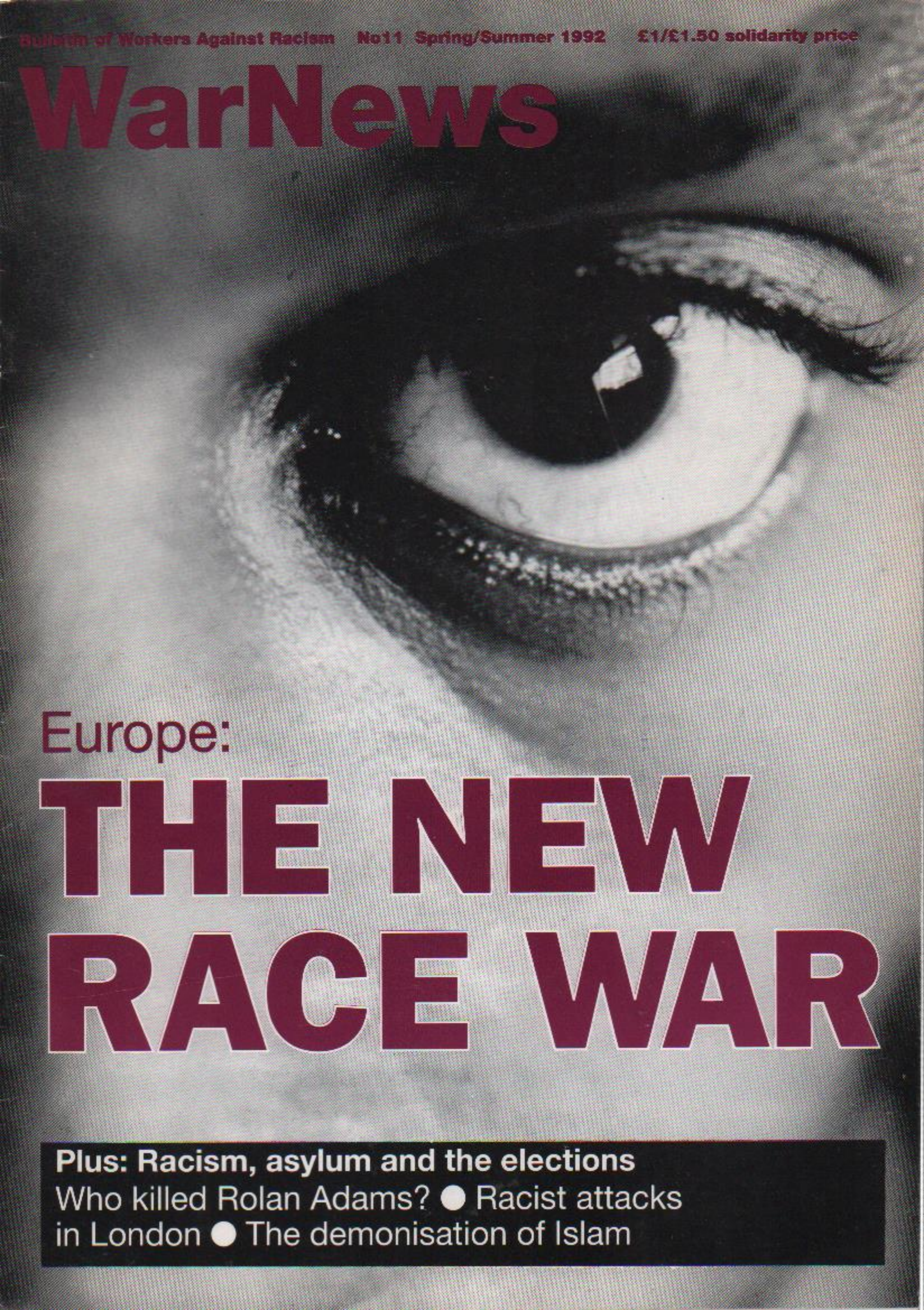


WarNews



Europe:

THE NEW RACE WAR

Plus: Racism, asylum and the elections

Who killed Rolan Adams? ● Racist attacks
in London ● The demonisation of Islam

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Racism, asylum and the election

In February, the government announced that Kenneth Baker's Asylum Bill would not be presented to parliament before the general election. Opposition politicians and immigration lobby groups have presented the move as a victory for anti-racists. The *Guardian* claimed that the failure of the Tories to push through the Asylum Bill was because 'a head of steam was allowed to build up' against it. Anne Owers, the secretary of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, was delighted at the Tory climbdown which, she said, would immensely benefit refugees.

Unfortunately, the fact that the Asylum Bill will not be on the statute books before the election is no grounds for celebration or optimism. The Tories already have more than enough means to curtail the rights of refugees and immigrants. The government's aim in raising the bill was not purely legislative. The Tories used the discussion around the Asylum Bill to target refugees and immigrants and to create a generally more racist climate. In this respect, the government has been very successful—not least because opponents of the bill accepted many of the Tories' basic assumptions.

Opposition to the bill has centred on its apparent unworkability, and the fact that it appears to contravene the United Nations convention on refugees. Many have argued that the bill would have made it more difficult for 'genuine' refugees to escape persecution. Opponents of Kenneth Baker's plans have also had Lord King, the chairman of British Airways, on their side. He has called the proposed fines on airlines for the carrying of 'bogus' refugees 'medieval and pernicious'. Such opposition concedes the principal Tory argument—that immigrants and refugees are a problem. The debate is simply reduced to a quibble about how best to implement controls on immigration.

The argument that the Asylum Bill was misguided because it makes it more difficult for 'genuine' refugees is logically absurd from an anti-racist point of view.

Since the government decides who is genuine and who is not, everyone whose entry would have been blocked by the Asylum Bill would have been *de facto* bogus. As soon as opponents of the bill accept the right of the British government to institute controls—in other words to decide who is and who is not genuine—they have made a key concession to the racist ideas behind it.

What many campaigners against the bill have failed to recognise is that the proposed legislation had absolutely nothing to do with asylum rights, or even with refugees, 'genuine' or otherwise. It was an attempt to raise the issue of race at a time when the Tories might have needed such a device before the election. Branding immigrants as 'economic migrants', or 'bogus refugees' is simply a way of sending a political signal to the electorate—that immigrants are responsible for economic and social problems in Britain and that the Tories, unlike Labour, were willing to clamp down on them. By going along with such Tory definitions, anti-racists can only make it easier for the government to pursue its racist policies.

Workers Against Racism recognised this danger right from the start of our campaign against the bill. We called for 'Asylum for all' to undermine the racist logic behind the genuine/bogus debate. We organised the first national demonstration against the bill, way back in November 1991, demanding 'No controls on immigration', and have called regular pickets of police stations like the Aliens Registration Office in London to drive home the same point.

Rather than attempting to expose the government for being incompetent legislators, or as being nasty to 'genuine' refugees, we set out to expose the way that all immigration controls are racist. We argued that it was not enough to oppose the bill on moral grounds, but that the Tories' hidden racist agenda had to be brought out into the open.

That the Asylum Bill is defunct is, in fact, largely irrelevant. The government

has won the argument that they set out to win: that refugees are the new threat to us here in Britain. The numerous tabloid headlines and the defensiveness of the Labour Party on the issue ensured that the Tories won the debate hands down. Alistair Darling, Labour's frontbench spokesman on immigration, even went as far as drawing up his own proposals for the revision of the UN convention on refugees, so as to better reflect the 'realities' of the 1990s.

