

WAR NEWS

Bulletin of Workers Against Racism

Number 12

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Welcome to Britain

Anti-racist festival (see back for details)

Welcome to

Fortress Britain

Racism is one of the most explosive issues of the day. The hysteria about refugees, the rise in racist attacks, the growth of the far right, the willingness of mainstream politicians to advocate openly racist policies—these developments have astonished and worried many people.

But at the same time as racism has returned so forcefully to the political agenda, so the forces of anti-racism seem to be in disarray. Much of the old liberal opposition to racism has crumbled away. Many of the old organisations and groups have disappeared. And, as Andrew Calcutt shows on p15, the language of liberalism is now being used to promote some very reactionary ideas.

It is against this background that Workers Against Racism have organised our Anti-Racist Festival. The festival, which runs from 9 April to 9 May, comprises of a wide variety of events—gigs, cabaret nights, poetry readings, public meetings, exhibitions. But running through all the events is one aim—the need to bring the message of anti-racism to a new audience so that we begin the task of building the kind of anti-racist

movement necessary to meet the challenge of the nineties.

This is a special issue of Warnews, the bulletin of Workers Against Racism, which introduces one of the highlights of the festival, an art exhibition which deals with the black experience in Britain today. Called 'Welcome to Britain', the exhibition will run at The Edge gallery in London from 19 April to 9 May.

This bulletin introduces the main themes of the exhibition and some of the photographs from it. Together they provide a graphic illustration of what it means to be black in Britain today.

The themes of the exhibition—nationalism, police violence, racist attacks, fascism, Western chauvinism—are not simply a way of cataloguing the photographs. They are also the central themes that any anti-racist movement today must take up if it is to be effective in challenging racism in the nineties. If you agree—join us at our festival. More importantly join us in our work. Workers Against Racism has branches across the country. If you want to find out more, phone (071) 278 9908 or write to Mark Butler, Workers Against Racism, BM War, London WC1N 3XX.

COVER PHOTO: CHRIS BARRINGTON

WAR would like to thank the following people for their invaluable help in getting the festival and exhibition together.

Richard Adams, Najma, Satish Sekar, Kole at Persistence of Vision, Paula Watson at Cooltan, Rachel at Creative Block, Deepak, Nicholas Awde at *The Voice*, John at the *Camden New Journal*, Marc Picken at *i-D* magazine, Jez Nelson at Kiss FM, Senita at Somethin' Else, Caroline and Lucy at *London at Large*, Colm at Ground Floor, Niell O'Brien at The Mean Fiddler, Lloyd and Buller Timmy at Happy Days, Ashley Slater and Microgroove, Karl and Free Speech, Simon Norfolk, Phil and Bas at The Orange, Mannick Govinda at The Paul Hamlin Foundation, Jaginda Lamba, Cary Sawhney at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Ahmed Sheikh

Nationalism

Resistance

Throughout Europe governments and political parties are whipping up nationalist sentiment. Politicians faced with economic crisis and social disintegration are increasingly wrapping themselves in their national flags. It is a trend that all anti-racists must oppose.

At the heart of the nationalist outlook is a chauvinist attitude towards foreigners. Being 'proud to be British' inevitably means denigrating other nationalities. It makes us believe that our problems arise not from government policy or from the type of society in which we live, but from people of other nationalities who are pinching our jobs, denying us our rights or running us down. The depth of anti-French and anti-German sentiment expressed in Britain during the current Maastricht debate about European unity demonstrates the dangers of nationalism.

A central part of the challenge to

(Right)
Resistance by
Abena Adda

(Below)
Children
of God by
Elizabeth
Odonkor



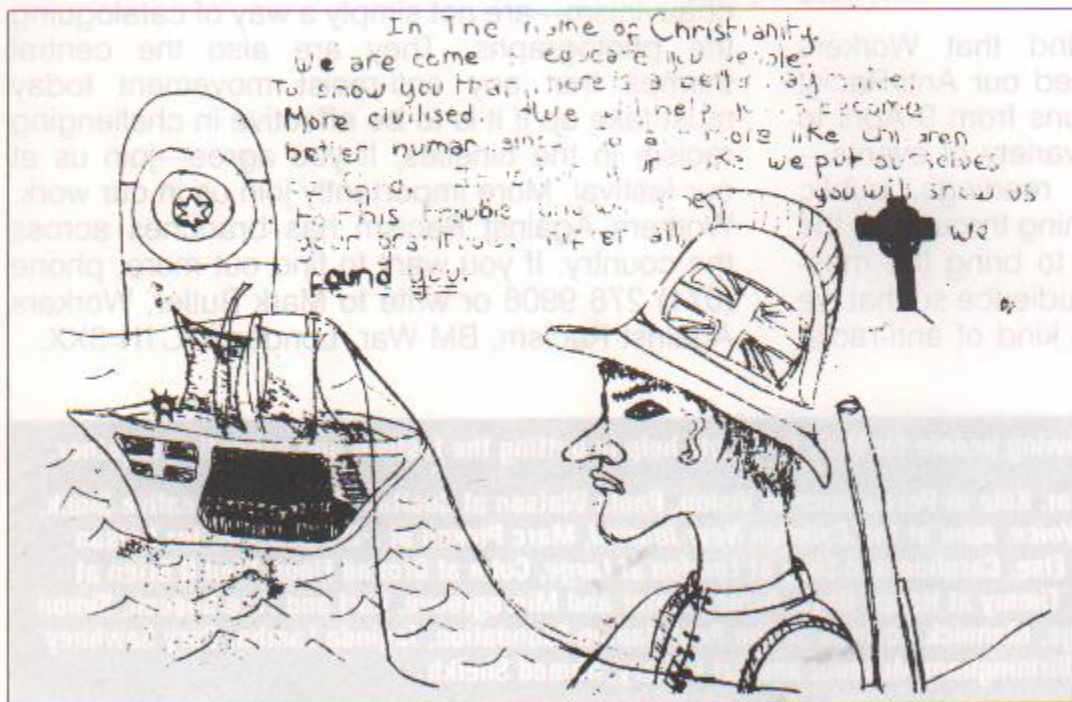
nationalism is the campaign against immigration controls. The logic of immigration controls is that social and economic problems in this country are caused by foreigners. That is an argument anti-racists must meet head-on.

