Multi-Racial Education, *African History - What do we teach?*
A. Sivanandan, *From Immigration Control to 'Induced Repatriation'* (Race and Class)
A. Sivanandan, *Race, Class and the State* (Race and Class)
Third World First, *Get Off Their Backs* (Third World First)
Eric Williams, *Slavery and Capitalism* (Andre Deutsch)

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION - THE ONLY ANSWER

Capitalism means war, unemployment, poverty, sexual and racial oppression. Big Flame doesn't believe in patching it up with piece-meal reforms through Parliament. Nothing less than the destruction of the capitalist state will pave the way for socialism.

Socialism means the end of all forms of exploitation and the creation of a free, equal, and classless society in which all human beings will be able to realise their potential.

SOCIALISM - A STRUGGLE OF THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS

There's no substitute for the mass involvement of the working class in the struggle for socialism. People must fight for their own freedom. Nobody can give it to them.

Unity cannot be imposed from above. It must grow out of the struggles of the working class. Socialists have a duty to recognise the differences that capitalism creates to hold back our unity - and to fight to overcome them. We support the struggle of women, black people, gays, and youth against their special oppression. We support their right to their own independent organisation.

Ultimately, Big Flame believes in the need for a new revolutionary party of the whole working class, which will play a leading role in the struggle for socialism. There is no short cut to the creation of a new party: thousands of independent socialists and militants must be won to the idea that we need it.

BIG FLAME AND WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

We are active in the women's movement and the socialist feminist tendency, where we fight for:

A Woman's Right to Choose on abortion, contraception and sexual relationships.
Freedom to walk the streets without fear of sexual violence.

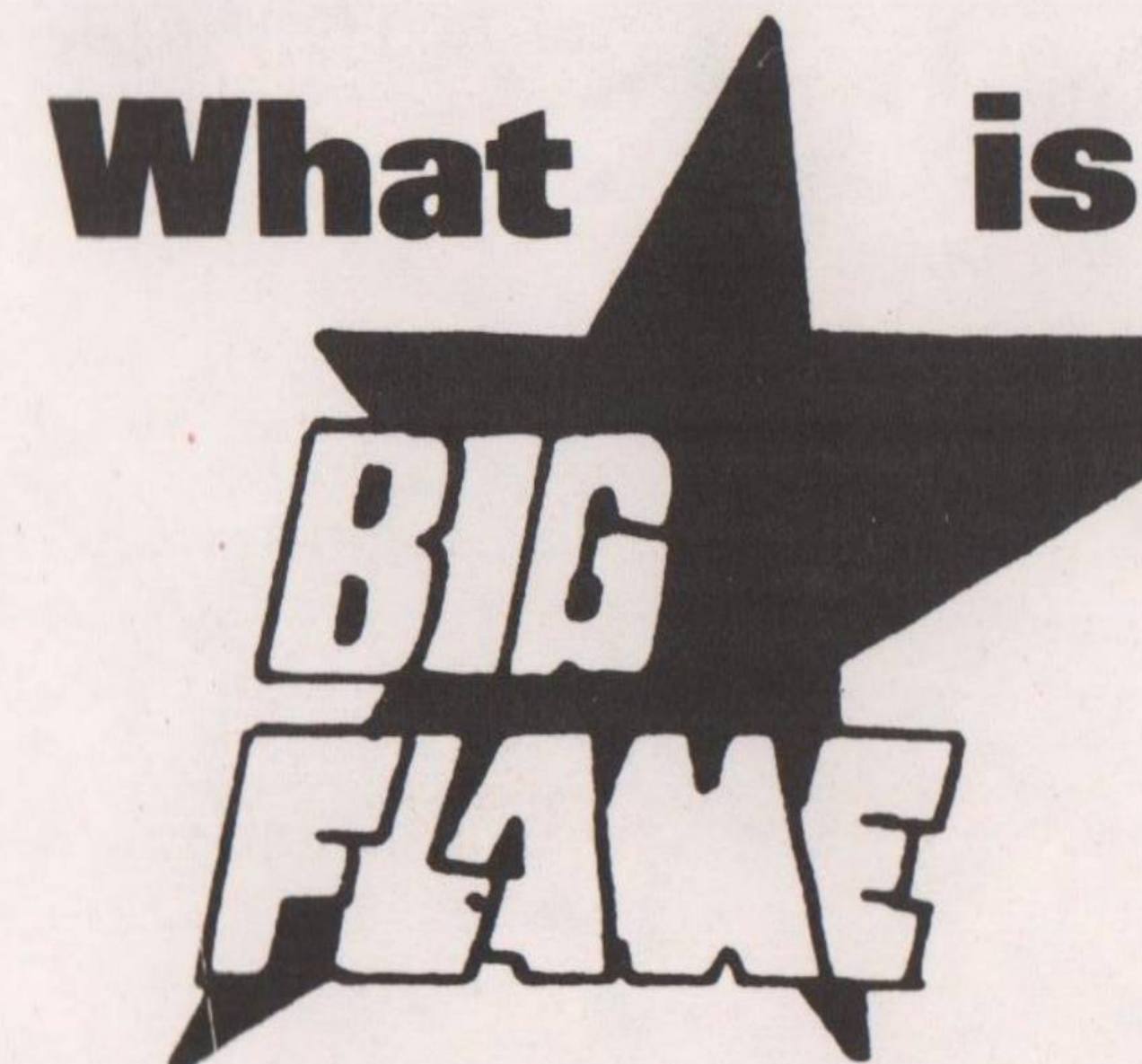
Refuges for battered women.