The failure of the official anti-racist lobby to question the basic assumptions behind the Asylum Bill indicates a broader problem facing anti-racists today. Race is becoming a central feature of political discussion. Virtually every debate from the music curriculum in British schools to discussions about aid to the third world is infused with an undercurrent of racism. Yet this racism remains hidden—because nobody is willing to challenge it. Rather, virtually the entire opposition to the Tories—from the Labour Party to the newly relaunched Anti-Nazi League—have adapted to the racist climate fostered by the government.

Workers Against Racism (War) has set out to ensure that the struggle against racism becomes a central issue in British politics. As a way of ensuring that the debate in the general election is not confined to mud-slinging and sex scandals, War is putting up a candidate in the Holborn and St Pancras constituency in London. Nigel Lewis, who has organised War's campaign against the police and council frame-up of Bengali youth in Camden (see p4)—which is part of the constituency—will be fighting on a resolutely anti-racist platform. We aim to raise both local and national issues and make the campaign a focus for a broader challenge to the racist consensus. If you want to see a real alternative to the racist establishment parties, then join our campaign. There has never been a more important time to put anti-racism back on the agenda. ●

Two years ago, in WAR News No7 (January 1990) we published a feature called 'Camden: the year of the racist attack'. Using confidential council documents, we exposed the complicity of the local Labour council in the high level of racist attacks in Camden's housing estates. Two years on, the situation has escalated to crisis. Matthew Poyner takes a look at the new campaign by the authorities in Camden to scapegoat Bengali youth in the area

Mukith Ali is a reserved and quietly spoken Bengali teenager. He lives with his family in Camden's Regents Park estate. Early one morning last September, he and his family were woken by a violent banging on their door. When they opened the door, they were confronted by several uniformed and plainclothes police officers who rushed in and immediately began searching the flat.

'They were destroying everything', Mukith told us, 'my bed, my clothes, all my books, even the Koran, they just threw on the floor in contempt. They then got me in the corner, showed me a picture, and asked if I recognised who it was. They were trying to make out it was me, but it didn't look anything like me. They carried on searching the flat, but they couldn't find what they were looking for, even though they were ripping my room apart'.

Similar raids took place at nine other addresses in Camden. The raids were part of a concerted operation against supposed 'ringleaders' of so-called 'criminal' Bengali gangs. Nine young Bengalis were arrested on a total of 18 public order charges. Mukith himself was taken down to the police station after the police found a piece of highly incriminating evidence in his room: a pair of brown Fila trainers.

'Nightmare weekend'

The police tried to implicate Mukith Ali and the others in events in the Regents Park area of Camden during the previous August bank holiday weekend. On the Saturday of the holiday, a group of Asians were walking through the Albany Street area on their way home from a Muslim festival. They were attacked by a group of white youths spraying CS gas. They defended themselves, and in the struggle that followed, at least one person was stabbed.

The following Sunday, Anwar Kadir was badly beaten and robbed by four white youths outside his Troutbeck home. On the Monday, 16-year old Abdul Kadir of Robert Street was beaten up by a gang of white racists who also threw bleach in his eyes.

The local papers presented this and other racially motivated violence as a gang war between rival groups of Bengalis and whites. 'Three stabbed in gang fights', screamed the headline from the *Camden New Journal*, in an article that described the 'Nightmare weekend on estate'. The press fingered the Bengalis as

the guilty party. Monday's *London Evening Standard* quoted an unemployed white man who claimed that 'it's a tit-for-tat thing. No-one is going to the police. The centre of it all is Drummond Street. That's where they all hang out'. In the coded racism of the 1990s, 'they' meant the local Bengalis, whose community is centred around the cluster of Belpuri houses and grocers at the back of Euston station.

The *Camden New Journal* even hinted at 'organised crime and agitators from outside' being the cause of the problem. It claimed that the Bengali youth were the biggest problem, because they were 'more heavily tooled-up'. The growing menace of racism was submerged beneath allegations of criminality, with the bulk of the blame being placed at the feet of the Bengalis.

A bad record

Camden has the fourth largest Bengali population in the country (after Tower Hamlets, Birmingham and Luton). After Kensington and Westminster, it has the third largest Arab community. The most recent figures available indicate that one in five of the residents in Camden are from ethnic minorities. But despite the numbers of black people in Camden, their lives are made hell by one of the worst records of racist attack in the country. Last year alone, there were over 160 racist attacks reported to the authorities, which is reckoned even by the police to be a massive level of under-reporting.

The police do less than nothing to help those under attack from racists. Mukith Miah is one of the young victims of racist attack. While returning from the local mosque after the festival of Eid, he and his friends were attacked in the vicinity of the Albany Road police station. They ran inside the station to escape their attackers, who remained outside, waving their weapons about.

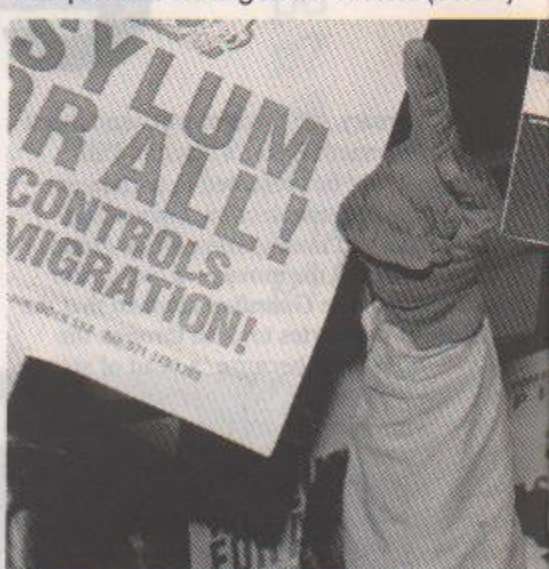
Police clamp down

'We told the policeman on the desk, but he just told us he could do nothing if we chose to hang about in big groups. He made out that we were asking for trouble, when all we were doing was walking home with our friends. He told us it was our fault if we got chased, and then told us to get out of the police station and go home, out into the street where there was a gang waiting to attack us.'

The police may be reluctant to take action against the racists but they are more than

When

War picket challenges the racists (below)



willing to clamp down on any Bengali defending himself from attack. In a letter to the *Camden New Journal*, chief superintendent Linda Newham of Kentish Town police station warned that 'victims of racially motivated

**'Conspiracy to
cause assault'**

being Bengali is a crime



crime must not be tempted to take the law into their own hands'.

The extent of collusion between police, politicians and officially sponsored community groups in enforcing the isolation and

criminalisation of the Bengali community is remarkable. When the eight young Bengalis arrested with Mukith Ali were brought before Highbury magistrates, the local press presented the case as the product of high-level secret

Mukith Miah, Roonu Miah and Alvor Ali were travelling to school one morning when they were attacked by the police. Roonu Miah explained what happened.

'We were on the back seat of the bus. We were talking, having a laugh in Bengali about the *Canned Carrots* programme that had been on the TV the night before. I noticed three men in front of us, but I didn't think anything of them.