Advocates of immigration controls claim that Britain is a small island which cannot take in too many new people. Too great an influx, they say, will put pressure on jobs and housing. There are insufficient resources to go round, and so we must put the interests of British people before those of foreigners. This is specious nonsense.

The number of people living in this country is irrelevant. Whether 50 000, 50m or 500m people lived in Britain, we would still be facing the same problems of slump, unemployment, poverty and homelessness. These problems arise not because too many people live here, but because we live in a system that puts profits before human need—and then blames foreigners in general, and black people in particular, for the consequences. In reality unemployment, poverty and homelessness are caused not by immigration, but by the same sordid system that denies equal rights to black people and immigrants.

The argument that we should 'put our people first' inevitably leads to racist conclusions. It can only lead to hostility against those not seen as 'our people'—blacks, immigrants, refugees, foreigners. This is why Workers Against Racism puts challenging nationalism at the forefront of its campaigning work.

Just as immigration controls are the cutting edge of racism in this country, so the campaign against controls is the cutting edge of War's activities. From our campaign against the Asylum Bill to our anti-deportation campaigns War's message is simple: all immigration controls are racist; we are out to abolish them! ●



Gallery 1

The Edge, 92 Cromer Street, London WC1

Identity by
Jo Bower



Untitled by
Cliff Hanley



In March this year, the new commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Paul Condon, launched a campaign against racism, claiming that the police had to be 'totally intolerant' of those who behave in a racist fashion both in society and within the police force itself. The day after Condon spoke the court of appeal cleared four black people, Ida Oderinde, Rennie Kingsley, Dennis Tulloch and Everard Brown. The four had been jailed for possession of drugs which had been planted on them by police officers from Stoke Newington. All had spent months in jail. The experience of the four was eloquent testimony to the fact that however many 'anti-racist' campaigns the police may launch, and however many PR organisations it might employ to clean up its image, it remains an irredeemably racist organisation.

The police cannot be 'totally intolerant' of racism because they are in the frontline of enforcing racial oppression. In a society like Britain, where racism is woven into the very fabric of the nation, upholding 'law and order' means upholding racist institutions, racist laws and racist practices. The 90 black people who have died in police and prison custody over the past two decades are testimony to that.

There is scarcely a black community in this country that has not suffered grievously at the hands of the police. In some areas, such as Liverpool 8 or Broadwater Farm, a whole generation of young blacks has been criminalised by the police and the courts.

When Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghup won the

appeals against their convictions last year after it was admitted that they had been jailed for the killing of PC Blakelock on the Broadwater Farm estate despite there being not a shred of evidence against them, many people were outraged. Yet the ordeal of the Tottenham Three was just the tip of the iceberg. Following the Broadwater Farm riot of October 1985, the police occupied the estate like an invading army. They raided one in four of the flats, arrested one in 10 of the residents and picked up virtually every young black male in the area. Children as young as 12 were held in custody without contact with parents, friends or solicitors and browbeaten into making the most fantastic confessions, many of which were later thrown out in court. Many others, however, were framed by a judicial system bent on revenge



