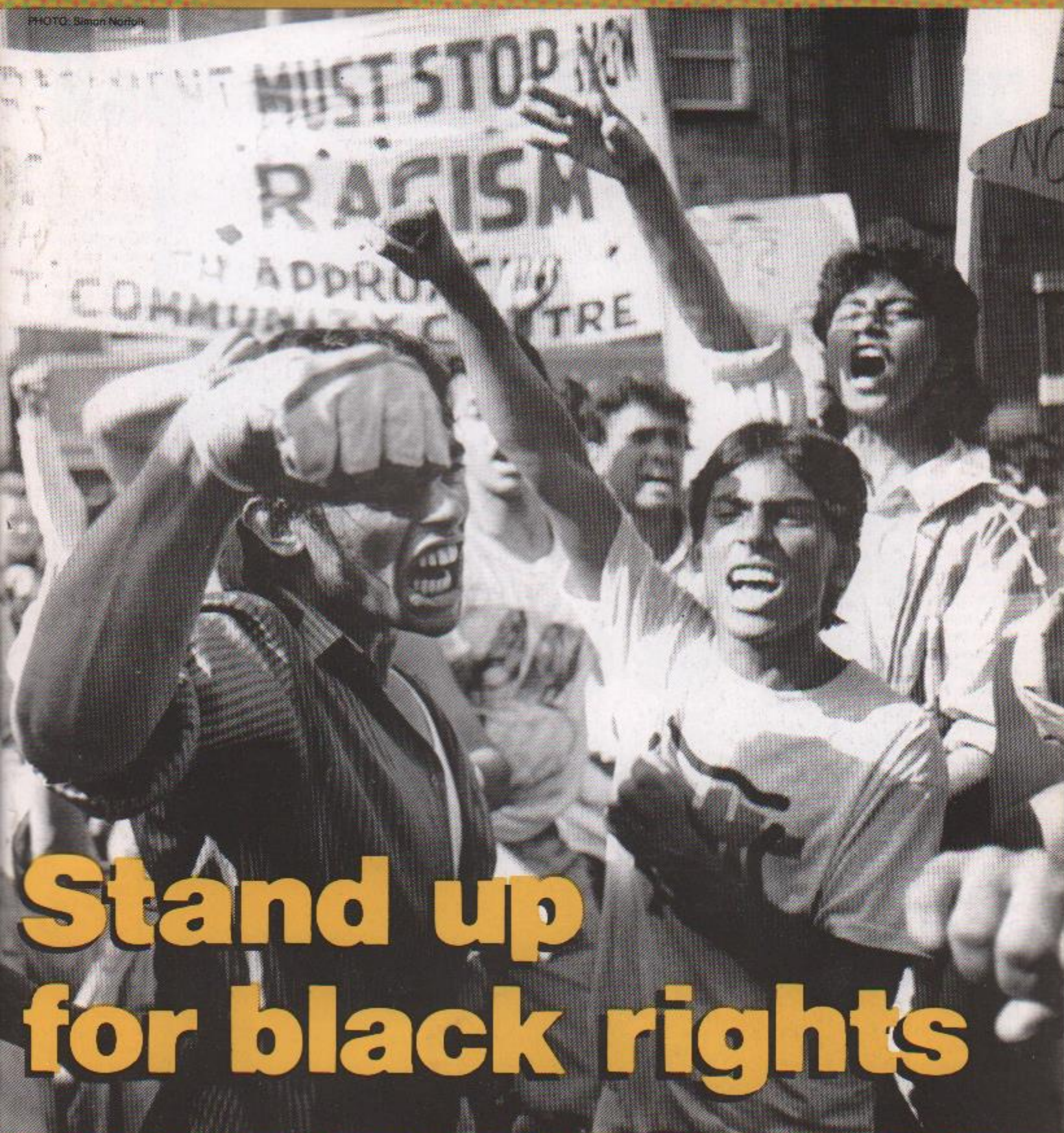


WARnews

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



Stand up for black rights

Special feature on Bradford—a city under siege

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The Arab quarter, Marseilles. From the riot police to socialist politicians everyone is lining up against Europe's immigrants

PHOTO: Collectif

Editorial

Racism after the Gulf War

The Gulf War has had many profound and far-reaching consequences. It has created turmoil in the Middle East, enhanced America's control of the region and given a new impetus to militarism. Not least of the consequences of the war has been the boost it has provided for racism in the West.

At the most basic level, the war intensified hostility towards Arab people and indeed all Muslims. As young Asians from Bradford explain in this issue of *Warnews*, anyone with a black or brown skin was considered a supporter of Saddam Hussein and hence fair game for attack (see page 12). The war led to a spate of fire bombings, assaults and vandalism against mosques, Asian homes and similar targets. The anti-Iraqi hysteria whipped up by the authorities helped provide official backing for such activities.

The Gulf War has also intensified racism in a more profound way. The devastating Western victory, the reduction of Iraq to rubble and the humiliation of its people have promoted the notion of Western superiority. The term 'imperialism', for so long used only in a derogatory sense, has become fashionable again, even within liberal circles.

Since the end of the Gulf War have lauded—and indeed demanded—Western intervention to save the third world from its own follies. A catalogue of recent tragedies—from the plight of the Kurdish people to the Bangladesh cyclone, from the famine in Africa to the war in Ethiopia—have been seen as confirmation of the inability of the third world to manage its own affairs, and the need for Western support to bail out the countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. A century after the arch-racist Rudyard Kipling

coined the term, politicians and pundits have openly resurrected the notion of the 'White Man's Burden'. As in the days of the Victorian imperialists, the Western media now paints a picture of a poor and ignorant third world waiting to be saved by the West.

These developments have had a profound impact on the West. A new culture of chauvinism about the third world is developing. It has again become respectable to hold contemptuous opinions about foreigners, immigrants and people from the third world. Arguments about Western superiority not heard since the thirties are now being voiced openly. Former French prime minister Jacques Chirac's tirade against 'smelly immigrants' demonstrates the new respectable face of racism. The black communities of Western Europe have become the immediate victims of this new chauvinist climate.

