

WAR*news*



Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the French fascists

The new Europe

Racism East and West

The spectre haunting Europe

The collapse of Stalinism and the end of the Cold War have brought many changes to international politics. One of the most menacing, but least noticed, is the unleashing of a new wave of racism.

In Eastern Europe ethnic rivalries, racial divisions and anti-Semitism have come to the fore. The rise of reaction in the East is the direct product of the backwardness of Stalinist societies.

Even more disturbing is the new intensity of racism in the West. In France Arab youth have been murdered and Jewish graveyards desecrated. In Florence racist thugs attacked black street traders; the authorities responded by banning black traders from the city centre. German 'guestworkers' are made unwelcome as they are displaced by East Germans. Britain's ruling party is sent into paroxysms by the possibility of a limited number of Hong Kong Chinese coming to this country. Throughout Europe the number of racist killings is on the rise.

The moves towards 1992 and an integrated EC will intensify the already virulent rise of racial oppression. The removal of internal borders can only be achieved by reinforcing 'fortress Europe', by keeping out all foreigners. The plans of the so-called Schengen group - France, Germany and the Benelux countries - to create a common travel zone tells us what to expect of 1992. The only things the group could agree on were the need to keep out foreigners and for strict controls on non-EC citizens. Its main achievement was a 'common deportation fund'.

This issue of **WARnews** highlights the rise of racism in Europe. The collapse of the Stalinist bloc of countries has unleashed reactionary forces that seemed to be part of the distant past. Once again the East is consumed by ethnic rivalry and the spirit of the pogrom. The emergence of Germany as the dominant European power has given new force to national rivalries and the racist politics that go with them. The drift of the West back into recession and stagnation provides fertile ground for racism.

An understanding of the forces that give rise to the new European racism is the precondition to defeating it. Unless we can build that understanding we will always be responding to the racist symptoms while never addressing the underlying cause. We hope that after reading **WARnews** you will be inspired to become part of a movement able and willing to challenge racism at its roots.

Keith Tompson

Euro-racism on the rise



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Anti-Semitism in France, Africans butchered in Italy - where in Europe are we going?

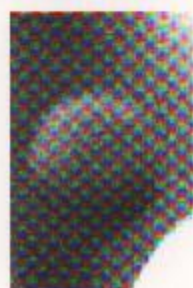


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Defend the Stepney Four!

There are few areas where racism is more overt than the east London borough of Tower Hamlets. Discrimination is institutionalised in every area of life; the apartheid housing policy confines Bengalis to the most rundown estates; more than 80 per cent of the homeless are Bengali; of the 400 children who this year have been refused places at school, at least 300 are black.

The Liberals, who first took control of the council in May 1986 overturning 41 years of Labour rule, swept back to power again with a much increased majority this spring. The Liberals have continued Labour's policy of treating Bengalis as second class citizens.

The intensity of racial oppression is reflected in racial violence in schools, on the streets and in housing estates. The number of officially reported racist attacks more than doubled last year. Parts of the borough have become effective 'no-go' areas for black people. Schoolchildren are particularly vulnerable. In January a 15-year old, Mokoddus Ali, was waiting at a bus stop in Bow to go home after school when he was viciously set upon by a group of older whites. They left him bleeding and unconscious from a two-inch stab wound to the head. Despite the attack happening in a busy shopping street only Bengalis came to help. Mokoddus no longer travels home alone and is frightened even to leave his flat. He believes that 'if anyone had tried to help me that day, I think they would have been killed. I'm too scared to go out now. They have ruined my life'.

In response to the growing tide of racist violence, Bengali youth have begun to organise themselves to fight back. In many areas groups of young

Bengalis now patrol estates and streets where attacks are common. 'The police always ignore our calls for help, so we have to defend our families ourselves' said one youth on the Ocean estate in Poplar. 'Even when the police do come, they always blame us for starting the trouble. They're racist as well.'

The response of the authorities to the violence is to treat any young black who stands up to the racists as a criminal. The story of the Stepney Four shows how resisting racism is now a crime in Tower Hamlets.

At the end of February a white youth well known for his involvement in racist attacks was stabbed at Morpeth school in Globe Town. Angry whites organised a demonstration outside Bethnal Green police station, calling for official action against Bengali youth. Demonstrators demanded an inquiry into so-called 'racial violence' against whites. Leaflets demanded 'rights for whites' and claimed that 'Muslims are taking over our East End'.

After the demonstration, a group of white youths, including stewards from the march, drove around Stepney hurling racial abuse at Bengalis. They attacked a group of black youths and in the ensuing melee one of the racists was stabbed.

The police, who turned up after the attack was over and the racists had dispersed, simply hauled in any Bengali who happened to be in the area. Malik Miah, Abdul Alim and Abdul Halim were arrested near the scene of the fight. A fourth Bengali, a juvenile, was arrested a few days later. All have been charged with attempted murder.

'We have been attacked for years', said Sara Bibi, mother of Malik Miah,

**Tower Hamlets
Bengali youth:
under attack
from police and
racists**



SIMON NORFOLK / LIVING MARXISM

'and the police have done nothing'. 'Now one white man gets stabbed and the police arrest these boys for attempted murder, something they had nothing to do with. The police are using them as scapegoats.'

Throughout the area, the police are blaming the victims of racist attacks for the violence. On the notoriously racist Ocean estate in Mile End a domestic dispute at the beginning of May blew up into a full-scale racist assault on two families. White families complained about Bengali children playing in their housing blocks. They then proceeded to smash the windows in the houses in Formosa and Galveston blocks. Despite repeated calls the police refused to intervene. The Bengali families called in their relatives to help defend their houses. In a confrontation with a group of 20-25 whites, one of the racists suffered a broken arm and head injuries. This time the police response was swift. They arrived within minutes, in

two vans, and hauled in the Bengalis to be charged under the Public Order Act. Indeed, during the local election campaign at the start of May white racists in the Redcoat ward forced both Bengali and whites to take down posters supporting the Labour candidate because it was a 'Paki party'. The local Labour canvassers, who are predominantly Bengali, found it difficult to persuade white supporters to openly associate with them. The strength of racist feeling in the borough allowed the Liberals to romp home with a 10-seat majority over Labour, where before it had only been one seat.

Liberals secured their victory by openly playing on fears that Labour would favour Bengalis over whites if elected. They put out a fake election leaflet purporting to be Labour policy for council rents to double and for priority to be given to the Bengali homeless. Instead of fighting this racist campaign all Labour leader Phil

Maxwell could do was threaten to take the Liberals to court, with the obvious assumption that they were lying about Labour's support for Bengalis. This was a monstrous cave-in to the prevailing racist climate.

Workers Against Racism has set up the Stepney Four Campaign to defend Bengali youth in Tower Hamlets, and to prevent the police criminalisation campaign against them. Our approach is simple: we oppose racists, in or out of uniform, we oppose attempts by the police to criminalise black youth, we support the right of black people to stand up to the racists in whatever way is necessary, and we organise to build working class support for the fight against racism.

Only such an uncompromising approach can tackle the racists and build a movement that can fight for black rights.

Nigel Lewis

Bengali families living in fear on the Isle of Dogs

CHRIS BLACK / REFLEX



It's a dog's life on the Isle

It's almost a year since Abdul and his family moved on to a largely white estate on the Isle of Dogs in London's Tower Hamlets. The block is in a good and clean condition, but almost as soon as they arrived they wanted to leave.

Local racists made a point of shouting abuse along the lines of 'fuck off back to Stepney'. It didn't take long for the words to turn into acts of racial violence. At the end of October 1989 Abdul was on his way home from school when he was confronted by two racists. They pushed him, abused him

and stole his watch. By this time he was desperate that his family leave the area, fearful that something may occur. In November it did.

