

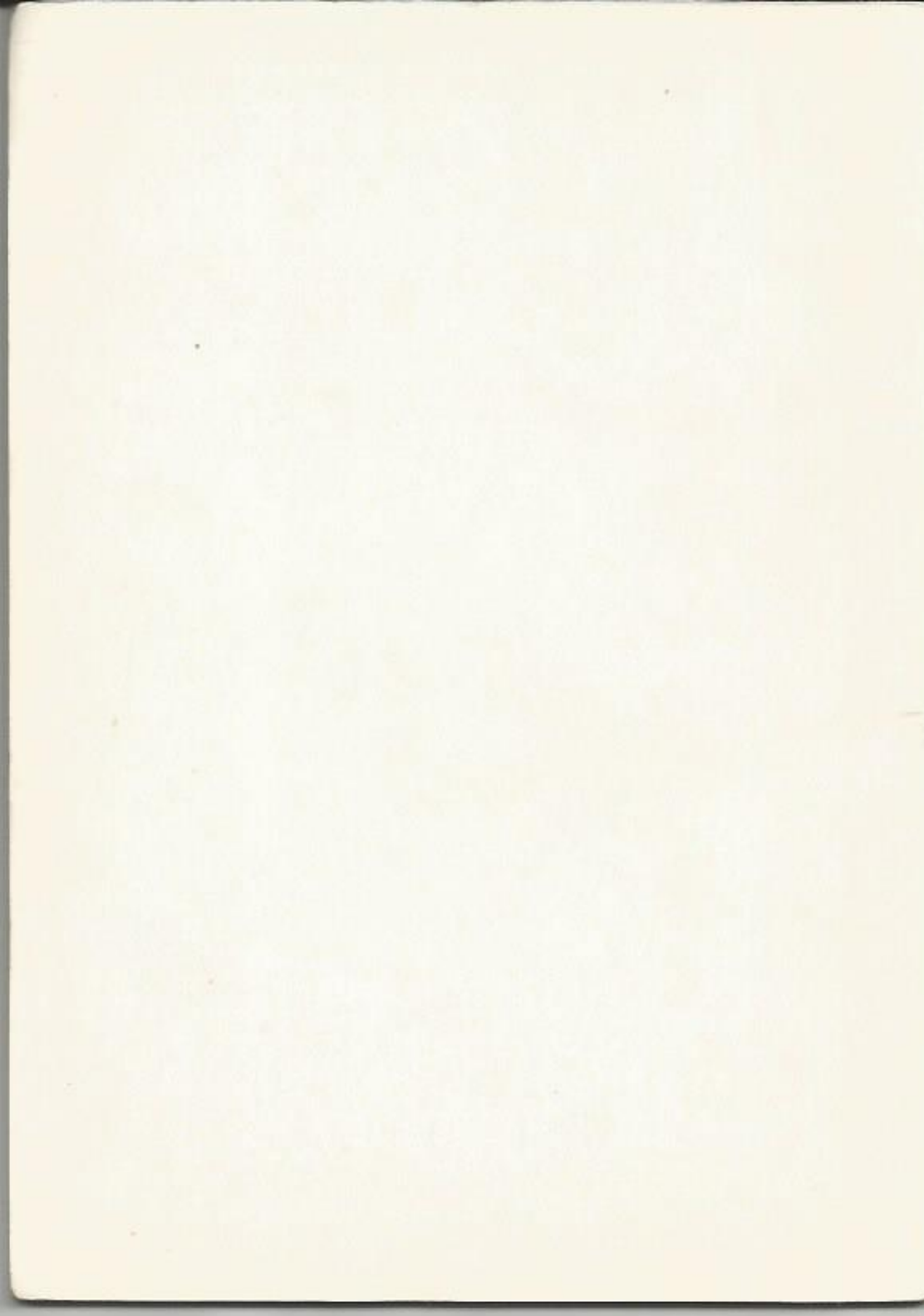
The Socialist Challenge to Racism



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The Socialist Challenge to Racism

by Dave Bailey

with an introduction by
Tariq Ali

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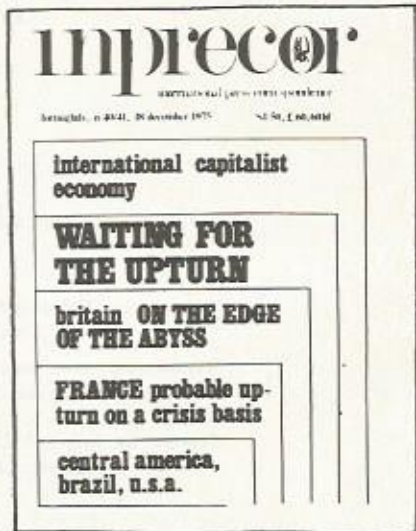
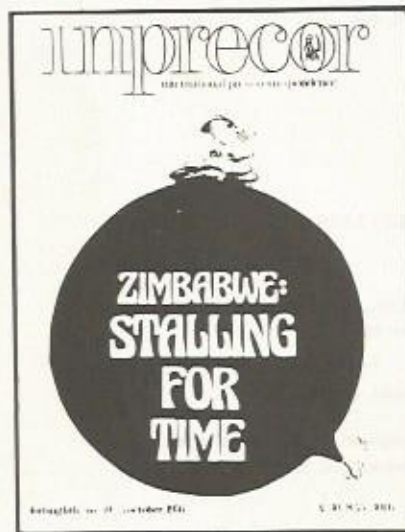
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Cover Picture: Ferouk Achmed, Secretary of Pakistani Youth Federation addressing a protest demonstration against the NF trying to prevent the installation of a mosque in parts of an unused warehouse, September 1976

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INTRODUCTION

by Tariq Ali

A number of interrelated events this summer highlighted the speed with which racist ideas have acquired a new respectability in crisis-ridden Britain. These include the orchestrated concentration by press and television on the plight of an Asian family from Malawi which was roomed temporarily in a five-star hotel; the decision by the British Broadcasting Corporation chiefs to go ahead and screen a blatantly racist film on its 'Open Door' programme, reminiscent of the anti-semitic campaigns of the Nazis; the dismissal of 'moderate' Alex Lyon from the Home Office after Callaghan was elected leader of the Labour Party, with Lyon stating publicly that he was sacked because Callaghan was basically a racist.

Thus as inflation and unemployment take their toll, as a Labour Government backed by the trade union leaders and its own left carries out further cuts in public spending, as no focus of mass opposition has emerged against the Labour Government, racist ideas are becoming the norm. The gutter press (**The Sun**, **Daily Mail**, **Daily Express**) have printed one scare story after the other; the 'quality' press led by **The Times** has been less crude and while deploring racism nonetheless 'understood' why the British people were 'anxious'. Hardly surprising then that in this atmosphere the rats came out of their holes, and discovered the opportunities that existed for them. In local elections in several Midland towns the National Front vote doubled and trebled. In the small industrial and solidly Labour town of Blackburn, the fascist National Party gained two local councillors. The leader of the local Labour Party said he was 'disturbed', but added that he would be more disturbed if communists had been elected. In the national by-elections in Rotherham and Thurrock the NF gained a relatively high vote and in the local by-election in Deptford in South London the combined fascist vote was slightly higher than that of the successful Labour candidate.

One of the most striking features of the recent racist upsurge has been the almost complete silence on the part of the self-appointed guardians of the labour movement's conscience. An old-time candidate for this role, Michael Foot, was very eloquent in addressing Scottish trade unionists in Glasgow on the "obscenities of apartheid" in South Africa, but not one word on the institutionalised racism of Britain under a Labour government. A newer guardian, with ambitions ultimately of becoming the chief caretaker, Tony Benn, was keen to commemorate the victims of Cromwellian oppression after the English Revolution, but had no statement to make on the victims of racist oppression in Britain in 1976. From the 'left' leaders of Britain's two major unions, Jones and Scanlon, there was also no statement.

The reason for this silence is not difficult to comprehend. It is not that Foot or Benn, Scanlon or Jones are racists. Far from it. It is because racism runs very deep in the British working class, a factor explained by decades of imperialism and of social-democratic hegemony within the labour movement. Instead of fighting this racism, the leaders of the left of the Labour Party are hamstrung by it, not only for fear of electoral defeat, but because of their deepgoing nationalism and commitment to 'Britain' rather than to the working class. This poses a serious danger to the unity and strength of the labour movement. The failure of Foot, Benn and co. to wage a serious and effective campaign against racism today paves the way for reaction tomorrow.

The complicity of the Labour left in the racist measures of successive Labour governments is also symbolised by the total failure of any left leader to publicly campaign around the positions adopted at this year's Labour Party Conference. The Conference called for the repeal of the racist 1971 Immigration Act and called for support for black self-defence. The question of racism is inextricably bound up with the immigration laws, for the simple existence of the 1971 Act, as we shall argue in this pamphlet, helps to falsely place responsibility for the economic crisis on to black immigrants in the minds of British workers.

In this situation, the burden of fighting racism has fallen essentially on the shoulders of the far left and the black communities themselves. The Communist Party, while absolutely opposed to racism, has up till now been too closely tied politically to left social democracy and hamstrung by its own failure over the years to educate its own working class members to wage any effective campaign. It has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the self-defence initiatives and calls for abolition of the racist immigration laws coming from within the black community. Instead, it has eagerly pushed forward every moderately anti-racist statement by such notables as the Archbishop of Canterbury - whose real views on immigration were to be taken up by Tory MPs soon after he wrote in the pages of the **Morning Star**.

The mobilisations by the black communities, especially the Asian communities, in the face of racist violence and police harassment, have been exemplary. They signal a new self-confidence and militancy among the Asian workers in Britain. They have served notice on Enoch Powell and the other racist leaders, whose demands for repatriation are now acquiring new force, that they are here to stay. No amount of intimidation is going to make them leave or give up the fight for equal rights here in Britain.

The revolutionary left has achieved a certain fragile unity in the anti-racist struggle. The agitational material carried in the IS paper **Socialist Worker** has been exemplary and its consistency finally forced the **Sunday Times** and the **Daily Mirror** to virtually reprint its material on the Birmingham Nazi, Robert Relf. The meetings organised by the IMG and supported by the I-CL and other groups have also had an impact. For whatever the other weaknesses of the far left (and they are not inconsiderable) its uncompromising and intransigent opposition to racism stands in marked contrast to the capitulations of social democracy and stalinism. It is worth stating that this attitude on the part of the far left is not totally unrelated to the fact that Trotskyism is the dominant ideology of the British far-left groups, as the arguments outlined in this pamphlet illustrate.