The North African and Arab communities in France have already suffered grievously. Even before the Gulf War there was a pogrom atmosphere in many of the large cities with black populations. Since the war, this has turned into open warfare. The murder of North African Djamel Chitou, the riots in the Paris suburbs of Sartrouville and Mantes-la-Jolie, the street fighting between young blacks and police, the killing of a police officer and the savage retaliation imposed by the authorities have created a new climate of fear. Similar riots have taken place in Belgium, Italy and Spain (see page 4).

In Britain too, the aftermath of the Gulf War has intensified racist hostility. In areas like Bradford, Birmingham and East London black communities are living in a state of siege (see pages 8-14).

The question of immigration has become a heated issue again throughout Western Europe. Even before the war, the issue of African workers entering Europe through Italy and France had become a major controversy. Since the war the debate has taken a new twist. The 'collapse' of the third world has led to the spectre of mass migration of impoverished millions from the 'South' to the West.

A new secret European Community report all but calls for the repatriation of black people in the EC. The report demands 'actions designed to encourage the economic reinsertion of immigrants to their country of origin'. It also wants the EC to tie any future aid programme to third world cooperation over immigration controls. The EC, says the report, 'should make explicit the migration dimension in reaching future cooperation agreements with the countries of the South and the East'. One way of achieving this would be to use aid to ensure 'the retention in their zone of origin of potentially migrant populations'. When official EC reports adopt a position of 'keep them out' and 'send them back', it is not surprising that racist thugs throughout Western Europe feel free to go on the offensive.

The new racism demands effective action. The aim of this issue of *Warnews* is to arm anti-racists with the arguments and ideas that can challenge both the immediate problem of racist assaults and the broader issue of the new climate of chauvinism. But such ideas and arguments can only be effective as part of a movement that can challenge the racists—both official and unofficial. Workers Against Racism has set out to create such a movement. If you want to stand up for black rights—join up today. ●

Editorial: Racism after the Gulf War

The stench of racism

The stench of RACISM

The immigration policies of France's socialist prime minister have won the approval of the Front National's Jean-Marie Le Pen. Emmanuel Oliver explains why the ideas of the far right are being made respectable by the politicians of the centre ground

'Smelly immigrants.' That was how former French prime minister Jacques Chirac described the black community in France in May. Chirac's diatribe against Arabs and North Africans sparked off a fierce debate on racism, in which politicians of all hues fell over each other to adopt increasingly anti-black attitudes. Government ministers in particular set out to demonstrate their racist credentials.

In an astonishing speech the interior minister Michel Poniatowski compared the arrival of immigrants to the Nazi occupation of France. Prime minister Edith Cresson, supposedly a left-wing member of the Socialist Party, promised a new crackdown on illegal immigrants. 'Of every 10 immigrants found to be here illegally', she complained, 'only three have been expelled. If people don't have the right to be here, they have to go home'. And just to make sure that they do go home, Cresson promised that air force planes would be used to stage mass deportations.

The immigration debate shows how racism has exploded into mainstream politics in France. Attitudes which would have been unthinkable a few years ago are now a routine part of respectable political debate. Five years ago when the then

interior minister Charles Pasqua deported 101 Malians by airlifting them out in a chartered plane there was a national outcry. One Socialist Party deputy compared the action to the deportation of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War. Today immigrants themselves are compared to Nazis while the prime minister backs mass deportation. Little wonder that the new climate of opinion has been welcomed by the Front National. A spokesman for the FN claimed that the government's tough policy 'validated the analyses and proposals' of party leader Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Since the end of the Gulf War racism has acquired a much uglier and more vicious form in France. The Gulf War turned an already-racist climate into a hysterical anti-black campaign. The clampdown by the authorities, and by the police in particular, over the past few months has transformed the simmering conflict in the ghettos into open warfare. From Mantes-la-Jolie on the outskirts of Paris to Lyons in the south of France there have been major street battles between black youth and the paramilitary police. Already two blacks and a police-woman have been killed.

The authorities have seized on the violence to organise a new clampdown on the black ghettos. The mayor of

Sartrouville near Paris, the scene of some of the worst fighting, called the riots the 'new intifada' and demanded even harsher police measures. Politicians of all political parties blame the violence on the failure of France's black community to assimilate into mainstream life. The debate is no longer about how many immigrants should be allowed into France but about how many blacks can be kicked out.

France is not alone in facing a new wave of attacks on its black community. Similar debates (and similar scenes on the streets) have taken place throughout Western Europe:

- Italy, once considered by Britain to be lax on the issue of immigration, is demonstrating its willingness to join in the racist crusade. The Italian authorities have set up what is effectively a concentration camp at Ostia on the coast near Rome to hold anyone considered to be an illegal immigrant. In May, a pitched battle between police and blacks took place in the centre of Rome as riot police baton-charged Arabs and Africans protesting against their forced transportation to the camp. In Milan too there have been mass evictions of immigrants.



Welcome to Europe

PHOTO: Gerard Uffers

In this chauvinist climate the racists have had a field day. Immigrant hostels in Milan have been repeatedly firebombed. When the government agreed to let black nurses work in hospitals there was a national outcry. Even the liberal newspaper *La Repubblica* published a cartoon which showed crude, comic-strip black nurses trying to sell trinkets to patients. 'Vu Cumpra?' ('Do you want to buy?' in pidgin Italian), they ask their patients. Immigrants in Italy are abusively known as the Vu Cumpra. Clearly Gino and Donatella do not want black hands nursing them to health.

- Germany has seen the growth of nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment in the months following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The reunification of the country has given licence for German nationalists to celebrate their anti-foreign sentiments in the way that British chauvinists have openly paraded their prejudices for years. The last 18 months have seen fire bombings of immigrant hostels; refugees turned back on the border; Africans thrown to their deaths from trains; and German fans celebrating their World Cup success by beating up any foreigners unfortunate enough to be on the streets. The Turkish 'guest' workers who have for years suffered in Germany are now joined by Poles and other East Europeans, scapegoated as

the supposed source of crime and prostitution. Many Vietnamese and Mozambican workers are now fleeing the eastern part of Germany as their lives are threatened by German workers who vent their anger at economic deprivation on foreigners.

