

ASYLUM FOR ALL

***stop
the Bill***

The Tories have set out to criminalise refugees through their new Asylum Bill. Home secretary Kenneth Baker's proposals include the 'fast track' processing of claims—a euphemism for speedier deportations—compulsory fingerprinting of all asylum-seekers, the abolition of independent legal aid, immigration checks at overseas airports and fines of £2000 for airlines carrying passengers with 'invalid' documents.

The government claims that the new law is necessary because the number of people applying for asylum has shot up to about 50 000 a year. Most of these, say the Tories, are 'bogus' since they are 'economic migrants' not 'political refugees'. The Asylum Bill, claim its supporters, will help distinguish between genuine and fraudulent cases and hence make it easier for real refugees to enter this country.

In fact the Asylum Bill is a squalid piece of racist legislation. Fifteen years after the last Labour government introduced 'virginity tests' to keep Asian women out of Britain, the Tories are instituting another

(continued over) ►

***no controls
on immigration***

**DEMONSTRATION
Saturday 23 November**

Assemble 1pm Lincoln's Inn Fields

London WC2 Holborn tube

(continued from p1)

degrading system to brand refugees as criminals and to prevent them entering this country.

We reject the distinction between 'economic' and 'political' refugees and between 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum claims. Economic refugees and bogus asylum-seekers are simply people the government wants to keep out of this country. We support the right of all people to enter Britain and remain here if they so wish.

We oppose not just the Asylum Bill but all restrictions on immigration. Supporters of immigration controls claim that Britain is a small island which cannot take in too many new people. Too great an influx, they say, will put pressure on jobs and housing and threaten harmonious race relations in this country. This is specious nonsense.

Unemployment, poverty and homelessness are not caused by immigration but are the products of the same sordid system that denies basic rights to black people and immigrants. Whether a thousand, a million or a hundred million people lived in Britain we would face the same social problems so long as we lived in a capitalist society.

The main consequence of immigration controls is to divert attention away from the responsibility of the system for our problems, and to pin the blame instead on a handful of foreigners entering the country. Far from immigration creating racism, it is immigration controls that promote hostility towards black people by giving credence to the idea that they are to blame for Britain's problems.

The Asylum Bill has been drawn up at a time when the authorities throughout the West are targeting the third world as a key problem, portraying it as a cesspit of backwardness and corruption and a menace to 'Western' values of 'freedom' and 'democracy'. By demonising the third world, and by treating immigrants and refugees as 'invaders', the authorities are hoping to create a siege mentality—'Fortress Europe'—which will allow them to establish a degree of social cohesion at home in a period when political changes have created widespread fears and insecurities (see p3). The Asylum Bill is part of a Europe-wide attempt to redefine European values and identity in opposition to the third world and to pin the blame for domestic problems on foreigners.

Workers Against Racism intends to challenge the Tories every step of the way in their campaign to target immigrants and refugees. The national 'Asylum for All' demonstration in London on Saturday 23 November is the first step in taking on the government and its racist arguments.

If you want to stop the Asylum Bill and challenge the racists, it is essential that you mobilise for the demonstration. We can provide speakers, posters and motions, put you in touch with other activists in your area, tell you about other local activity and give you details of transport to the demonstration from your area.

Phone us on (071) 375 1702 or write to Workers Against Racism, BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX.

Editorial

THE SILENT RACE WAR

RACISM IS BACK on the political agenda. In Britain the Tories could well use the asylum issue to win votes in the coming election campaign. In France mainstream politicians try to outdo each other in their rush to proclaim opposition to immigration while, according to one poll, the policies of the Front National command the support of a third of the population. In Germany the first anniversary of unification was marked by a series of dramatic attacks on immigrant hostels. In the USA former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke won the Republican Party nomination for the race to be governor of Louisiana. Even in the supposedly liberal Sweden, the far-right won a significant share of the vote in the recent election.