In the opinion of the International Marxist Group, however, this limited unity remains too episodic to have a meaningful impact within the working class. Even the combined weight of the far left is insufficient to have such an impact. We believe that an anti-racist unity built on the broadest possible basis, drawing in trades councils, trade union branches, local Labour Parties, etc., is vital. Unity in action of the far left would go a long way towards aiding this process.

This pamphlet is designed to open discussion. Some of the questions it raises are the subject of disagreement on the far left itself. It is however, neither the first nor the last word on the subject of racism and as the anti-racist movement develops and grows we are confident that many new experiences will have to be integrated and explained.

PINNING THE BLAME ON THE BLACKS

The capitalist press and politicians are still telling us that capitalism is a social system that produces 'progress'. But working people living under capitalism in Britain today are rapidly finding out that the opposite is true. Things they thought belonged to the past as far as Britain is concerned are re-appearing in a serious way. Living standards are falling, unemployment rising, the welfare state is being cut to pieces, homelessness and misery are on the increase, inflation is raging. During the course of 1976 they also saw the rapid re-emergence of something else - and it certainly wasn't progress. It was **racism**.

The fall in the living standards of the working class and the new rise of racism are linked. People who see their financial world collapsing about their ears, who see no clear prospect of a bright future for themselves and their children despite lifetimes of hard work, grow desperate. Middle class people ruined by inflation, and working class people who see no way ahead now that the struggles of 1971-1974 have been halted in their tracks by the Labour and trade union bureaucrats, find various political answers being advanced. But none of these answers seems so simple or effective as the one we have heard ever more frequently this year: '**get rid of the blacks**'.

The National Front even had a catchy little slogan to sum it up: 'One million unemployed, one million immigrants'. The arithmetic may be somewhat dated, but the message is clear.

Of course, our more 'respectable' political leaders in Parliament aren't quite so blunt about it as the fascists, but they too keep up with the times. The murderous tirades from Enoch Powell were predictable. Give them £1,000 each to leave Britain was his slogan. 'Enough is enough' echoed Labour Chief Whip Bob Mellish at the alarming prospect of 'invasion' by a few hundred refugees from Malawi. Further to the left, it seems that not even that honourable ex-leftie Michael Foot could avoid the temptation - as a memorandum sent out by his Department of Employment in February revealed. This little love note stated that work permits were not to be renewed for foreign workers if British nationals were available for work - and appeals on the grounds of unfair dismissal were not to be allowed. Powell's speeches, with their talk of racial purity, and Michael Foot's more 'practical' little memos all have the same basic message: let's all get together to **make the blacks pay**.

Well, in 1976 some of the blacks **did** pay. Blacks like young Gurdip Chaggar, a young Southall Asian: he was stabbed to death in the street. Blacks like the two overseas students killed by gangs of white youths in East London. And hundreds and hundreds of blacks attacked up and down the country. Their murderers and tormentors remain anonymous, but the Foots, Mellishes, Powells and the Hitler-lovers of the National Front, not to mention the toe-rags in Fleet Street, are all to blame for these deaths and assaults.

In fact, of course, the blacks have been paying for a long time now. Ever since they began to arrive here in large numbers in the 1950s they have been paying. With

their freedom, and even with their lives, they have been paying for the profits of British businessmen and paying for the stunts of political opportunists like Powell. Despite the fact that, far from being the **cause** of Britain's economic and social problems they have been among the worst **victims** of them, the attempts to make the black immigrant the scapegoat continue.

That a scheme like that of Enoch Powell's to "repatriate" black people can be seriously discussed, with its echoes of the "final solution" course on which Hitler embarked against the Jews forty years ago, is the logical and inevitable outcome of a long and miserable history. It is the history of a 'conspiracy' - a conspiracy by a wide variety of forces to do one thing: to lay the blame and the responsibility for the problems of the working class on to black people.

To understand racism in Britain today we must look at the recent history of these attempts.

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act

The first big step taken in this direction - to picture the black worker as a cause of all our problems - was taken in 1962. It was the Commonwealth Immigration Act, passed by a Tory Government. What did this Act do?

Up until 1962, anybody who was a British subject could come to Britain freely, look for work, even settle down if he or she wished. Skin colour, race or creed were unimportant - providing you were a member of that wonderful institution, the **Commonwealth**. Now, under this 'Commonwealth', Britain continued to have 'special relationships' with countries which had previously been exploited directly by her as colonies. But Britain wanted to pretend that in the Commonwealth, everybody was really equal, hence 'proving' that no neo-colonial type of exploitation was going on. Hence, citizens of Commonwealth countries were to be regarded as **British subjects**, with the right to enter their 'mother country'.

After the 1962 Act was passed, this changed. You might have the privilege to be British, but now could only come here to work if you had a work voucher. There were Category A vouchers for workers who had a specific job to come to; category B vouchers for those whose skills would be very useful to Britain (doctors, teachers, etc.); and C Vouchers for semi-skilled and unskilled workers. These vouchers were allocated each year to Commonwealth countries by quota. Predictably, as the years went by, these quotas got smaller. In 1965, the total voucher issue was restricted to 8,500 a year, and the C Voucher - the one for unskilled and semi-skilled workers - was abolished altogether by Harold Wilson. Since then, the bulk of black people coming into Britain have been the families and dependants of those already living here.

The economic effects of this legislation on black people will be discussed later on. The most important thing, however, about this Act was what it represented politically. The 1962 Act was a clear statement that workers from the Commonwealth (by which was meant **black workers**) were now to be regarded as a **problem**. It is hard to recall that the Labour Party leadership, which now moans on endlessly about 'reasonable numbers' actually opposed it at the time.

So the British authorities had now adopted an official doctrine: the coloured immigrant was a 'problem'. The Government had said that he needed to be controlled. If he were not controlled then he and his kind would create problems in Britain: social problems, economic problems, political problems. From now on, every Home Office official would be checking for 'evasions' of the regulations, every policeman on the look-out for 'illegals', every public authority would double-check the credentials of every coloured man or woman they came across. After all, if there wasn't a widely recognised problem, the Government would not have passed the Act.

The Racist Lies

But what sort of a problem? What arguments lay behind this and the subsequent immigration control which has been installed?

The first is that black people take jobs from white workers. This is what has been suggested by every racist hundreds of thousands of times since 1962.

This argument is, and always was, a load of rubbish. People simply do not travel across the globe, leaving their families and their homes, unless they are pretty certain of a definite job when they finish their journey. As Hugh Gaitskell pointed out in 1961, there was "an almost precise correlation between the movement in the numbers of unfilled vacancies in Britain and the immigration figures." When the demand for labour in Britain temporarily fell between the years 1957 and 1959, for example, the number of immigrants from the West Indies fell accordingly. In other words what was happening before immigration controls were introduced was what happens everywhere there is a free labour market. Workers go where there are jobs and where there aren't jobs workers don't go.

The idea that blacks 'take white workers jobs' simply doesn't stand serious investigation. In actual fact, far from "snatching" jobs which white workers were looking for, the black worker has, on the whole, been forced to take the job that the white worker has already refused for something better.

This is confirmed by every major study made of the employment structure in Britain since the War. An early study of West Indians in London, for example, conducted in 1958-9, showed that fifty-five per cent had had to take jobs below their qualifications. Clerically trained West Indians found themselves dishwashing in hotels, skilled welders slagging out in the iron foundries. In other words, skilled men found themselves in the worst of the unskilled jobs. Many occupations, it has been admitted, for example by the PEP Report of 1965 into racial discrimination, are virtually closed to blacks. Those which are open are those which are most unpopular among white workers: hospital and catering work, public transport, textiles, and jobs involving unsocial hours. In other words, the large influx of coloured workers into Britain, far from taking jobs from whites, have allowed white workers to 'promote' themselves as it were to jobs with better pay and prospects.

Sometimes this can be graphically illustrated within a single factory. A sample survey of the cotton industry conducted in 1967, for example, showed that while only 15 per cent of the spinning workers and only 10 per cent of the weaving workers

in the factory were black, these black workers nevertheless staffed 59 per cent of the spinning night shift, and 36 per cent of the weaving night shift. In other words, the blacks got the jobs which the whites rejected. Some problem! The only people who have a problem here are the blacks.

Another argument put forward in favour of immigration control was that immigrants were a 'drain on Britain's social services'. They would take houses, hospital beds and school desks from British workers. This sort of argument is frequently to be heard from people who are most active in **reducing** the number of houses, hospital beds and school desks available to the working class. Enoch Powell himself is an excellent case in point. When Powell was Minister of Housing, he framed the Rent Act of 1956. This Act de-controlled rents, so fuelling the boom in property speculation which has strangled the efforts of Local Housing Authorities to provide homes for all. Today, the hypocrisy is practised on an ever increasing scale — every Tory and right-wing Labour politician is busy butchering the social services. The blacks, they tell us, are the problem.

In fact, black people are the victims of one of the biggest economic con-tricks around. It's true what the racists say: black people don't make the same contribution to the social services. They make **more**. Workers born in Britain cost the state upwards of £10,000 per head in school and hospital bills alone, even before they've turned their hands to a single day of toil. Yet the immigrant worker costs absolutely nothing. He comes 'ready made', as it were. The costs of bringing him into the world, of education and rearing, are all born exclusively by the home country, not by Britain. Talk about aid! Here is a once and for all gift from the poorer to the richer countries. It is indeed strange that no MP has yet come forward with the suggestion that immigrants pay less income tax because of the disproportionate contribution they and their home country are making to Britain's social services and state revenues generally. It isn't Britain which has got the problem: it's the black immigrants and their country of origin that are out of pocket!

On top of all this, it isn't as if black people consumed more than their share of public expenditure. For a start, it's the black workers, doing the worst jobs in the social services, that keep these services ticking over. Then again, the black worker doesn't finish up at a university or institute of higher education so frequently as the white workers or their children. In the case of housing, recent surveys show that black people occupy disproportionately few council houses. In fact, as far as housing is concerned, black people have, by and large, had to go outside the state sector altogether to get a roof over their heads. In the private housing market, black people have suffered vicious oppression and exploitation. In 1956, a survey carried out in Birmingham showed that only 15 out of 1,000 whites would rent accommodation to black people. Black people have usually had to club together and run the gauntlet of the more disreputable estate agents to get a home. 'We usually obtain' said one estate agent in Leyton, East London, 'a much higher price than the market value from our Commonwealth friends.