'As we moved to get off the bus, all three of the men rushed up and said they were CID. They said that no-one could leave the bus until they'd been searched. They singled us out, and said that they were arresting us for conspiracy to cause assault. I said "what assault?", and they told me to shut up and wait until I was in the station. One of them said to me "You're the one with the big mouth, so where's all the drugs?"

'At the station, they tried to frighten us by saying that our

parents would be angry with us. They threatened to keep us there all night unless we confessed, and wouldn't let us phone anyone. One of them said to Mukith, "We know you, you've been in trouble before". They tried to say that I had attacked a white girl in the area, and that that's why we were speaking Bengali, so no-one could understand that we were planning to attack people.

'Workers Against Racism came to the station with my mother, and helped arrange for a solicitor to get us out. After four and a half hours, they let us out.

'If we can't speak our language to each other, then what sort of country do we live in? It makes me really angry. The police tried to make out we are criminals just because we choose to speak our language. They were the most racist people I've ever met.'

Nigel Lewis

meetings between the police, local Labour MP Frank Dobson, Camden Labour council leader Julie Fitzgerald and various community groups. This unholy alliance had apparently decided that it was necessary to 'tackle the estate violence' by 'isolating a handful of troublemakers'.

Everyone wanted to pin responsibility for the trouble on the local black youth. This facade of consultation was used by the police to legitimise their criminalisation policy. As chief superintendent Newham noted in her letter to the *Camden New Journal*, 'Suffice to say that ward councillors, members of the police consultative group and the Racial Harassment Working Party, lay visitors and the Bengali Workers Action Group were kept fully informed of the police operation'. The message could not have been clearer: if you resist racist attacks, then you will be out on your own.

Despite the attempt to scapegoat the Bengalis, the police have not had it all their own way. Workers Against Racism, working with the arrested youth, organised a large and angry picket of Kentish Town police station (see picture), and there have been vocal protests outside every court appearance, which have attracted wide interest.

Dropping the charges

In the courtroom as well, the police have been forced on to the defensive. In October, the prosecution was forced to drop charges against four of the nine, and the following month charges against another two were also abandoned. The remaining three cases were remanded to appear for committal on 15 January 1992, but before the case could be heard, the prosecution had to drop the charges against one of the remaining three, leaving only two, Shahin and Shaleem, to face charges in the spring at Snaresbrook Crown Court.

But just because most of the charges have been dropped, the pressure on the youth has not eased. Since his arrest in September, Mukith Ali has subsequently been attacked by racists. They identified him from a *Camden New Journal* article which incorrectly reported him as having been identified at an identity parade. The newspaper has limply claimed in its defence that they printed the information in good faith, having received it from the police. As if this wasn't enough, the police have arrested Mukith again, this time on the ridiculous charge of 'conspiracy to cause assault'. Mukith's latest crime was to talk Bengali in an animated way in front of a police officer (see box).

Workers Against Racism and local youth are determined to put a stop to the criminalisation of the Bengali community. We cannot allow the police to ride roughshod over the rights of black youth in Camden. WAR is standing a candidate in the general election in Holborn and St Pancras, the constituency which covers the Regents Park estate and Drummond Street area. We will use the election campaign to raise the issue of racism in Camden—and the complicity of local politicians, from Labour MP Frank Dobson down, in criminalising black youth in the area.

(We have changed several names, to protect the youths involved) ●

On 21 February 1991, a 15-year old black youth called Rolan Adams was stabbed to death at a bus stop on the sprawling Thamesmead estate in south-east London. In October 1991, 19-year old Mark Thornborrow was tried at the Old Bailey and convicted of Adams' murder. Sentencing Thornborrow to life imprisonment, Judge Kenneth Richardson said: 'I am satisfied there were racial overtones which the courts will not tolerate.'

Richardson's judgement gave the impression that socially inadequate white youths are the originators and sole perpetrators of racism and racist attacks. In evidence to the court, Thamesmead youth worker Christina Rogers also laid the blame on 'white adolescents [who] would be dangerous if they had a brain between them'. The *Guardian* felt the same way. Describing the 'simple-minded' youth of Thamesmead, feature writer Jocelyn Targett was dismayed by their 'pizza faces, disfigured by the unruly hormones and routine abuses of adolescence...they split off into the underpasses and short-cuts to go and find videos to nick and little drugs deals to score' ('Last Exit to Nowhere', *Guardian Weekend*, 25 May 1991).

Giro City

Judges, social workers and liberal journalists all agree that racism is a problem caused by the white 'underclass' which inhabits concrete jungles like Thamesmead. With local unemployment nudging 50 per cent, they have slotted Thamesmead and its inhabitants into the Giro City stereotype. Those who live on it are portrayed as a separate sub-species of humanity, feeding on racism and similar prejudices. Such people are said to be innately stupid: their bigotry runs in the family, and only the good offices of social services, the police and the courts can prevent them running amok. The official consensus maintains that 'the underclass' killed Rolan Adams.

Yet the young people of Thamesmead do not conform to the image imposed upon them. Many are bored and frustrated, but this does not mean they all get their kicks out of racist attacks. 'The ones who are doing it are just a bunch of wankers', said a white youth standing at the bus stop where Rolan Adams was killed. A succession of 16-year olds were proud to say 'Rolan was my friend'. Most of them blamed a tiny minority—'Mark Thornborrow and the Wildfowler Gang'—for creating a racist atmosphere on the estate.

'Candles' and 'spades'

The Wildfowler Gang are so called because they hang around outside the Wildfowler pub, although they prefer to be known as Nutty Turns Outs Inc—NTOs for short. When asked about the events leading up to the death of Adams, none of them leapt to Thornborrow's defence. But they expressed strong resentment against non-whites who 'get off easy': 'What about the old woman who was stabbed by a spade in New Cross, all for £10? It was forgotten in five minutes. And if a spade does something to one of us, we're not parading up and down with candles, are we? Thornborrow did wrong and now he'll have to do his bird, but

Who killed Rolan Adams?

Mark Thornborrow is serving a life sentence for the murder of Rolan Adams. But Andrew Calcutt believes Thornborrow is not the only one responsible for Adams' death

they make such a fuss when anybody accuses them that they probably get off.'

The NTOs claimed 'making a fuss' means 'spades' are less than British. It's a lesson they've learned from those politicians and opinion makers—such as judges, social workers and *Guardian* journalists—who constantly tell us that British is best.

Gang warfare?

The Nutty Turn Outs cited tit-for-tat violence as the cause of Rolan Adams' death: 'Up the Woolwich the black youth give you hassle as you walk past. They are on the up. Two of them stabbed up some of our mates. It's just what they did to us. Blacks slag off whites. It works both ways.' The NTOs insisted 'we have to defend the manor against anyone coming over here and giving us grief'. According to them, Adams' death was a consequence of 'gang warfare, not racialism'.

'Gang warfare' is a thinly disguised codeword for whites against blacks. But who taught the NTOs to think 'enemy approaching' whenever they see an unfamiliar black face on Thamesmead? Where did they get the idea that black people are a problem which needs to be dealt with?

