

CAMPAIGN AGAINST
carf
RACISM & FASCISM

No 31 April/May 1996 80p



**disarm
the police**

CONTENTS

- Ban the killer spray
3
- Justice for Amer Rafiq
4
- Incitement – the new state weapon
4-5
- Criminalising solidarity
6-7
- Safe for profits...
7
- Roma at risk
8-9
- CARF interview with Raju Bhatt
10

CAMPAIGNS & REPORTS

- No pass laws here
Stop the immigration raids
Benefits case lost
11
- Stop deportations
Victory for Dr Edeh
12
- Justice for Chapeltown
Satpal Ram
Lawrence murder trial
Faith, hope and deportation
Free Véronique
13
- Kick 'n' tell
Mosque myths
14
- Fascist round-up
14-15
- Earl Marshal victory
Anti-racist education for the
north-east
European election round-up
15
- Calendar of race and resistance
16



No 31 April/May 1996
BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX
Tel: 0171-837-1450

ISSN 0966-1050

Printed by Russell Press (TU)

EDITORIAL

DISARM THE POLICE

On 1 March 1996, British police were given new weapons of chemical warfare to try out on the streets. Just two weeks later, Ibrahima Sey, a Gambian asylum-seeker, died after east London police sprayed him with CS spray. Whether he died of the effects of the spray (known to be so dangerous that three police officers are suing their own forces for their injuries, and two forces have refused to use it) or whether, as police claim, from hypertensive heart disease, is not the issue here. The point is that another black man is dead in police custody. For whenever the police tool themselves up with the latest in repressive technology, or use dangerous or untried methods, it is black people who bear the brunt of it, black people who pay the ultimate price – whether it is Joy Gardner, shackled with a body belt and gagged with asphyxiating tape, or Brian Douglas, on whom the new lethal side-handled police baton was used, or Alton Manning or Shiji Lapite, victims of the fatal neckhold.

And redress there is none. The police complaints procedure is a farcical exercise in futility in which the police investigate themselves. Thus, those who arrested Ibrahima Sey have not even been suspended. For families who hope to learn the truth about a death in police custody, the inquest system is a source of frustration, controlled as it is by the coroner and his (police) officer. When, despite all the obstacles put before them, families have obtained a verdict of unlawful killing, still no prosecution of the officers concerned has followed. And when, with the doors of the legal system closed against them, black people speak out, accusing the police bluntly and publicly of racist brutality, of murder, they find themselves facing incitement charges.

But if black people are on the front line, suffering the casualties of policing and the criminal justice system, they are, equally, in the front line of protest. In marches like those in Manchester and east London, reported in this issue, defence campaigns and memorial committees keep the issues of police brutality and accountability to the community at the forefront of people's consciousness and conscience.

But why should it be left to the black community to police the police? ■



Family and friends remember Ibrahima Sey

Ban the killer spray

It took just two weeks from the introduction of CS spray for a black life to be claimed, that of Ibrahima Sey, a 29-year-old father of two and former member of the Gambian football team, who died at Ilford police station on 16 March.

Between 4 and 5am up to 20 police officers from the notorious 'Fortress' Forest Gate police station arrived at the Manor Park home of Mr Sey's family in response to a call from a neighbour about a domestic dispute. Police now admit that Ibrahima went calmly, offering no resistance, after his request that his friend Paa could accompany him to the station was granted.

Ibrahima was taken to Ilford police station (the holding cells at Forest Gate were being refurbished), where he was dragged into the back yard of the station and Paa was told to leave as he was no longer needed. It was at this point, says Paa, that Ibrahima was pushed to the ground and handcuffed by officers sitting on top of him. Police formed a human shield to stop Paa intervening while Ibrahima screamed 'see what they're doing to me'. Paa was taken to an interview room where, five hours later, he was told of his friend's death. Ibrahima's body, which showed bruising to his chest and forehead as well as a split lip, was taken to King George's hospital, where his wife Amie Kunta was receiving treatment. She was confronted by his body on a trolley and forced to identify it.

Stop the cover up

Seemingly, the police realised they were dealing with a politically sensitive death. Workers at Newham Monitoring Project received early-morning calls summoning them to a meeting with police officers and members of the police community consultative group where they were told of the death. The following day, police



spin doctors began their work in earnest with the familiar tactic of character assassination. Just as Joy Gardner was 'the most violent woman we ever saw', Wayne Douglas was a 'mugger' and Shiji Lapite was 'cocaine-



Aziz Rahman

crazed', police attempted to portray Ibrahima as someone who got what he deserved. They have now been forced to apologise for claiming, even before the investigation began, that Ibrahima was violent. Meanwhile, the British High Commission in Gambia claimed that Ibrahima had held his year-old baby out of an upstairs window.

The police post mortem finding that Ibrahima died of 'hypertensive heart disease following a period of exertion', was immediately disputed by his family and friends, who pointed out that he had no history of heart trouble. Then the police attempted to give the impression that he died in hospital, yet hospital records show that he was dead on arrival. The police cannot say exactly when the CS spray was used on Ibrahima, but given that no witnesses saw it used at his home or during the journey to the police station, it must have been used while he was handcuffed at Ilford police station after being separated from Paa.

Uniting the community

In Newham, where police racism and brutality is a fact of life, the death of yet another black man in police custody has outraged and united the community. Within a day of the death some 300 people picketed Forest Gate police station to voice their anger. The next evening 90 people representing numerous African, Asian and religious groups came together to launch a campaign demanding an immediate halt to the use of CS spray and the suspension of the officers involved in Ibrahima's death.

A march the following weekend from Forest Gate police station to Ilford police station, passing Ibrahima's home, attracted over 1,000, mainly local, people who demanded an end to the deaths in custody which have provoked so many protests in the past year. ■

Ibrahima Sey Memorial Campaign, c/o PO Box 273, London E7. Tel 0181 555 8151.

DISARM
THE POLICE

THE FACTS ON CS SPRAY

Chemical sprays have been used for public order control since the 1920s. In Britain, the use of chemical gas was authorised only on armed and besieged criminals. In Northern Ireland, CS gas began to be used routinely for crowd control in the 1970s.