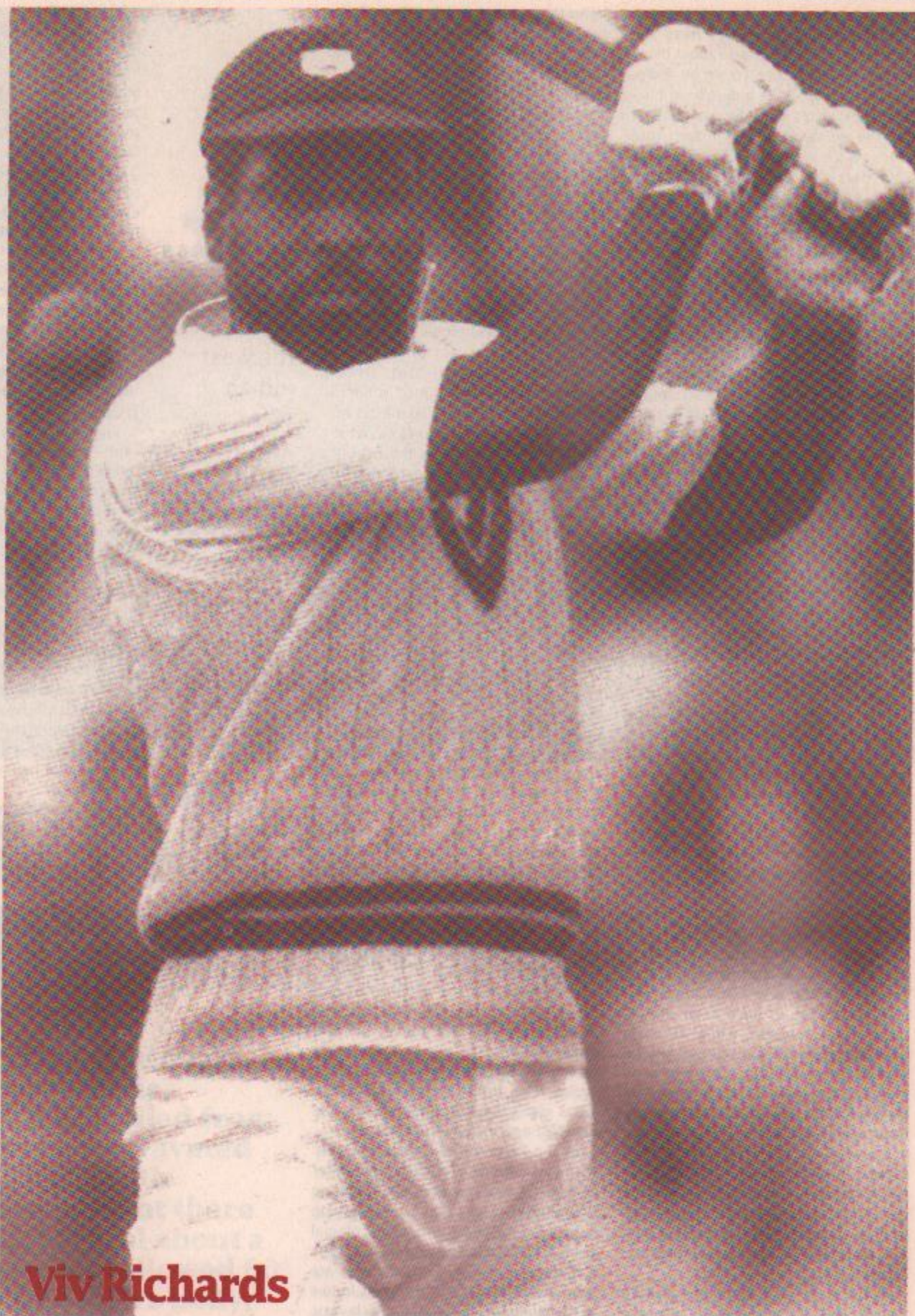
Abdul was on his way to get baby food for his cousin. He was confronted by seven or eight thugs whose opening words were 'why have you come here Paki?'. They then proceeded to beat him unconscious. Abdul was left in the middle of the street for about 10 minutes, with a broken jaw and bruises all over his body. Even now the side of the jaw that was fractured is clearly visible.

Now Abdul and his family live according to a racist-imposed curfew. 'I never go out after four in the afternoon, it's too dangerous'.

There are only a handful of Asians living on the estate but all have stories of harassment, abuse and violence. Most feel isolated and helpless. The only option seems to be moving out. **It is up to anti-racists to reverse this situation and create a safe estate for Bengali families.** WAR's work in the Isle of Dogs is fighting for this end.

Emmanuel Oliver

There was more to England's tour of the West Indies than just cricket, says Kenan Malik



Viv Richards

The 'Englishman's' nightmare

Britain's black community, said Norman Tebbit recently, 'wouldn't pass the cricket test'. Why? Because most black people would rather cheer on India, Pakistan or the West Indies than England. Now, that's a bit like complaining that the residents of SW19 don't turn out to watch Wimbledon Football Club play. Preferring Fashanu and Wise to Barnes and Beardsley is akin to cheering on Gooch and Fraser rather than Richards and Marshall – it's taking loyalty beyond the call of sanity.

For the cricket authorities, though, the problem is not so much that black people here refuse to back England as that black people abroad are taking over the game. 'Cricket is not an English game anymore', moaned Simon Barnes in the *Times*, in the aftermath of the Viv Richards affair which brought to an acrimonious close England's winter tour of the West Indies. 'It has been subject to the influences of, to name but a few, Islam, Indian politics, partition, Tamil separatism, Marxist writing, Rastafarianism...' For Barnes, and other British commentators, the controversy surrounding the test series confirmed their worst fears of where the game was heading.

'There is no place in cricket', thundered the *Sunday Times'* Robin Marlar, 'for Richards' unscrupulous win-at-all-costs attitude'. Others echoed this view, accusing the West Indian captain of 'cheating', 'lying' and bringing 'shame' to the game. 'The compilers of the Oxford Dictionary', wrote Martin Johnson in the *Independent*, 'might be wondering just how long they can continue to list "not cricket" as "(colloq) infringing the codes of fair play between honourable opponents in any sphere"'. All agreed that it was time to take a stand against such behaviour. 'Britain gave many sports to the world and set high standards of sportsmanship', argued Peter Lawson of the Central Council of Physical Recreation. 'But now sport's values have been shot to pieces by a universal win-at-all costs mentality. Obviously we cannot tell the rest of the sporting world how to behave, but there is no reason why Britain should not set an example and hope others will follow.'

So, what did the West Indians do to offend English sensibilities so? The furore began in the third test when the West Indies used time-wasting tactics to draw a match they had been in danger of losing. 'Cheat' screamed the British press.

In the next test, England batsman Rob Bailey was given out caught behind; a television replay showed that he had not touched the ball. British commentators furiously claimed that Richards, who ran the length of the pitch in making the appeal, had intimidated the umpire Lloyd Barker into making a wrong decision. Worse was to follow. When BBC correspondent Christopher Martin-Jenkins claimed on local radio that Barker had 'cracked under pressure' and his actions had

been tantamount to 'cheating', Barker retaliated by issuing a writ for defamation. Haul Jenkins, 'educated at Marlborough and Cambridge', in front of the beak? Now, that just wasn't cricket.

Finally came the infamous incident involving Viv Richards in the fifth and final test. On the first day of the match Richards gave a V-sign to a section of the crowd which had been barracking him. When a *Daily Express* hack, James Lawton, questioned Richards about this, the West Indian captain told him that he would 'whack' him if the journalist wrote anything derogatory. Lawton did just that, in an article headlined 'Captain Viv blows his top'. The following day instead of leading his team on to the field, Richards sent out a substitute while he himself marched into the press box and spent ten minutes haranguing the hapless Lawton.

For British journalists this was the final straw. 'Oh for a cartoonist like Gilray to cut this turkey cock to size!', exclaimed an exasperated Marlar. The *Sunday Correspondent's* Scyld Berry thought that the controversy had become 'cricket's equivalent of the Salman Rushdie affair'. He called for a strict code of conduct to keep players like Richards in check. But why such a fuss? Cheating, time wasting, intimidation, crowd abuse, abuse of journalists – there is nothing new in any of this. 'It is widely acknowledged' wrote the great English batsman CB Fry nearly a century ago, 'that if both sides agree to cheat, then cheating is fair'. And both sides in the West Indies clearly agreed to cheat. In the fourth test, it was England's turn to spend all day tying shoelaces and moving fielders in an attempt to save the match. The fact that, unlike the West Indies they were unsuccessful and allowed the West Indians to win, only shows that England are as bad at cheating as they are at playing the game.