Racist culture

It isn't the 'pizza-faced' youth of Thamesmead who have scapegoated immigrants and black people for Britain's social and economic problems, who introduced immigration controls, relegated black people to third class status, fenced them off in separate housing estates, and portrayed them as drug pushers and scroungers. This is the work of the highest in

the land, not the inhabitants of bottom-of-the-pile housing estates. The NTOs have copied the coded racism of *Times* editorials and translated it into the south-east London vernacular.

The NTOs and their friends say they feel threatened by newcomers: 'They come over here and they want us to do things their way. We're supposed to fit in with them. In religious education, we had to learn about their religions and festivals. But we want to know about us, because it's our country.' The teenager who said this must have been about seven years old when Margaret Thatcher condemned immigrants for 'swamping' the British way of life. He is unlikely to have read articles by the likes of Ray Honeyford or Roger Scruton condemning 'multicultural education'. But such ideas are so much part of British culture that, to the youth on Thamesmead, they are simply common sense.

Respectable and responsible

Some left wingers like to pretend that the NTOs learned their virulent brand of racism from members of the British National Party. But when Britain's premier politicians promote chauvinism as common sense, everyday racists like the NTOs have no need to associate themselves with an obscure group of neo-Nazis.

Mark Thornborrow may have been the one who pulled the knife on Rolan Adams. But Thamesmead's young racists are following through the arguments promoted by 'respectable' politicians. These are the people who should be called to account for the murder of Rolan Adams, and for the countless other racist attacks in Britain today. ●

Target Islam

Nasreen Khan explains why the West seems so fearful of the threat from Islam

For 100 years the West failed to understand communism. In the end it did not matter, there was nothing worth understanding. For more than 1000 years the West has failed to understand Islam. This time it matters: a system driven by God will always be more subtle, durable and rational than one driven solely by economics. In the calculations and fears of many, Islam is now on the verge of replacing communism in the front line of global opposition to Western liberal democracy.' (B Appleyard, *Sunday Times*, 12 January 1992)

Over the past few months it has been virtually impossible to open a newspaper or tune into a news bulletin without finding another story about the threat of Islam. Panics about the Islamic bomb, the fundamentalist victory in the Algerian elections and the growth of militant Islam throughout North Africa and the Middle East have all made the front pages. As the Appleyard quote demonstrates, commentators in the West are becoming increasingly explicit about the need to target Islam as the new threat to the West.

Western commentators are also becoming more explicit about why they need to target Islam. As Appleyard noted, 'a certain type of depravity does seem to be infecting our societies: underclasses are expanding, crime is increasing and a blank inarticulate dissent has become a part of popular vernacular'. Add to this, continued Appleyard, 'a full-blooded, 1930s-style economic depression in the 1990s' and the West is facing major problems:

'The liberal West is constructed on a spiritual vacuum and this may well turn out to be a spiritual failing. The lesson of Islam may, in the long run, prove to be that a society must believe in something if it is to be a society at all.'

Appleyard is right to see the 'spiritual vacuum'—the lack of any internal dynamic or positive vision of the future—as a key problem facing Western societies. But the problem is not new. The lack of 'something to believe in' has been a crucial failure of the capitalist system for much of the twentieth century. Two world wars, Depression, fascism and the Holocaust did not

provide a very good advertisement for capitalism and did little to enthuse people about the value of the free market system.

The single idea that the capitalists have come up with this century to defend their system has been anti-communism. Few people might have believed in the capitalist system, but by damning the Stalinist bloc as the 'evil empire', Western propagandists were able to portray their system as at least superior to the East. Anti-communism acted as an ideological glue, binding the West together and creating a degree of cohesion both domestically and internationally throughout the postwar period.

The new 'evil empire'?

The collapse of Stalinism and the end of the Cold War deprived the West of its most valuable mechanism for ensuring stability. Western propagandists have been forced to look for a new 'evil empire' against which they could rally the West. The third world in general, and Islam in particular, has increasingly fitted the bill. Hence the Cold War has increasingly given way to a 'race war' as the West targets the third world—and third world immigrants—as the new enemy.

The motive behind the Islamic panic, then, has little to do with any real threat that Islam or Islamic states might pose but is the product of the problems facing Western societies in the post-Cold War era. By recreating the idea of the 'West' and 'Western civilisation' in opposition to the 'threat' from Islam, Western rulers hope to create a greater sense of 'belonging' in Western society and hence to establish a sense of cohesion at time of increasing political and social uncertainty. Demonising Islam is the West's way of conjuring up a new enemy against which it hopes to rally its own forces. We need to expose the anti-Islamic hysteria for what it is—a racist crusade which scapegoats the third world and its people for the problems of the West. ●



Declaration of WAR

● No to all racist laws!

The new asylum laws being debated in Britain and Germany, and the demand for a Europe-wide policy to keep out refugees and immigrants, indicate the importance of legislation in consolidating the new racism.

Immigration laws target foreigners and immigrants, not the crisis-ridden market system, as the chief threat to people's jobs, housing and general well-being. They strengthen the idea that people from the third world and Eastern Europe should stay where they are. It is vital that anti-racists oppose all immigration laws, and all restrictions on asylum rights, in order to challenge the new climate of chauvinism against foreigners.

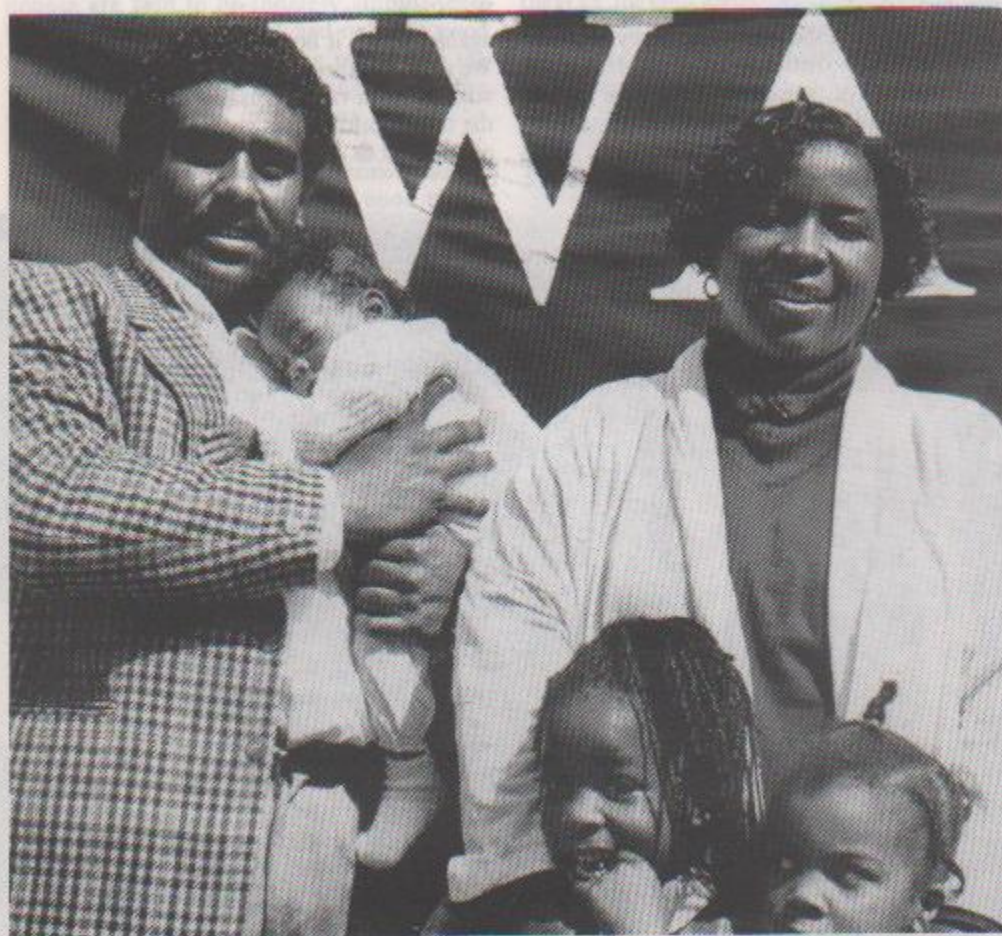
'When I was first threatened with deportation, I just didn't know what to do. I met WAR by accident in July 1988. They spent two years building a campaign to support me. In the end, the home office had to let me stay. They admitted that I had too much local support for them to deport me. And during the campaign, over 500 other black people were kept from being deported while the home office tried to beat us. Without WAR, there is no doubt in my mind that I would have been deported back to St Vincent in the Caribbean. Before I met them, I would never have believed that you could give the racists such a bloody nose!'