Its first use in Britain for public order was during the Liverpool uprisings of July 1981, when Merseyside police fired 59 rounds of CS gas cartridges and 15 grenades, hospitalising five members of the public. The gas was fired from shotguns. The then home secretary Willie Whitelaw promised it would not be used that way again. But in 1986, then home secretary Douglas Hurd authorised chief constables to draw supplies of CS gas from centralised stocks, to get round local police authorities who refused to allow their forces to stock it. At that time, scientists warned that in high concentrations the gas could cause serious and lasting lung damage and even death.

The CS spray used on Ibrahima Sey in Ilford is manufactured by a French company and is used in France and Belgium. Belgian police

are reported to be looking for a safer substitute. In Britain, training trials were interrupted in June 1995 when a police inspector suffered 50 per cent burns to his eyes. He is now suing Northamptonshire police for damages, as are two other police instructors injured while demonstrating the spray. The manufacturers of the spray recommend that it is used with the Biocare aftercare product which reduces the risk of serious burns, a recommendation which British police have chosen to ignore. Despite the concerns over the spray's safety, over 2,000 officers began using it on 1 March in 20 police areas nationwide, wearing it in small containers on their belts. Seven suspects were reported to have been restrained by it in the first weekend of its use. Two forces in England have refused to go ahead with it until they are satisfied of its safety for their officers. But a leaked Association of Chief Police Officers memo said that chief constables were not prepared to wait for a safe solvent. Since Ibrahima Sey's death, ACPO is reconsidering the medical and legal implications of its use. ■



S O'Neill

DISARM THE POLICE Justice for Amer Rafiq

Manchester, 9 March 1996. Manchester is on the march. Community elders are on hunger strike, nearly every shop in Wilmslow Road is closed on what should be a busy Saturday afternoon, and over 2,500 angry people are marching past Platt Lane police station.

It is just three weeks since Manchester's Eid celebrations, when Muslims from across the north of England came to celebrate in Wilmslow Road, the heart of the local Asian community. Three weeks since Amer Rafiq, a 21-year-old restaurant waiter and part-time student from Longsight was so brutally 'restrained' in a police van that he lost his eye.

'If Amer had been in that police van for ten minutes more, we would be attending his funeral instead of this demonstration,' his friend told the rally. It was at 2am on 21 February that Amer finished work and went to join the party. A dispute with the police over where he had parked his car led to his arrest. What happened in that police van is now the subject of a Police Complaints Authority



investigation and a civil action by Amer's lawyers. What is clear is that Amer was eventually dumped by police, unaccompanied, outside the hospital, where a four-hour operation failed to save his right

eye. He was left with a badly bruised jaw and unable to speak or eat for over a week. His family was not even informed that he had been injured.

Four of the policemen involved have been removed from operational duties, but for Amer's family and the campaign this is inadequate. They are demanding the immediate suspension of the officers involved and a full public inquiry: 'We are not talking about an individual police officer. Behind a police officer lies the full might of the British establishment.' What happened to Amer was no accident. Anyone who has been on Wilmslow Road on Eid in previous years has witnessed the oppressive police presence and shameless brutality of riot squads, horses, helicopters and dogs. 'To them we are just "Pakis" - to be cleared off the streets,' said Tariq Mehmood of the Amer Rafiq Defence Campaign.

For Manchester's black community the demonstration was a significant achievement and there is now talk of an independent black youth movement. In the week preceding the march Amer's friends visited mosques and youth groups across the north of England and brought together the old and the young, men and women, Sikhs, Hindus, whites, and African-Caribbeans. Asian women had their own meetings and organised their own contingent on the march. Reading a solidarity message from Stephanie Lightfoot-Bennett, the sister of Leon Patterson who died at the hands of Stockport police, Manchester activist Mukhtar Dar reminded the rally that the attack on Amer was not just an attack on the Muslim community. 'Both Asians and African-Caribbeans are being brutalised in police custody - at the end of the day we are all black.' ■

Amer Rafiq Defence Campaign c/o Pakistani Community Centre, Stockport Road, Manchester. Tel 0831 366051 or 0402 124805.

We demand - No cover up • Justice for Amer Rafiq • Punish the culprits • Freedom for religious and cultural association • Compensate Amer Rafiq

Incitement

Across Europe, incitement laws brought in to protect minorities are being used against black people and anti-racists.

Black people took to the streets of Brixton in December 1995 to protest at the death of Wayne Douglas at the hands of the police. Two days later the police suggested that charges of incitement might be brought against black speakers at the Brixton rally. In January a Belgian court sentenced Tali ben Salah on a very similar charge. He had been a speaker at a black protest rally in Molenbeek on 5 April 1995, called after police opened fire on Turgut Sag, a man of Turkish origin. Tali got a one year suspended sentence for 'incitement to riot'. And in Bremen in January, two Anti-racist Bureau workers were charged with offences of 'inciting hatred' for a damning critique they had written of the police and politicians.

There appears to be a systematic attempt to close down criticism of the policing of black people - all black people, whether those like Wayne Douglas who are born here, or those like George B and João S who were asylum-seekers brutalised by police in Germany.

Trial by 'white' media

In Britain the police worked very obviously in cahoots with the media. The first day's reporting after the Brixton protest had, predictably, not been about Wayne's death, but the damage caused by 'rioters'. But no sooner had police commissioner Condon said that he was considering incitement charges because of the inflammatory nature of the speeches made at the rally, than the media changed tack. Damage was forgotten as the press (from the gutter to the genteel) took up the incitement refrain.

First they suggested a conspiracy: 'The plot that lit riot fire' in the *Express*, 'Mob plot to shoot police' in the *Mail*. Then the individual speakers were attacked. For the *Sun* Rudy Narayan was 'Dangermouth', for the *Mail* he was a 'firebrand' with an 'acid tongue', a 'Bull in Brixton's china shop', wrote the *Independent*, 'Ranter who fanned fire' screamed the *Express*.

Attack on black press

Third came the attack on black newspapers which had, in advance of the

— the new state weapon

demonstration, exposed police brutality. The *Voice* had already been targeted by the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Telegraph* whose report of the 'riot' stated, 'Anger had been roused by this week's edition of the black newspaper the *Voice* which interviews a man who claimed to have witnessed the police beating Douglas.' But, by 15 January, everyone was joining in. The *Mail* attacked 'black community newspapers', the *Telegraph* ran another prominent feature, *The Independent* and *Observer* reproduced the *Voice*'s front cover. The *Sunday Express* exposed 'the extremists behind the chaos' and the *Mail on Sunday* did an exposé of the sinister middle-class life-style of the *Voice*'s owner.