These developments have made more noticeable a significant new trend in Western politics—the emergence of race as a central part of political and intellectual discourse. The debate on the 'White Man's burden' in the third world, on ethnic rivalry in Eastern Europe, on the degeneracy of the urban 'underclass' in Britain's inner cities all have an underlying theme—that the people of the third world are inferior to those of the West; and that within Western societies themselves the urban poor should be treated as some sort of lower race.

The right-wing offensive around these issues marks the start of a kind of race war. It is a silent race war because the fundamental assumptions of racial superiority behind these arguments are as yet unspoken—and unchallenged. While many have been shocked at the overt expressions of racism now coming to the fore few have recognised the underlying assumptions in Western political

debate that fuel the silent race war. So long as such assumptions remain unchallenged, the right will continue to set the political agenda, reactionary opinions will become accepted as common sense and the racists will continue to grow in confidence.

The silent race war is a product of the problems facing Western societies in the post-Cold War era (see p3). The collapse of the old world order has ensured both the need for and the possibility of a ruling class offensive on the issue of race.

The ruling class has been forced to go on the offensive because the crumbling of the old international order at a time of global capitalist recession has opened up a new order of uncertainty and disillusionment. The issue of race has become a key means of providing a degree of cohesion in this new period. Elitist arguments—the inferiority of the underclass for example—provide intellectual cohesion for the establishment by promoting the idea that the ruling class is born to rule. At the same time nationalist and anti-third world sentiments provide a more populist presentation of racist ideas, useful for binding together society at large.

The establishment's offensive to restore cohesion and identity takes place against a background of the left in retreat. The collapse of Stalinism in the East and of social democracy and Labourism in the West has discredited left-wing ideas and disoriented those who seek to change society. The defensiveness of the left in response to these changes has dislocated the political centre to the right.

The ruling class offensive on the one hand and the defensiveness of the left on the other has

weakened the purchase of liberal sentiments in Western societies. The weakening of liberalism has allowed right-wing politics to take a much more assertive and reactionary form. Less constrained by the consensual arguments which held sway through the postwar years, right-wing politicians feel more confident about being openly racist and chauvinist.

Challenging the silent race war is one of the most important tasks we face today. Even those who oppose the overtly racist arguments now gaining ground nevertheless accept the underlying racist sentiments. For example, many opponents of the Asylum Bill are horrified by the discriminatory nature of the legislation—but still hold to many of its underlying assumptions.

Many anti-racists for instance implicitly accept the idea that the West is superior to the third world and that Western intervention can help the backward parts of the world to develop. A recent editorial in the *New Statesman* accused the Tories of 'racist hysteria' in introducing the Asylum Bill. But it went on to argue that 'more sensible than mass migration to the West' would be a Western campaign to bring democracy to the third world, thus removing 'the incentives to migrate'.

So long as radicals accept the basic assumptions of the right, then the racists will continue to set the political and intellectual agenda. We need to challenge not simply the overt racism of the Asylum Bill or the Fortress Europe debate but also the hidden assumptions that today underlie the arguments of both left and right.

RACISM AND FASCISM

THE GROWING RESPECTABILITY of racism and the increased support for the far-right in several European countries has led many on the left to target fascism as the major problem facing Europe. The left in Britain has revived its anti-fascist rhetoric of the seventies and launched new campaigns to 'get the Nazis off our streets'.

The anti-fascist campaigns in the seventies were a diversion from the real task facing anti-racists. This is even more the case today. At a time when mainstream politicians are making racism respectable, focusing on the antics of the fascist fringe not only evades the real problem of racism but also stokes the very nationalist sentiments that underlie the growth of racism.

By viewing fascism as an excrescence on an otherwise healthy body politic, anti-fascists allow respectable racism to flourish. In the seventies the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) organised against the 'Nazi' threat to 'British democracy' posed by the National Front (NF). Yet it had nothing to say about the threat to black rights from the Labour government's immigration policies. Far from challenging British nationalism, the left adapted to it, arguing that fascism was a foreign ideology alien to the British tradition. The ANL constantly used the image of Britain's 'heroic' war against Nazi Germany to justify its campaign against the NF.