What made the test series so acrimonious was not the cheating, nor the intimidation nor the abuse, but the racial undertones always implicit in tests between England and the West Indies. This time the underlying tensions exploded after England won the first test against all expectations.

In the West Indies cricket is more than just a game. It is both a reminder of their colonial past and an affirmation of national pride. For a people who have lived for years under the colonial yoke, humiliating England has become a national pastime. Such feelings are particularly intense in the West Indies with its historical legacy of slavery. When a banner at the Barbados test told the English batsmen to 'Take your licks like men', the reference to flogging was not accidental.

Nobody has embodied this fierce belief in West Indian pride more than Viv Richards. As the *Sunday Times* noted 'Richards is not only the world's greatest batsman, he is a hero figure to millions and a potent symbol of black power and dignity'. For England too

Journalists heaped abuse on the West Indian team, and in particular on Richards

cricket is more than just a game. For more than 150 years cricket has been the embodiment of the values of England and of Empire. When England teams toured the colonies, they went to impress the stamp of king and country. As CLR James said of the 1953 England tour of the West Indies, 'The team gave the impression that it was not merely playing cricket but was out to establish the prestige of Britain, and by that, the local whites'.

In those days the colonials knew their place, both on and off the field. Today it is a different matter. It is more than 20 years since England won a test series against the 'Windies'. The top three test teams in the world are all black. Britain's loss of status in the world has been reflected on the cricket pitch too.

England went to the West Indies this winter resigned to a repeat of the 'blackwash' of four years ago, when they were rolled over 5-0. Instead, they won the first test, and, after the second was abandoned because of rain, came within a whisker of winning the third.

The British press went potty. 'Goocha' ran the *Sun's* banner headline after the test win, echoing its notorious headline after the sinking of the *Belgrano* during the Falklands War. 'We made them grovel' it boasted. England vice-captain Allan Lamb told leading West Indian bowler Malcolm Marshall that he had lost his 'bottle'; England's rookie fast-bowler Devon Malcolm boasted that he knew how to deal with Viv Richards.

Such abuse was like a red rag to a bull. Far from grovelling to England, the West Indies set out to humiliate them. The more the West Indies asserted their superiority, the more racist became the rantings of the British commentators. Egged on by Geoff Boycott and Tony Greig, former England cricketers now working for Sky TV, English commentators tried to do in the press box what the England team failed to do on the pitch.

Journalists heaped abuse on the West Indian team, and in particular on Richards. 'The picture was clear', wrote a columnist in the *Barbados Sunday Sun* on the reaction to the Bailey incident. 'On the one hand was the goodly English gentleman Bailey, like King Lear more sinned against than sinning, and on the other the screaming gesticulating natives led by Viv Richards. Waving hands, of course, comes easily to the natives who need long hands to pick the coconuts they drink all day.' Little wonder Captain Viv blew his top.

In the end the West Indies had the final say. Richards destroyed Malcolm's bowling, taking 19 runs off one over in the fourth test. The bowlers reduced English batsmen to nervous wrecks. In the final test normal service was restored as England collapsed to an innings defeat. It will take more than a Gilray, Marlar or Boycott, or for that matter a Gooch, Lamb or Malcolm, to cut this turkey cock to size.

PANDORA ANDERSON



Who killed Germain Alexander?

The inquest into the death of Germain Alexander concluded that he died from natural causes 'aggravated by lack of care'. Keith Tompson argues that there was nothing natural about a heart attack that followed 80 injuries to Germain's body, including a broken back

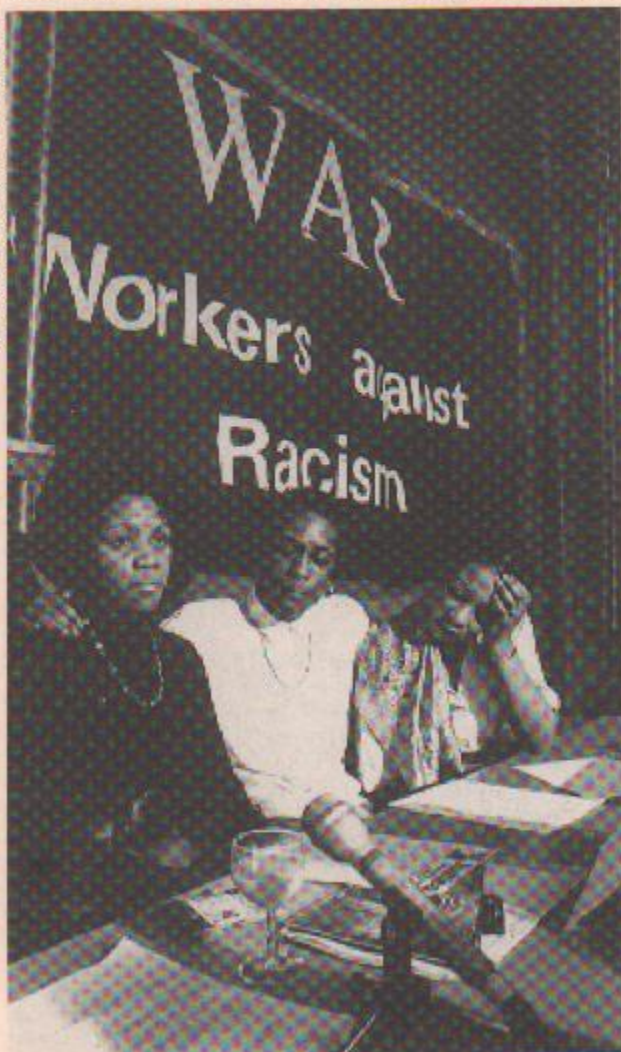
When Germain Alexander was arrested in his own home on 4 December 1989 he was involved in a struggle with first two, and then six, officers. He came out of the struggle with several wounds, including a severe scar on the left side of his face. Police say he rubbed his own face against a carpet and so burned his skin. The arrest took place because of complaints by a neighbour of loud music. Police said they entered the house in case Germain was ill or unconscious. He wasn't, yet 48 hours later he was dead.

Germain was held by Edmonton police for about 12 hours and then released on bail. He went straight to his estranged wife's house but she did not want to see him and called the police. Germain was again taken to Edmonton police station where he was held overnight.

On both occasions he was examined by police doctors and found to be 'fit to detain'. Neither doctor examined his

medical records or his mental state. This was a significant omission as Germain Alexander was a registered manic depressive prone to fits of rage. He had been detained in mental institutions several times as the Edmonton police knew from his record. Yet rather than refer him to hospital they took him to magistrates court on 5 December and charged him with assaulting police officers. He was remanded in custody, not in a hospital, but in Brixton prison.

Germain was placed not in the normal cells at Brixton, but in the medical wing. Police claim that in the early hours of 6 December he spat at an officer through the spy hole and became abusive. They say that fearing for his cell-mate's safety they decided to remove Alexander to a special medical room (SMR) or strip cell. Six officers were assigned the job of removing him. They used riot shields and helmets. The six were officers



Richards, Jackson, Molyneaux, Thompson, Nicholls and Garum. They had been ordered in by a Mr Fukes, the deputy principal officer in charge of the prison.

The inquest was told of Thompson's warning to his fellow officers that Alexander was as strong as an animal. Thompson knew Alexander from a temporary stay in Brixton about 18 months earlier. Prison officers claim that they moved Alexander to a downstairs cell by the book – that is with minimal use of force and no violence. Other prisoners say differently. They claim that Alexander was beaten, that his hands were stamped upon, that he was dragged by his feet down the stairs whilst his head crashed on the floor. It is accepted that there was blood in the cell when this was all over. In fact one officer ordered it cleaned up immediately.

Alexander was placed in a special medical room and stripped. He was

Germain Alexander's three daughters, Vee, Marcia and Clem, share their grief

found dead twenty minutes later. He had two teeth lodged in the back of his throat, a total of 80 injuries and a broken back. His teeth can only have been dislodged in the struggle to remove him from his cell. They would only have remained in his throat if he was unconscious when they were dislodged. It seems likely, therefore, that he was dead before being placed in the strip cell. Prison officers deny this.