It is not clear whether the police planted stories about the black newspapers, but at the end of January Condon went on radio to attack the *Voice* for being 'irresponsible' and 'inflammatory', and 'fuelling discontent'. The *Voice* stood by its original cover story and the information (with a sworn affidavit) from the witness to the events of Wayne's death.

In the Belgian case, too, there was a trial by media, though of a different kind. Tali was interviewed on TV on the evening of the demonstration and he calmly explained his indignation. He said that whilst much was being made of the riot he

feared that the police who had opened fire for no reason would once again go unpunished. And those words were translated as 'incitement to riot'.

Incitement protection backfires

It is ironic that legislation about banning incitement which was brought on to the statute books to protect minorities from fascists, is now being used against black people and anti-racist campaigners. This has not happened here since the 1960s, when Michael X, Roy Sawh, Alex Watson, Ajoy Ghose and Uyornunnu Ezekiel were all charged under the 1965 Race Relations Act. It is significant that all the campaigners facing charges across Europe are not talking about any ethnic group or even white society but protesting at the violence of their respective police forces.

In Germany the Bremen anti-racists are charged for inciting hatred (against the police) under section 130 of the Criminal Code. This Code, devised after the war to prevent a recurrence of Nazism, was strengthened two years ago to deal with neo-nazi groups, right-wing propaganda and those who specifically denied the holocaust. It is being used against anti-racists for the first time.

In May 1995, a tribunal of Bremen

judges met to hear evidence of police malpractice. Anti-racists gave evidence to the tribunal of police brutality and especially of one incident in which two asylum-seekers were forced to drink an emetic by police officers. This evidence was published as a pamphlet called *The police who make you sick*. Then in January 1996, when police raided their offices (see CARF 30) and accused the organisation of defaming a public person and using words which associated public figures with Nazis (because of a leaflet against deportations) the seven-month-old report on policing suddenly became a crime. The workers face up to five years imprisonment for their supposed libel and up to three years imprisonment for inciting hatred. Amnesty International is highly critical of the use of the criminal law to 'stifle criticism of state authorities – including law enforcement bodies – or to intimidate those who voice legitimate concern about the action of practices of state authorities'.

As the British organisation Statewatch explained to CARF, the bringing of such charges in three countries is no coincidence. 'It comes as no surprise,' said Tony Bunyan; 'police officers have for years been "informally" exchanging views on tactics when they get together in regular meetings in Brussels.' ■



Criminalising solidarity

It is not just asylum-seekers and immigrants who are attacked under the new Asylum and Immigration Bill; those who help them could find themselves in the dock, as they have in other European countries.

In October 1995, Sylvie B, a French woman of Chatillon (Hauts de Seine), was given a three-month suspended sentence for trying to marry the Congolese boyfriend she had lived with for two years. She was the first woman to be convicted under laws which criminalised 'aiding irregular stay'. In December, a 56-year-old Algerian on an invalidity pension, who had lived in France for 30 years, was prosecuted for assisting the 'illegal' entry of his wife.



When the laws were passed in December 1994, interior minister Charles Pasqua said they were designed to deal with professional smugglers and profiteers, and ridiculed the idea that they would be used for those motivated by humanitarian reasons or by friendship.

These cases have lessons for Britain, as the government prepares to create a raft of new immigration-related offences, strengthen existing ones, increase penalties and give the police more powers. Under the proposed Asylum and Immigration Bill, it will be an offence to help an asylum-seeker to get into the country (although those working for refugee organisations are exempt).

Even now, every week people are convicted at ports such as Dover and sent to prison for two or three years for smuggling immigrants and asylum-seekers in to the country in lorries, vans and cars, under existing laws penalising those who assist illegal entry. But the new Bill will additionally criminalise those bringing in asylum-seekers perfectly legally.

The government claims that the new offence is aimed only at criminals and

racketeers who profit from the desperation of those seeking asylum in western Europe. But, although the Bill exempts those 'acting otherwise than for gain', it is likely that many people moved by friendship or common humanity will find themselves on trial, having to prove their innocence of commercial motive.

Creating crimes

Creating more criminal offences is not, in any event, the way to deal with the criminal profiteers. For it is the actions of western European governments in imposing visa requirements and carrier sanctions which force asylum-seekers into the arms of such agents in the first place. The December 1995 conviction in Lyons of the captain and crew who murdered eight African stowaways and threw them into the sea off Portugal to avoid carriers' liability fines, should have brought home the message. The abolition of carrier sanctions to allow asylum-seekers to reach western Europe legally, is the only way to get rid of the trade in desperation, with its attendant dangers.

This is not the only new offence under the Bill. Other provisions criminalise those using deception to stay in the UK, and anyone who helps them. If someone has lied to stay in the country, no matter how desperate their circumstances, not only will they be guilty of an offence but so will anyone else who helps them stay. We could see couples arrested at the registry office or the altar, under the proposed law.

With no exemption for humanitarian motivation or for those engaged in refugee assistance work, these measures could criminalise out of existence ad-hoc groups of rejected asylum-seekers, groups which provide sanctuary to those facing deportation and organisations which help runaway domestic workers find security and decent employment.

Solidarity groups working with abused domestic workers, and offering 'sanctuary' to rejected asylum-seekers, have long had to walk a tightrope. Since 1971, it has been a criminal offence to 'harbour' those entering or staying in the country without authorisation. The harbouring law has hardly ever been used. But the creation of the new offences of helping people stay signals a clear intention by the Home Office to crack down.

It is no coincidence that similar laws are being put in place elsewhere in Europe. In Belgium, laws penalising those who provide assistance to foreigners without residence permits went through the Cabinet in December 1995. In France, an anti-terrorist bill adopted by the National Assembly in December makes aiding unauthorised foreigners a terrorist act in certain circumstances.