So, far from being a problem, the black workers who have come to work in Britain are nothing but an economic asset to British capitalism. Like the millions of southern European and North African workers who go to work in the EEC countries, they are a source of super-profits to the capitalists. Without them, the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s would not have been so sustained.

Recently, black people have been 'discovered' to be connected with another problem: a "breakdown of law and order". Powell has told us that the Notting Hill riot was just the sort of thing he had predicted if black people were allowed to continue coming to Britain. But where was the anger among newspaper editors and politicians when Gurdip Chaggar was murdered, or when assaults on Asians became routine? It's not whites who have a problem of law and order, it's the blacks. They are the major victims of the "breakdown in law and order", a breakdown engineered in the first place by, amongst others, Mr. Powell himself.

The whole thing is rather sharply illustrated by the remarks of Judge Gwyn Morris at the recent 'mugging' trial in South London. On the basis of crimes of petty theft, he calls for the creation of **vigilante squads** to defend whites against 'black muggers'. But when it comes to Asians protecting themselves against possible murder by setting up black self-defence groups — to accompany blacks home from work, patrol areas where blacks are frequently assaulted etc. — then there is an outcry in the press and a systematic attempt by the police to harass the self-defence groups, plant them with weapons, and so on.

The Real Aims of Control

If the arguments used to justify immigration controls are and always were so much nonsense, then why were they ever passed? The answer is twofold.

The Immigration Laws, an attack on the democratic rights of black workers and their families, were aimed at doing two things. First, at pinning responsibility for the economic and social problems of the working class firmly on to black people instead of where it belongs, on the capitlist system. The fact that the arguments we have just discussed are to be heard so widely is proof of the success of this. Second, to make black workers more exploitable by white employers.

The legislation passed since 1962 reflects this second aspect very clearly.

The Act dealt a severe blow to the economic independence of the black immigrant worker. This was to be to the economic advantage of big business. For to get his voucher, and to satisfy his own Government that his country would get vouchers in future, he had to satisfy the authorities he wasn't a "troublemaker" or an "undeserving" case. In other words, the aim of restricting his freedom of movement was not to "protect other workers", but to help the bosses for whom he would work as well as his own pro-capitalist government to keep tabs on him. The extent to which the Act was passed to help British business interests is also shown by the creation of Voucher B — the one for those who had skills which Britain needed. Here, poorer countries were being openly encouraged to export their short supply of trained doctors and technical workers to Britain — not a group of workers either who are notorious for competing with the unemployed for jobs.

The intimidation of the black worker in an effort to make them more pliable to exploitation has proceeded further in the legislation passed since 1962.

In the 1950s, most of the black workers who came here didn't want to stay permanently. They were, by their own choice, **migrants**. They came when there was work available and went home again when they had earned enough to make a start back home. The **Economist** Intelligence Unit survey of Commonwealth immigrants, for example, showed that only a third of them intended to stay permanently. Other

studies indicate a much higher proportion. R.B. Davison's study of West Indians conducted in 1962 revealed that 98% of the children had been left behind in the West Indies — not a sign that their parents intended leaving home for good. With the '62 Act, this free movement of migrant workers ended. After '62, a black worker would have to settle down in Britain if they wanted to work here at all, and the black worker knew that once having got a voucher to work in Britain they would probably not get another if they returned home.

However, this right to settle was soon to be brought to an end. This was one of the things which the 1971 Immigration Act did. While removing all controls on the immigration of Commonwealth citizens who had at least one British-born grandparent (i.e. who were **white** — the grandfather clause established by Wilson's Government in 1968) it laid down that a coloured worker could only come here provided they had a work permit for a specific job. It carried no automatic right to settle. In fact they had to re-apply to stay in the country each year, and only after five years could they apply to become a British citizen. In other words, the 1971 Act aimed at turning the black worker back into a migrant. Only this time they were no longer **free** migrants. For the 1971 Act would have the effect of turning them into something quite different: **contract labourers** without the civil rights enjoyed by provided he had a work permit for a specific job. It carried no automatic right to settle. In fact he had to re-apply to stay in the country each year, and only after five years could he apply to become a British citizen. In other words, the 1971 Act aimed at turning the black worker back into a migrant. Only this time he was no longer a **free** migrant. For the 1971 Act would have the effect of turning him into something quite different: a **contract labourer** without the political or civil rights enjoyed by other workers. This is the meaning of provisions such as those requiring immigrant workers to have a work permit, register with the Department of Employment, preventing them changing jobs without permission, and allowing at the end of their term for deportation without right of appeal if the Home Secretary thinks they haven't been of 'good character'.

The aim of creating a migrant contract worker system has nothing to do with protecting the jobs, pay and conditions of indigenous workers. Quite the opposite. The white workers, convinced that there is something dangerous about the black immigrant, have allowed the black worker to be stripped of virtually all their democratic rights at the port of entry. The aim of doing that is precisely to create a



Photo: Chris Davies (Report)

group of workers so oppressed and exploited that, the bosses hope, they can be used to undermine the conditions of the British workers. As we shall see, there is no evidence that they have had any success at all in this particular objective because of the class consciousness black workers have shown.

According to the 1971 Act, black workers can only come to Britain (assuming 'courage' to allow some in), if they agree to accept conditions of employment which no British trade unionist would even consider — such as for example, having their very physical presence in the country dependent in effect on the whim of the employer. This would put them into the same position as the thousands of the most oppressed workers of Europe — the hundreds of thousands drawn every year from Southern Europe and the Mediterranean countries to the shanty towns built by French, Swiss or German employers, who use them as cheap labour and who get rid of them when the job is over or when unemployment goes up.

Family Break up for the Black Worker

In the long struggle to place the responsibility for Britain's problems onto the black worker and to super exploit him as well, the erosion of the democratic rights of the immigrant has reached a new peak: the attempt to break up their families. This is one of the most detestable aspects of immigration policy — which is perhaps claiming as many lives and creating as much suffering as the racist thugs.

Everybody knows that Britain is proud of its 'family tradition'. Enoch Powell himself has said, in support of the principle that was written into the 1962 Act that dependants had an unequivocal right of entry to join their families, that such freedom to live together as a family, was an 'inescapable obligation of humanity'. But things change quickly in Britain, especially obligations and principles, and especially those of Mr. Powell.

By 1971, any worker coming to Britain — any black worker that is — had no automatic right to bring his dependants with him on his short-stay work permit. Worse still, those who had already settled here on the vouchers issued in the Sixties, have found it increasingly difficult to get their relatives in and live together with their families: a right which every other worker in Britain takes completely for granted. This is because the last Labour Government of Harold Wilson introduced a law in 1969 which said that dependants, even though having a right to join their relatives here, must first gain an entry certificate. At first, the entry certificate, issued at London Airport, was largely a formality. Then the immigration officials got tougher and began discovering 'faked' documents. Families became separated as wives and children were flown back to India or Pakistan to await the investigation by the authorities. Then the Home Office adopted a new policy. Certificates of entry should be issued in the country of origin. So the immigration authorities set up shop abroad and entry certificate officers from Britain proceeded — as slowly as they knew how — to interview people waiting to join their relatives in Britain. The Home Office said this was 'to save distressing scenes at Heathrow' (whether for the benefit of the immigrant or the nice white tourist was never clearly determined). In fact, it was to create bureaucratic bottlenecks so as to keep the entry figures down.

This year, the Hawley Report said that the obligation to admit genuine dependants of people settled in Britain was being discharged satisfactorily, that the officials did a difficult job responsibly, and that forged documents were common among the applicants. The Runnymede Trust however, have issued a report saying

that 'on the contrary, the dependants they visited said they had been treated like criminals, that the entry certificates procedure were slow and tense and that forged documents are used in desperation by wives and children who have a legal right to join husbands and their fathers' (*Guardian*). The authors of the report say that they studied the cases of 58 people who had been refused the right to appeal against a decision not to grant them the right of entry to Britain. 55 people, they believe, had a genuine right to come to the country.

BBC TV have produced a documentary about Mohammad Akram, a bus conductor in Bradford, who was separated from his wife and child after interview at the British Embassy in Pakistan. The entry certificate officer had found 'discrepancies' in the accounts given by the husband and wife of their circumstances in separate interviews — for example, their descriptions of their houses differed, medical details differed, and there was some confusion over village numbers. At his appeal in Leeds, Mohammad Akram pointed out that he had said his house had 4 rooms and his wife 3, only because he included a large passage in which visitors sometimes slept. He had taken his wife to the doctor for treatment for infertility, but his wife had been too embarrassed to tell this to a white official. The British official had told him that the Pakistani authorities who issued his marriage certificate were liars. In short, the officer claimed they were not man and wife. In Mohammad Akram's case, the appeal in Britain was granted and his wife joined him after 3 years of waiting in Pakistan. His daughter however had died in Pakistan while waiting for British 'justice' to take its course.

The drive to stop coloured people joining their families has now reached such a pitch that family separations at Heathrow are becoming increasingly common. The family members are interviewed separately, all over again. A small discrepancy of detail could be sufficient to 'prove' somebody is lying. Cases have occurred where women and girls have been given internal examination to see if they really could be mothers or virgins they claim to be. Cases have occurred of children being flown back home because some official doubted their documents, often documents Home Office officials abroad have issued. And if the authorities need time to satisfy themselves, an immigrant can spend months in a special wing in Pentonville Prison, waiting to know whether he is to be deported.

This human misery and degradation occurs not because immigration officials support Mr. Powell, although some of them do. It occurs because, in the words of one civil-rights expert: 'Daily experience of casework showed quite clearly that the policy was interpreted by immigration officials as a duty to stem the flow of coloured immigrants'. In other words, it is because black workers and their families have been defined as problems, and are continually being re-defined as such by racist campaigns, that already unjust laws are being applied in such a brutal fashion. The 'sanctity of family life' of which British ideologues are so fond does not apply to the black family. The democratic right to live with his family does not, in practice, exist for the black worker.