(Left)
Police and
Bengali by
Simon Norfolk

(Above)
Demonstration
against police
harassment by
Michael Kramer

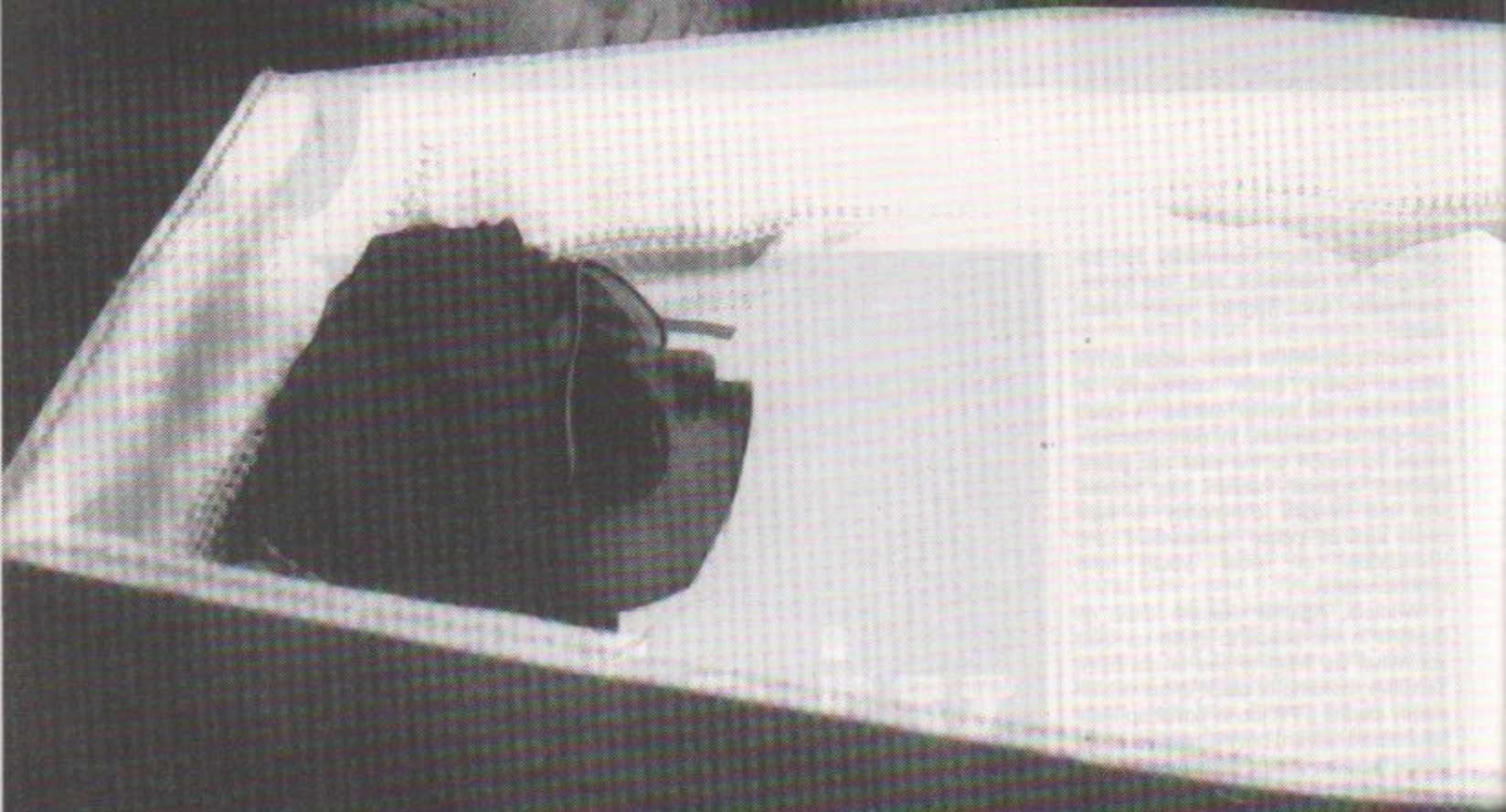
against the black community for the killing of PC Blakelock, and, like Silcott, Braithwaite and Raghip, spent years inside.

Such treatment of black people is not unique. Every black community in Britain can tell similar stories. A good example is Camden, in north London, where for much of the past two years, Workers Against Racism has worked with the Bengali community to fight back against police harassment and intimidation of local youth and schoolchildren.

Workers Against Racism has no illusions in the police to clean up their act. What we want to see is not more 'sensitive' policing of black areas (which simply means a PR job to cover up institutionalised racism), but the removal of the police from our streets and off our backs.

STOP

violence



When people think of racist attacks the image that comes to mind is that of neo-Nazi thugs firebombing refugee hostels in Germany. The black and immigrant community in Germany have indeed suffered terribly over the past few years at the hands of racists. But this should not blind us to the fact that there is nothing unique about racist violence in Germany. Racist attacks are as intense in Britain as they are in Germany—but they are a lot less visible.

Ruhullah Aramesh, Rohit Duggal, Padchadcharam Sahitharan, Aliyah Miah, Mohammed Sarwar, Saddik Dada, Khoaz Miah, Ashique Hussain—all were murdered last year, not on the streets of Hamburg or Berlin, but on the streets of London and Manchester. It is estimated that there are some 70 000 racial incidents a year in Britain—one every seven minutes. Some are minor.



Racist attacks

Others—as the catalogue of racist murders indicate—are not.

This wave of violence does not take place in a vacuum. All across Europe politicians have been whipping up hostility to black people, fulminating against 'bogus' refugees and condemning immigrants as scroungers. The willingness of respectable politicians to adopt racist language and racist policies has encouraged the racists on the streets and in the housing estates to go on the offensive.

Workers Against Racism has a long history of providing physical defence for

families who have been subject to racist attacks. We recognise that the police and the politicians have no interest in defending black people—they are often at the forefront of promoting racism and cannot combat it.

Ordinary people, on the other hand, have every interest in challenging the racist poison that divides our communities and weakens the working class as a whole. That is why from Brick Lane to Bradford, War has worked to build local campaigns that can isolate the racists and defend families under attack.