This European-wide criminalisation of those who 'aid and abet' foreigners to enter or stay derives from a common programme adopted by EU immigration and home affairs ministers in 1993, and designed particularly to combat illegal working in the Community. Most other European countries already have



The Ogunwobi family marked the end of their second year in sanctuary in Hackney Downs Baptist Church on 25 March by holding a protest outside Downing Street. Under the new Bill those who assist them could be prosecuted.

David Haslam/CofA

employer sanctions, and Britain is proposing to follow suit with the introduction of employer sanctions in the new Bill.

Deterring employers

Employer sanctions – the imposition of criminal penalties on those who hire unauthorised workers – are sometimes justified by the need to protect such workers from exploitation. Some countries, such as Austria, tie in employer sanctions with fines for paying less than the minimum wage.



Photos: Darren Jakobsen

But, in Britain at least, such an argument rings false, when minimum wages, health and safety provision and other official protection against exploitation have been systematically dismantled.

In Germany, where such sanctions are a long-standing feature of internal immigration controls, the construction union IG Bau-Steine-Erden recently drew attention to the fact that one in four construction workers is unauthorised, and to the poverty wages of foreign workers. The evidence demonstrates that, far from protecting unauthorised workers, employer sanctions drive them into even worse conditions of exploitation, since only the worst employers will take them on.

In Britain, the government reassures employers that all they will need to do to avoid criminal liability is to see a prospective worker's NI card or, if there isn't one, a passport or birth certificate before hiring. But belying the claim that the measures would impose no additional administrative burden is an offer of training in understanding passport stamps, so that employers would be able to ascertain from a passport whether someone had the right to work or not. Employers, like airlines, are to become unpaid immigration officers, on pain of fines. Not surprisingly, the proposals are unpopular. And their effect on the settled black workforce could be dramatic: more than half of employers polled in a survey say that if the new law comes in, they will not bother to hire black workers at all.

Safe for profits...

In January 1996, home secretary Michael Howard announced three more countries deemed 'safe' under the Asylum and Immigration Bill now going through parliament. They are Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya.

While there has been an improvement in human rights in Ethiopia over the past year or so, according to Human Rights Watch, the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups in particular claim persistent government harassment, including the assassinations of members and supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front. The Amhara complain that activists have been detained for public discussion of human rights abuses. Several journalists have been detained without charge or trial and the whereabouts of some remain unknown after a year. Oromo Relief Association offices were closed down and ORA workers subjected to arbitrary detentions.

The United States is the main aid donor, providing \$125m in bilateral assistance, the second largest amount after South Africa. It has strategic interests in Ethiopia as an ally in the Horn of Africa, which sits at the southern end of the Suez canal.

In Kenya, according to Human Rights Watch, the Moi government continues to intimidate and harass the opposition and persecute displaced ethnic groups. Autocratic president Daniel Arap Moi proclaimed that criticism of his government was treason, and called for the arrest of those insulting him. There was a

crackdown on human rights activists and opposition politicians in early 1995, with independent organisations banned or their headquarters firebombed. Journalists were dismissed and detained and the government kept its monopoly over radio and TV. Ethnic groups from the Rift Valley, displaced by a campaign of terror by Moi's government in the early 1990s, were persecuted and intimidated and their resettlement was obstructed.

Britain is the largest bilateral aid donor, giving £31m. British companies have an estimated £2bn invested in Kenya. Germany, Denmark and Japan cut aid to show their disapproval of the worsening political and human rights profile of the government, but Britain blocked EU attempts to make aid conditional on improvement.

Meanwhile, Howard suffered a setback in his attempt to deport Saudi human rights activist Mohammed al-Masari to Dominica in February, when the chief immigration adjudicator declared himself not satisfied that Masari would be safe in Dominica and ordered the Home Office to reconsider. ■



Legalising 'fishing raids'

Finally, to drive home the message that Britain doesn't want unauthorised workers, police are to get extended powers of search and arrest in cases of suspected overstaying and illegal entry, newly defined as 'serious arrestable offences'. This provision will legalise the 'fishing raids', or raids on workplaces where whole

workforces are carted off for an immigration check. Common in the seventies, these blanket raids were banned in the eighties but have made a comeback in the nineties under the guise of warrants for named individuals. Such niceties are no longer called for in an era of mass deportation.

In Denmark, the police banned public fundraising in 1995 by the Danish Committee for Refugees Underground, suspecting that the money collected by the group was used to provide help to rejected asylum-seekers in hiding. The public was thus deprived of the opportunity to express its fundamental disapproval of racist and vicious laws excluding refugees from protection.

If these measures become law, many organisations in Britain helping immigrants and refugees will have to go underground. The message sent out by the government is that asylum-seekers are a menace on a par with dangerous drugs, who must be kept out of the country at all costs – a message of comfort to indigenous racists. ■



Roma at risk

Half a century ago Europe was coming to terms with the holocaust and the fact that among those who perished were half a million Roma people (Gypsies). Yet 50 years on, the Roma are, yet again, in fear for their lives.

The Roma, it is believed, became a nomadic people fleeing pogrom after pogrom as they travelled over 800 years from Rajasthan, through Iran and the Middle East to Europe. Now, they have nowhere to run. As Germany deports over 100,000 Roma to Romania, the Czech Republic (CR) refuses the majority of Roma citizenship. Denied settlement in the west

forced to live 30 to a house), wily (when they use any means to achieve some justice) lazy (when they are refused work), the Roma have become targets for the skinhead gangs of central Europe.

Hungary

The Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities in Budapest has recently published a list of 35 serious cases of violence or discrimination against Hungary's Roma in 1995. What emerges from these testimonies is not just the level of fascist violence but the institutional racism from medical and legal services and the overt racism of local police forces.

In March 1995, when a Roma family in Pest county were busy renovating a farm they had just bought, molotov cocktails were hurled into a downstairs room at night by a group of skinheads wielding a bayonet, gun, sword, baseball bats and iron bars. They were members of the fascist Party of the Creators of National Unity (whose leader Albert Szabohad formerly led the World National Popular Rule Party which had been banned under legislation outlawing neo-nazi parties). The group had spent an afternoon drinking and watching videos of skinhead bands, and decided to 'get some action' by attacking the Roma home.