The coroner told the inquest that it is not unknown for people suffering from manic depression to suddenly drop dead from heart failure as a result of adrenalin flows. He accepted that this was remarkably rare but known to be possible. As evidence he cited records of First World War trench warfare resulting in death by heart failure. This, claimed the coroner, amounted to a natural death. He omitted to say whether these deaths also included the victims being left with multiple injuries, and broken bones. Nonetheless his remark is in one sense apt. Germain Alexander went through a war between 4-6 December 1989. He was killed by his captors who, rather than understand his mental illness, assaulted him so violently his heart collapsed. To describe his death as 'natural', or his treatment at the hands of his killers as 'lack of care' is a travesty. There is only one word in the English language that can adequately describe what happened to Germain Alexander. He was murdered!

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**LIVING
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Racism in the new Europe

The rise of reaction



Entry into Europe means taking your life in your hands - crossing the Straits of Gibraltar in this case

With anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe on the rise, Andy Clarkson and Stefanie Boston explain why the far right is also gaining ground in Western Europe

Euro-racism is rapidly becoming respectable. In March, after racist thugs had launched a series of vicious attacks on African immigrants in the Italian city of Florence, the local authorities followed up by sending in 500 police to make a thorough job of 'bashing the blacks'. But Giorgio Morales, the socialist mayor of Florence, naturally has to be a very highly cultured man. He excused his actions on the grounds that the immigrants were 'incompatible with the artistic heritage of the city' (*Prospettiva Socialista*, 16 March 1990). The government in Rome then stepped in. After a spate of similar racist assaults across the country in April, it ordered the armed forces to mobilise to defend Italy's frontiers and coastlines from the hordes of foreigners supposedly waiting to flood in.

In France it has been a similar story. In the town of Roanne, near Lyons, a Moroccan-born student was mowed down by a car in March. The driver then returned and repeatedly rode back and forth across the body. According to witnesses, the driver had earlier shouted, 'How dare you stroke my dog, you dirty Arab!', when the youth had touched his pet. Within weeks Jacques Medecin, the conservative mayor of nearby Nice, had given Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme right-wing Front National a major boost; he invited the Front to hold its congress in Nice and called on its councillors to join his administration.

Questioned on his views on the repatriation of foreigners, Medecin replied, 'Monsieur Le Pen put them to music with his exceptional talent'. When former conservative president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing called for a national referendum on immigration in April, Le Pen gleefully claimed, 'He has the same values [as us] and no doubt the same preoccupations'.

From Britain in the west to Italy in the east, the Western democracies of Europe are becoming engulfed in a racist tide. And in Eastern Europe a similar pattern is emerging. Anti-Semitism presents itself as a growing and dangerous phenomenon.

Drowned immigrants are literally being swept in by the tide on Spanish coasts. But the far right are making most progress in those countries where the mainstream parties of the left and right have lost direction and are losing their appeal for the propertied classes. The disintegration of post-war European society is breeding reaction once again. It is the political bankruptcy of the parties of the centre that is making racism respectable. They are now reduced to making one concession after another to satisfy their racist clientele. As the Paris correspondent of the *Times* recently put it, 'The question of racism appears to be one of the only subjects in France these days that can arouse real parliamentary and press interest' (4 May 1990).

As for the European left, it is in an even more pathetic condition than are the centre parties. Even before the collapse of the Stalinist bloc it had all but accepted every major tenet of faith in the market economy. The events in Eastern Europe have served to deprive even the most hard-nosed Stalinist of faith in the possibility of a viable alternative to capitalism.

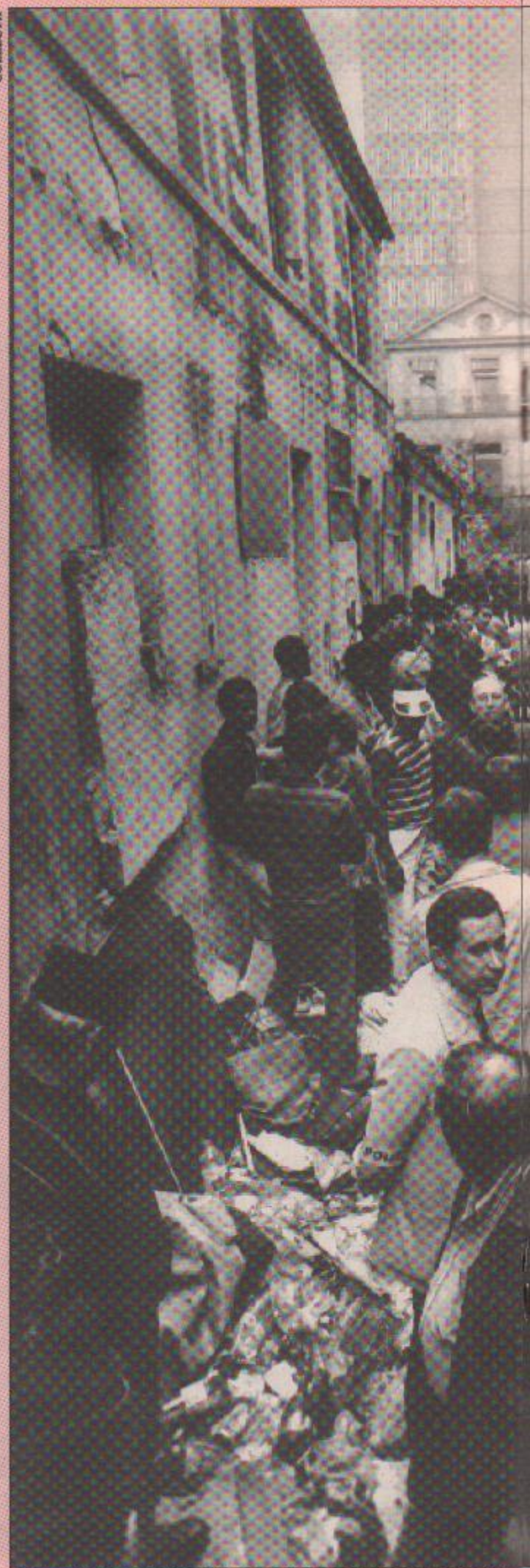
Consequently, while the left's national leaderships fret and worry at the rise of racism, their local lieutenants compete with the fascists for the racist vote. Andre Dechamps, the communist mayor of Clichy-sous-Bois, an industrial suburb east of Paris, has chosen to fend off the FN challenge by prohibiting anyone of North African origin from renting accommodation or owning shops in his town centre. In a council by-election this March, he told immigrants to stop harassing old women and 'pull their socks up'. Dechamps' actions have encouraged the racists: Clichy was the site for a recent spate of attacks on Jewish graves.

It has long been a comfort to the left to imagine that the far right is some alien excrescence on the body politic. Indeed they have frequently accused the fascists of being unpatriotic. The reality is that the far right can only find support where the ground for its racist views has been laid long beforehand by the parties of the political mainstream.

Fascism is only a more extreme form of the patriotism enthusiastically championed by the moderates. For years, all the moderate parties of the European centre and left have supported immigration controls, which target foreigners, not

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In Europe, racism has been placed on the political agenda by the parties of the political mainstream and the far right has been reaping the electoral benefits.
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French police evict immigrants from their homes and examine their identity papers, searching for potential deportees

capitalism, as the chief threat to people's jobs and housing. Before the Florentine attack, the Italian parliament passed a law with Communist Party support fixing a ceiling on immigration depending 'on the needs of the national labour market' (*Financial Times*, 2 March 1990). Last December, France's Socialist administration tightened restrictions on immigration after president Francois Mitterrand declared, 'We are not facing a human tide, but there are too many of them' (*Independent*, 11 December 1989).

The far right merely has to draw out the logic of this approach. 'There are too many of them' say the parties of the political mainstream. 'Send them back' ripostes the far right. The fascists have not been slow to point out the political opportunism behind the mainstream parties' desire to integrate the foreigners already living in Europe. The ruling Italian Christian Democrats were accused of 'wooing the immigrant vote' after offering an amnesty for all immigrants who had registered with the authorities by the end of this April. In France, a desperate Mitterrand has called for guest-workers to be given the vote. As the parties of the establishment, either left or centre, fail to deliver the goods, the far right is now in a position to claim that they are failing because they are not consistently racist.