The left's adaptation to nationalism did little to stop the far-right. But it made it easier for mainstream racists to receive a hearing. In 1979 the Tories came to power on a virulently racist

platform which cut the ground from under the far-right. For the ANL the defeat of the NF was all that mattered and it disbanded. The Tories were given a free hand to go in hard against the black community, introducing a new Nationality Act, instituting passport checks in dole offices and hospitals and organising police swamp operations in black areas.

Today, the consequences of the arguments of the anti-fascist movement are potentially even more disastrous. The rise of racism throughout Europe is the product not of the growth of fascism but of the move of mainstream politicians to the right. The defensiveness of the left has allowed right-wing organisations to be more assertive, reactionary and racist. In France, for example, it is mainstream politicians like former premier Jacques Chirac who are making respectable the ideas of the Front National. By emphasising the unique character of the far-right, the left can only make it easier for the mainstream right to promote even more reactionary policies.

While the left decries the policies of the Front National in France or the Republican Party in Germany, the mainstream right is busy rewriting its history in order to normalise Europe's fascist past (for example through the championing of Croatia—see p4). The irony of the anti-fascist campaigns is that they are easing the way for the establishment to legitimise the ideas of the far-right.

Targeting fascism in Britain is even more absurd.

The far-right groups are pathetic, inconsequential organisations even less threatening than they were in the seventies. Indeed British fascists are so insignificant that the British left is forced to vent its anti-fascist anger not against the far-right in Britain but in Germany and France. At a time when the Tories are using issues such as the Asylum Bill to promote the silent race war, Anti-Fascist Action responds by organising a picket of the German embassy under the slogan 'Burn the race card'.

The anti-fascist posturing of the British left not only evades the real issue of state racism, it also has potentially dangerous consequences. The anti-fascists' targeting of Germany can only help fuel British nationalism by encouraging anti-German chauvinism. Former Tory ministers Nigel Lawson and Norman Tebbit, who both warned of the growing spectre of fascism this week, would be quite at home burning the race card outside the German embassy—while using that same race card to promote hostility to foreigners, immigrants and refugees in Britain.

The real problem we face is not German fascism but British nationalism. Our task is not to worry about the antics of the far-right but to challenge the consensus across the political spectrum that foreigners—whether third world refugees or German fascists—are the problem. Winning the arguments against the Asylum Bill will be a significant step in the struggle to halt the growth of racism.

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Bring down Fortress Europe

The French working man sees on the landing of his council flat an immigrant father with four wives and a score of children, making 50 000 francs on welfare, without a job of course. If you add to that the noise and the smell the French worker goes crazy. We don't reject foreigners but there is an overdose in France.
(Former French prime minister Jacques Chirac)

'Foreigners contribute to the well-being of society.... But that does not mean that we must helplessly watch the abuse of asylum rights. I know this is causing people great concern. I will do everything I can to bring the abuse of asylum rights to an end as soon as possible.'
(German chancellor Helmut Kohl)

'We cannot open our doors to all-comers just because London, Rome and Paris may seem preferable to Bombay or Algiers.... We have need of a perimeter fence around Europe.'
(British prime minister John Major)

Immigration has become one of the most explosive issues in European politics. Newspapers run features about 'floods' and 'invasions'. Respectable politicians use rhetoric which until recently was confined to the far-right. From Bradford to Berlin racist thugs have taken to the streets to harass and intimidate immigrants.

What has given rise to this explosion of racism? Politicians and the press tell us that the new racism is the consequence of a Europe facing an unprecedented wave of immigration. The collapse of the third world and the disintegration of Eastern Europe, they argue, have led to enormous numbers of people wanting to share the affluence of the West. The prospect of being overwhelmed by this tide of immigrants, the argument continues, has led to the surge of racism.

Indeed many argue that the only way to keep racism in check is by creating a 'Fortress Europe' to keep out the 'invaders'. Without tough new immigration laws, the *Daily Mail* recently argued, we will witness 'the biggest shift to the right in Europe since the 1930s'.

The argument that uncontrolled immigration is leading to racism turns reality on its head. The truth is that the new respectability of racism has transformed immigration into a political issue. Refugees are not the cause of racism, they are its victims.