The attacked family was far too poor to pay for legal advice. 'My children wear summer shoes in the wintertime... we live from day to day, often we do not know what we will eat tomorrow', wrote the mother to the independent Legal Defence Bureau. The police and prosecuting authorities hardly seemed to care, and the incident only came to light seven months later in the local press when another crime was investigated. Local government officials did not visit the family till three months after the attack. And the prosecutor is reluctant to charge with racial crimes, which could incur a sentence of two to eight years' imprisonment—charges of simple assault are being brought instead.

Everyday racism has become the norm in Hungary, where unemployment among the Roma runs at 40 per cent and they comprise 60 per cent of the prison population. Doctors won't treat Roma, town hall ceremonies exclude them, newspapers vilify them, their football teams are not allowed into changing rooms, support is withdrawn from local Minority Councils. On 15 July 1995, a man died in Paszto at the hands of the same police force which was responsible for beating up a Roma rape suspect so badly that he had to have most of a testicle removed. The investigation department of the prosecutor's office decided the police had



David Drew

and rights in the east, the Roma have become the most reviled 'nation'. The result is a massive increase in racial violence.

In a survey of students in Usti, 30 per cent believed that all Roma should have gone to the gas chambers. Another poll found that 86 per cent of non-Roma Czechs had strong objections to accepting Roma as neighbours. Ninety-six per cent felt that Roma were lazy and unable to adapt to new market conditions. Every racist epithet is applied to the Roma, who are despised both as a kind of underclass in the city and a marauding tribe in the countryside.

The Roma are said to be stupid and uneducated. Meanwhile their children are systematically put into special schools because, speaking only Romani, they cannot pass entrance tests to normal schools. They are said to be work-shy and shiftless. The Roma were imprisoned for resisting the Communist regimes' attempts to force them into sedentary employment. And when they try to make a living on the streets of the city, they are derided as thieving hawkers. Dirty (when they are

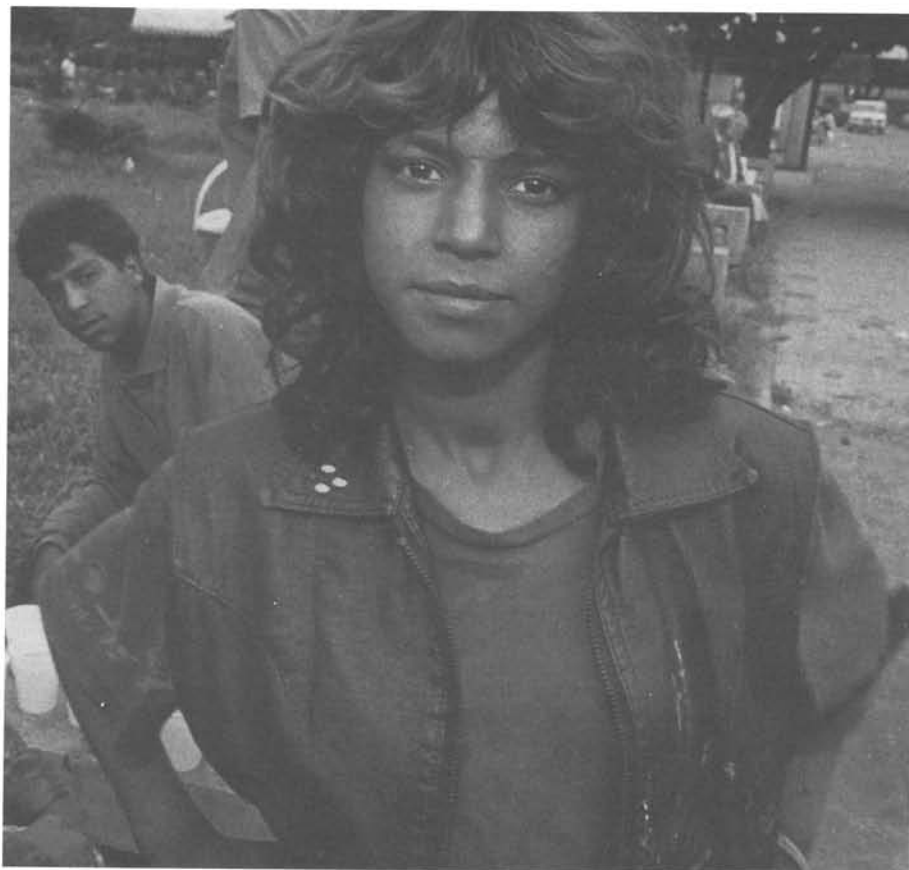
Czech citizenship law

After the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993 the Czech Republic has effectively denied citizenship to an estimated 100,000 Roma on the basis that they are in fact Slovaks. They cannot claim health and social benefits, apply for jobs, vote or hold public office. According to the UN, 'Citizenship legislation is being based on ethnicity under a cloak of democracy.' Key figures like President Havel refuse to budge on the citizenship issue, despite their public condemnation of racism, because they know the new restrictive regulations pander to popular racist sentiments.

Most Roma in the CR have Slovak citizenship. (Almost every Czech Roma was killed in the holocaust.) They were initially brought in as unskilled labour after the Second World War following the expulsion of Germans from the Sudetenland. When there was one country of Czechoslovakia, it was, of course, irrelevant where one hailed from. But now it is all-important and the

pressure is on to rid the CR of its Roma population.

To renounce Slovak citizenship so as to qualify for the Czech one is no easy matter. Many Roma are illiterate and just do not understand the process. Then it means a visit to Slovakia, which most people cannot afford. And people are given eight days to get the required documents when it actually takes an average of five weeks to obtain them. In addition they must have a clean criminal record for the last five years and proof of two years' residency. Both of these are hard qualifications for many Roma. During the Communist period failing to do national service and refusing to take state jobs were both criminal offences. In addition, the overcrowding forced on Roma families means that many do not have residence documents. (Now, under international pressure, the Czech government may be about to waive the requirement of a clean criminal record.)



no case to answer, on the basis that he had sustained the injury days before his arrest (and had, therefore, raped while suffering extreme genital injury?).

Czech Republic

Even the Czech police admit that skinhead attacks against Roma have increased dramatically. They say 60 incidents were reported to them in 1995. And the independent Citizens' Solidarity and Tolerance Movement (HOST) has recorded 166 serious attacks during the past year.