In Europe, racism has been placed on the political agenda by the parties of the political mainstream and the far right has been reaping the electoral benefits. In France the Front National already controls thirty town councils. After having lost the single seat it won in the 1988 general election, the FN won the seat of Dreux – the town where Le Pen first made an electoral breakthrough in the 1983 municipal elections – with 60 per cent of the vote following the 'Muslim scarves' affair last December. It just failed to win another parliamentary by-election in Marseilles by 48 per cent to 52 per cent. Opinion polls show that 12 per cent of French voters back all the FN's policies, but that figure rises to 75 per cent on the issue of immigration. Le Pen's objective is for the FN to be the biggest party on the French right within the next two years.

When the right-wing Lega Lombarda swept into second place in the northern Italian region of Lombardy in this month's local elections, every political commentator was startled. Centred on Milan, Lombardy is the wealthiest part of Italy and the Lega Lombarda won 20 per cent of the vote by directing racist attacks against southern Italians, whom it accuses of holding back Lombardy's advance, and against parasitic bureaucrats in Rome. The LL also calls for the expulsion of foreigners without jobs. The success of the League's attacks on the less prosperous parts of the country illustrates the fragility of the Italian state.

The reason for the success of the far right in France and Italy is the instability of the ordinary political institutions in those countries, rather than the strength of racism. It is their evident disintegration that has allowed racism to become respectable.

As the recent controversy over the Hong Kong immigrants showed, Britain is not immune to racism. Indeed, by any objective criterion, it is the most racist country in Western Europe. Yet the organised far right is electorally insignificant here. Norman Tebbit was even howled down by his own party for demanding tougher curbs on immigration. The marginalisation of the far right is the product of the stability of state institutions. Indeed, at the moment, openly playing the racist card could be counter-productive for the establishment, because it could well unleash considerable instability on to the British political stage.

British institutions are not as fragile as Continental ones, which were established only comparatively recently. No Continental political institution survived the Second World War intact and, unlike in Britain, opposition frequently tends to be interpreted as opposition to the state. In a situation where every other vehicle for retaining the support of the masses has become drab and uninspiring, racism is the chief channel the European establishment has left to fend off widening discontent.

Explicit racism provides a political coherence the centre parties and the left can no longer deliver to the capitalist classes of Europe. Fascism is on the rise in democratic

France, while Italy appears to be degenerating into its condition before the *risorgimento* of the 1860s.

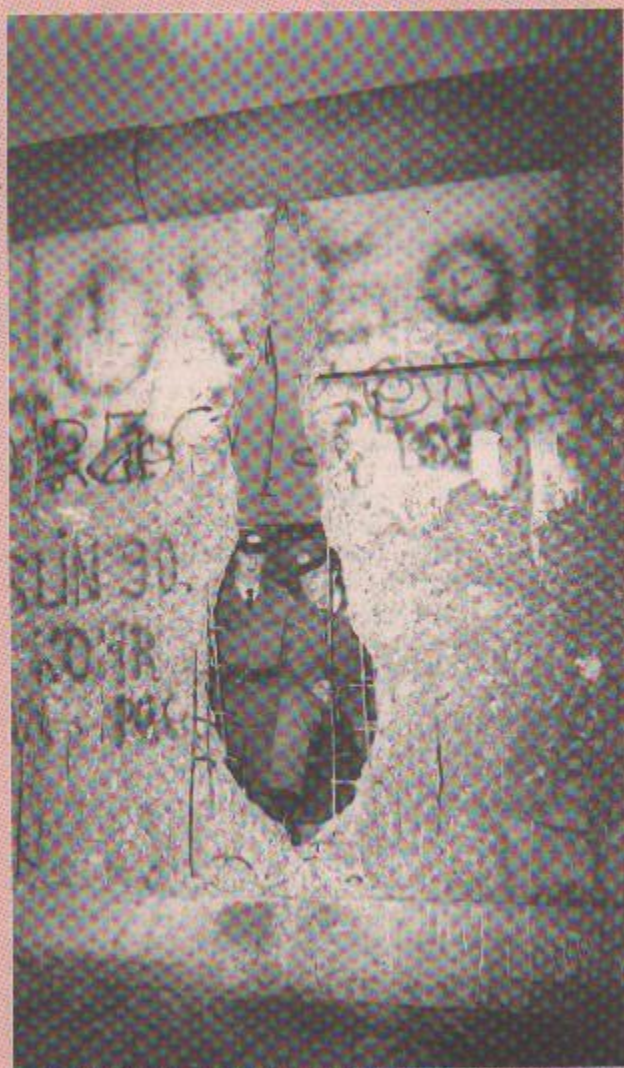
Despite the widespread assertion that Germans are 'inherently' attracted to fascism, on the other hand, Germany seems to be the least likely Continental country to see the growth of a strong far-right party. Up until late last year, the growth of the neo-Nazi Republican Party of ex-Waffen SS member Franz Schoenhuber seemed assured. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats seemed to be plumbing the depths of unpopularity and the Republican Party won two million votes in the June 1989 European election.

But that was only up until 9 November 1989. With the smashing of the Berlin Wall and German unification on the horizon, the fortunes of the mainstream parties have revived and no more has been heard of Herr Schoenhuber. In last week's *Land* elections in North Rhine Westphalia and Lower Saxony, the Republican Party's vote fell below one per cent. Although Kohl's CDU itself suffered setbacks in the elections, the success of the Social Democrats showed that both the main parties can reap electoral benefits from the national question. The decline of the far right in Germany is not the product of racism becoming any less intensive; the Republicans have been squeezed out by the relative strength of Germany's mainstream parties.

The recent wave of attacks on immigrants in France and Italy is not likely to be the last. The growth of the extreme right in these countries shows that reactionaries are on the march and intend to make it respectable to assault minorities. In these circumstances it is all the more urgent to challenge the prejudices of any form of nationalism.

As the wall
comes down
racism raises
its head

SIMON NORFOLK / LIVING MARXISM



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The New Europe

Racism
East & West

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Tebbit's racism

A sign of things



to come?



It is dangerous to dismiss Norman Tebbit as just another Enoch Powell, warns Kenan Malik

'Which side do they cheer for?' Norman Tebbit asked rhetorically of Britain's black population. He went on to answer his own question, arguing that the majority of black people in this country would fail his self-styled 'cricket test': they would rather support India, Pakistan or the West Indies than England in a cricket match. That might show consummate taste in cricket, but for Tebbit it demonstrated an unpardonable degree of disloyalty. 'They hark back to where they came from rather than where they are', complained Tebbit in an interview with the *Los Angeles Post*.

The former Tory party chairman pursued the theme the following day during the debate in parliament on the government's Hong Kong Bill. The bill makes provision for 25 000 selected heads of households in the colony to receive British passports. The government's hope is that this will encourage stability in Hong Kong in the run-up to the Chinese takeover in 1997.

Tebbit has been among the fiercest critics of the bill, and the leader of the Tory revolt against it. For Tebbit the scheme betrays the Tories' election pledge to prevent any further primary immigration.

'These pledges were made', Tebbit told the house of commons last week, 'because these islands are already overcrowded and in the belief that great waves of immigration by people who do not share our culture, our language, our ways of social conduct, in many cases who owe no allegiance to our country, was, and is, a destabilising factor in society'. He warned that 'if we are not to see social upheaval arising from religious and cultural and ethnic differences, then we have more than enough to do to integrate existing communities without adding to that burden or exacerbating existing problems'.

Tebbit's comments caused widespread outrage. Commentators right across the political spectrum condemned them as tantamount to inciting racial hatred. Several Labour MPs called for him to be prosecuted under the Race Relations Act. Almost without exception newspaper leader-writers considered that he had gone too far this time. In parliament his rebellion collapsed with just 44 Tory MPs voting against the government.