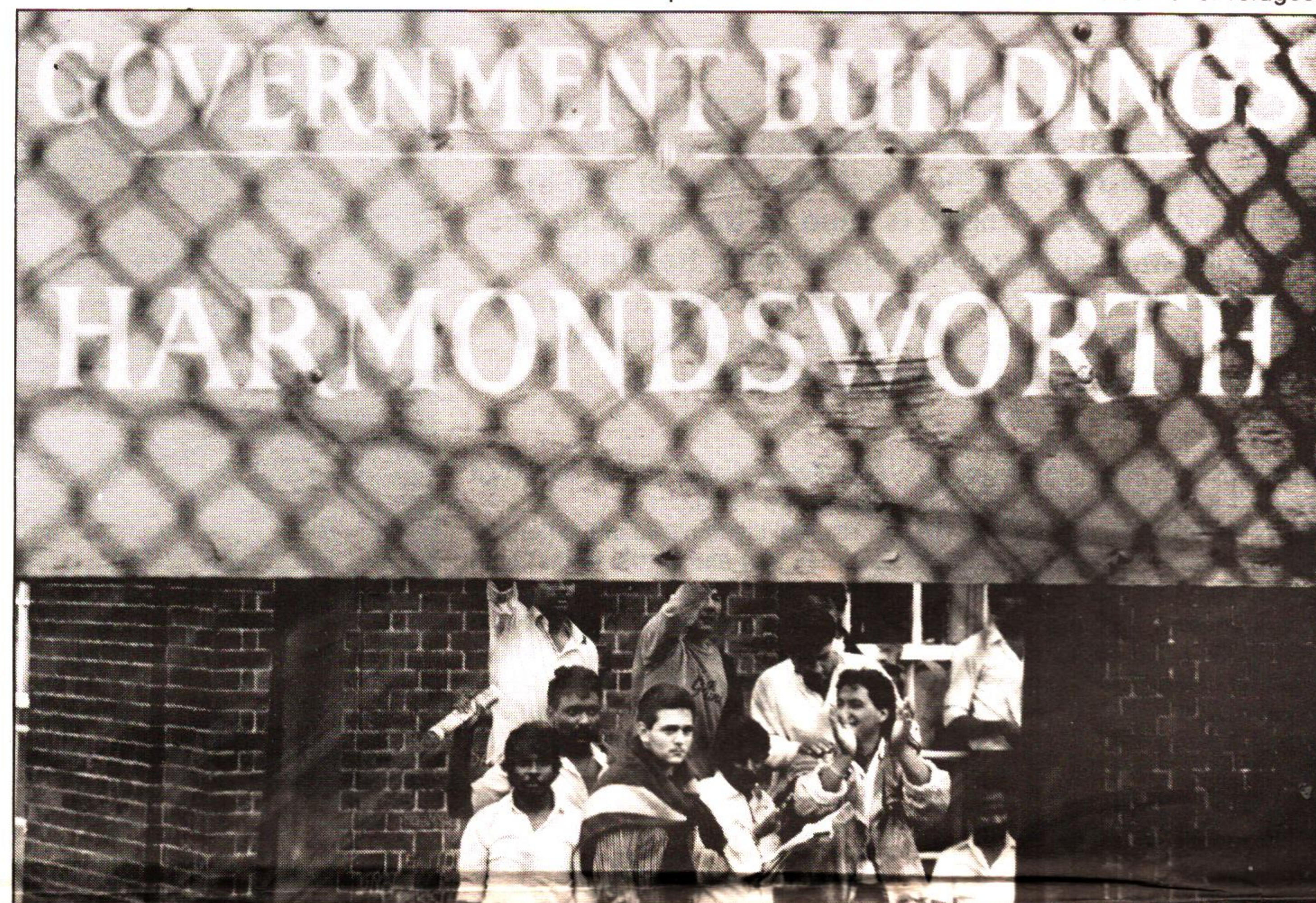
The 'perimeter fence' that Major wants around Europe has long been in place. Eleven million foreign workers came to Europe in the fifties and sixties, encouraged by the authorities who needed people to the dirty, arduous jobs that European workers rejected. But following the recession in the early seventies, most European countries imposed severe restrictions on further immigration. In recent years immigration to Britain and France has amounted to 0.1 per cent of their population—a third of the figure for the USA.