It is fitting to end this chapter with the story of Loonet Galiara. She was eight months pregnant when she arrived at Heathrow to join her husband in Britain. Twenty-four hours later she had given birth prematurely to a baby girl and the baby died. The death occurred after immigration officials at Heathrow had insisted she was lying about her right to enter the country and were about to put her on a plane back to India. The immigration officials, who laughed as Loonet and her husband pleaded for a doctor, have disclaimed all responsibility for the death of Loonet's baby.

THE PROFITEERS OF RACISM

As we have seen, a section of workers in Europe today — numbering many millions in all — have been systematically deprived of their democratic rights. One simple question is: why has this been allowed to happen in countries which are the homelands of working class organisation and ideology?

The only possible answer to this question is that it has taken place only because the working class movements of Europe have taken a decision — not a conference decision, an open decision, or anything like that but a decision nonetheless — that this should happen. Not only have they turned a blind eye, they have actively encouraged it. Workers have mistakenly thought they might actually benefit from it.

Lots of people in the labour movement, even some revolutionaries, don't like to face this fact. They talk as if it is all a matter of workers getting swayed from time to time by capitalist propaganda. Of course, it is absolutely true that the bosses exploit racism. Full marks. But this is only true because workers have shown themselves, often **well in advance** of the bourgeois tacticians, to be racist. In fact, we could go further. To really grasp what has happened in Europe over the past quarter of a century, it is not correct to imply that the bosses 'created' racism in order to divide the working class and create a super-exploitable layer of workers. Rather the truth of the matter is the other way round. The pre-existence of deep racist and chauvinist ideologies in the workers of the imperialist countries allowed the bourgeoisie - in an era where colonialism is on the retreat and imperialism on the defensive - **to formulate policy objectives at home which would not otherwise have been possible**. These policies include creating a cheap labour force in the metropolis, and using racism to divert attention away from the real source of economic and social problems.

The truth of this proposition is demonstrated when we look at the political as well as the economic aspects of immigration control and the campaigns for such controls.

Cheap Labour

Let us first look at the economic side of the racist developments in Western Europe.

Employers have encouraged the migration of millions of workers from ex-colonies and from Southern Europe, year in and year out, because they believe they might be able to make more profit out of these workers than they would if they had to employ indigenous workers on the same job. The employers calculate that the black or Southern European worker, because of the relatively poor conditions of their own country, might be prepared to accept lower wages and conditions than the European worker. But this presupposed that the trade unions in the metropolis would not take the simple and obvious steps (of insisting that all workers get the same rate for the job, that there be full unionisation and no racial discrimination etc.) that would overcome any potential problems arising from different levels of expectation as between one worker and another. The bosses calculated that when it came to the crunch, all the talk about workers of the world uniting would turn out to be so much hot air. And by and large they were right.

A balance sheet shows that rather than champion the cause of the immigrant worker, the organised labour movements of Western Europe have, on balance, tried to exclude them and drive them away — by ostracising them from the union, bureaucratically ensuring that even in the union they have no say, ignoring their especially acute economic exploitation, and worst of all, joining campaigns to stop them coming to the metropolis and to get them to 'go home'. In other words, they have pursued policies which play straight into the bosses hands. However, the fact is that, despite the frequent lack of a trade union background in their country of origin, and despite hostile treatment at the hands of people who mouth about unity, they have not done any of the things which white workers feared they might, such as break strikes or act as a brake on wages. Quite the contrary. The boot has often been on the other foot, and the immigrant worker has, despite the enormous legal and political handicaps, proved to be a frequently more militant fighter against the bosses than their indigenous counterparts.

This is the conclusion which is reached in a book by Castles and Kosack called **"Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe"**: This is the most comprehensive review of every aspect of the question so far produced. In their book, they detail the attitude of the trade unions and the experience of immigrant workers in every single country of Western Europe.

Let us take some examples from their book. The Swiss Trade Union Federation (SGB) has taken the lead in campaigns against immigration into Switzerland for over twenty years. It has joined hands with right-wing chauvinist groups (like the 'Zurich Democrat Party' and the 'National movement against the foreign domination of people and homeland'). In France, all the trade union federations, the CGT, the CFTC and the FO, all campaigned against immigration between 1948 and the mid-Sixties. In Britain, the TUC has opposed discrimination against Commonwealth immigrant workers. But this has been purely verbal, and has gone hand in hand with silence over immigration controls or calls for numbers to be restricted. Few practical measures have been taken by the TUC to tackle immigrants special problems. The TUC hardly created the best climate for fighting racism when they reacted to the white East European immigrants who came to Britain between 1945 and 1949. In their case, they concluded agreements with employers that foreign workers, although to get the same wages, were only to be employed where no British worker could be found, and they were to be first out in cases of redundancy. Employers were not allowed to employ more than a certain number. The Welsh mines excluded foreigners completely.

At the grass roots level, where it really counts, the experience of immigrant workers into Europe has been extremely bad. For whatever the policies of the union leaderships, it remains an inescapable fact that trade unionists have allowed immigrant workers to be given the worst jobs, and that trade unionists have frequently applied positive pressure to keep it that way.

One of the best known examples of this in Britain is the struggle at Standard Telephone & Cables in 1973. Cases from every country in Western Europe are also to be found. Castles and Kosack, among the many examples they give, include the case of 1,700 Spanish and Italian immigrant workers at the Hella car headlamp manufacturing company in Lippstadt, Germany. Here, in 1969, the foreign workers, most on contracts which bound them to the firm, were doing the same work as German workers for less money. This had been known to the union for years, yet despite the official policies of the German unions being among the more

'enlightened' in Europe, nothing has been done to change this. When the immigrant workers themselves went on strike to change the situation, the union condemned the strike and deserted them.

Castles & Kosack conclude that 'the fear that immigrants would act as strike-breakers has proved unjustified. On the contrary, they have participated actively in picketing and demonstrations...In disputes of a general nature, in which indigenous workers have fought for better wages and conditions, the immigrant workers have shown full solidarity' and, despite the fact that the employers and the authorities 'have attempted to exploit the weak legal and economic position of immigrants during such disputes. Threats used in trying to get the immigrants to act as strike-breakers include eviction from company accommodation, dismissal from work, and deportation.' (page 177). In other words, immigrant workers in Western Europe, including in those countries where their legal status and terms of employment are worse than in Britain, have shown themselves frequently to be among the most militant working class fighters, while at the same time confronting hostility, discrimination and desertion by their fellow white workers.

The general lesson to be drawn from all this is twofold. First, the super-exploitation of immigrant labour is only possible because the organised labour movement connives at the attempts of the bosses to deprive these workers of most of their rights and to create a pliable section of the work-force. The only people who have benefitted from this are, of course, the bosses themselves. Secondly, the immigrant workers have, by and large, had to take the initiative themselves —despite all the forces ranged against them — to make any headway in struggles for a decent standard of living and for democratic rights. The fact that the bosses have seldom succeeded, if anywhere in Western Europe since the War, in using immigrant workers against the struggles of the indigenous labour movements is no monument to the attitudes of those labour movements. It does illustrate, however, that the white labour movement has much to learn from the immigrant workers.

Political Profits

The economic gains to be made out racism are therefore clear enough. None of those gains fall to the workers who have been deluded into supporting racism on the shop-floor. But the position is just the same, if not worse, when we look at the **political** profits which the bosses and their representatives have made out of racism.

In fact, racism is so strong in Britain that the **political** capital which can be made out of it by bourgeois politicians is enormous. It can even be argued quite plausibly that on some occasions at least the temptations have been so strong that legislation has been passed which contradicts the longer-term economic interests of the employers in employing a super-exploited layer of workers. For example, the 1962 Act, while it allowed greater control by the Government over the sort of workers who were to be allowed into the country, nevertheless had the effect of turning what had previously been a **migrant** workforce into an **immigrant** workforce. This led to the possibly unforeseen and unprofitable outcome that the black settler, as opposed to the black migrant, was less prepared to accept the pay, conditions and promotion prospects previously available to the immigrant — it also led, quite naturally, to an influx of economically unproductive descendants. It seems that the racists are so keen to fuel up racist campaigns that they sponsor legislation which defeats their stated aim.

RACISM ON THE STREETS: Assaults on Asians (East London)

- March 5 *Artandas Moorjani and family threatened by Mary McKenzie. Threats with intent to cause fear. 'I just don't like Pakistanis'. Fined £25 and bound over for a year.*
Mrs Monahan Kaur stabbed by a man in a factory in Brick Lane
- March 12 *Surab Ali attacked by four youths in Hanbury Street. Skull fractured.*
- March 16 *Mansur Ahmed assaulted on 16 March at Hessel Street by John Groves.*
- March 18 *Vijay Kumar Oet, 15 years old. Kicked, punched and robbed by three youths in Canning Town.*
- March 19 *Two white boys arrested for throwing missiles and using threatening behaviour towards Pakistani boys in Brick Lane.*
12-year-old Mina Patel and her mother - child threatened at gunpoint and mother manhandled by two men.
- March 26 *Mr Moorjani robbed by two youths. Both arrested and released on bail.*
- April 2 *Abdul Stabur rob*
- April 2 *Abdul Stabur robbed by two youths. Both arrested and released on bail.*
Mujir Ahmed and wife attacked by about 15 youths who demanded money. Friends who went to help were also attacked. They were kicked and hit with bottles. A number of people were taken to Bethnal Green police station. Investigation taking place. One youth made a statement implicating three others - no action taken.
Rahman Alavir punched and threatened with a knife.
- April 4 *Gulham Patel attacked and his briefcase stolen by three men in Stepney.*
Mr A. Rouf residing in Weaver House was knocked down and kicked by seven men, two of whom he knew by sight. He called the police and nobody came.
- April 8 *Dudu Miah robbed in Brick Lane, Sheba Street.*
- April 9 *Mohamed Isbaq mugged by five thugs and badly injured.*
- April 11 *Bottles thrown at Bengali youths in Brick Lane.*
- April 16 *Salud Ali and Ansar Miah assaulted by M.J. Flood in Whitechurch Lane.*
- April 20 *Stones and airgun pellets thrown and shot through the windows of Weaver House (Bengali family).*
- April 22 *Stones were thrown through the windows at Arthur Deaken House (Bengali family).*
- May 7 *Pregnant Mrs Radica Ali punched and robbed in Forest Gate.*
Mr Sariman Halder stabbed by a gang of thugs in Toynbee Street. They made no attempt to rob him. He suffered a punctured lung. Attackers drove off in a van.
- May 9 *Rihan Kabir, residing in Bernard House, chased by gang with knives.*
- May 10 *White boys attack Bengalis outside Daneford School. Four Bengalis arrested.*
- May 12 *Idris Ullah, residing in Casson Street, chased from Vallance Road by three young men. Hit on the head and stabbed in the side. No attempt at robbery.*
- May 13 *Shamsul Uddin, residing in Corbin House, Bow Road. At 10.30 pm he was assaulted by three boys in front of witnesses.*
Jim Miah residing in Weaver House - his mouth cut by a bottle which was thrown at him.
- May 14 *Mr Uddin arrested. Broom and hammer taken from his home. He was charged with possessing offensive weapon.*
- May 16 *Mozla Miah, residing in Queensbridge Road, E.2. Attacked in Commercial Road by 10 youths in a van.*
- May 17 *Dudu Miah, residing in Aston Street, attacked in Aston Street. When police arrived he was immediately asked if he was a squatter.*
- May 21 *Rampart Street, after 11 pm, 12 boys attacked three men. Police arrived after 20 minutes. Rana Miah in hospital.*

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...and a Black Self-Defence Patrol (East London)

Two cars are to set out from our base. Eleven of the volunteers who have turned up are chosen, mainly for their determination and trustworthiness. Everybody knows everybody else. Ten of the eleven have been out on previous nights.