(Left) Funeral of Kuldip Singh by Simon Norfolk

(Above) Smashed window by Chris Beresford



The rise of the far right, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, the TV images of Seig-heiling youth on the streets, have led many people to fear that we are seeing a return to the 1930s. But what is striking about racism today is less the march of the far right than the fact that it is often impossible to tell the difference between the far right and the mainstream right.

When former French prime minister and possible next president Jacques Chirac accuses Arabs of being 'noisy and smelly' and claims there is an 'overdose' of foreigners in France; when German interior minister Lothar

Kupfer claims to 'understand' the feelings and actions of those who attack refugee hostels; when 'nice' Mr Major demands a 'perimeter fence' around Europe to keep out immigrants—then it becomes clear that our problems are not restricted to the fascist fringe.

The willingness of mainstream politicians to adopt the arguments, policies and language of the far right has given a boost to the credibility of the fascists. The racism of the mainstream politicians has made the far right respectable. Stemming the rise of fascism means challenging head-on the racism of mainstream society which allows the far right to breed.

Fascism and racism



(Top left)
Auschwitz gate by Simon Norfolk

(Top Right)
Boots by Simon Norfolk

(Left)
Auschwitz at dawn by Simon Norfolk

(Right)
'But mummy said...' by Mark King

(Far right)
Flag wavers by Simon Norfolk



Western cha



(Above)
Serbs by Michael Kramer

(Right)
Freedom by Kenneth Potts

From Somalia to Serbia, from Angola to Iraq, Western interference in the affairs of third world and Eastern European countries has now become accepted as common sense. Where many people might in the past have objected to such intervention as 'imperialism', today they accept it as 'humanitarianism'.

In today's political climate the West is seen as a force for peace and progress in the world, indeed the only force for peace and progress in the world. The people of the third world and Eastern Europe are seen as naturally uncivilised, congenitally violent, given to atavistic bloodlusts and incapable of running their countries and organising their lives without Western assistance. The idea of the 'White Man's burden'—the notion that the Western powers have a moral duty to help out backward states incapable of helping themselves—has become fashionable once more.

The result has been the moral rehabilitation of imperialism—the idea that the West is morally superior to the third world is now an acceptable part of our culture. Such a viewpoint can only entrench the climate of racism. A central task for any anti-racist campaign today must be to challenge the idea that 'West is best' and to combat chauvinist ideas about Eastern Europe and the third world. ●