Many supporters of a Fortress Europe policy acknowledge that their arguments have less to do with the numbers of foreigners entering Europe than with their colour or culture. An editorial in the *Times* last week argued that the problem is not one of 'the new asylum-seekers' numbers—at present relatively small—but of whether there would be hostility towards the arrivals' (2 November). And what is the cause of this hostility? The fact that the arrivals are black.

Racist policy

Spectator columnist Charles Moore drew out this argument when he called for a 'more liberal and "racist" immigration policy'. 'The foundation of any British immigration policy should be that immigration is a positive good but only if it enhances and does not undermine Britishness' (19 October 1991). And what 'enhances Britishness' is the possession of the right skin colour. Hence we should 'open our doors' to 'Poles, Hungarians and Russians'. 'Muslims and blacks on the other hand', argues Moore, 'should be kept out as strictly as at present'.

The new focus on race and immigration, then, has little to do with the question of numbers. Rather it is the product of the political and social changes sweeping the world. Throughout the eighties political insecurity in Europe encouraged the rise of racism. The trend has been exacerbated by the events of the past two years. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of Stalinism, the onset of



Behind the perimeter fence: Britain's fast-track welcome for refugees

the recession and the Western victory in the Gulf have all helped to shatter the old world order and to usher in a new era of uncertainty and doubt. It is this climate of insecurity and fear that has given rise to the new racism.

The end of the Cold War which divided Europe has led to profound political and social changes in the West as well as the East. It has undermined the mechanisms through which the Western powers enforced cooperation internationally and maintained social stability at home. Not only has the Soviet bogey disappeared, but the use of anti-communism, which acted as an ideological glue in the postwar period, is no longer credible.

National identity

The crumbling of the old world order has acted as a catalyst bringing to the surface many of the political and social insecurities facing Western societies. Many of the political certainties of the past no longer seem valid and, as a result, the traditional parties of the left, right and centre have been badly disoriented. These developments have been made worse by the arrival of serious economic recession.

The ruling class in each country has responded by trying to recreate national identity, generally in a more exclusive form to give a sense of 'belonging' at a time of widespread disillusionment and despair. Western identity is being recast in opposition to the 'menace' of the third world. Thus Moore's concept of Britain is essentially that it is not the third world:

'Britain is basically English-speaking, Christian and white, and if one starts to think that it might become basically Urdu-speaking and Muslim and brown, one gets frightened and angry.'

In the place of the old red menace has come the demonisation of the third world.

The third world is increasingly portrayed in the West as the embodiment of corruption and backwardness and as a threat to 'Western' traditions of 'democracy' and 'freedom'. The Gulf War played an important role in projecting this image. The war against Iraq was supposedly in defence of 'Western' values against a 'tyrannical' third world leader. The overwhelming Western victory made ideas about Western superiority respectable again. In the wake of the Gulf War, a new culture of chauvinism about the third world has developed.

In recent months imperialism—which for much of the postwar period had been discredited in the eyes of many people—has gained moral legitimacy. Many people, including those on the left, now argue that Western intervention is necessary to bring democracy and prosperity to the third world. These views have led to the resurrection of the notion of the 'White Man's burden'—the idea that only the West has the capacity to save the third world from its problems.

The rehabilitation of imperialism has made it acceptable once more to express contemptuous views about foreigners, immigrants and people from the third world. It has also resurrected Victorian-style arguments about the incapacity of non-Western peoples to organise their affairs. The recent Commonwealth conference in Harare provided a platform for white Commonwealth leaders to lecture black leaders on 'democracy' and 'human rights'. The anti-refugee hysteria takes place within this wider context of the targeting of the third world as a problem that needs to be sorted out by the West.