- In Belgium the clampdown by the authorities on the country's black population has also created major confrontations on the streets. In May, Brussels police hassled one black person too many. When a young black motor cyclist was stopped by the police and his sister beaten up several days of street violence followed.

- Spain introduced strict new immigration laws this spring to prevent north Africans from entering the country. Tens of thousands of Africans have been deported from the port of Algeciras. A major riot broke out as hundreds of immigrants being held in the port waiting for transportation back to Africa fought running battles with the police.

- Britain may seem to be the one country in Western Europe that has bucked this pattern. Mainstream politicians still proclaim their support for anti-racist policies and few would be as openly racist as Continental politicians. There have been no riots recently like those which have swept European cities. But, as the articles on

Bradford and Thamesmead in this issue of *Warnews* show, racism is as entrenched in Britain as elsewhere. Home secretary Kenneth Baker's clampdown on refugees and prime minister John Major's insistence on a tighter EC policy on immigration demonstrate Britain's racist credentials. British politicians may be more subtle than their European counterparts but Britain is no less racist.

In the run-up to the creation of the single European market, in 1992, EC member states had already set out to create a 'fortress Europe', tightening up on border controls and keeping out foreigners. In the wake of the Gulf War, the anti-immigrant crusade has taken an ugly new twist. Not only has the campaign against Iraq given new impetus to both official and unofficial attacks on Europe's black communities but it has also created a new climate of chauvinism about the third world which has further marginalised immigrants in the West. The 'collapse' of the third world in recent months, the famines, wars and disasters which have struck Africa and Asia, and the growing plight of refugees have all led to a spectre of the mass migration of millions from the 'South' to the West. The result has been an even fiercer clampdown on immigrants.

The stench of Euroracism is unmistakable. It is time we swept the Continent clean of the rotting mess. ●

Thamesmead

Racial violence not gang warfare

Press and politicians have closed
their eyes to racism on
Thamesmead

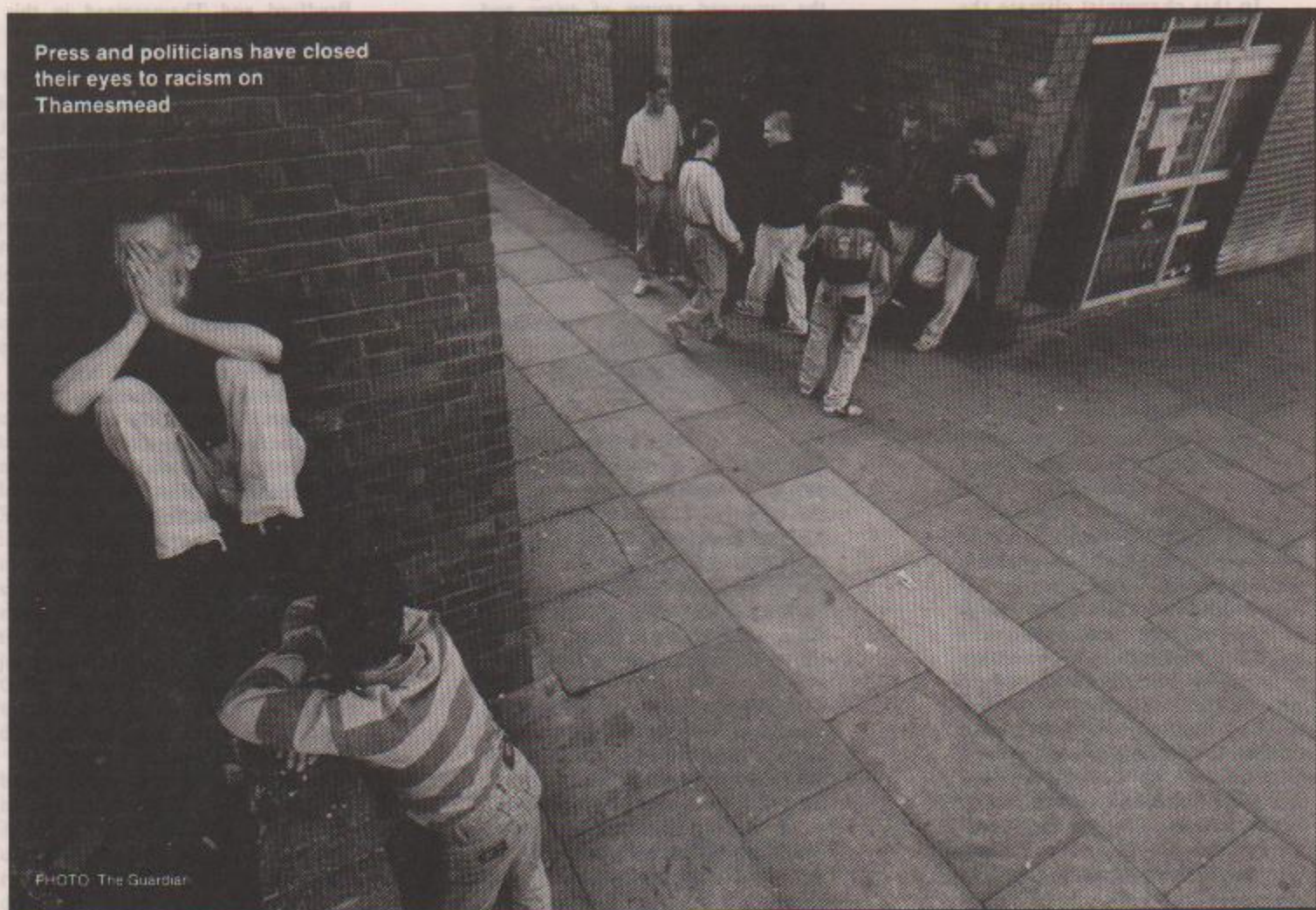


PHOTO: The Guardian

When two black men were murdered on the Thamesmead estate in London, the media at first ignored it. Then they called the killings the result of 'gang warfare'. Geraldine Harris exposes the media lies and reveals the reality of life on Thamesmead

Thamesmead is a sprawling, ramshackle, tumbledown concrete jungle of an estate in south east London. If it stood on the outskirts of Mexico City or Johannesburg it would probably be called a 'shanty town'. In Britain, planners prefer to look on it as an 'overspill estate'.