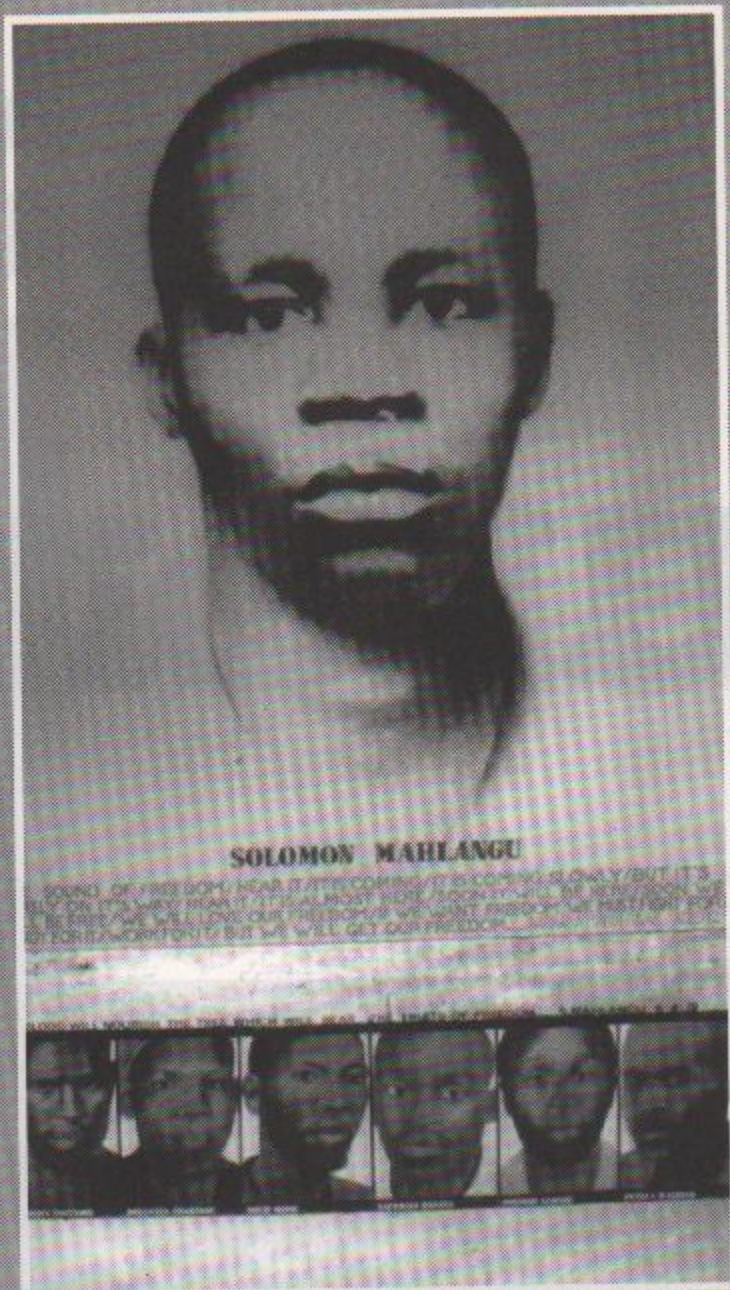
uvvinism



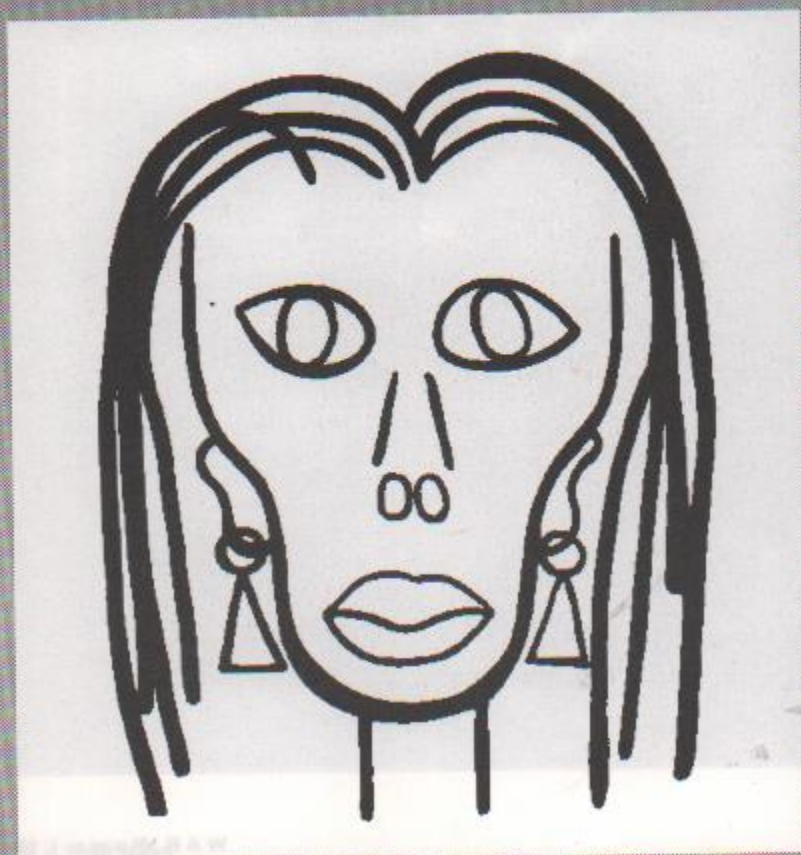
Gallery 2

The Edge, 92 Cromer Street, London WC1

The Sound of Freedom
by John Murray



Loneliness by
Sheila Benson



Censorship goes PC

Andrew Calcutt warns that the language of liberalism is being used to promote anti-black ideas

Rapper Ice-T and record company Time Warner recently parted company after the latter refused to print the controversial cover of the new album *Home Invasion* (subsequently released in the USA by Priority, and in Britain by Virgin). His was the story which hit the headlines, but Ice-T is not the only rapper to have run into distribution problems. In March, *NME* published a 'selective guide to the US rap that's currently not available in your high street record shop'. Tracks by Paris and Kool G Rap & DJ Polo were among those listed. Author Angus Batey concluded, 'it seems that both economic and political pressures are forcing hardcore rap back underground'.

In the USA, influential critic Michael Medved has named NWA, 2 Live Crew, Ice Cube and the Geto Boys as pernicious, brutalising influences on young people. Medved also criticised Madonna and Prince, as well as films such as *Hoffa* and *Terminator 2*. His much-hyped book, *Hollywood v America* calls for a 'cultural environmental movement' to clean up 'media pollution'. For the likes of Medved, hardcore black music is as unappealing as an oil slick.

It's less than a year since right-wing Republican Pat Buchanan called for a 'cultural war' in the USA. Following the furore over Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' (slammed by George Bush, Dan Quayle and New York mayor Mario Cuomo), Buchanan sought to rally America's white suburbia against the blacks of the inner-city 'underclass'. 'Cultural war' was his chosen terrain.

Buchanan failed to win the Republican nomination for the US presidency: his tone was too strident and divisive. Yet Medved is only one of many opinion-formers who have taken up and developed Buchanan's line of argument. These are not conservatives from the traditional, Buchanan mould.

But their message is the same: throw a cultural cordon around the inner cities and reclaim the media on behalf of wholesome, law-abiding suburbanites.

Medved's pitch amounts to cultural war gone green—in the style of saxophone Bill Clinton, rather than of Ronald Reagan, Bush or Buchanan.

Medved's vocabulary, like Clinton's, is borrowed from the language of political correctness. He talks about 'balance', 'diversity'. He calls for 'positive images' as opposed to 'exploitative violence'. He says 'self-censorship', but the 'self' is superfluous. If Medved's arguments were to be put into effect (and the marginalisation of rap seems to suggest that they already are), black music and film will be even more unwelcome in the mainstream marketplace. The cultural map of the USA will look more like the days before bebop, when blacks were kept out of white bands and 'race' music was confined almost entirely to the ghettos.