A recent article in the academic journal *International Affairs* spelt out the importance of the Fortress Europe debate for maintaining stability and cohesion in the West. The author, Barry Buzan, notes that 'migration and the clash of rival civilisational identities' are likely to be two of the more pressing international issues in the next decade. Immigration 'threatens communal identity and culture' and can 'threaten the ability of the existing society to reproduce itself in the old way' (July 1991). The panic about immigration is a reflection of the wider fears of social instability and the undermining of national identity which have been unleashed by the undermining of the old order.

Societal cold war

The Cold War between East and West has been replaced by what Buzan calls the 'civilisational cold war' between the West and the third world, and in particular between the West and Islam. 'A societal cold war with Islam', notes Buzan, 'would serve to strengthen the European identity'. Hence, he argues, many European leaders are 'prepared not only to support a societal Cold War with Islam but to adopt policies that encourage it'.

The debate about Fortress Europe, then, is not so much about immigration as a response to the fears about social cohesion and national identity.

The importance of Fortress Europe is that it provides an anchorage in the stormy waters of the post-Cold War era. Through the creation of an 'other', the establishment can conjure up a 'self'. The targeting of the third world and of immigrants allows the authorities in the West to create a European and a national identity and establish a measure of cohesion around 'Western' values.

In Britain the debate about European integration has led to the promotion not just of Fortress Europe but of Fortress Britain. Opponents of closer European integration claim that it will undermine British sovereignty and Westminster's ability to pursue its own policies. Former chancellor Nigel Lawson claimed this week that monetary union would encourage 'the growth of Mr Le Pen's Front National in France and its unpleasant counterparts elsewhere in the community' (*Evening Standard*, 4 November). Norman Tebbit similarly raised the spectre of 'marching Nazis'.

'German racket'

Lawson and Tebbit are not primarily worried about 'sovereignty' (Britain has long since lost the ability to pursue an independent policy), and still less about growing support for the far-right. Rather they are concerned that Britain's ability to promote a sense of self and identity will be constrained within a German-dominated Europe. As Nicholas Ridley made clear in his infamous *Spectator* interview, in which he described the EC as a 'German racket', the spectre of fascism is a code for the threat of German influence.

The divisions in the Tory party on the issue of Europe reflect a debate about how best to promote British nationalism and identity. It is no coincidence that the anti-European lobby also consists of the most vociferous supporters of tighter immigration controls and a clampdown on refugees.

We have every interest in undermining Fortress Europe and Fortress Britain. 'Western' values are the values of a system that entrenches unemployment and poverty at home, inflicts barbarism and terror against the third world, denies black people and immigrants their basic rights—and all in the name of 'civilisation'. Taking a stand against the anti-refugee hysteria is the first step in challenging the system that holds us all in chains.

Hands off Serbia!

The war in Yugoslavia has become a central part of the racist campaign to promote 'Western values'. The conflict is portrayed in the West as a 'frontier war' in defence of Europe. Croatia is seen as the embodiment of European civilisation and ideals while Serbia is portrayed as a barbarian nation whose aim is to destroy Europe. As calls mount for Britain to back Croatia, we oppose all Western intervention in Yugoslavia

'Again, therefore, as before in Europe's history, it is Britain's unique responsibility to stand up and fight for freedom.' Thus concludes an article entitled 'Bomb Serbia?' in last week's *New Statesman and Society* (1 November). The author goes on to call for British recognition of Croatian independence, for Britain to establish a military alliance with Croatia and to proceed to present Serbia with an ultimatum: 'ceasefire and withdraw behind Serbian boundaries within a week or face war with Britain'.

The question mark in the title provides the only hint of equivocation in the article. It is evidently the sub-editor's gesture to the radical and pacifist traditions of the journal that launched the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and, in the past, generally opposed Western militarism.

In the substance of the article, there is not the slightest hint of equivocation. If Serbia failed to comply with Britain's ultimatum, the title should become an imperative—Bomb Serbia!:

'British aircraft flying from Cyprus and Austria could destroy the Serbian air force and fleet in one day. Tanks and military formations could then be wiped out at leisure from the air without much difficulty.'