The estate was built in the sixties as a model 'new town' to provide housing, employment and leisure facilities for 60 000 people. Today it stands as a monument to deprivation and hopelessness.

Surrounded by ring roads and barren wasteland, Thamesmead is virtually cut off from the rest of London. The promised underground link has failed to materialise and there is just one bus out of the estate. The promised jobs have also proved illusory. A third of the adult population is unemployed. The estate is in a state of disrepair. The flats are decaying, the concrete chipping away and everything from the windows to the plumbing falling apart. Facilities are non-existent. There is no launderette, no bank, no cinema, no train station. A handful of tatty shops make up the 'town centre'. Apart from a fish and chip shop there is nowhere on the estate where you can get so much as a cup of tea.

Not surprisingly Thamesmead breeds despondency, despair and anger. Much of the anger on this predominantly white estate is directed against the local black community. The black tenants on Thamesmead have faced a barrage of abuse and violent attacks.

The racist campaign against local blacks culminated horrifically in two brutal murders earlier this year. On 21 February 15-year old Rolan Adams was walking home with his brother Nathan from the Hawksmoore youth club on the estate. As they passed the Wildflower pub, they were set upon by a gang of white youths. Nathan managed to get away. Rolan did not. He was stabbed, slashed across his jugular vein, and died as he struggled to get to the main road for help. Two

weeks later Orville Blair was stabbed to death outside his flat on the estate.

Shortly after the killings Thamesmead hit the national headlines—not because of the brutal murders but because an American anti-racist activist dared to challenge the racists. The Reverend Al Sharpton, a controversial black activist in the USA, arrived in Britain in early May to launch his brand of anti-racist campaigning in this country. One of his first acts was to lead a march to Thamesmead to protest about the murders.

The British press was outraged. Commentators were furious that Sharpton—'a bloated bigot who preaches a gospel of hate' according to the *Sun*—should have been allowed into Britain in the first place. But what really incensed British commentators was that Sharpton had the temerity to pronounce on racism in Britain.

Suddenly the media circus descended on Thamesmead. Hacks who had previously never made it further than an episode of *Eastenders* now became experts on life on the estate. Their message was the same: the violence of Thamesmead was less the product of racial tension than of gang warfare. Indeed they pinned the blame on anti-racists for 'stirring things up' on the estate. A feature in the *Guardian* summed up the media view of Thamesmead.

The *Guardian* article—'Last exit to nowhere'—painted a picture of an estate inhabited by a vicious 'underclass', gangs of working class youth with little morality or feeling, whose lives were given to drug taking, petty thieving and mindless violence. According to the author of the piece, Jocelyn Taggart, Rolan Adams was killed because the Thamesmead gang—the Firm—mistook him for a member of a rival gang, the Woolwich Mafia. Orville was simply the victim of mindless violence. The real villains of the piece, according to Taggart, are the anti-racist activists who stir up trouble on the estate. 'The protesters, mostly women, I find purely confrontational',

she quotes a local police chief. 'There's no voice of reason. They're as bad in their way as the British National Party.'

The idea that the murders of Rolan Adams and Orville Blair were the product of gang warfare rather than racial violence—and that anti-racists only stir up trouble—is a breathtaking reversal of reality. If racism is not involved how come, on a predominantly white estate, both murders were of black men? How come graffiti went up after the murders boasting 'Whites 2 Blacks 0'. And how does Taggart explain her own description of the Firm tooling up for an 'invasion of niggers'?

Rolan Adams and Orville Blair were the victims of a racist society. A society that treats black people as second class citizens in every aspect of life. A society that pushes deprived white youth, such as those on the Thamesmead estate, to target blacks as scapegoats. A society in which 'liberal' newspapers like the *Guardian* sweep the issue of racism under the carpet and attack anti-racists for telling the truth.

At the same time we must acknowledge that the anti-racist movement has failed the black community of Thamesmead. Instead of organising in defence of the local black community, the left has relied on gestures and publicity stunts. Instead of challenging the racists on the estate and attempting to win local support to isolate the hardcore racists, anti-racists have preferred to target the far-right British National Party. While the BNP has its headquarters nearby it has little influence on the estate. The problem in Thamesmead is not the presence of fascists but the widespread acceptance of everyday, mainstream racism which, in the deprivation and poverty of the estate, gets translated into violence against blacks.

The Thamesmead demonstration, organised in opposition to a BNP march in May, summed up the problems of the anti-racist strategy. The demonstration was badly mobilised for and poorly attended—just a few hundred people turned up. Organisation on the day was non-existent. The demonstrators spent all day marching up and down the same strip of road. The only effect was to demoralise anti-racists, embolden racists on estate and polarise further the divisions between black and white on Thamesmead.