The worst was certainly the attack on the Roma family Berki in Zd'ar nad Sázavou last May. Four skinheads broke into their house at night and started to smash furnishings with an axe and baseball bat. Tibor Berki, 43, tried to defend himself with his bare hands. One attacker hit him on the head repeatedly with a bat. Three hours later he died from a brain haemorrhage. When the case was heard a racial motive was ruled out by the court. While one 21-year-old skinhead was found guilty of murder and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment, the others were only changed with illegal entry and violence against a group. One got a suspended sentence. According to HOST, this was the fifteenth racial murder since 1990.

Massive Roma resistance and country-wide protests against racism were announced by 28 organisations which met in Prague on 10 December 1995. Roma organisations are demanding that the

government outlaw all racist organisations, prosecute crimes motivated by racism, ensure that the police give protection against violence and give them back citizenship rights. Roma are increasingly tired of waiting for the government to take action against the growing racism and are calling for self-defence.

Self-reliance

Whilst governments stall on introducing real measures to protect Roma or deliver post-Communist equality and human rights to all, the NGOs and foundations have swarmed to eastern Europe. The 'Roma issue' is part of a new radical chic. And, just as the Black Power organisations of the 1960s had their white hangers-on, the Roma today have their groupies.

Rudko Kawczynski, president of the Roma National Congress, was extremely forthright about the dilemmas facing the Roma today. At a human rights conference in Prague on 8 March, he denounced the new 'Roma industry' of NGOs and researchers who purport to know Roma needs and speak on their behalf. Stressing the need for Roma unity, self-reliance and self-organisation he said, 'we must bring about our own liberation'. ■

Information provided by HOST, PO Box 13, 128 00 Prague 2, Czech Republic; The Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, H-1537 Budapest 114, POB 453/269, Hungary; CPRSI, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Krucza 36/Wspolna 6, 00-522 Warsaw, Poland; Romnews, RNC, Simon-von-Utrecht-Str.85, D-20359 Hamburg, Germany, and the Institute of Race Relations' European Race Audit.

Fascist groups becoming established in the Czech Republic are able both to recruit skinheads locally and make international contacts.

The National Fascist Community

Founded: 1992

Ideology: Czech fascism, racism, anti-Semitism

Publication: *Agressor*

Links: Bohemia Hammer Skins

Actions: series of demonstrations 1992/3

Numbers: c50

The Patriotic Front

Founded: 1993 (officially registered as a civic movement with Interior Ministry)

Ideology: National socialism, racism, anti-Semitism, neo-nazism

Publications: *New Order, Fenix, Nation*

Links: Le Pen's National Front and Dnesek

Numbers: c100-150

The National Movement

Founded: 1993

Ideology: Czech fascism, anti-Semitism

Publication: *Dnesek*

Bedford

Founded: 1991 using name of a KKK founder

Ideology: Militant anti-Semitism

Jednota Kalicha - The Goblet Unity

Effort to unite all 'patriotic' skinheads in CR

Patriotic League

Founded: 1993 by members of Bedford, Goblet Unity and New Czech Unity, and registered as a civic movement

Ideology: nationalism

Publications: *Czech Shield, Sling Boy, Clean Shield*

Actions: demonstrations and marches 1994

Numbers: c200

Bohemia Hammer Skins

Founded: 1993 by skinheads in CR

Ideology: national socialism, racism, anti-Semitism

Links: to Hammer Skinheads in USA and Europe

Publications: *Der Sturmer, New Europe, White Warriors, Patriot, Hammer News* plus videos

Actions: Six concerts since October 1993

Numbers: c150+

National Socialist Movement of Europe

Ideology: National socialism, neo-nazism, racism

Links: similar groups in western Europe

Numbers: c200

The National Pure Front

Founded: 1994, registered as a civic movement

Ideology: nationalism

Publication: *Národní bej*

Also Templar Knights of the KKK, HASS, White Aryan Resistance, Militant Group Beroun and Militant Group Ostrava have been operating in CR.

Information provided by HOST, PO Box 13, 128 00 Prague 2, Czech Republic.

In the wake of the 'unlawful killing' verdict brought against two police officers at the inquest of Shiji Lapite, CARF spoke to the Lapite family's solicitor, Raju Bhatt, who has represented many black families over deaths in custody

Lift the shroud of secrecy

What do you think of the Lapite verdict?

The verdict was an indictment not just of the police officers whose actions led to an unlawful killing, but of the police force as a whole and, in particular, the commissioner Paul Condon. The verdict resulted from evidence about the force used by the arresting officers, the stranglehold they applied, and the consequences of that stranglehold – the death. The evidence also included an astonishing account by those responsible for training the metropolitan police who claimed that they were not aware of any warnings about the dangers inherent in the use of neckholds. The finger points directly at Paul Condon, because some nine months before the death he would have received a circular from the Association of Chief Police Officers advising every chief constable that the fatal risks of using neckholds were such that these holds were to be avoided if at all possible.

What will happen now?

The two police officers involved remain suspended pending a reconsideration of the case by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The jury at the inquest were satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that there was an unlawful killing. So, as a matter of common sense, it would be pretty surprising if the CPS came to a different

view. However, experience has taught us that even in such circumstances the CPS remain unwilling to bring criminal charges against police officers responsible.

Whether or not there is a prosecution, Scotland Yard and the Police Complaints Authority will have to decide whether to bring any disciplinary charges against the two officers. The conduct of any such proceedings will be in the hands of the commissioner, the officers will be represented by lawyers through the Police Federation and Lapite's family will have no say in what happens.

Is it open to the family to consider bringing a private prosecution in the criminal courts?

There has been no private prosecution in these circumstances in the past, to my knowledge, and for good reason. The private prosecutor is not entitled to legal aid so the bereaved family would have to bear the burden of the costs in an attempt to take on the responsibilities of the state without the resources available to the state. If the officers were acquitted their costs could be landed on the family – and those costs could be so enormous as to bankrupt most people.

What about a civil claim?

The way in which the law works is extremely inhuman, cruel and certainly not about justice. To get a claim off the ground, you have to show not just that you can prove liability for the death but also a resulting financial loss. The law looks not at the value of the loss of the life but the value of the financial losses resulting from the loss of life. And in many cases where a person who has died was not supporting anyone, the door is closed.

What can concerned members of the public do?