In Britain the debate is generally more muted, but no less intense. Journalist Tony Parsons followed his low-life attack on the working class (*The Tattooed Jungle*, Channel 4), with an anti-rap column in the *Daily Telegraph*. The *Guardian* has set out its stall on behalf of the pro-self-censorship lobby: Martin Kettle welcomed Michael Medved's book and called for more restraint; a two-page feature on Ice Cube indicted him as a fraud and a brute; former *Oz* editor Richard Neville bemoaned the souring of sixties liberalism and despaired at 'rappers [who] extolled racism, sexism and cop-killing'. Besides, they interrupted his yoga and 'mild mystical practices'.

Britain's quality papers are stuffed with 'second sight' columns in which former liberals like Neville (hippy) or Parsons (punk), confess the error of their youthful ways. In the *Guardian*, Neville flinched at lifelong dope-smokers who've wasted their lives for a 'mess of pot'. In the *Daily Telegraph*, Parsons declared that giving up cannabis is an essential part of growing up: those who carry on taking are condemning themselves to lifelong immaturity. He doesn't say whether this applies to generations of black musicians who continued taking 'draw' in the same way that their white counterparts take a drink.

In Britain, as in the USA, the atmosphere is increasingly reminiscent of Prohibition, with hardcore black music as one of the 'dangerous intoxicants' which white youth are warned not to indulge in. Unless he can cite past appearances in the *Cosby Show* or some other emasculated representation of black people, almost any performer may find himself vilified for pushing fiendish black music into innocent white ears.

It remains to be seen whether young people will accept or reject the new Prohibition. Body Count, Ice-T's thrash-metal outfit, has been a strong seller in white suburban shopping malls. Back in the fifties, in his influential essay 'The White Negro', Norman Mailer was among the first to describe a generation of white youth identifying with a (mistaken) idea of what it is to be black ('the existential synapses of the negro'). Besides ripping it off, subsequent generations of whites have taken up black music as a sign of their rejection of official values and ideas. If this tradition were to be discontinued, the Medveds and *Guardian* columnists would presumably have to come up with something more exciting. Gary Cooper? Joan Armatrading? Suzanne Vega? I can't see the youth of Basildon entranced by ancient heroes or PC positive images drawn from up-market bedsitter-land.

For the time being at least, young people seem less keen on songs about love among the loft-conversions and more interested in warehouse parties featuring hardcore black music. But then, the Clinton-style cultural war has only just begun.

Andrew Calcutt will be speaking at the Anti-racist Festival on 'Racism and Rap' on 26 April 1993 at 7.30pm at The Edge gallery, 92 Cromer Street, London WC1.

Nigel Lewis

On 15 July 1992, Nigel Lewis, the national organiser of Workers Against Racism, died as a result of a brain haemorrhage. Although only 29-years old, Nigel had achieved much in his short years. He will be sadly missed.

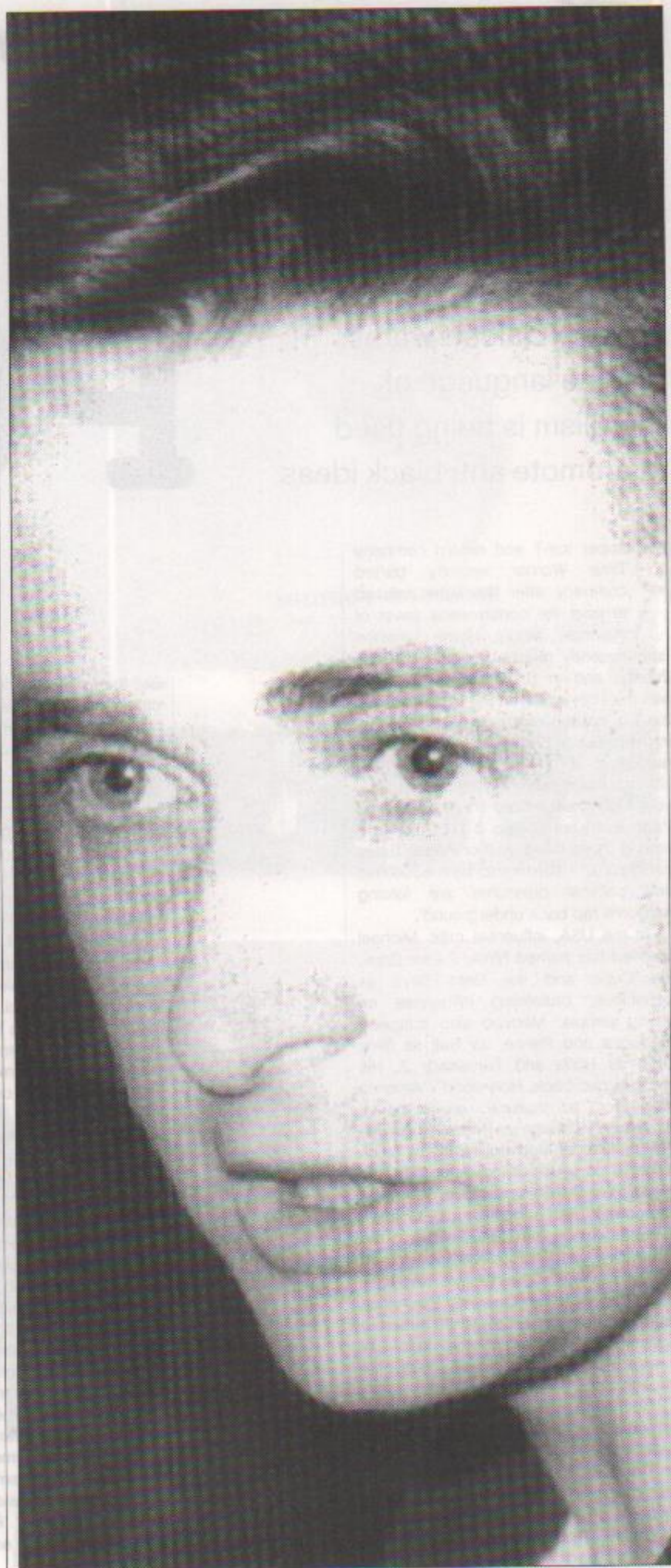
Nigel's life could be well summed up by saying that he was prepared to stand up and stand out. He stood up because he was not prepared to tolerate discrimination and inequality: in his early twenties, he co-ordinated industrial action at a factory he worked at and later he built support for the ambulance drivers in the hospital where he was employed. But, in particular, he stood against racist discrimination, especially when it came right from the top—from MPs, the media and the police. He organised pickets outside the courts and police stations when Camden police said that local Bengali youth were criminals, and he organised demonstrations against the Asylum Bill when the government said that immigrants were 'scroungers'. Whether it was thugs on the street or racists at the top, he was prepared to stand up to them.