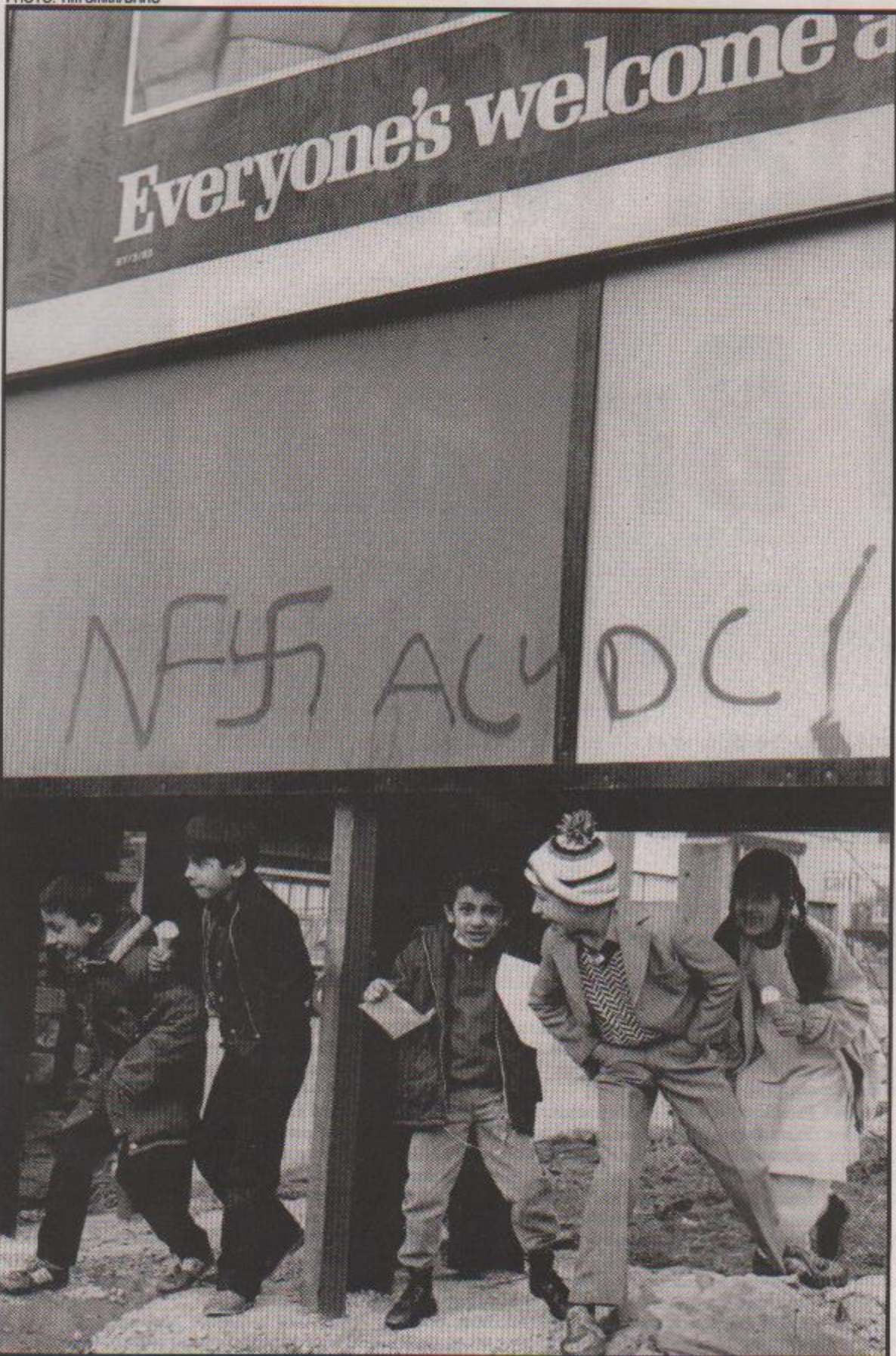
The events in Thamesmead demonstrate the need for a new kind of anti-racist movement. We need a movement that takes seriously the task of defending black communities from racist attack. We also need a movement that takes seriously the task of challenging the ideas that underpin racism throughout Britain. The price of failure will be paid by young men like Rolan Adams and Orville Blair.

Bradford: a city under siege

The British press has given much coverage to police violence and racism which has led to riots in the black ghettos of Paris and Brussels. Yet British commentators have been virtually silent on the racist onslaught much closer to home. In Bradford the black community is living in a state of siege. Daily the black community faces vicious attacks from racist thugs—backed up by the police. Blacks who resist are arrested and charged under the Public Order Act. Colour bars are common and segregation the norm. At a time when even South Africa is finally breaking the shackles of apartheid, Bradford is a city rigidly divided on racial lines.

In a special feature on Bradford, *Warnews* looks at the problems facing black people in what is perhaps the most racist city in Europe—and on the possibility of a new fightback

PHOTO: Tim Smith/BHRU



....but some are less welcome than others

A city under siege

Apartheid in Britain

South Africa may be ditching its apartheid laws, but in Bradford, segregation and colour bars still receive official sanction.

Keith Tompson reports

On 17 May 1991 Howard Brown, a shy and soft-spoken Yorkshireman, went to a local pub, 'The Old Peculiar', for a drink with friends. The pub had recently been refurbished and its name changed from 'The Flagship'. When Howard approached the bar, the barman told him 'I'm sorry, I can't serve you'. Howard is not just Yorkshire born and bred—he is also black. And as far as the local racists are concerned black and Yorkshire don't mix.

Howard demanded to see the manager. The landlord told him that he had a list of 40 drug dealers, all black, who would be barred from the pub in the future. In effect the pub has started operating a colour bar and is now refusing entrance to all of

the young blacks who were previously its regulars.

When Howard insisted on being served, bouncers threw him out, together with his friend Carlton Fielding. Outside, five police vans were waiting. As the two men left the pub, a dozen police officers approached them. 'Where are you going now?', one of the officers demanded. 'I'm off home', was Howard's reply. 'You're not going anywhere', shouted the officer and jumped on him. Within seconds the other policemen had joined in the attack on Howard who was bundled into one of the police vans virtually unconscious.

When Carlton tried to intercede the police leapt on him too. He was taken with Howard to the police

station. Unbeknown to the police, however, a local photographer had managed to capture the whole incident on film (see photograph above).

Howard and Carlton were held in custody for six hours before being released on police bail. They were both charged under the Public Order Act with resisting arrest and using abusive and threatening behaviour.

The treatment meted out to Howard and Carlton is not unusual. More and more pubs in Bradford are operating a colour bar under the pretext of keeping out 'drug dealers'. And the police are giving the racists all the help they need.