Even his traditional supporters deserted him. 'It's not cricket, Mr Tebbit', admonished the *Sunday Telegraph*, adding that his comments 'hit below the belt'. According to a *Sunday Times* poll of right-wing Tory MPs, one in two did not agree with his cricket test remark; one in four considered that his comments had damaged his political career. Robert Harris summed up the general feeling when he wrote in the *Sunday Times* that 'by his speech and his interview Tebbit has placed himself, like Enoch Powell and Oswald Mosley before him, beyond the pale'.

Tebbit's outspokenly racist remarks have certainly left him isolated, even within the right wing of the Tory Party. They are also likely to have caused considerable damage to his hopes of gaining the Tory Party leadership, which were slim even before the controversy erupted. However, it would be dangerous to dismiss him simply as a latter-day Powell, who has now made himself into the pariah of British politics. Tebbit is ploughing a very different furrow from the one Powell followed in the sixties, and he is still likely to be a major contender on the Westminster scene.

Powell was always a maverick, whose ideas were often out of touch with the general mood of the times. In 1958 he resigned as treasury secretary in the Macmillan government in protest at the administration's refusal to adopt unfettered free-market policies. A decade later prime minister Edward Heath sacked him from the cabinet after his notorious 'rivers of blood speech' which warned of the dangers of immigration. Powell's images of the 'Tiber foaming with much blood', his description of immigrants as 'wide-grinning picaninnies'

and his strident call for compulsory repatriation were not only offensive but out of tune with the times in an era in which the liberal consensus still held. Powell was always on the periphery of the Tory establishment and once out of the cabinet he was easily sidelined into the margins of politics.

Tebbit, on the other hand, is a much more central figure in the Tory Party, and one who has helped shape the dominant political mood of the past decade. He cut his political teeth as one of the coterie around Margaret Thatcher which, in the seventies, helped fashion her distinct brand of politics and then enabled it to gain ascendancy inside the Tory Party. Throughout the eighties Tebbit was Thatcher's right-hand man, responsible for drafting policies on trade unions, employment and industry. He became Tory Party chairman in the run-up to the last election, and played a key role in masterminding Thatcher's third electoral triumph.

By 1987, however, Tebbit's relationship with Thatcher had become strained. The differences came to a head over the direction of the election campaign. After the election Tebbit returned to the backbenches from where, notwithstanding the cooling of his relations with the prime minister, he has assumed the role of the keeper of the Thatcherite conscience. In a period when many in the Tory Party have been questioning the aggressively pro-capitalist policies adopted by the government, Tebbit has reminded the doubters that there is no alternative for the British ruling class. The pace of the Tory onslaught and its impact on society has begun to worry even confirmed Thatcherites. In the face of this uncertainty Tebbit's task is to lay down the law for the Tories.

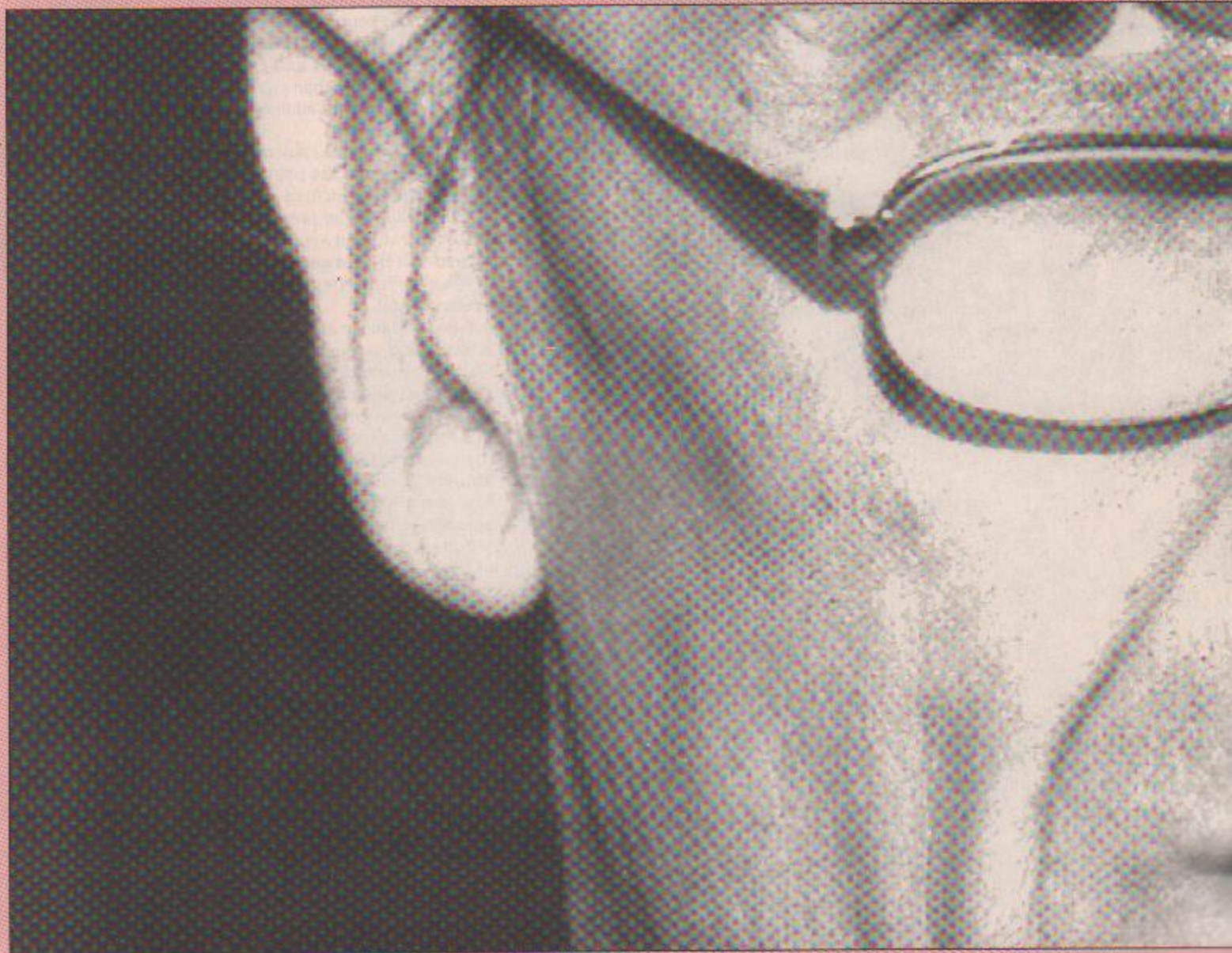
Outside of government, Tebbit has been uniquely placed to float ideas and tackle opponents in a way which would be impolitic for ministers. Thus Tebbit has taken on established institutions – from the monarchy and the Church of England

to the BBC – in an abrasive manner which those within the government would have found impossible to pursue. This has often brought him into conflict with even his own supporters. When, two years ago, he made a controversial attack on black Commonwealth countries, calling them 'tribal', the Duke of Edinburgh, not noted for his liberalism, felt compelled to criticise him. And even the *Sun*, generally his most sycophantic admirer, has felt it necessary occasionally to upbraid him for going too far. For Tebbit, such criticisms are the inevitable consequence of the role he has carved out for himself as the tribune of Thatcherism. It is in this context that we must consider Tebbit's new crusade on immigration.

Tebbit's latest outbursts show, not that he has put himself beyond the pale, but that the Tories are keeping their options open on the issue of race. The fact that home secretary David Waddington, a Neanderthal on the question of immigration and black rights, should move the Hong Kong Bill shows that the difference between Tebbit and the Tory establishment is not one of ideology. The party leadership has adopted a pragmatic course in maintaining a relatively low profile on the issues of race and immigration. However, by stirring up the racist pot, Tebbit is keeping the issue bubbling. Should the Tories find it necessary to embark on a racist campaign before the next election, this would have proved very useful.

The Tories are the natural party of racism. Thatcher has long been adept at wrapping herself in the Union Jack and making a political virtue out of the hatred of foreigners; Tory backwoodsmen, like rent-a-quote MP Terry Dicks, continually stoke up reactionary prejudices about muggers, drug pushers and illegal immigrants. The Tories recognise that, more than any other issue, that of race allows them to promote popular prejudices and put their opponents on the

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Jack



defensive.