Many people oppose discrimination and injustice, but few will stick their necks out and provided outspoken leadership for resistance. Nigel took this all the way when he stood as a candidate for Workers Against Racism in the general election. Contesting Holborn and St Pancras, he was prepared to stand out and force the issue of racism on to the political agenda.

Nigel led War's campaigns, from promoting comedy nights to raise funds, to organising against police harassment. He was everywhere: visiting a family that had been attacked; going to court with Bengali youth; outside a police station with a megaphone.

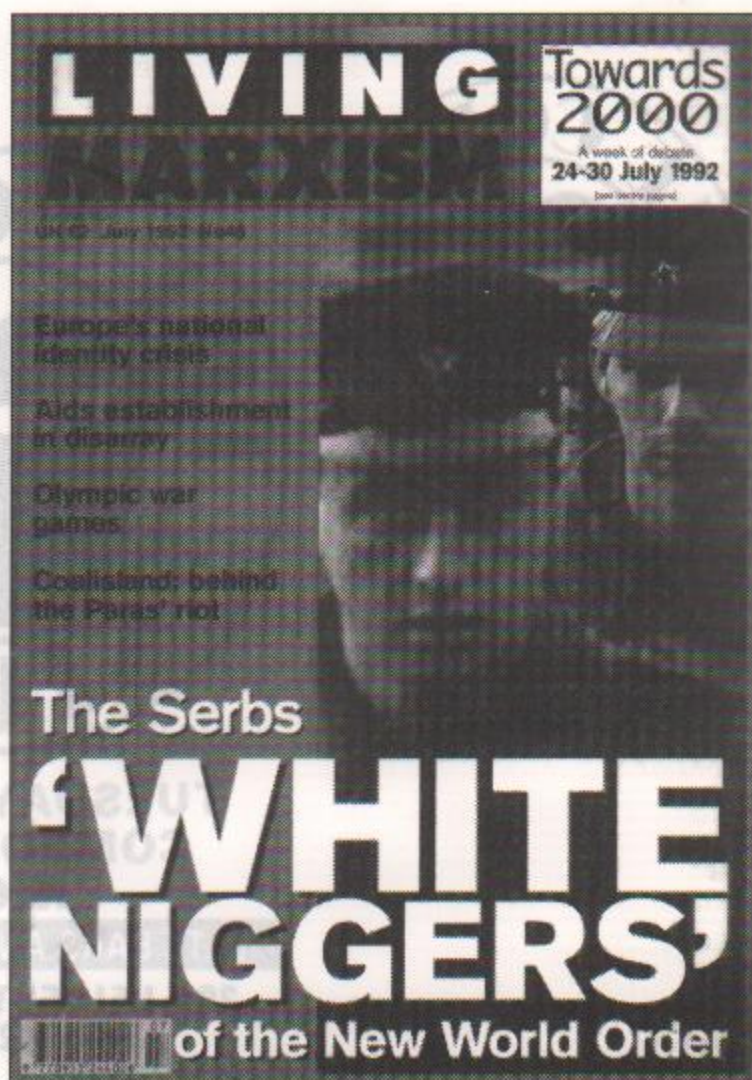
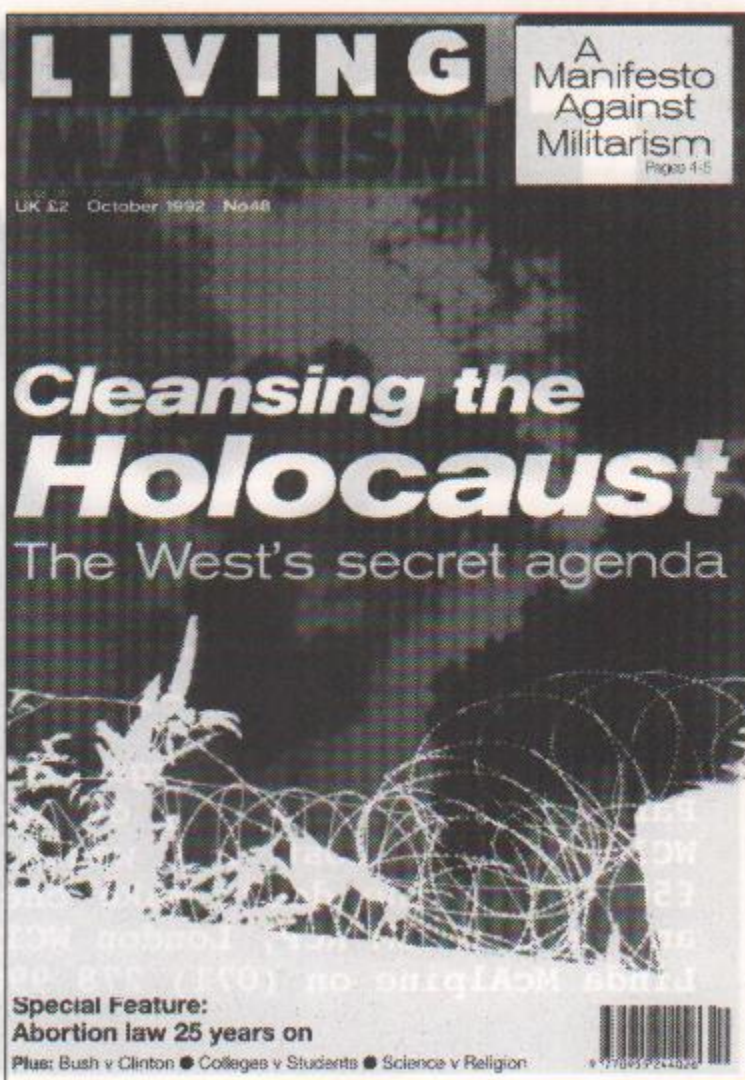
Many people will miss Nigel for many reasons. He had a lot of friends, both in Workers Against Racism and in the areas where he had campaigned, and he was close to his family. It is a major loss to the struggle against racism because people with energy, imagination and a willingness to put themselves on the line don't come around often enough. But at the same time, Nigel's drive and willingness to fight was an inspiration to all who met him. We will all miss Nigel.

Mark Butler (Workers Against Racism)



WE B R I C S B U S E

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Anti-racist festival

ORGANISED BY WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

APRIL

9	Funky Chicken Part 1	Sound Factory
10	Norman Brown	Subterania
10	AWOL	Paradise Club