Julius Alexander, victim of a deportation order



● Stop police repression and criminalisation

Police action against immigrants and asylum seekers all over Europe has legitimised the new racist climate. Foreigners have been blamed by the police for rising levels of crime, and have been rounded up and put into concentration camps. Labelling all blacks and foreigners as potential criminals strengthens the prejudice that foreigners are the central problem facing society. The identification of blacks with crime strengthens the prejudice that immigrants are the central problem facing society. Our aim should be to redirect this anger to the real source of our problems—the market system which cannot provide the things we need to live a dignified life. Victims of criminalisation such as the Cardiff Three should be released at once, and the racism behind the Tottenham Three jailings exposed wherever possible.



an Anti-Racist Charter for the 1990s



depression tion!

'In February 1990, me and my mates were attacked by a group of racists. They had just come from a "rights for whites" march in Bethnal Green. We had to defend ourselves, and one of the racists was injured. The police, who have spent the last 10 years ignoring attacks on Bengalis in the East End, came within two minutes, arrested us and charged me with attempted murder. WAR were the only people prepared to stand up and defend us. The papers were full of stories of us as mad criminal knifemen. WAR exposed the racism behind the attack and our treatment by the police. They said that Bengali youth were not criminals. Without WAR, the real story of the racism in the East End would never have been raised. Without them I believe I would have spent a long, long time in prison.'

Malik Miah, one of the Stepney Four

All over Europe, East and West, a new wave of racism has been unleashed against foreigners.

In Germany, chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats have tried to restrict the rights of refugees by challenging the country's postwar constitution. Racist attacks are now so common in unified Germany that daily accounts appear on the news.

In France, politicians are falling over themselves to endorse the racist policies of Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National. Immigrants have been labelled as 'smelly' and their presence likened to that of an invading army.

In Spain, immigrants have been rounded up in concentration camps for processing, and attacks on Gypsies have intensified.

In Italy, police have attacked African street traders in Florence, forcing them into concentration camps in a city that is supposed to be a cradle of civilisation and culture.

Britain has led the way in restricting the right to asylum, criminalising black youth and promoting racist ideas about the third world.

Throughout Eastern Europe, Gypsies, Jews and other ethnic minorities are being

scapegoated and attacked.

Racism pervades almost every political and intellectual debate in Europe today. Yet where there was once opposition, there are now silent voices. When Margaret Thatcher made her infamous 'swamping' speech in January 1978, there was a national outcry. But when, in June 1991, John Major conjured up a similar image, calling for a 'perimeter fence' to be built around Europe, his comments caused barely a ripple of disquiet.

There has never been a more important time to build a combative anti-racist movement. We need to challenge the new racist agenda being set by the right, and provide a clear platform from which we can defend the rights of immigrants and minorities whenever they are attacked or scapegoated.

The Declaration of WAR: an Anti-Racist Charter for the 1990s—set out below—lays the basis for building a new anti-racist movement. It is also WAR's manifesto in Holborn and St Pancras in the forthcoming general election. Please publicise the ideas contained within it and help us raise the anti-racist banner in the election.

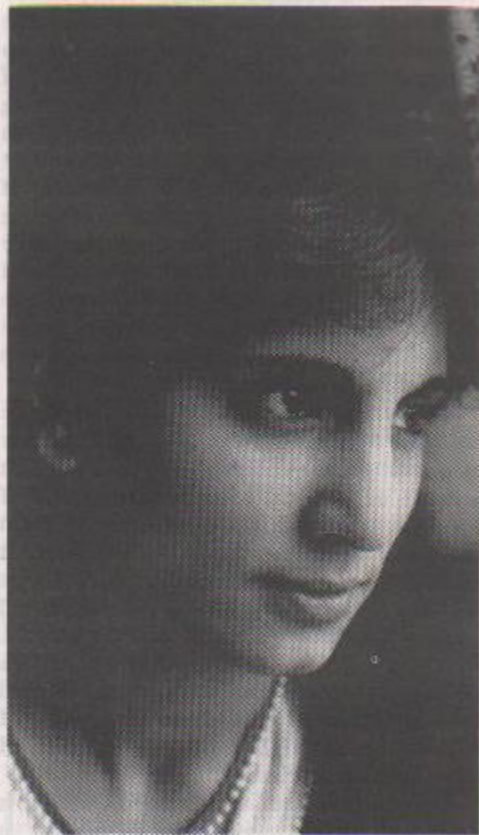
Nigel Lewis, WAR candidate in Holborn and St Pancras

● Direct action against racist attacks!

Racist attacks have reached pogrom-like dimensions in parts of Europe. Here in Britain, they increase year by year, with little opposition. To stop these attacks remains a priority for anti-racists. We must defend the victims of racist attacks, and isolate the perpetrators of such attacks. State institutions cannot be relied upon to combat racist violence. We have to organise independently of the police and the state authorities.

'Every night for more than five years me and my family were attacked. We called the police so many times, but they never did anything. We wrote to the council, and the local MP, but they ignored us, or tried to make out that the problem would go away, or even that there wasn't really a problem. The young men and women from WAR camped on our floor for weeks to deter the attacks. They protected us when everyone else had ignored us. Without them, we would have been on our own when the attacks happened. Eventually, their help enabled us to stick it out until the racists were forced to stop the worst of their actions. With only me and my family there, I am sure that the racists would have got more and more confident. If we get any more trouble, I know that WAR are only a phone call away.'

Nasreen Saddique, victim of racist attacks



Over the past few months there has been an alarming increase in the political influence of the far right in European politics. Very few countries in Europe, West or East, have been unaffected by these events.

In France, mainstream conservative politicians have queued up to echo the anti-immigrant sentiments of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National. Many have raised the possibility of a political alliance with Le Pen in the forthcoming presidential elections. Socialist prime minister Edith Cresson responded by promising the French people that she would be prepared to charter air flights to deport illegal immigrants from French soil. The number of French voters who say they agree with Le Pen's immigration policies has nearly doubled in the past year to 32 per cent from 18 per cent in 1990, according to an opinion poll published in *Le Monde*.