The Tories exploited to the full the political advantages of racism in the period prior to the 1979 general election. With her infamous 'swamp' speech, Thatcher made a direct pitch for the racist vote; the Tories came to power on one of the most chauvinist platforms in the post-war years.

Despite their natural instinct to play the racist card, however, the Tories have been remarkably reluctant to use it ever since. The government has not denied its racist credentials, but neither has it flaunted them. The issues of race and immigration hardly featured in the 1983 and 1987 elections. Indeed in 1983 the Tories made a play for the black vote with their campaign slogan 'Labour say he's black, we say he's British'.

It is true that the authorities have orchestrated numerous scares about race and immigration – Tamil refugees, black muggers, 'Yardies', drug pushers, Muslim fanatics. But the government has refrained from turning such campaigns into a general attack on the black community. Certainly, Thatcher has never gone as far in power as she did in opposition. Indeed in some cases, as over the Rushdie affair, the Tories have taken exceptional care to maintain a degree of restraint.

Thatcher's reluctance to repeat her pre-1979 performance has nothing to do with any new-found desire to stand up for the rights of the black community. The Tories' more equivocal attitude since coming to power is purely pragmatic. The weakness of the opposition has meant that they have had little need to exploit the issue. At the same time the Tories recognised the need to minimise the socially disruptive effects of racism. The riots which exploded on the streets of the inner cities almost as soon as the Tories took office showed how the open enforcement of racism could unleash

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wider instability. Over the past decade, therefore, the Tories have largely kept this potentially explosive issue under wraps.

This is not to say that racist oppression is any less fierce than it was a decade ago. Racism has greatly intensified under Thatcher. Police brutality, immigration raids, racist attacks – all have increased over the past ten years.

A home office report published last year showed that more than half of young black men in London have been hauled through the courts. Last summer five black men died in police custody in London alone. Before Easter an inquest took place into the death of Germain Alexander, a black man who was beaten to a pulp in Brixton prison. Recently police and immigration officials broke up a wedding at Hackney registry office and hauled off the bride and two witnesses to the cells, as part of 'Operation Gold Ring', an investigation into alleged bogus marriages arranged for 'illegal immigrants'; more than 200 people have been arrested in the course of the investigation. The experience of the Stepney Four shows graphically how the police informally cooperate with racist thugs in enforcing the oppression of black people.

But while racism has gone unchecked on the ground, the authorities have been careful not to be seen to be openly promoting it. Unlike in France, Germany or Italy where respectable politicians have few inhibitions about declaring their racial prejudices, here they have largely held their tongues. Mainstream politicians in all the parties pay lip-service to the need to preserve a multi-racial society and protect the interests of the black community.

It is in this context that we can see the importance of the Tebbit campaign. For the first time in a decade a senior Tory figure has embarked on an openly racist crusade and put



immigration back on the top of the political agenda. Tebbit's verbal bouncers over Hong Kong and the 'cricket test' are designed to soften up public opinion should the Tories want to make an issue of racism in the run-up to the next election. With the Tories trailing in the opinion polls, the economy heading for recession and government policies like the poll tax deeply unpopular, many Tories recognise that the promotion of racism could well be their only ticket to another election triumph.

The recent decision by education secretary John MacGregor to allow parents to select their children's school on racial grounds shows which way the wind is blowing. Two years ago, during the Dewsbury schools row, the then education secretary Kenneth Baker refused to back a group of white parents who were boycotting a predominantly Asian school. 'It is better to have a mixture', he advised, 'because that leads to greater understanding'.

Today the Tories take the opposite view. MacGregor rejected a ruling by the commission for racial equality that Cleveland local authority had infringed the Race Relations Act by allowing a white parent, Jenny Carney, to change her daughter's school. Carney claimed that there were too many Asians in the school and that her daughter was 'learning Pakistani'. MacGregor's decision opens the way for an openly segregated school system and is clearly aimed at appeasing racist support at a time when Tory popularity is at an all-time low.

The Tories' willingness to play the racist card can only have been increased by the performance of the Labour Party in the Hong Kong debate. Given the open rebellion in Tory ranks, the incoherence of the Tory arguments in support of the bill, and the deep problems the Tories already faced on a wide variety of other issues, Labour should have been, as the *Sunday Correspondent* put it, 'shooting at an open goal'. Instead Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and Gerald Kaufman transformed what was an embarrassing situation for the Tories into a disaster for Labour.

The Labour Party has long recognised that racism is the electoral ace up Thatcher's sleeve. Hence, in his efforts to transform Labour into an electable party again, Kinnock has been desperate not to be outflanked by Thatcher. But as the recent debate on the Hong Kong Bill showed it is very difficult to outmanoeuvre the Tories on the issue of race.

The Labour frontbench wanted to ensure that the Tories could not accuse the party of being soft on immigration. The shadow cabinet decided therefore to oppose the government – but on the grounds not that it was racist, but that it was 'elitist'. At the same time to stop themselves looking like racists, opposition spokesmen refused to make clear what a Labour government would do, declaring ad nauseam that they did not want to play 'the numbers game'. It was a position that could hold no credibility. The result was a parliamentary disaster.

Labour's pusillanimity was clearly exposed in the commons debate. Former Labour minister Peter Shore demolished Hattersley's argument that the people of Hong Kong should be given 'democracy in the colony' rather than a British passport. 'However far democracy has advanced in Hong Kong' he pointed out to Hattersley, 'if the Chinese wish to roll it back they have the power to do so. We cannot offer additional confidence to the people of Hong Kong by telling them that a Labour government will introduce democracy in Hong Kong. It is no way out'.

Hattersley then accused the Tories of discriminating against British blacks: 'The bill...would increase their suffering by pushing them further down the queue. Their relatives would be left out as the new entrants are allowed in.' Such a shameless display of hypocrisy proved too much for Jim Sillars, once a Labour MP, now a Scottish Nationalist: 'I was utterly appalled to hear him [Hattersley] engage in divide and rule tactics between immigrant communities. I never thought I would hear that from him.' Sillars might have added that, as a minister in the Callaghan government in the seventies which presided over the scandalous 'virginity tests' for Asian brides, Hattersley has played a more ignoble part than most in ensuring that the relatives of black people in Britain 'would be left out'.

Roy Hattersley and Gerald Kaufman were chased around

the chamber' declared Andrew Gimson in the *Independent on Sunday*, 'but neither had a single bolt-hole'. In the end the opposition achieved the considerable feat of contriving to appear both more racist and more incompetent than the Tories. Labour managed to make even Tebbit look honourable. As the *Sunday Correspondent* put it, 'At least Tebbit was straightforward about what he wanted. Labour merely sought to dress in a cloak of high principle'.

And where was the Labour left while all this was going on? Safe in their own bolt-holes, is the answer. Left-wing MPs were as concerned as the Labour frontbench that they should do nothing that might rock the boat or jeopardise Kinnock's chances of entering Number 10. They refrained therefore from organising any campaign to expose the Tory scheme as racist or to fight for the right of all Hong Kong people to enter Britain if they so wish. Even the four black MPs remained studiously silent on the issue.

Instead around 25 Labour MPs, mainly members of the Campaign Group, decided to make a gesture by abstaining on the vote – and then not to protest about the racist policies coming from both sides of the house, but because they didn't want to 'enter the same lobby as Norman Tebbit'. In a week when virtually every left-wing Labour MP was queuing up to shake hands with Nelson Mandela, not one would lift a finger when they had a real chance to fight for black rights.

It was left to the Liberal Democrats to expose Labour's sordid capitulation to the arguments of the racists, and to put forward the view that everyone in Hong Kong should have the right to come to Britain. The fact that a middle-of-the-road nonentity like Paddy Ashdown, a former marine who supports immigration controls and backs Britain's war in Ireland, should appear to be the leading anti-racist in the Hong Kong debate shows how far the anti-racist movement has collapsed.

The left's abandonment of the fight against racism has had disastrous consequences. It has allowed reactionaries on both sides of the racial divide to gain the upper hand.