11	Peace Fest	Busbies and Astoria
11	Funky Chicken Part 2	Rhythm Station (Aldershot)
12	Jez Nelson	Jazz Café
13	RAM	Legends
17	Vanessa Simon	Subterania
17	AWOL	Paradise Club
20	RAM	Legends
21	Ian Keable, Paul B Edwards, Noel James and Logan Murray	Sir Laughalot, Streatham
23	Dorado Records Night	Subterania
24	AWOL	Paradise Club
24	Microgroove	Subterania
27	RAM	Legends
30	Dodge City	Orange Club

MAY

4	Marxman	Powerhaus
8	AWOL	Paradise Club
11	RAM	Legends
12	No BS allowed (Rap night)	Chats Palace

DISCUSSIONS AT THE EDGE GALLERY 92 CROMER STREET, LONDON WC1

APRIL

19	Opening of 'Welcome to Britain' art exhibition
22	Satish Sikar on anti-racist campaigning includes Yusef Abdullahi of the Cardiff 3
26	The New Prohibition—Black Music and Censorship: Andrew Calcutt presents a roundtable discussion on rap and censorship in conjunction with <i>The Wire</i> magazine
28	Genetics and Race: A Dismal History Reith lecturer and professor of genetics at UCL, Steve Jones
30	Ahmed Sheik presents an evening of poets

MAY

5	Who's Malcolm X? Whose Malcolm X?: Emmanuel Oliver discusses
7	Black British Film: Presented by Kunle Oluremi with speakers

VENUES: Sound Factory, Curtain Road, Shoreditch ● Paradise Club, 1-5 Parkfield Street, Islington, N1 (071) 354 9993 ● Legends, 29 Old Burlington Street, W1 (071) 437 9933 ● Subterranea, 12 Acklam Road, W10 (071) 960 4550 ● Jazz Café, 5 Parkway, NW1 (071) 916 6000 ● Powerhaus, 1 Liverpool Road, N1 (071) 837 3218