There's an orderly discussion: how to deal with the different situations we may encounter. The routes are decided. Each car is to meet the other at hourly intervals. Both drivers know the area like the back of their hands. One car is to check on the other bases from which other patrols will be setting out.

Nothing in the first two hours. We drive almost in silence. It's worrying that so many Asians, standing in groups on street corners or leaning out of the cafes and doorways, recognise and acknowledge our mission. They wave, and one or two give clenched fist salutes.

Down the Commercial Road to the East India Dock Road and then into Corbin House off Bromley High Street. We've been told that a white gang gathers there around pub closing time. The Asian tenant who brings the information has had his windows smashed, his house robbed, his children assaulted the previous day. The buildings around have a long history of shameful racist intimidation, abuse and assault.

We are to go and talk to the Asian families on our rounds. Two of the families tell us, standing in their doorways (which we do deliberately to inform the neighbours of our presence), that the police have been called each time there is an assault, and each time they have carried away the Asian who complained and charged him. We suggest practical ways of collective self-defence. We leave them two phone numbers.

Several police cars pass us on the Mile End Road. As we turn down Toynbee Street, our driver spots trouble. Two young Asians are being followed by four young white men.

The doors of our car fly open before anyone has a chance to say a word. The car screeches to a halt alongside one of the Asians who is about six yards ahead of the now running gang. We jump out through all four doors. The gang is obviously unprepared for an attack on more than two unarmed Asians. They shout to each other 'Pakis',

turn tail and run.

Our driver tries to get back into the car and chase them. They run down the pavement and disappear into Brune House. We pick the Asians up, and piling into the car, drop them a few hundred yard down the Commercial Road.

Back to Brick Lane to keep an appointment. At the corner of Brick Lane and Hanbury Street a small crowd of young men has gathered. On the opposite pavement two young policemen in shirtsleeves, their walkie-talkies to their faces, are bullying a young Asian. He has his arms above his head and one of the police officers is thrusting a lit torch right up his nose, Nazi style.

We get out of the car and approach. 'Fuck off or we'll have you for obstruction', the policeman says. He is asking the man they've stopped whether he's an illegal immigrant. They are radioing for a car.

We cross the street and shout to the detainee in Bengali to tell us his name and address. He begins to reply and one of the policemen clamps a hand over his mouth to stop him. The police car arrives and they bundle him into it. We're back in the car. One of us phones to a solicitor who is on call, the others follow the police car to Bethnal Green Police Station.

Before the car gets to the station, the solicitor has the particulars of the arrested man. The patrol goes back to one of the bases and we call a member of the Anti-Racist Committee for Asians in East London (ARC-AEL) to deal with the police. The committee man sets out to find the relatives and the passport of the arrested man. From the experience of a previous night, we know that the police won't give bail without having the passport on hand.

The other car reports back. They've been stopped by police in Commercial Road. The Inspector tells one of the group: 'We're picking you lot up, because the whites are smarter, they can't be caught with offensive weapons on them.'

From our experience of other nights, on patrol, we know different.

Another example is the action Harold Wilson took of abolishing the C Voucher scheme in 1965. According to Paul Foot, in a book entitled **The Rise of Enoch Powell**, this was "among other things, blatantly contradictory to their own National Plan". The 1971 Immigration Act, as is commonly pointed out, does of course make straight economic sense to the employers. It creates the legal framework for migrant contract labour on the European model. However, no British Government will allow any significant number of black immigrant workers into the country, no matter on what terms they come, because to do so after the racist campaigns of the last twenty years would almost certainly lose such a Government its next General Election.

There are some incidents in the grisly story of immigration control that are so disgusting that most people would put them down to personal malice. In fact they represent attempts by politicians to compete with each other as the best immigrant-haters. Take for instance the action of the Labour Home Secretary in 1969 who ruled that Commonwealth citizens engaged to be married to women living in Britain could not enter, marry and settle as of right. The women must instead leave the country and first live with her husband before he could come into Britain. This meant that some Asian women would, in order to marry, have to leave the country and take the risk that they might be separated forever from their home and their parents in Britain. Then there was the decision of the Tories to make **retroactive** the 1971 Immigration Act. It seems that something in the country was so desperately wrong that an entirely new procedure in English law making had to be resorted to. The effect of this was to make an unknown number of people who were already living here into 'illegal immigrants'. Perhaps there weren't enough **actual** illegal immigrants in the country for the police to arrest, so Parliament created some to give them a bit of practice. Whatever the reason for this astonishing move, and no reason over and above political opportunism can be found, the effect was that many black workers all over the country suddenly found themselves lifted from their homes dozens at a time and taken to the police station for investigation and to be asked to prove that they had not broken the law. This was a new departure in police procedure as well. Some unfortunate people found that they were literally lifted from their homes and deported overnight without even the opportunity to appeal!

This purely gratuitous harassment, which seems to be based on no immediately obvious economic motive, can, like much of the immigration policy of successive governments, only be understood against the background of something very important: the upsurge of the white racist mob. In many ways, it is the white racist mob that has set the pace in getting racist legislation onto the statute books. People who think that the whole business of racism is simply innocent workers being swayed by bosses' propaganda should put their noses closer to the page

The White Racist Mob

In Nottingham there is a district of the city known as St. Anne's. It contains some of the worst poverty in the country. A book was published a couple of years ago called **The Forgotten Englishman: A Study of Poverty in Britain**. It was a study of St. Anne's. In this depressed area of Nottingham, newly settled in the 1950s by West Indians, mobs of whites suddenly exploded in anger during the summer of 1958. Shouting slogans such as 'We'll get the blacks', 'Down with niggers', the mobs attacked black people with knives, bottles, razors and bicycle chains and tried to smash their property. One hundred and fifty whites were arrested. This outburst, sparked off by a trivial incident over a white prostitute, and coming at the end of a summer of rising unemployment, was followed by two weeks of even more serious

rioting in the Notting Hill district of London, where fascist groups had been inciting people to 'act now to keep Britain white', 'deport all niggers', and so on.

It was only after this show of violent hatred from some of the poorest sections of the white workers that the black immigrant learned with dismay that some MPs, of both parties, were pandering to the reactionary mood and beginning to put forward demands for immigration control. The Tories met this demand with the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 — the first major departure in racist immigration legislation.

The Tories made this move at a time when their election slogans — such as 'you never had it so good' — were beginning to wear a bit thin. The slogans of the Tories had been based on the economic boom of the 1950s. That boom was coming to an end. On the other hand, the Tories had always been aware that to get into government, and to stay in government, the Conservative Party had to win a sizeable proportion of working class voters. If the Tories could no longer claim to be able to guarantee full employment and a constantly rising standard of living through their economic policies, then they had to be able to capture the working class voter in some other way. Appealing to racism and national chauvinism seemed an alternative, or least to be part of an alternative approach.

The lesson that a change in strategy was needed was not fully absorbed by the Tories at first. Party bosses reported to the Tory leadership that whispering campaigns against anti-racist Labour candidates during the 1959 General Election had won some votes. Although the Tories fought the 1964 Election with the 'prestige' of 'having done something about the blacks', they did not however adopt a vigorous anti-racist campaign in the 1964 Election campaign. With one exception. That exception was Smethwick.

In Smethwick, Tory candidate Peter Griffiths had been campaigning since 1962 for a complete ban on immigration (by which he meant coloured immigration). In 1964 he fought an openly racist campaign. Stickers appeared all over his constituency saying 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour'. Griffiths smashed the Labour majority at the polls and won his constituency. It was completely against the national trend. Elsewhere in the country, even safe Tory seats were falling to Labour. There was no question left in anybody's mind: racism wins votes and support for a Tory Government.

It was from this point on that increasing numbers of Tories, and soon the chief among them, Mr. Enoch Powell, began to exploit racism systematically.

In 1965, soon after the impact of Smethwick, the new Labour Government proposed a Race Relations Bill, avoiding their former pledges to abolish the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act. The racist backlash began to emerge again. The summer of 1965 was similar to that of 1976 in so far as black people all over the country began to experience a dramatic increase in racialist abuse and physical assault. Some extremely serious developments occurred such as threats by the Ku Klux Klan to kill immigrant leaders in Britain. Fascists of all kinds stepped up their activities.

It was against this background that the Tories launched a ferocious Parliamentary opposition to the Race Relations Bill, taking the 'credit' for drawing the teeth of the

Bill, by getting it made 'voluntary'. This, and the failure of Patrick Gordon Walker, the defeated Smethwick Labour candidate, to get re-elected in Leyton, convinced Wilson that he must make some concessions to the reactionary currents in the working class. The 1965 White Paper, limiting the number of vouchers and abolishing the C Voucher, was his reply.

It was also at this time that Enoch Powell became the most consistent advocate of the view that if you wanted to get a Tory government which could really bash the working class, or even blunt the mild reforms of capitalism proposed by the Wilson Government, then you had to present 'nigger bashing' as a real alternative solution to the problems of the working class against anything that Labor proposed. In one his speeches he began by saying: "The Government is fiddling about with irrelevancies about the ownership of steel and land, while the urgent necessity of a change in the Immigration Law remains unattended to..." (quoted in Paul Foot, **The Rise of Enoch Powell** p.79).