Members of the public should write to the director of public prosecutions (who heads the CPS) letting her know that it is not just the family who is waiting and watching. Similarly, the public at large should be writing to the commissioner asking him to explain how in all conscience

DISARM THE POLICE

he sat, it would seem, on warnings which, if he had acted, might have saved the life of this man.

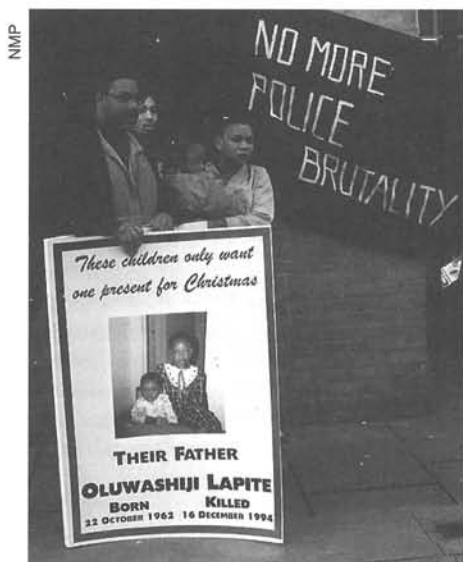
You have been involved in a number of other deaths in custody cases. What is your experience?

There is great frustration about the shroud of secrecy which comes down around any such death, the absence of any procedures which might allow justice to be seen to be done – from the investigative stages and the inquest (where the remit is so narrow and restrictive) through to the functions of the CPS and the disciplinary authorities. It is almost as if the authorities are engaged in a conspiracy (I use the word deliberately) to ensure that justice is not seen to be done. The way these things are investigated not only endangers public confidence in the police, but sabotages it almost beyond salvage.

Many families with members who have died in custody go on campaigning because they want to stop it happening to anyone else. What can they achieve?

We are talking about an absence of political will to stop what often amounts to extra-judicial killings and to control officers of the police and prison service. We need accountability at all stages – from our own organisations and from the arms of the state – but we don't see it in the investigative and disciplinary processes, we don't see it in the criminal justice system, we don't see it in lessons being learnt.

As a lawyer I find myself counselling families about the failure of the system more than anything else. I hope the day will come when I don't have to do that. I hope the day will come when, even if there is a death in custody, lawyers like myself will not be needed because the investigation will be carried out by the state itself in such a way that the family will see that justice has been seen to be done. ■





No pass laws here



Darren Jakobsen

While 10,000 people marched against the Asylum and Immigration Bill in central London on 24 February, community groups and trade unions have been campaigning against the new regime. Numerous stories of internal controls and passport checks are coming to light.

St Thomas' Hospital in London has instructed general practitioners who make hospital referrals to check the immigration status of patients who might be overseas visitors. It demanded Home Office documentation prior to offering out-patient appointments, although this instruction has now been withdrawn. However, in other bodies existing management structures are being used to carry out checks. Thus, at least one DSS office in Hackney has attempted to turn away people who speak neither English

or Turkish, which most French-speaking African asylum-seekers obviously can't.

One hospital personnel department has tried to stop asylum-seekers being given permanent jobs, on the basis that they may not be in the country permanently. And at University College Hospital, London, a clear attempt was made to intimidate and victimise black workers through the use of immigration checks. Unison has protested vigorously about a letter from the personnel department which warned staff that 'If it is discovered through spot checks or other measures that you do not have an up-to-date permit/authorisation it will not be possible to continue your employment'. Unison points out that the letter was sent only to domestic and portering staff, who make up the largest section of black workers at the hospital. ■

Stop the immigration raids

Fear of immigration police is thought to have been responsible for the death of a woman in east London on 15 March. 35-year-old Nilla Nurjahan, who is thought to have been an unregistered migrant, fell 30 feet to her death from a balcony of Luke House in Stepney when immigration police visited her home. Police stated that they were looking for a male at that address. Both Joseph Nnuale and Kwanele Siziba died last year while attempting to escape immigration officials because they feared deportation. The climate of fear among migrant communities which is being created by the new legislation will undoubtedly lead to more deaths. ■

Benefits case lost

The removal of social security benefits from refused asylum-seekers and from those who claim after arrival was declared legal by the High Court in March. The court threw out a legal challenge by JCWI and by Zairean asylum-seeker 'Miss B', who was refused benefits when she claimed asylum at the Home Office in Croydon on the day she arrived in Britain instead of claiming on Eurostar. Miss B fled from Zaire after her husband was killed and she was raped by security forces. The judges said that social security minister Peter Lilley was entitled to save public money, and taking away benefits was not a 'plain and direct' interference with refugees' rights to claim asylum and to appeal against refusal. But they turned down the social security minister's demand that JCWI pay his costs.

The legal struggle against the benefit cuts will go on, with appeals to the Court of Appeal by Miss B, and hopefully by JCWI as well. Meanwhile, a consortium of lawyers' firms dealing with asylum-seekers, together with the Refugee Legal Centre, have won the right to have posters put up at arrival areas at airports, warning people to apply for asylum there rather than waiting. The British Airports Authority initially refused the request on the instructions of the Immigration Service, but then backed down. Negotiations continue over the siting and wording of the posters, and the languages they should be in. Practical action to help those refused benefits has demanded new forms of protest and, in some cases, direct action. In Hackney, homeless asylum-seekers have occupied an old disused courthouse, where they sleep and provide food for those in need, aided by the squatters' group SQUASH. ■

The Refugee Council is collecting information on emergency local provisions for asylum-seekers in a central register. If you have information on local initiatives offering practical help to asylum-seekers denied benefits, or need that information, please contact Maxine Edney, Emergency Accommodations Coordinator, Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ. Tel 0171-820 3063.

DEMONSTRATE

Stop the Asylum and Immigration Bill

Saturday 20 April
Assemble 11am
Embankment, London SW1

Called by CAIAB 0171 247 9907

Stop deportations

Congratulations to **Akin Adeboye** who was granted asylum by a Glasgow immigration tribunal at the end of January. The tribunal heard evidence from Colonel Nyiam, a former member of the Nigerian inner cabinet in the 1980s, who fled to Britain as a wanted man. He confirmed that Akin had been a covert information officer, passing government documents to dissidents and the media, and that he would face death squads if returned to Nigeria. Akin is one of just five Nigerians to be granted asylum out of the last 9,000 applications. He dedicated the tribunal's judgement to the memory of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other democracy activists executed by the Nigerian dictatorship last year.