Exploiting the Holocaust?

In Austria, the far right has been able to feed off growing anti-semitism. In a Gallup poll survey in October last year more than 20 per cent of those questioned thought that Jews should be barred from top jobs and 31 per cent did not want Jewish neighbours. Six per cent said they would not shake hands with a Jew. Almost a third of 2000 people polled said they thought Jews exploited the Holocaust 'for their own ends'; more than half wanted an end to Holocaust commemorations.

'Twenty to 30 per cent of the Austrian population have negative views of foreigners, including Jews', Gallup said in its introduction to the survey results. As a measure of the political impact of these views, Joerg Haider's far-right Freedom Party made impressive gains in the municipal elections on 10 November.

Flanders, fascists and Franco

Immigration became a major issue in the Belgian general election last November. The Flemish far-right party, Vlaams Blok, wants a separate Flemish state and to rid Belgium of third world immigrants. The party has nothing against the thousands of rich European or North American nationals who come to work at NATO or EC headquarters in Brussels. 'If fighting to keep Flanders Flemish and Europe European is fascist, then I am more than happy to be a fascist', Vlaams Blok president Karel Dillen told the party congress last November. In the election Vlaams Blok emerged as the largest party in the city of Antwerp and did better than expected in the rest of the country.

In Germany, the far right was in the headlines for most of November and December as a result of the enormous increase in racist attacks across the country. Hundreds of refugees were victims of attacks. In local elections in Lower Saxony, in former East Germany, and also in the northern part of west Germany, far-right political parties polled enough votes to win seats in state parliaments. In the face of the mounting attacks, a government spokesman, Dieter Vogel, argued that 'we have, of course, no possibility of eliminating overnight a wave of hostility, of attacks against foreigners'.

In Spain, on the anniversary of Franco's death, over 10 000 supporters of the neo-fascist

Never

Keith Tompson looks behind the growth of the far right in Europe

group, CEDEDE, paraded through Madrid. In both Switzerland and Sweden, the far right has emerged as a credible political force. In Eastern Europe, the rise of xenophobia and attacks on Gypsies and Jews is the subject of widespread discussion.

There seems to be no doubt that the postwar patterns of European politics are shifting. The far right, with a more thorough-going

return to the dark ages of Nazism. Certainly the far right is far more successful today than it has been at any point since 1945. However, far from a return to the 1930s, the growth of the far right is very much rooted in the politics of the 1990s.

The new focus on race and immigration is the product of the political and social changes that have swept the world over the past decade.



anti-foreigner message, has forced its way onto the platform and, while not yet vying for power, has nonetheless to be taken seriously. For those who lived through the 1930s and 1940s, and were used to the old refrain 'Never Again!', it must seem as if the past is repeating itself. The resurrection of anti-fascist campaigns—such as the Anti-Nazi League in Britain—indicates the worries of many people that fascist organisations are creating a new climate of racism.

It is understandable that many people should view the developments in European politics as a

Throughout the eighties, political insecurity in Europe encouraged the growth of racism. The trend has been exacerbated by the events of the past few years. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of Stalinism, the onset of the recession and the Western victory in the Gulf have all helped to shatter the old world order and usher in a new climate of uncertainty and doubt.

For the past 40 years, the West has been able to rally international and domestic opinion against a supposed common external enemy—the Soviet Union. By creating a 'red menace', Western governments could both give

again



a sense of mission to their societies—the need to stand firm against communism—and find a means of creating unity in the West against a common foe. The end of the Cold War has undermined the mechanisms through which the Western powers enforced cooperation internationally and maintained social stability at home.

Western politicians have looked for a new scapegoat now that the Soviet Union no longer exists. Increasingly, in the place of the old red menace has come the demonisation of the third world, the Islamic states in particular, and of immigrants and refugees.



The far right has grown because its anti-immigrant message has already been promoted by mainstream politicians who are scapegoating immigrants for the political and social problems facing Western society today. Germany provides a useful illustration of this. Many people have pointed to the resurgence of neo-Nazi groups and the violence against refugee hostels as evidence for the rise of a new Nazi Germany. In fact, it is not the far right but respectable politicians who have been responsible for fuelling the anti-refugee hysteria.

The racist backlash in Germany is the result

of a systematic campaign by the government which targets immigrants as a problem. For some time the authorities have been complaining loudly about refugees 'flooding' into Germany at the rate of 30 000 a month. There has been a heated debate about the need to tighten up Germany's liberal asylum laws to make it harder for foreigners to enter the country.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) demanded that the postwar constitution be changed in order to limit the number of asylum-seekers. The opposition SPD objected to this but argued for holding camps for refugees, faster processing of their claims and speedier deportation of 'bogus' asylum-seekers.

Scapegoating refugees

That the aim of the anti-foreigner campaign was less to restrict the numbers of refugees than to scapegoat foreigners as the new enemy was indicated by the fact that, in November, the CDU suddenly dropped its demand for constitutional change. The sudden switch suggested that the CDU's vigorous campaign had been little more than a political device to create an anti-immigrant climate.

It was in this racist climate created by the mainstream politicians that the attacks on immigrant holding centres and hostels began to rise. The far right, taking its lead from the CDU and SPD's open hostility to foreigners, simply translated onto the street the language of the parliamentarians. As German political leaders have opened up a debate about the undesirability of foreigners, it is not surprising that one of the beneficiaries will be those who are most consistently anti-foreign—the far right.

The growth of racism, therefore, has been fuelled not by Nazis, but by respectable politicians using immigration as a political football for their own cynical purposes. A new racist consensus which legitimises attacks on foreigners is the result.

Xenophobic atmosphere

This is the pattern throughout Europe. It is not that the far right has emerged from the sky to suddenly come to prominence as a new, albeit still marginal, political force. Rather, the language of everyday politics has become increasingly xenophobic and the far right are simply feeding off the atmosphere that they had no role in creating. The decision of Jacques Chirac and Giscard d'Estaing to contemplate an alliance with the Front National is part of the same trend.

Immigrant organisations in Europe are not unaware of this reality. On a mass anti-racist

demonstration in Paris on 24 January most of the protesters were as hostile to the Socialist leaders, who had called the march, as they were towards Le Pen's party. Mohammed Hocine, an Algerian and on hunger-strike against French immigration laws, summed up the mood when he said: 'The left is doing just what the right used to do. How can we vote for it?'

The new atmosphere of racism and nationalism in Europe is often seen as an exceptional deviation from the norms of European political behaviour. Because of this, opponents of racism tend to concentrate on the most extreme manifestation of racism—the far right. This is the fatal flaw in the anti-racist armoury. The rise of anti-foreigner sentiment is entirely consistent with the traditions of mainstream politics in Europe. The collapse of the economies of Eastern Europe, and the pressures on those in the West due to the world recession, mean that there is a deep-rooted disenchantment with the way things are. This has, and not for the first time, given rise to a desire to find somebody to blame.

Redirecting anger

We have to reorient the whole approach of anti-racism to deal with the new racism. The old slogan of 'Never Again!' is inadequate as a response to the rise of the far right. Because the far right's growth is the result of developments which go to the heart of mainstream politics, which themselves are the product of an irreversible decline in the economic prosperity of Europe, simple moral objections will be pitifully inadequate in opposing them.