Racism has always been a way of life in Bradford. From the moment the first black immigrants arrived in

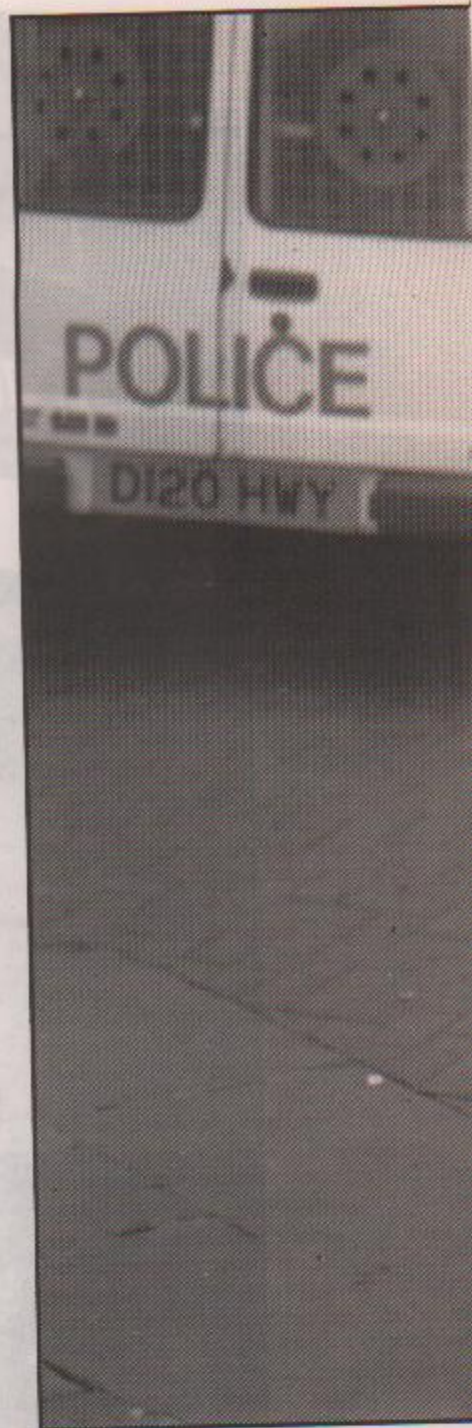




PHOTO: John Angerson / Ouzellian

the city they have faced hostility on the streets, discrimination in the work-place and segregation on the housing estates. The Rushdie affair helped polarise the city even further and intensified racial tension. Today the city is fast becoming the racist capital of Europe. The Gulf War gave the signal for racists—official and unofficial—to go on the offensive (see page 12). More than ever the city's black population is now living under siege:

- On 10 June, more than 100 white youths attacked two Asian restaurants in the Manningham district. Wielding sticks and knives, they virtually destroyed the Kashmir and Taj Mahal restaurants. The attack came after two white youths

were ejected from one of the restaurants for refusing to pay their bill.

- In a similar assault, two white youths attacked the house of the Ali family, also in Manningham. The Asian lads in the house resisted and in the fight one of the white assailants was stabbed and later died. Two Asians have been charged with murder.

The pattern of mounting racist attacks and of police support for the racists is not new in Bradford, or indeed anywhere in Britain. But in Bradford today, things have reached the stage of a systematic assault on the city's black population. There is a greater need than ever to organise a

fightback against the racist onslaught.

Local people have launched a campaign to defend Howard Brown and Carlton Fielding. The campaign organised a successful picket of 'The Old Peculiar' in May, mounted demonstrations at court hearings and is investigating other colour bars in the city.

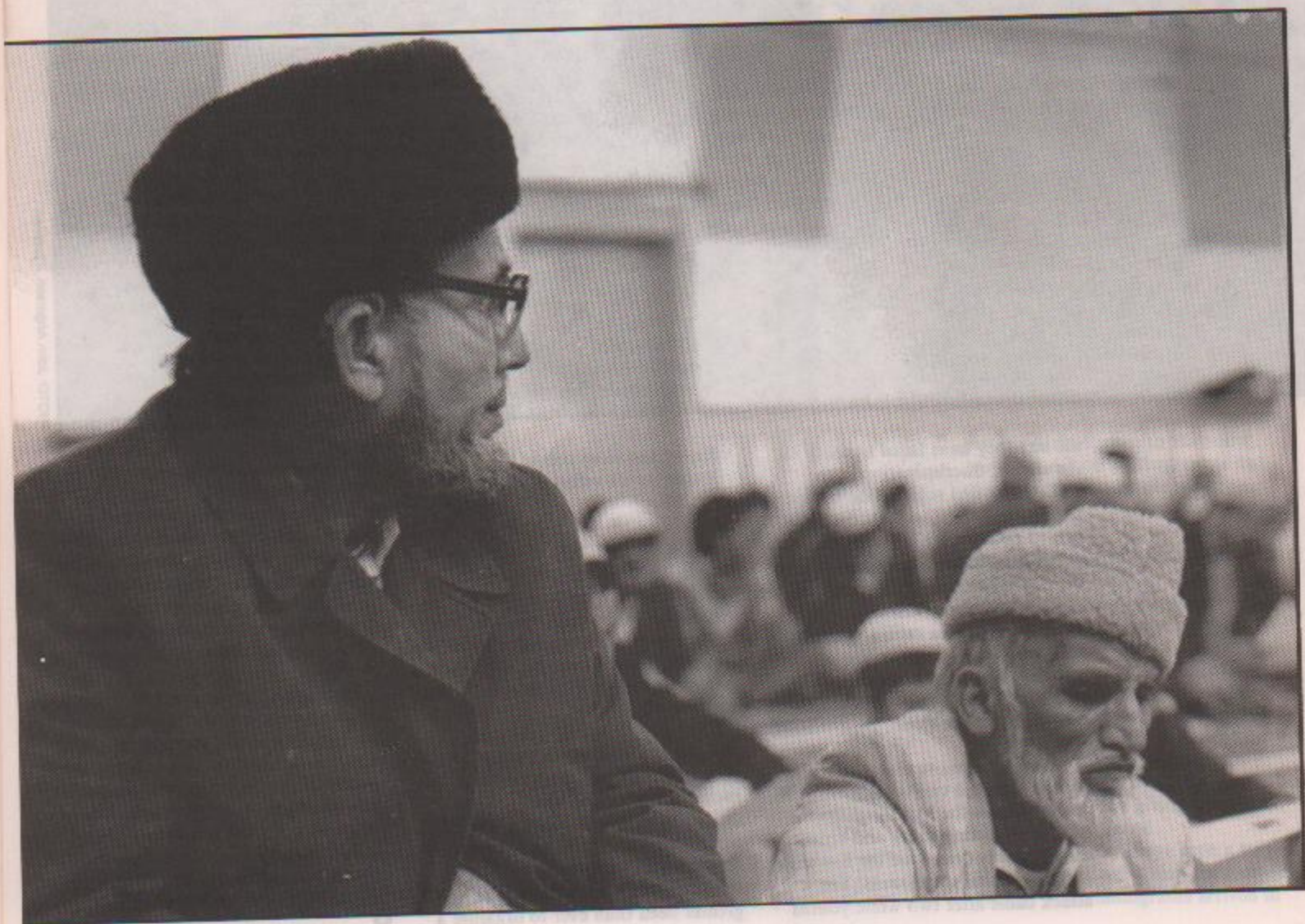
There is also a campaign to defend the two Asian youths charged with murder. At a public meeting on racism in Bradford in June there were calls for the creation of a city-wide campaign against racism. This is an initiative that WAR would wholeheartedly support. A united resistance to racism in Bradford cannot come a moment too soon.