Irrelevancies? The nationalisation of steel and land were hardly irrelevancies. At least Powell didn't think so in 1956 when he framed the Rent Act. But when it came to nationalising the land in 1966, then land was an irrelevancy. When it came to a measure which could potentially have stopped speculation and led to an increase in council-house building, then suddenly land was an irrelevancy, and the issue of coloured immigrants (who by this time were growing fewer in number each year) was suddenly an emergency. Powell was using the classical old tactic of diverting attention away from the real causes of the problems of the working class on to purely fictitious ones.

Castles and Kosack, in the book we mentioned earlier, give an amazing example of such diversionary tactics. It is impossible to resist including it here. In Germany and Switzerland between 1964 and 1966, the trade unions were campaigning for a reduction in the length of the working week. The bosses countered with a novel campaign: 'Work an hour longer to make the employment of foreigners unnecessary'. The bosses conducted surveys purporting to show that many employees were willing to do this and even to work on Saturdays so that foreigners could be expelled from the country. There is no doubt that the unions' efforts to gain shorter hours for all workers were seriously hampered by this counter-blast from the bosses (page 170).

Dockers Join the Racist Mob

Back in Britain, it was not to be long before the extent of working class support for racism was to be clearly demonstrated again. In 1967, Powell and Duncan Sandys, drawing attention to the number of East African Asians who had British citizenship and who were being forced out of the countries they were living in, whipped up panic over the entry of Kenyan Asians. The result was the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act, which introduced the openly racist principle that UK passport holders did not have an automatic right of entry unless they had a 'substantial connection' with the UK (the grandfather clause). This Act, which may have been in contravention of the European Human Rights Commission, was designed solely as a manoeuvre to stop the Asian refugees coming to Britain by making them into stateless persons. As the Asians forced out of Africa began to arrive in Britain, immigration officials put them back on the plane. Some families flew around the globe for weeks before finding refuge.

In the summer of 1968, Powell made a series of speeches in which he called for yet further controls, but in a manner which embarrassed Heath (although Heath accepted Powell's main demands and the 1971 Immigration Bill took shape in the heads of the Tory opposition). Powell started spreading the sort of stories which previously only the fascists had resorted to — old women having excreta pushed through their letter-boxes and the like. Powell was now talking too of the purity of the white race. In other words, Powell's language — never mind his demands — was that of the fascists. Powell was making the Websters, Tyndalls, Jordans and other Hitlerites respectable.

When Powell was sacked from the Shadow Cabinet thousands of dockers marched to Westminster calling for his re-instatement. Similar demonstrations and strikes occurred in the Midlands. They called for a ban on immigration and echoed his demands too for repatriation. These were workers - traditionally strong Labour supporters and strong trade unionists — who were striking over the dismissal of a member of an **opposition, Tory Cabinet!**

In other words, the racist upsurge was not to be limited to the poverty stricken whites of Nottingham. Nor to the traditional Tory working class voter going to the polls in Smethwick. Here was **one of the most powerfully organised groups of British workers**. They showed that they too could be drawn in behind the racist banner. The dockers march was a revelation to the ruling class. It surely speaks for itself that the Heath administration passed the Immigration Act at the same time as it passed the most vicious piece of anti-union legislation devised in modern Britain, namely the Industrial Relations Act.

The lessons to be drawn from all this are obvious. Since 1958, British workers have shown that, whatever their feelings about the bosses, they didn't like the blacks. For this prejudice, black immigrants have had to pay with the loss of many of their freedoms. This hasn't done the white workers any good. But it has done the Tories a lot of good. They have used racism, particularly as espoused by that most powerful weapon, Enoch Powell, to slow up the advance of the labour movement and as a cover for launching a sustained attack on all workers between 1970 and 1974. Of course, it would be foolish to argue that measures such as the Industrial Relations Act would never have been passed but for Powell or the dockers' demonstrations of 1968. But they helped. And on the more general level, they helped to prevent wide layers of workers drawing deeper political lessons than they did from the upsurge against the Tories of 1971-1974 about the nature of capitalism. As to Enoch Powell himself, the potential of this figure for leading an anti-working class government of an even more vicious kind has yet to be used by the bourgeoisie.

In the present recession, the bourgeoisie finds racism useful for at least three reasons. First, that the anger among workers over unemployment and cuts in social services can be diverted away from the bourgeoisie, and on to the blacks. Second, that the racist movement, built on the false premise that throwing blacks out of their jobs, their home and their country will solve unemployment and other economic problems, cuts across any political tendencies coming forward from the left of the Labour Party or from the revolutionary left which threaten to stand in the way of the right-wing policies of Callaghan and Healey. Thirdly, that the way is prepared, should the bourgeoisie decide, for an election to get rid of the Labour Government and replace it with an even more right-wing Tory one than the Heath regime. The Thatcherite policies of doubling the rate of public expenditure cuts will certainly create a demand for scapegoats on a massive scale.

WHAT WE MUST DO TO DESTROY THE RACIST OFFENSIVE

The racist bandwagon is starting to roll again, and every black person and every organised worker must campaign to stop it, if it is not to roll over some of the key democratic rights the working class has fought for and won through decades of struggle. There are at least four key aspects to organising the fight-back.

1. Black Self-Defence

The most immediate threat is to black people themselves. This of course is the physical threat to life and limb. Whatever else is demanded, the physical defence of black people must come top of the list.

Reformists in the Labour Party or in the Communist Party, as well as in black communities themselves, are frequently to be heard telling blacks to 'cool it down, leave it to the police, go home'. This is what they said after the murder of Gurdip Chaggar. They frequently go on to argue that for blacks to organise self-defence against such attacks will only make the situation 'worse', 'provoke the racists'. As if the very presence of black faces in the country were not sufficient provocation to a racist.

Experience, however, point in the opposite direction. Dilip Hiro points out in **Black British, White British** that in 1958 'once the blacks in Notting Hill had overcome their initial alarm, shock and despondency, they tried to help themselves as best they could...They avoided walking alone after dark. They provided elaborately arranged escorts for those black London Transport employees who had to work late-night or early-morning shifts and formed vigilante groups which patrolled the area in cars...This self-defence, coupled with the sentences passed against nine assailants in West London by Judge Salmon in mid-September, had a salutary effect. By the end of September, the situation had returned almost to normal...' (p.41).

It is of course unlikely that the British judiciary could be expected to do the same today in similar circumstances. However, the essential point about self-defence is clear. It is even more relevant today for the increasing hostility of the judiciary to black people. Dilip Hiro reiterates the point again about black self-defence in relation to the threats of the Ku Klux Klan in 1965, when blacks organised self-defence. On this occasion, the police confessed their own inadequacy in advance. It would be futile, said a senior police officer in Notting Hill, to depend on the police. He expressed his 'helplessness in preventing a white gang from keeping their vow to hound a West Indian family from the district'. 'It became clear', continues Hiro, 'to the West Indian leadership, that the community would have to rely exclusively on self-help...plans were made to organise vigilante groups for self-defence in London as well as in Birmingham' (p.55). Some groups have of course gone even further. Hiro again: 'In June 1970, Asian leaders in Wolverhampton told the author that only after Asian youths began taking the initiative in assaulting the skinheads and other white youths did the attacks on Asians by the skinheads subside'. (p.56).

This spirit of self-reliance, born out of a recognition of the futility of depending on the police and the authorities, has not made things 'worse'. On the contrary, it has sent Government ministers scurrying to the drawing board to draft concessionary legislation for black people. The fact that black people had practised self-defence against white mobs encouraged the Labour Government of 1965 to make a law against racial discrimination, however ineffective it may have been. When the Race Relations Act was recognised as inadequate by black people, the Labour Government at first refused to do anything about it. Then, in 1967, the explosions in the black ghettos of the United States — where self-defence reached the height of full-scale uprisings against the police in the ghettos — the very people who had opposed further legislation suddenly announced that the law would be toughened against discrimination. The 1968 Race Relations Act soon followed. Far from losing the struggle to influence the white reformists, black self-defence got these reformists passing legislation aimed at trying to set up bodies, such as the Race Boards, which would take away the need for black militancy. Wisely, black people have not ceased to be militant in their own defence, especially in view of the general uselessness of these bodies.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that black people should organise to defend themselves against assault, and white workers should defend the black workers when they take this action. White reformists who **counterpose** the use of the law against racists to black self-defence are in practice telling black people to place their lives in the hands of liberal yet powerless bodies. These bodies are incapable of stopping the murders or the assaults. In practice, the white liberal race relations industry has to rely for its power on the police and the courts — which is why it has no real power (except perhaps to confuse some of the reformist forces in the black communities).

The very way in which the Race Relations machinery operates shows that they were passed, not with the aim of combatting racism, but of buying off the opposition of black people to the official racism practised throughout British society, especially as expressed in the Immigration Laws. The Act laid down a policy of trying to conciliate in disputes over racial discrimination rather than have recourse to a prosecution. Such conciliation has frequently meant black people being asked to surrender some aspect of their national identity in order that some white racist can be dissuaded from committing discrimination. This is the meaning of the 'integration' of the Race Relations laws. Integration means not rooting out the racists so as to make Britain a fit place for black people to live in, but smothering the black protest.

Experience shows that dependence on such machinery would be suicidal. So long as measures against racists are left in the hands of conciliators, or of white police and judges, both groups representing the bourgeois state which has official racism as its policy, then blacks will continue to suffer. The way the police have cynically exploited the Race Relations Act for their own racist activities demonstrates this. The Race Relations Act amended the Public Order Act to create an offence of using 'offensive words'. The police have used this amendment to bring, under the Public Order Act, prosecutions, not against Kingsley Read or Enoch Powell, but against black anti-racists. So much for the police carrying out the law. The laws they carry out are the ones they want to carry out, and only those. The only really effective way to silence racists is by mass opposition and mass mobilisation, not liberal sweet talk or laws which will always be rendered into paper tigers by the actions of the very police and judges who are supposed to implement them.