As racism has intensified under Thatcher, young blacks have become increasingly frustrated and angry. A decade ago many would have joined left-wing organisations or anti-racist groups. Today they are increasingly isolated and feel that they have no choice but to look after their own. In the absence of a genuine anti-racist movement, many young blacks have given up on politics altogether.

Even worse, the retreat of the left from the anti-racist struggle has allowed reactionary forces to provide an alternative focus for angry black youth. The widespread support among young Asians for the campaign against *The Satanic Verses* is the most graphic example of this. The way in which the anti-Rushdie campaign has become a vehicle for militant young Asians to vent their frustrations is a tragic illustration of the failure of the left to organise resistance to racism.

The failure of the left to fight for black rights has also allowed the racists to gain a wide hearing within the white community. In areas like Bradford and east London, the arguments of the far right are gaining currency. When Asian youth organised a march against racist attacks last summer, ordinary white passers-by hurled abuse at them and applauded white youths who physically attacked the demonstrators. In March hundreds of local people joined a 'white rights' march. In Tower Hamlets the strength of racist feeling in the borough allowed the Liberals to retain power in the May elections.

The growth of reaction in both the white and the black communities, and the increasing signals from the Tories that they are about to embark on a racist crusade, shows the urgency of building a new anti-racist movement. We need a movement that is willing to take a clear stand on issues such as immigration controls, police brutality and racist attacks; a movement that refuses to subordinate the interests of black people to that of the Labour Party; and above all a movement that sees as its task the winning of working class support for the struggle for black rights.

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**Jean Smith reports
on the police who
assaulted 'the
wrong man'**

Another case of mistaken identity?

Harold Benn was with two friends, driving along Garratt Lane, Tooting, after they had spent the evening at another friend's house. He was pulled over by a police car containing four officers. It was the beginning of a brutal case of 'mistaken identity'.

One of the officers snarled at Harold to get out of the car and he was given a breathalyser test. The test proved negative. Not content with their night's work the officers proceeded to examine the outside of the car and eventually arrested Harold on the basis that he was suspected of having stolen it.

Harold's initial response was to ask the police to use their radio to check the registration and confirm his ownership. He asked for this three times but was ignored. 'The only time they used the radio was to call for back-up, even though I was offering no resistance', he says. Within minutes six police cars and a van appeared with about 13 officers. Harold was rushed, punched, and forcibly bundled into the van, where he was attacked by a number of officers who repeatedly beat him. One stamped on his face and neck causing him to black out.

Harold's passengers, Vince and Linda, together with their 18-month old baby, were left at the roadside to walk home. They immediately contacted Harold's sister who rushed to the police station with the car log book.

Harold was held for about an hour. 'Once my sister had arrived they seemed very keen to get rid of me as soon as possible.' He had asked several times to see the police doctor and was



**Harold's face
shows signs of
police attention**

ignored when saying he wished to lodge a formal complaint. Eventually one officer did respond, by trying to dissuade him.

Since this attack Harold has had pains in his head and down the left side of his face, he has a permanent scar on his left cheek and is on pain killers. He also has bruises and scars on his leg and has trouble sleeping.

This is not Harold's first experience with the police. In 1986 he was

jumped by four plain-clothes officers as he emerged from his own home. They gave no warning and did not identify themselves. On another occasion police arrived at his home claiming to be chasing someone, they barged past his sister and mother and tried to arrest him. On both occasions they claimed afterwards that it had been a case of mistaken identity. After this latest attack Harold Benn was lucky to emerge with any identity at all.

Workers Against Racism has never been more active. This much is clear from the cases covered in the bulletin in your hand. There has never been a better time to take the plunge and join up. WAR was founded in east London in 1979. The motivation was the rise in the number of racist attacks and the failure of the anti-racist movement to effectively organise against them. From this small beginning as a campaign sponsored by the Revolutionary Communist Party, WAR is now a nationwide campaign. We have branches in the following towns and cities:

Scotland: Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh. **North-east:** Newcastle, Sunderland, Darlington, Middlesbrough.

Yorkshire: Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Wakefield, Pontefract, Huddersfield **Wales:** Cardiff. **Lancashire:** Manchester, Liverpool. **Midlands:** Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Leicester. **South-West:** Oxford, Bristol. **London and South-East:** Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Camden, Islington, Hammersmith, Brent, Brixton, Wandsworth, Peckham, Lewisham, New Cross, Brighton, Canterbury.

What we stand for

- Opposition to all forms of racial discrimination
- An end to all immigration controls
- Direct action against racist attacks
- An independent anti-racist movement with no links to the police, local or central government

Donations to: WAR, BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX

Join WAR today: To join us, and find out more about our activities, send £5.00 (£25.00 for organisations or trade union branches) to: Workers Against Racism, BM WAR, London, WC1N 3XX. Tel (071) 375 1702
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Home office aim to reverse Alexander decision

New attack on black rights

Pete Bush explains why the government is determined to get Julius Alexander out of the country

LIVING MARXISM



Back in February 1990, when a high court ruling quashed the deportation of Julius Alexander, many anti-racists assumed that a major victory had been won. The high court had found that the home secretary had acted illegally in granting immigration officers the power to make decisions about deportations. Events since then have confirmed that the legal process is not a reliable instrument with which to combat the government's determination to widen the powers of immigration officers.

The home office asked for an appeal 'as a matter of urgency' as 'some 500 cases since August 1988 had been made by immigration officers' and were being held up due to this case. This confirmed the status of Julius Alexander's case as a significant test case affecting many others. It also showed the judiciary working for the government. Whereas Julius had to wait many painful months for his hearing, the home office was granted its request and a new hearing was set with indecent haste.

Within three weeks Julius was back in the high court, this time in the court

of appeal, and in front of Lord Donaldson, Master of the Rolls. After two days we were listening to the almost inevitable result: 'Whilst always hesitating to differ from Lord Justice Woolf...in the end we do so without doubt.'

Julius' February appeal rested on the devolution of deportation powers from the home secretary to immigration officers at inspector level under rules introduced in 1988. Then the practice was successfully challenged as it removed the customary right of appeal through parliament. For Donaldson, however, 'there are clear advantages and no unfairness in the (provisional) decision to deport being taken by civil servants who are readily available and have considerable experience and expertise in immigration matters'. The home office needs experts in intimidation and harassment to start up the conveyor belt deportations Julius' appeal halted. In Donaldson's judgment the immigration service fits the bill.

Along with the reversal of the high court decision came the message that the next, and final, legal stage, once lodged, 'should be expected to be heard fairly swiftly'. With this date due

Julius and children at the high court

to be announced a short summary of the legal argument is timely.

From the start of the case the defence put forward the following proposition: the home secretary cannot, under the terms of the 1971 Immigration Act, delegate his authority to make decisions to deport to any subordinate official. It is his power, and his alone, to make such decisions.

The state argued that the home secretary could indeed make such a delegation, by using a constitutional principle known as the Carltona principle. This principle stems back to a 1943 case of Carltona Ltd versus the Commissioners of Works and Others. This laid down the extent to which a head of department can delegate his powers to others.

The defence case was that Carltona does not apply to immigration law because the 1971 act states explicitly what powers belong to the home secretary and which ones belong to immigration officers. The high court agreed with this argument but the court of appeal did not.

For the court of appeal Carltona does apply because the act does not say explicitly that it doesn't. In other words the home secretary can delegate his powers to subordinate officials, including immigration officers, within his department. It further added that when acting as alter egos of the home secretary such officers are not acting as immigration officers but only as the home secretary in another form, so there is no clash of roles.

The house of lords will now decide which will end up as the legal position.

Behind the courts' bloodless jargon lies a train of human misery. The effect of the appeal court decision is that deportation levels of 300 per cent more than before August 1988 look set to continue. Now running at six per day they are likely to rise. Most of these are occurring as a result of an immigration officer deciding to deport and then telephoning an inspector for a decision on the deportation. Conveyor belt deportations are already here, if Julius loses they will accelerate beyond even the 1988 level.

The government is determined to break the Alexander decision, to throw Julius out of the country, and send thousands more after him. We cannot rely on the house of lords to win this case. Julius' campaign needs the widest backing if it is to win. Now is the time to contact us and get involved. The outcome is crucial for black rights. Phone us on (071) 375 1702 now.