An end to the division of labour between men and women, inside and outside the home.

AGAINST SEXISM AND RACISM

Big Flame supports the struggle of black people to live in equality and free from the fear of racist attacks. We support their right to form their own independent and self-defence organisations.

We fight for the Anti-Nazi League to take an anti-racist stand against all forms of official harassment of black people.



TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!

Capitalism is international. The struggle for socialism and national liberation abroad aids our fight against British capitalism. The international unity of the working class is crucial.

We are in solidarity with all socialist and republican movements fighting to free Ireland from British imperialism. We support the United Troops Out Movement and call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and

CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

All London Teachers against Racism and Fascism, *Handbook on Teaching Against Racism* (ALTARF)

Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Councils, *Blood on the Streets* (Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Councils)

Big Flame, 'Black Autonomy and the Class Struggle', *Revolutionary Socialism* No. 2, 1978

Big Flame, *A Close Look at Fascism and Racism* (Big Flame)

David Edgar, *Racism, Fascism and the Politics of the National Front* (Race and Class)

Gay Activists Alliance, *Anti-Fascist Handbook* (GAA)

Stuart Hall, 'Racism and reaction', *Schooling and Culture* No. 4, 1979
Stuart Hall and others, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Macmillan)

Institute of Race Relations, *Police against Black People* (Race and Class)

Vic Seidler, 'Masculinity and Fascism', *Achilles Heel* No. 1, 1978

Martin Thom, 'Anti-Racism: Infections of Language', *Wedge* No. 3, 1978

Veronica Ware, *Women and the National Front* (Searchlight)

Martin Walker, *The National Front* (Fontana)

In addition to these books, pamphlets and magazine articles, there are a number of periodicals it is worth reading regularly especially *Searchlight*, *Race and Class* and *Race Today*.

self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. A united, socialist Ireland will assist the liberation of the British working class.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Our aim is to build independent rank and file organisations opposed to the reformist leaders of the trade unions. We support the fight for higher wages, shorter hours, a lighter work load, and for full pay - work or no work. Differentials deepen the disunity and we want to see them narrowed. We oppose redundancies, incomes policies, and every device to increase exploitation.

IN THE COMMUNITY

We argue for closer links between the struggles in the community and those at work. We fight for better, community-controlled public services and for decent homes for all.

If you agree with us, why not find out more about us? We have branches or members in many cities throughout England and Wales. Send off the form if you want to find out more about Big Flame.

To Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

I would like more information about Big Flame.

Please send me a copy of *Introduction to Big Flame*.

I enclose a postal order for 18p.

NAME

ADDRESS

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