By the same token narrow anti-fascism, as expressed in the reformation in Britain of the ANL will be useless. Fascist organisations can grow because their basic premises—that foreigners are to blame for the decline in living standards, that patriotism is good—are shared by all mainstream political parties.

If we want to halt the growth of the far right we need a movement capable of defending the rights of foreigners against the mainstream parties. Such a movement will need to point out that the market system itself is responsible for the decline in the fortunes of ordinary people and redirect the legitimate anger of the poor against the real barrier to their prosperity. Only a campaign against the mainstream racists can halt the rise of the far right ●



The relaunch of the Anti-Nazi League has led to a furious debate within anti-racist circles. Neither side in the debate, argues Kenan Malik, can promote the struggle for black rights

When the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was relaunched earlier this year, supporters of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) attacked the new organisation in a series of letters to the *Guardian* and articles in black papers such as *Black Briton*. ARA supporters denounced the ANL for being part of the 'white left', for disregarding the 'black experience' and for attempting to 'splinter the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle'. The ANL responded that 'the specific job of stopping the growth of Nazism...must involve the widest possible unity' and that it was best placed to ensure such unity.

What is ironic about this bitter rift is that there is little of substance that politically divides the two groups. Both groups work within the bureaucratic anti-racist framework established in the late seventies and eighties. Neither have a relationship with the black community. Both reduce racism to its most obnoxious aspects, look to the state to tackle the problem of individual racists and ignore the institutionalised nature of black oppression. Most notably, both organisations have adapted to the prevailing anti-German chauvinism that now permeates British politics. So what is the fuss about?

The dispute between the ARA and the ANL amounts to a sectarian squabble between two groups trying to make political capital out of growing liberal concern about racism. The ARA was set up last November by a coalition

of black local government activists, Labour MPs and trade union bureaucrats. The ARA claims 'the participation of the major black organisations via the Black Liaison Group'. In fact, the Liaison Group consists largely of self-appointed 'community leaders' who work for state-funded organisations such as the Newham Monitoring Project, are involved in middle class pressure groups such as the Society of Black Lawyers or are Labour Party functionaries such as the Black Sections leaders. They comprise the remnants of the race relations industry created by the Tory government, in the wake of the 1981 riots, to act as a buffer between the authorities and black youth, and to contain black militancy.

Containing black anger

The Tories' strategy proved very successful in stabilising the inner cities. By the end of the eighties, cash-strapped local authorities slashed funding to equal opportunity units and police monitoring groups which, having successfully contained the explosion of black anger, could be safely dispensed with. As the 'community leaders' lost their funding and hence their power base, so they tried to create new organisations through which they could exert their influence. Anti-Fascist Action, the National Black Caucus and the Black Liaison Group have all been attempts over the past few years to establish national platforms for black activists. The ARA is the black bureaucrats'

latest attempt to carve out a new niche for themselves.

For the ARA, the relaunch of the ANL was a potential threat to its claim to be the official voice of the anti-racist movement, and to its access to resources, funding and support. Hence its ferocious attack on the ANL.

The inability of black activists to establish a dynamic anti-racist movement demonstrates their lack of any relationship with the black community. ARA supporters might denounce the ANL for being part of the 'white left' and for disregarding the 'black experience'. But they themselves are entirely reliant on the Labour Party and local authorities for any influence they might wield, and have more experience of battling in council grant committees than of campaigning for black rights.

If the creation of the ARA is the response of

The

black activists to their isolation, so the relaunch of the ANL is an attempt by sections of the left, and in particular the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), to deal with their own political problems. Disoriented by the major political changes of the past few years and desperate to break out of the isolation felt by many left-wing activists today, the left has resurrected the ANL in a self-conscious attempt to recreate the successes of the seventies. In so doing the left has demonstrated its failure to understand both the key to the ANL in the seventies and the political transformation that has been wrought in the past period.

Helping Labour

The original ANL was launched not simply to stop the fascists but more out of fear that the National Front was undercutting the Labour Party's electoral support. Alarmed in particular by the 1977 council elections in London, in which the NF polled 119 000 votes and cut deep into Labour support, a coalition of Labour and radical left activists, led by the SWP, created the ANL.

In its founding statement, the ANL noted that 'in these months before the general election, the Nazis will seize every opportunity to spread their propaganda. During the election itself, National Front candidates might receive equal TV and radio time to the major parties. The British electorate will be exposed to Nazi propaganda on an unprecedented scale'.

The Labour Party welcomed the ANL as a useful way of buttressing its crumbling support. In *Beating Time*, his account of the growth of the ANL, David Widgery recalls the account given by League founder (and SWP member) Paul Holborow of a conversation with Neil Kinnock, then considered to be a left-wing MP:

"I really tried to explain", he says, "that there were really big differences between us but as far as I was concerned the ANL was an important organisation which we both from different points of view needed to support".... And Kinnock replied, "Look I don't really care what your political organisation is. As far as I am concerned the ANL performs a very important function for the Labour Party". (p112)

A decade and a half later, Kinnock has transformed himself into a right-wing Labour leader and transformed his party into a cut-rate version of the Tories. Kinnock's concern today is not whether he might lose working class votes to the far right but whether he can gain middle class votes from the Tories. For the Labour Party of the nineties, the ANL is more of an embarrassment than an organisation that could 'perform a very important function'.

ANL squeezed

A second major change since the late seventies has been the creation of a layer of professional anti-racist activists through the local government quangos. When the original ANL was established it had few competitors in the scramble to win backing from liberal anti-fascists. It was able to sign up Labour MPs, trade union bureaucrats and showbiz personalities as supporters. The aim of the ANL, as Widgery notes, was that 'It should be open to people who were pro-immigration control but were prepared to demonstrate against the Nazis' (*Beating Time*, p49).

The creation of a new race relations industry in the eighties (consolidated today around the ARA) has put the squeeze on the ability to recreate the old ANL. Not only does the ARA demand the right to be the 'single united movement that is needed against racism and the rise of the extreme right' but anyone who 'is pro-immigration control but prepared to demonstrate against the Nazis' is likely to favour the ARA which, unlike the ANL, is not associated with violence and militancy (however unfair to the ANL such allegations may be).

Who are the patriots?

The one thing that the ANL does have going for it is a political climate much more favourable to a bout of anti-German chauvinism. It comes as no surprise that the ANL should be relaunched at the very time when anti-German sentiment is becoming a major element in British politics.

The old ANL deliberately promoted British nationalism as part of its anti-fascist drive. The key feature of ANL leaflets was the idea that British Nazis were sham patriots who soiled the Union Jack. This bogus patriotism was

constantly contrasted with the genuine nationalistic spirit as it had manifested itself in Britain's 'finest hour'—the 'anti-fascist' struggle against Germany in the Second World War.

One ANL leaflet headed 'Why you should oppose the National Front' noted that 'they say they are just patriots. Then why does Chairman Tyndall say: "The Second World War was fought for Jewish, not British interests?"'. Another leaflet, called 'What would life be like under the Nazis?', argued that 'the NF says they are just putting Britain first. But their Britain will be just like Hitler's Germany'.