RACISM IN INDUSTRY: The Record of the Trade Unions

1. The Strike at Imperial Typewriters

It began in May 1974. Imperial Typewriters employed 1600 workers, 1000 of whom were Asian. The basic rate of pay was £18 for women and £25 for men, with bonuses for the production of 200 typewriters a day. The Asian workers learnt that the bonus should have been paid for 168, not 200, machines. This meant £4 a week. So they demanded a new wage agreement and the payment of the bonus backdated to January 1973.

They also discovered something else once they went out on strike. The union would scab on their struggle. The union at Imperial was the T&G. There were 16 shop stewards for the 1600 workers, but only one Asian on the shop stewards committee. The strikers - Section 61 - demanded the right to elect stewards. Their nominations were however, ruled out of order by factory convenor, Reg Weaver. He said to be a steward they had to be union members for two years. Of the two leaders of Section 61, one was two weeks short of two years membership. On this pretext, Weaver refused to talk to the strikers.

The majority of the Asian workers joined the strike. The majority of the white workers, especially those in the more skilled grades, scabbed. They crossed the picket lines for three months. The strikers were sacked. The shop stewards, Weaver and his appointees, used this as a further excuse to refuse to talk to Section 61.

Weaver talked of 'minorities dictating to majorities', people who 'do not understand or respect our institutions', and the possibility of a 'white backlash'. Weaver was a racist.

The strike remained unofficial and the strikers got no strike pay. Yet, despite all this, the workers of Imperial won their struggle. A racist one-day strike of some of the white workers and the plethora of NF propaganda which went up around the factory, failed to shake the new militancy of the Asian workers.

Despite this treatment by the union, the workers at Imperial insisted throughout that they were fighting for improved pay and conditions for all the workers, for strong trade unionism and for a democratic union.

2. The Strike at Standard Telephone & Cables

Extract from Red Weekly, 14 September 1973

Black machine operators at the Standard Telephone Company in Southgate, London, are still on strike in pursuit of a demand that the management force the skilled machine setters to train a black machine operator as a setter.

STC, which is owned by the giant American firm ITT, is a company where a section of white workers have formed an alliance with the management against their black fellow workers. Half of the 2,000 workers are black, yet only one is employed as a skilled setter. The black workers, employed as machine operators, have fought a long battle against this racist alliance.

When, in 1969, a black operator was elected as a shop steward, most of the white setters left the AUEW and joined the ETU in protest. In 1970, the management wished to train another setter. The operators recommended a black, and the ETU members a white, worker. The management selected the white ETU member, who had only been at the factory for six months. After strikes and go-slows, a black setter was finally appointed in 1971. At this point the setters demanded a training bonus of £1.50, even though they had been training white setters for years.

In late 1972, another black operator, Roderick Adams, was selected for training as a setter. When, last month, a vacancy for a further setter arose, the ETU members refused to train Adams any longer. ETU members are reported to have said that there were 'too many coloured machine setters in the machine shop' (there was one).

The reason why the Labour Party and Communist Party leaderships are hostile to the tradition of black self-defence is not because these leaderships are racist. Far from it. Rather, it has to do with the question of their general political programme. To these parties, the working class will move forward against capitalism by utilising, above all else, the machinery of parliament and the bourgeois state apparatus itself. Of course, revolutionists believe that historical experience shows conclusively that a reliance on these particular instruments is quite useless - worse than useless in fact, for, as Chile demonstrates, the bourgeoisie will overthrow the bourgeois democratic state even if the workers movement refuses to do so, in order to pursue the class struggle. However, this is not the particular point we are making here. The point is, that being committed to the bourgeois democratic state, believing it can be used for the historical goals of the working class, these reformist organisations have also conceded the **monopoly of organised force** to the bourgeois state. Hence if the forces of the state protest at the appearance of 'vigilantes' or whatever the press chooses to call them, then the instinct of the reformists is to support such protest and to try to stop the appearance and development of such forces which are beyond the control of the state and which break its monopoly. In other words, the reformists, in sectarian fashion, look at the question of self-defence, not from whether it meets the needs of the black communities or not, but whether it is in line with their own particular political premises.

2. No Platform for Fascists and Racists

The slogan of no platform for racists and fascists has been adopted by a wide range of working class organisations in recent years. As far as British workers are concerned, it has its precedent in the anti-Mosley campaigns of the 1930s. The most famous example is of course that of Cable Street, where thousands of workers prevented Mosley from marching through the East End of London, despite repeated attacks by police on the workers who were cordoning off the route. Cable Street destroyed Mosley as a political force and saved many East London Jewish families from assault by fascist thugs.

The essential lesson of this experience is still true today. The whole question of no platform is bound up with the need of the working class movement to turn against the racists in its own ranks and come to the defence of the beleaguered racial or religious minorities who have been selected by the fascists for assault as the scapegoat for capitalism's problems.

The point hardly needs further illustration beyond the speech made by Kingsley Read at the time of the murder of Gurdip Chaggar. 'I have been told' he said 'that I cannot refer to coloured immigrants so you will forgive me if I refer to niggers, wogs and coons. As for the murder of an Asian youth in Southall last weekend, that was terribly unfortunate. One down, one million to go.'

In other words, it is quite possible for anybody to get up on a public platform in Britain and advocate **genocide** without fear of arrest or interference — despite the fact that many of the people who originally supported such measures as the Race Relations Acts had just such speeches in mind. Speeches like those of Read are an incitement to physical assault, if not actual murder, of immigrants.

Stopping such people from taking a public platform is not something we urge out of a desire to restrict democratic rights to anybody, but out of regard to the realities of the situation. When the fascists become really powerful as in Germany in 1932 or in Italy in 1921, everybody recognises the true character of these people. They are violent forces of reaction, out to physically break up the workers movement and destroy the democratic rights which the workers have won. Their attacks on racial minorities are only a means through which they get into a strong political position to be able to launch such attacks. Mussolini's Italian fascists were, from the very first days, a predominantly para-military force which attacked workers' demonstrations and meetings with knives and guns. Racism was not part of Mussolini's platform. However, when the fascists are weak, as today, this potential danger — a lethal danger — of fascist development is only implicit in the fascists' actions and programme. For many reasons, including the fact that the working class has drawn certain historical lessons from Italy, Germany, Spain, and Chile, the fascists seek to clothe themselves in a certain respectability. They even masquerade as defenders of free speech.

One of the reasons why demanding no platform for fascists is important, is to draw attention to the real character of the people, such as the National Party or the National Front, who are always pretending that they are not actually fascists, when everything they do follows the classical pattern. Attacking the fascists and silencing their speeches, breaking up their marches and their meetings, is not going to stop racist sentiments in the working class. We all know that. Racism is too deeply embedded, independently of the fascists. But by drawing out their real character, it is going to assist the fight against racism in two distinct ways.

First, a lot of people in the working class can be brought up short by pointing out that the very people who are putting forward vigorous racist agitation are the same sort of people who number Hitler among their antecedents. Pointing this out — and it is true — has an important impact. A large number of people can come to understand the iniquity of racism via this route. When it is demonstrated how the most basic organisations of the working class were broken up by Hitler, Franco, Mussolini and other fascists, in other words, the exponents of racist purges, then this is more effective than appeals to 'humanity', 'one race, the human race' and the other slogans which the Communist Party puts forward that are without class appeal. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly from the point of view of self-defence, depriving the fascists of a platform prevents the fascists from **organising** forces when there is an upsurge of racist sentiment among the broad masses. For the purposes to which the fascists will organise this sentiment are not pleasant — exactly the sort of attacks on the black communities that we have seen in Notting Hill, Nottingham and other areas. Precisely the sort of attacks that the Jewish ghettos experienced in the Thirties in Germany. Racism will not be stopped by organising against the fascists, although a big political blow can be dealt to it. What will be combatted is the sort of mass racist violence that the fascists are seeking to organise. This is because no platform for fascists knocks the stuffing out of the hardcore fascists. If these individuals can be made to feel that their real goal — to destroy the workers movement physically — is unobtainable, then their willingness to join the fascists and their campaigns will be undermined.

Fascism is not the danger in Britain today. But it is worth looking a little deeper at why the fascists are constantly on the look out for situations which they can stir up into a race riot - a situation which can reverse the whole political situation decisively against a minority community. It is because the real concern of the fascists is not with persecuting blacks. It is with building a mass movement prepared to go beyond the boundaries of the law in the course of agitating for the state to be strengthened. This is the starting point for the fascists — they 'explain' that there is a conspiracy to stop the state forces being used against the workers movement (whether it be communists in the army or whatever). So they seek to build bodies which can go beyond the bourgeois state in violent attacks on the workers movement —and when they seize power, the fascists would of course extend the forces of the state enormously. Only if they can offer this prospect to the bourgeoisie do they stand a chance of getting the bourgeois support they need if they are to come to power. It is by harnessing the power of a section of the masses, and by using their forms of struggle, such as demonstrations, strikes, uprisings and so on, that they hope to offer the head of the workers movement to the bourgeoisie on the platter.

To return to the situation today in Britain. If it had not been for the systematic anti-fascist campaign waged against the National Front since 1974 by among others the International Marxist Group and the International Socialists, the fascists would today not only be much stronger, they **would have been able to take real advantage of the present upsurge of racist sentiment among the mass of workers.** The consequences would have been far more serious than a few extra votes in a few by-elections. A new mass attack on the black communities would now be more likely. This is exactly what the fascists have been hoping to stir up with their demonstrations through the heart of the black ghettos, in Leicester, Blackburn, Bradford, Hackney and other places.

The main beneficiary of such an upsurge would not, in the first place at least, be the fascists. It would have the effect of shifting the whole political spectrum much further to the right than has actually occurred in the present economic recession. The main beneficiary of this would be Enoch Powell.

Powell represents an important danger to the working class movement. He is a sort of 'de Gaulle' figure as far as the ruling class are concerned. Powell aims to be the sort of individual strong 'leader' who can come forward in a time of real crisis to 'lead the country'. The basic idea is that the support which exists for Powell among workers exists independent of party or class allegiances — as demonstrated by the fact that powerfully organised workers such as dockers will strike to put him back into an opposition Cabinet. With this sort of support, Powell would hope to appeal over the heads of the traditional organisations of the working class — just as the dockers ignored the warnings of their leaders as they marched past them out the gates. In this position, a government headed by such a man could do real and lasting damage to workers organisations. The ruling class are keeping Powell in reserve. It is probably this, rather than the inadequacies of existing legislation, which explains why Powell has never been threatened with prosecution under the Race Relations laws for his murderous speeches.