A city under siege

'Jihad'

against Bradford Muslims





PHOTOS: Kenan Malik

Bradford in West Yorkshire is a city at war. Kenan Malik reports

The more they say to me "Get out of this country, you support Saddam Hussein", the more I support Saddam Hussein 100 per cent.' Fiaz is a quietly spoken 19-year old, a student at Bradford College. It would be hard to caricature him as a wild-eyed religious fanatic. Yet the Gulf War has turned Fiaz into a staunch supporter of Saddam Hussein. This view finds a ready echo within Britain's Muslim community, and

nowhere more so than in Bradford.

It is some 18 months since I was last in Bradford. Then, the controversy over *The Satanic Verses* bitterly divided the city between black and white. Today that division is wider than ever, and the mood of the city is that much uglier. Not a single Muslim I met backed the Western war drive; few whites opposed the war. If the Rushdie affair provided a focus for the Muslim community to vent its anger

against a racist society, the Gulf War has become the pretext for a racist crusade against Asians. 'If they want a jihad, let them have it', wrote *Sunday Telegraph* commentator Peregrine Worsthorne about Muslims. In Bradford the anti-Muslim 'jihad' is already under way. From verbal abuse to physical attacks, Bradford racists have taken advantage of the Gulf War to launch a new onslaught on the black community.

'As far as they are concerned if your skin is brown then you're Iraqi and you support Saddam Hussein'

Shortly after war commenced, the local paper, the *Telegraph and Argus* published an editorial entitled 'All the way to Baghdad'; urging the West not to stop short of the total destruction of Iraq. The letters page has become a soapbox for local racists. 'Muslims have a choice', declared one correspondent. 'They have to decide which side they are on—Britain or Iraq. If they support Saddam Hussein they should go and join him in Baghdad. And if they won't go we should make them.'

It is a view that is echoed in local pubs and clubs. 'They're either British or they're not', said one drinker in Manningham Labour Club. 'It's up to them. They've got to decide which side they're on. And if they don't like it here, they can get out.'

The authorities have led the way in targeting the black community. At the start of the war, police swooped on Bradford University, arrested seven Iraqi students and interned them at Full Sutton, the top security prison near York. When a local imam declared his support for Saddam Hussein on television, he found the police on his doorstep. They had come to check his passport.

Factory brawls

Unofficial racists have not been slow to learn from the government's campaign of harassment. Intimidation of Asians is now an everyday affair. 'We were coming back from work on Saturday night', said Ali who works part-time at the Odeon cinema, 'and there were these people coming out of the pub. They weren't drunk or anything. But they kept shouting at us, "You're Saddam Hussein's people. Get back to Iraq. Get back to your country". As far as they are concerned if your skin is coloured brown then you're Iraqi and you support Saddam Hussein'.

Intimidation is not confined simply to verbal abuse. The Medina Majid Mosque in Batley has been firebombed twice since the start of the Gulf crisis. Racists petrol-bombed a house belonging to an Asian family in the Westtown district of Dewsbury. The almost-completed Westtown Mosque has been vandalised, causing tens of thousands of pounds' worth of damage. In the week that war broke out racists set alight four cars belonging to Asians on the Hilltop estate in Heckmondwike, near Dewsbury. Local schools have become battlegrounds. In one incident, white youths from St John Fisher School near Dewsbury laid siege to the predominantly Asian Batley High School.

Most ominously, the tensions have spilled over into local workplaces. At

TA Firth, a textile factory in Heckmondwike, a mass brawl broke out on the factory floor. One of the workers, who refused to be named, explained what happened. 'It's been pretty bad since August. But once the war started, all hell seemed to break loose. The white workers spat at us, carried Union Jacks and started calling us traitors. The whole thing just exploded. Now management says we're not allowed to talk about the Gulf. But what difference will that make? We weren't talking to each other even before this.'

Another local workplace, the Fox biscuit factory, has also been the scene of fights between black and white workers. Such workplace battles have not been seen in the area since the early seventies. Even in council offices feelings are running high. Khalid works in the Equal Opportunity Unit at Kirklees council. 'Even here Asian workers are facing harassment', he noted. 'Ever since the government started rounding up Iraqi people in this country all Muslims have been threatened.'

The intensity of hostility has created a climate of fear inside the Asian community, and stirred fierce resentment among the youth. What most terrifies community leaders is the possibility of young Asians fighting back. 'What we're worried about', said Mohammed Saddique of the Bradford-based Muslim Youth in Britain, 'is the youth taking matters into their own hands. It could draw the whole community into conflict. We're trying to persuade the police to deal with the problem'.