The legacy of the Gulf War is striking here—another opportunity for Western 'surgical strikes' against vastly inferior forces, for rapid 'destroy' and 'wipe-out' operations that can devastate a poor country 'without much difficulty'.

The *New Statesman* makes the link between Serbia and Iraq explicit by drawing parallels between the regime in Belgrade and that in Baghdad. It dismisses the Serbian leadership with contempt as 'scarcely more rational than Saddam Hussein' and alleges that 'Serbian barbarism is already almost sufficient to rival Saddam Hussein'. For the *New Statesman* this link is sufficient for the West to inflict on Serbia terror on the scale that it unleashed against Iraq. Recent UN surveys report that in Iraq 'endemic poverty, malnutrition, and psychological disruption [are] now affecting large sections of the population' (*Guardian*, 23 October). Now the West

is contemplating a similar campaign against the Serbs.

The real significance of the parallel between Iraq and Serbia is that both are on the wrong side of the great divide emerging under the post-Cold War 'new world order'. The disintegration of the former Stalinist bloc has thrown the borders of central Europe into question, leading to the establishment of a new line between West and East. The Western powers are creating a new division in Europe, a division that is tearing Yugoslavia apart in the current civil war.

On the Western side stands Croatia which according to the prevailing prejudice is prosperous, civilised, Catholic, democratic. It is symbolised by the Renaissance architecture of the ancient fortress city of Dubrovnik (Byron's 'pearl of the Adriatic'), besieged for the past month by the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army.

On the Eastern side stands Serbia, condemned as backward, barbarous, Orthodox, communist. As in the Gulf War, the Yugoslav conflict has become transformed into a struggle between West and East, between 'freedom' and 'tyranny', between European 'civilisation' and 'barbarism'.

The depiction of Croatia as innocent victim and Serbia as wanton aggressor depends on a highly creative interpretation of both recent and more distant history. The initiative towards the break-up of Yugoslavia, which underlies the current conflict, originates in Croatia and Slovenia, the republics which have benefited the most from the development of market relations and links with the West over many years. Croatia is little more democratic than Serbia, which is little more communist than Croatia: both are dominated by nationalist politicians who have emerged from the disintegration of the old Stalinist order. Croatian forces have played their part in breaking truces and ceasefires to strengthen their negotiating position in EC talks, just as Serbian troops have conducted similar manoeuvres; no doubt both sides are guilty of sectarian atrocities.

However it is the role of Croatia in the Second World War that gives it a particular significance in the new



Flying the flag for the West: Croatian forces at war with the Serbs

Europe that is emerging from the break-up of the postwar order. In alliance with Nazi Germany during the Second World War, Croatian nationalists participated enthusiastically in the subjugation of the rest of the country and in the systematic slaughter of between 500 000 and 700 000 Serbs, Jews, gypsies and others. The current Croatian president Franjo Tudjman is author of a book, *Wastelands: Historical Truth*, which, the *Guardian* noted, 'offers an explanation, almost an apology' for both the behaviour of the wartime Ustashe regime in Croatia and the wider Holocaust carried out by Nazi Germany.

In backing Croatia, Germany has made its most dramatic gesture so far towards asserting its independent role in the new Europe. Throughout Europe, the cause of Croatia has become a cause for right-wing politicians determined to rewrite the history of the Second World War and to emerge at last from the long shadow which the Nazi episode cast over their outlook

and their system. The irony is that in Britain, where the establishment is reluctant to encourage the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the inevitable growth of German influence in the region, the calls for intervention come from what was once regarded as a journal of the left.

It is an iron law of history that when the call goes up for Britain to 'stand up and fight for freedom', thousands of people somewhere are at risk of losing not only their freedom but also their lives. This time it is the people of Yugoslavia in general, and Serbia in particular, who are at the receiving end. So far they have suffered only Lord Carrington's diplomacy but, no doubt shortly, EC sanctions will follow and ultimately perhaps direct military interference on top of the supplies of arms and mercenaries already pouring into the country. 'No to Western intervention!' should be our reply to the *New Statesman* and to all the apologists for Western barbarism in Eastern Europe and the third world.