We say that these fascists and racists must be stopped: before it is too late. No platform for racists and fascists! For self-defence!



3. Lift all Immigration Laws

The third thing which must be done is that a real campaign must be launched to **get rid of all immigration laws.**

This is one of the most important means whereby the organised workers movement can take up and combat racism among the broad mass of the population. Virtually every black organisation in Britain is on record against the 1971 Immigration Act, if not all immigration laws. The reason for this is not simply because it affects their families, or that it contains clauses for repatriation which could be used in future, or for any one of the many reasons it directly affects them. It is because they understand that the effect of these laws is to place the **blame** for social and economic problems onto immigrant workers, by suggesting that they need controlling, that they are a problem, and so forth.

We say that no black worker is to blame for the problems of capitalism. We say that by taking up the campaign against immigration laws, the organised labour movement would be saying very clearly that it too has no doubt where the real blame lies and that racist campaigns by the ruling class are not going to have any further impact. **Stop blaming the black worker** is what the workers movement should be saying, with one united voice. The Labour Party Conference has already provided an indication of this. What is needed is to make the resolution at the Conference

calling for the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act a reality in terms of an organised campaign of the working class. A good start could be made by opposing the forthcoming Nationality Bill which the Callaghan Government is putting to Parliament.

4. Against all forms of racism and national chauvinism

The three things outlined above need to be done **now**. Immediately. But these will only represent a **beginning**. Experience shows that you can't get rid of something like racism overnight. Whatever campaigns are waged, there will remain a residue of racist sentiment which will threaten to come to the surface at a period of particularly acute stress and capitalist crisis. It is worth looking at the reasons for this.

This racist undercurrent — it might even be called a racist culture among the working class generally in Britain — is a hangover from the period of imperialism. We must not forget that the European powers, by developing their global empires over several centuries, inflicted defeats on other parts of the world which were of truly astonishing proportions. In some of these countries, labour conditions were imposed which were worse than those under feudalism in Europe itself, as for example in the case of slavery. Hence it is not surprising that in the fierce struggles to subject the world to its rule, the Western bourgeoisie developed virulent racist ideologies — both to combat the understandable objections of the subject peoples, and to buttress their own internal cohesion. The working class in the European countries inevitably absorbed a certain amount of this racist ideology, particularly as the bourgeoisie began to buy off the leaders of the workers movement with the promise of mutual benefits to all classes from colonial and imperialist exploitation. These leaderships acted as transmission belts for racism into the working class.

However, if all we were dealing with in Europe was an ideological residue which was losing its historical basis, then we might well expect to see racism occur only as a cultural phenomenon, and a disappearing one at that. Instead what we find in Europe is that racism is actually on the rise in a number of important countries, and that since the late 1960s fascist groups have grown stronger in nearly every single European country. In other words, racism is a real factor in the class struggle.

The reason for this lies in the fact that racism has been 'overlaid' with something which, as far as the broad masses are concerned, is probably more potent: national chauvinism. When workers are urged to expel black people, it is not to defend the 'European interest', but to defend the 'national interest'. The fact that workers from Africa arriving in Britain, and workers from Greece arriving in Germany meet the same sort of treatment when they arrive, despite the difference in skin colour and historical background of Africans and Greeks, illustrates that what we are dealing with is racism as an expression of national chauvinism, rather than simply racism per se. No country in Europe is a 'frontier society', such as South Africa, Rhodesia, or the Southern United States of America. Here the society is founded on racism and the lines of class cleavage more or less coincide with the lines of racial cleavage. In these societies, extreme right-wing developments of a fascist type are generally the main threat to the workers movement. In Europe however, what we face is the existence of social democracy, that is of national chauvinism as the dominant bourgeois ideology of the workers. Also in Britain today, the immediate enemy is of course not the fascists, but the social-democratic demobilisation of the working class struggle.

Photo: John Sturrock (Report)



Only if all forms of national chauvinism are consciously fought against inside the labour movement — in connection with whatever issue it arises — will the ideological background against which racism flourishes be changed. Only a thoroughgoing **internationalism** in all aspects of working class politics will defeat racism. It is perhaps this which explains why Trotskyist organisations, such as the International Marxist Group, British Section of the Fourth International, have

been to the forefront of the anti-racist struggle.

In this respect we feel justified in saying that the recent campaign by the left MPs in favour of import controls is responsible for the present racist upsurge along with the campaigns of the racists themselves. When people advocate **import controls**, they are saying that the problems of British workers will be solved by chucking a Japanese worker out of a job. It is exactly the same principle as that which says that the problems of British workers should be solved by chucking the black worker out of his job, his home and his country.

This is not to minimise the racist threat. This is a pamphlet concerning the fight against racism, not the more general problem of fighting social democracy. However, racism will continue to be a **political** factor in the class struggle for as long as organisations like the Labour Party remain chauvinistic in their policies.

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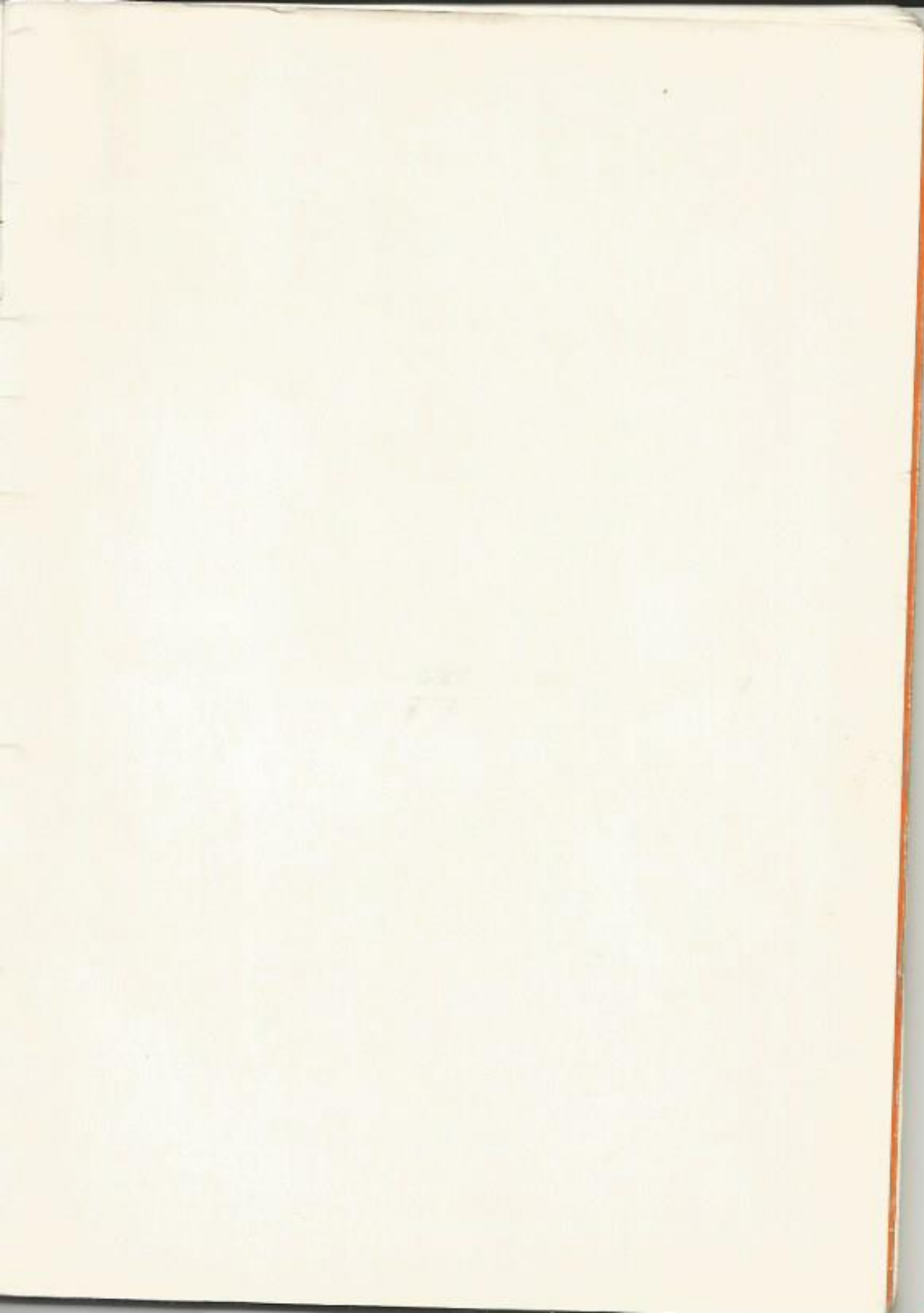
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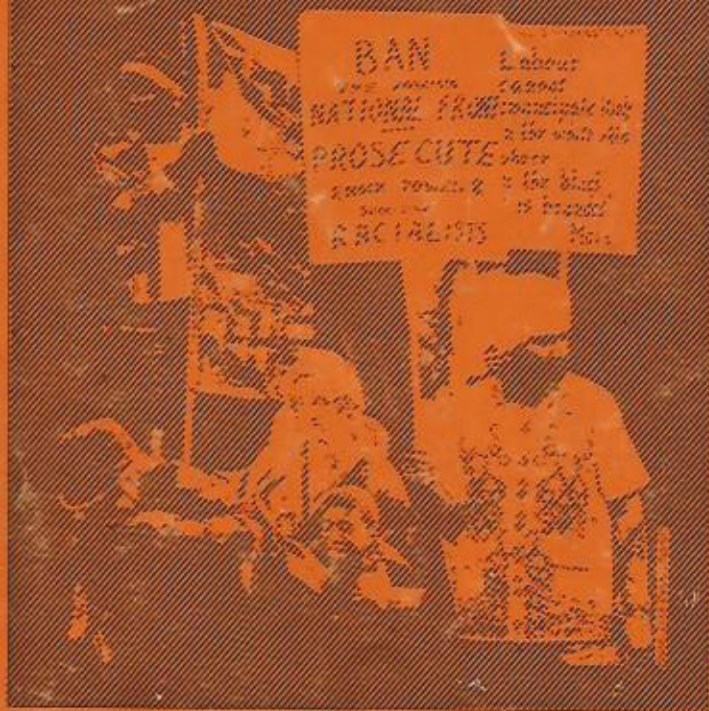
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