'Racism is always there'

In an effort to contain the resentment inside the Asian community, religious leaders have adopted a more militant stance towards the Gulf War. The newly-formed Supreme Council of British Muslims expressed its 'outrage' at the 'savage, destructive war being waged by the United States, Britain and their allies against the Muslims of Iraq'. Such rhetoric, however, is unlikely to ease the frustrations of local black youth. The Gulf War has not caused the anti-Muslim backlash. Rather the Gulf War is the latest and most sharply defined focus for racism. As in the Rushdie affair, it is racism that has shaped the response of both black and white communities to the Gulf War.

'Racism is always there', said Afia who attends Park Lane in Leeds, 'and whenever anything happens between the Western powers and the Middle Eastern or Asian people, the racists come out'. 'Our parents came to this country in the fifties and sixties', added Ali, 'to work in the

factories and do their dirty work. And now we've actually achieved something, we've gained respect because we've businesses, restaurants, shops—so now they want to get rid of us. The Gulf War is just an excuse to do this. It's just not on'.

The experience of racism in Britain has ensured the backing of many Muslims for Iraq. 'The abuse you get makes you really angry', said Ali. 'It makes sure you support Saddam Hussein.' Afia put it slightly differently. 'I tried to explain to people that I didn't support Saddam Hussein and I didn't support the Americans. And they say "Where do you stand?". They say "There's no two ways about it. You support him or you support Britain". In the end you might as well say you support Saddam Hussein because they all think you do anyway.'

According to the British press the Muslim support for Iraq is motivated by religious fanaticism. Certainly most Muslims, especially older ones, are horrified at the thought of the desecration of their holy shrines. Few second generation Muslims born and brought up in Britain, however, consider the Gulf War to be at root a religious conflict. 'Saddam Hussein says it's a holy war', said Fiaz. 'The media in this country says it's a holy war. But it's not about religion. It's about greed, because they want to keep the oil.' They all scoff at the idea that America is fighting tyranny or standing up to aggression. 'Why didn't Britain and America go into Tiananmen Square?', asks Ali.

Fiaz, like most Muslims, sees the Gulf War as the latest episode in a history of Western attacks on the third world. 'They took over India. They split up Pakistan and Bangladesh in the civil war. They split up lots of different countries. Now they're trying to do this to Iraq as well. Britain and America are trying to intervene in every situation they can find. They're too nosy. They should just leave things to themselves.'

For Fiaz, Ali and Afia, there has been little choice about which side to back in the Gulf War. They support Saddam and Iraq, not because they are fanatics or fundamentalists, but because of their bitter experience of British racism. 'When I was young', recalls Fiaz, 'I grew up with racists. Now I think they will always be here. There will always be racism in England'. It is that sense of oppression which forms the common bond across the Muslim world and ensures that every missile and bomb that falls on Baghdad is felt in Bradford too. ●



Welcome to Britain?

What Justice?

Kate Lawrence is not surprised that the law has failed black people in Britain

Racial Justice At Work

Christopher McCrudden, David J Smith and Colin Brown, Policy Studies Institute, hbk £35

The latest report by the Policy Studies Institute, like its predecessors, highlights what most black people in Britain already know—the toothlessness of the government-sponsored race relations industry. *Racial Justice At Work* outlines the failure of the first round of anti-discrimination legislation drawn up in the sixties, a failure which led to the revision of Britain's official policy on racial discrimination. The 1976 Race Relations Act which followed extended the scope of earlier legislation and attempted to strengthen the mechanisms of enforcement with a new regulatory agency—the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)—with the power to carry out formal investigations. The legal process was also opened up to allow cases to be brought by individuals. Previously only the Race Relations Board had the power to bring cases to court—which in any case it rarely did.

The new legislation was supposed to make up for the shortcomings of the previous law. A detailed review of the enforcement of the 1976 Act, however, leads the authors of the report to conclude that the 1976 Act, just like the old law, has failed on every front. 'None of the three main elements of the 1976 strategy has worked as intended', the report concludes. 'The aims of the 1976 Act have been realised only to a limited extent.'

The methods of encouraging employers to adopt positive action policies have been inadequate, the

report says. The authors also point out that cases brought to court by individuals depend on expert advice, which is only available to a few.

The PSI researchers blame confusion over the objectives of the 1976 Act, lack of resources, structural weaknesses in the CRE and low damages awarded in industrial tribunal hearings for the persistence of discrimination against black people in Britain. The report's conclusion is that we need a new law with greater powers and a new willingness on the part of the authorities to take action. But yet another law cannot provide the answer to racism in Britain. The problem lies not in the inadequacy of the legislation but in the whole strategy of looking to the law to fight racism.

Legal measures against racism are doomed to failure because the instrument used to enforce racism cannot be used to combat it. Racism is the product not of errant individuals but of official discrimination against black people. From immigration controls to racist policing, from discrimination in education to apartheid housing policies the authorities have been at the forefront of establishing and maintaining a framework of discrimination.

The race relations legislation was never about combating racism. Rather its aim has been to mop up the mess created by racism and to contain black militancy. As the PSI report itself notes, one of the main aims of the

ineffectual Race Relations Board set up in 1967 was to provide for 'the peaceful and orderly adjustment of grievances and the release of tension'. One race relations strategy has followed another as each one has been exposed as unequal to the task.

The failure of the old sixties legislation in containing the rising tide of black anger led to the 1976 Act and the establishment of the CRE. This was to prove just as ineffective from the viewpoint of both the black community and the establishment. Following the 1981 riots this 'new, improved' race relations machinery was condemned in an official report which argued that it was irrelevant to the government's needs for the eighties.

Now began a new chapter in the containment of black anger through the co-option of leading community leaders and militants on to local government quangos and council-sponsored schemes. Ten years on, with municipal anti-racism having been discredited, the official anti-racist movement is searching for yet another law to fight racism.

Looking to the law to defend black people is a bit like asking Norman Tebbit for advice on the West Indian cricket team. What we need is not stronger legislation but an effective anti-racist movement which is willing and able to fight in solidarity with black people against both official and unofficial racists. ●

Join WAR!

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