The ANL propaganda struck a chord in a country which, ever since 1945, has constantly resurrected memories of the Second World War, as a way of establishing its self-image and identity. The replaying of the Second World War continues unabated today—witness the showing recently of the mini-series *The Day of the Fox* about the D-Day landings. But unlike in the seventies, the enemy is no longer the Nazi Germany of 40 years ago. The menace, as we are reminded in increasingly strident terms, is the reunited and reinvigorated Germany of 1992, which rides roughshod over its neighbours on every issue from Croatia to interest rates.

Challenging chauvinism

The anti-fascist campaigns of the left provide the vehicle for winning radical and working class support for the chauvinist policies of the establishment. In its adaptation to anti-German chauvinism, the ANL has been joined by the ARA. Over the past few months supporters of both organisations have increasingly targeted German fascism as a problem for British anti-racists—the latest bulletin of the Campaign against Racism and Fascism even spotted German skinheads in Rochdale!

We have no interest in taking sides between the ANL and the ARA. However we have every interest in challenging the adaptation of both to British nationalism and anti-German chauvinism. An anti-racist movement can only be built through the most determined struggle against every form of chauvinism. ●

movement we need

Cleaner, greener and whiter

Sutton lies in the depths of south-west London in the leafy county of Surrey. Its public image is of affluence and home counties' suburbia; council publicity depicts Sutton as 'the cleaner, greener borough'. However, beneath the gloss and PR hype lies a darker side of Sutton. Alastair Davies and Nigel Lewis report on one Asian family's experience of people in London's cleaner, greener, whiter borough

At the end of January, a young Asian mother drove up to her flat on one of Sutton's modern council estates just outside the town centre. She had been shopping with two of her four children. They were asleep in the car; four-year old Suhayl in the back seat, and four-month old Anis strapped in his safety seat in the front.

The mother was nipping upstairs to her flat to get a coat, and was then going to visit relatives. Not wanting to disturb the children, she left them momentarily in the car.

She had been gone just 30 seconds when she heard an almighty crash. Local racists, who had been waging a 16-month hate campaign against the family had thrown a brick at point blank range through the windscreen at the sleeping baby. It missed by millimetres, showering the baby and sleeping child in the back with glass. A passing workman rushed with the mother to the car and rescued the children. The assailants disappeared.

Violent racist attacks such as this are unfortunately all too familiar to the family. They arrived in Britain in the late sixties from East Africa at the same time as several thousand Kenyan Asians. At the time, this provided the pretext for the then Labour government to introduce the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which was rushed through parliament in three days. The act enshrined in law the concept of patriality—the idea that only those people who can prove that their ancestors were born in Britain have a right to live here themselves. It codified in law the second-class status of black people, and helped to consolidate the racist climate that was to drive this family almost to the depths of despair as the seventies and eighties unfolded.

Sustained attacks

Almost from the moment they moved into a housing estate in Carshalton they were subjected to a campaign of sustained and

serious racist attacks. This culminated in an arson attack on their home in 1987. Both council and police failed to act: only an unusually direct approach to the then mayor led to the family being rehoused at their current address.

Six hours later

But in November 1990, the latest racist campaign of intimidation commenced. Since then, the family has recorded over 40 instances of verbal and physical abuse, attempted violent entries, attempted attacks with knives, human and dog excreta and urine being pushed through the letter box, threats to set dogs on the children and graffiti attacks on the house.

Throughout the whole period, the local police were kept informed of the violence. They were contacted on five separate occasions. Each time the police simply shrugged their shoulders. On the 30 May 1991, two racists came over the balcony of the flat and threatened to attack the



family. 'I managed to frighten them off', says the mother. 'I then informed the police. They came and told me that there was nothing they could do. They said they would send a home-beat officer, but none ever appeared.' A week after this attack, the racists attempted the same again. The police were contacted, and responded six hours later. Again, they did nothing.

In fact, the police now claim that there is no record of them being contacted at all. At a racial incidents panel meeting on 5 February 1992, Brian Taylor of Epsom police division noted that 'no record of any incidents of racial harassment...to the family have been noted by the police'.

Sutton council has also been directly approached by the family on at least five occasions. Its response has also been dismissive. First, council officials questioned whether the attacks were racially motivated. They then demanded photographic evidence of the attacks. 'I think they wanted me to say to the attackers "hold the knife and say cheese"', says the mother.

'No racism here'

When the family requested rehousing, the council hid behind bureaucracy. The family filled in a mutual exchange form, but heard nothing more from the council. When the attacks became so serious that the council had to accept that the family was facing a campaign of racist violence, it told the family to take out civil or criminal action against the racists.

Even after the brick attack on the baby,

council officials still remained sceptical. In February, at the same racial harassment panel meeting where the police claimed to have no knowledge of the racist attacks, the council still clung to their 'no racism here' story. Housing management official Humberto Celis claimed that other Asians on the estate did not appear to have similar problems. He had obviously not spoken to the Bengali family on the same estate who were so frightened they very rarely left their flat.

Isolating the racists

Education welfare official Eddie McMahon explained that the eldest child seemed 'to be experiencing no difficulties due to racial harassment, and was well settled and appeared to have no behavioural problems'. According to minutes of the meeting the panel were 'concerned that, in view of the degree of harassment the family had been experiencing, little information about their circumstances had emerged prior to the panel meeting'.

The family refused to give up, and under pressure, the council offered to rehouse them. The flat Sutton council provided was totally inadequate. The family refused to accept such a desultory offer. 'We felt that the council were trying to make us the victims of the attacks', said the mother. 'They were making us suffer, rather than really try to help us. I didn't see why we should accept this. The best that they could offer was to take out prosecutions against the racists. This would have just left us open to the charge of being grassees, further isolating us.'

At this point, Workers Against Racism got

involved. We organised physical defence of the family to deter the racists. We canvassed the estate, and located a core group of anti-racists. We carefully built up trust between ourselves and those on the estate who wanted to help, introducing potential volunteers to the family and asking whether they would help us set up a scheme to help. Early in February 1992, we set up the 'Sutton Support Network', so that concerned people could contact the family and offer any help they could.

More importantly, we have begun to break the isolation of the family and started to isolate the racists instead. Now that other people on the estate are standing up to the racists, the attackers have had to think again. The attacks have become very much more infrequent. The racists themselves are now frightened of being pariahs in their own community.

Living in peace

After almost five years of being ignored, patronised, treated as a problem themselves and then being insulted by the authorities, an end now seems possible to the constant attacks the family has suffered. 'I used to think that everyone was against us on this estate', says the mother, 'and if we had gone along with the council or the police, I am sure that by now they probably would be. Now that Workers Against Racism have built up some opposition to the racists, I feel much more confident we can live here in peace'. If you would like to help us provide support for the victims of racist attack, please contact us as soon as possible. Don't wait too long before you act.●

BREAK the RACIST CONSENSUS

Workers Against Racism is standing a candidate in the London constituency of Holborn and St Pancras in the coming election. Our aim is to put the issue of racism back on the political agenda. On virtually every issue from the Asylum Bill to police harassment there is a consensus across the political spectrum that black people are the problem. We intend to challenge that racist consensus. If you want to help our campaign contact Nigel Lewis on (071) 375 1702 or write to BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX.

VOTE WAR