Meanwhile another Nigerian, 20-year-old **Ade Onibiyo**, son of Abdul Onibiyo who was deported last October and who has not been heard from since, has lost an appeal against his deportation order. Although lawyers won an important legal principle when judges ruled that he was entitled, due to changed circumstances, to make a fresh asylum application, they rejected Ade's case. Ade will now take his fight to the House of Lords. Lambeth Unison has mounted a high profile campaign in order to prevent the Onibiyo family being further destroyed.

Victory for Dr Edeh

CARF is pleased to report that Dr Yedullah Anthony Edeh, a former leading member of the Nigerian Oilworkers Union (see CARF 29), had his asylum application granted by the German authorities in February. Dr Edeh arrived in Germany following the imposition of military rule in Nigeria in 1993. He was held by the German authorities in appalling conditions on a container ship in Bremen, from where he organised protests and strikes among the refugees.

His fight against deportation was won after a campaign involving trade unions in Germany and a wave of international protest from Italy, Britain and Hungary, among others. In a letter to CARF he writes:

The international pressure from you and others has been very influential in the positive decision of the asylum office last month. To all the numerous good people who I have not yet been privileged to know or meet and who sent faxes from Britain on my behalf I say my sincere thanks from the bottom of my heart. If my help is ever required as necessary in your struggle, you can be sure of a true and willing ally in me always. ■

Atia Idrees has been told to leave England by June after the Home Office agreed to review her case but then rejected her plea for discretionary leave. Atia came to England from Pakistan to visit her widowed grandmother in Oldham and found her distressed and in poor health. She is now caring full-time for her grandmother who is incapable of independent living. Oldham Social Services stated that they are incapable of providing the care that Mrs Bibi needs but the Home Office is still determined to deport the only person able to look after her. Atia has won the backing of her MP Michael Meacher and received hundreds of letters of support. Campaigners claim that minister Timothy Kirkhope had not fully briefed himself on this case before making a decision, nor was he able to expand on what would happen to Mrs Bibi if Atia was deported.

The **Lashley** family from Moss Side in Manchester have gained widespread community support in their fight against deportation to Barbados. Campaigners have blocked roads in Manchester town centre and outside the Lashley's home to prevent the deportation of Owen and Lorraine Lashley and their two daughters, Magdalen and Takita. Owen has lived in Britain with his mother and sisters from

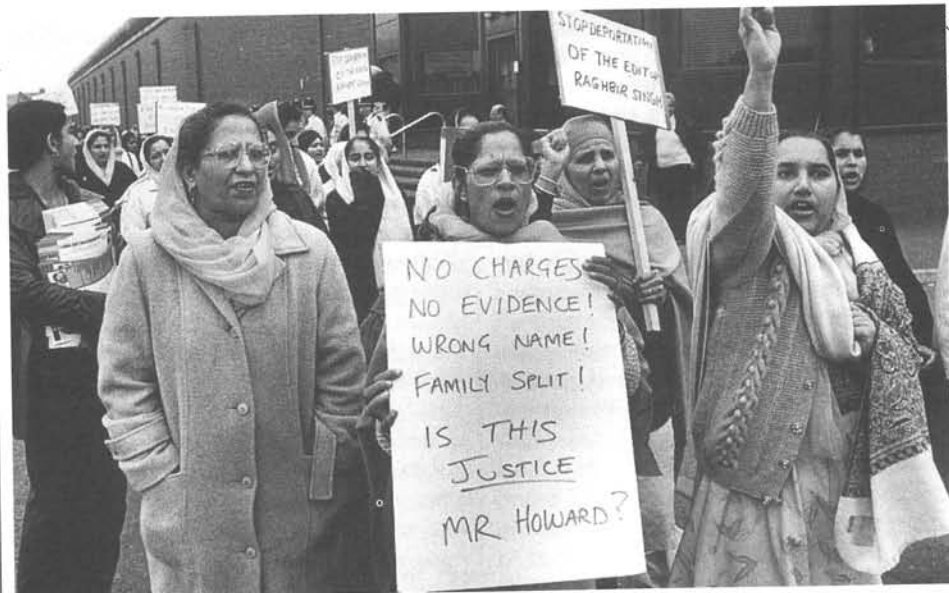


Lashley family

1962 to 1973, and from 1988 to the present. The family's deportation was postponed when Lorraine Lashley collapsed and was too ill to travel, but the Home Office said that they expect them to leave as soon as she is well.

Manchester schoolchildren are continuing their support for **Florence Okolo** and her two children who are faced with deportation to Nigeria. In November 1995, the appeal adjudicator recommended to the Home Office that Florence and her children be allowed to stay, and schoolchildren from St Philip's primary school in Hulme, where Florence's children are pupils, are continuing to keep up pressure, including demonstrating outside the Home Office on 23 May. ■

Atia Idrees Defence Campaign, c/o Pakistani Community Centre, Oliver Street, Oldham, Oldham OL1 1EZ. (Home Office Ref J242872). Lashley Family Must Stay Campaign c/o 400 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester M8 9LE. (Home Office Refs. B471356 and L289396). Okolo Family Defence Campaign c/o St Philips Primary School, Loxford Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 6BT. Onibiyo Family Campaign, 0171-737 2134.



Birmingham NUJ held a demonstration in Birmingham on 30 March in support of **Ragbir Singh**. Ragbir has not been convicted or even charged with any crime, and no evidence has been presented against him, but he has now been detained in Winson Green prison for one year for unspecified reasons of national security. Ragbir is editor of a West Midlands-based Punjabi

newspaper **Awaze Quam** which has been critical of the Indian government. If he is deported to India he faces imprisonment and possible torture. Amnesty International is monitoring his case and is considering making him Britain's first prisoner of conscience. Ragbir Singh Defence Campaign, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham, B29 7NY.

Justice for Chapeltown

On a foggy night in October 1994, a couple of WPCs having trouble arresting a 14-year-old youth outside the 10-2 Club radioed for a back-up. In response, dozens of police descended on Chapeltown to show the black community who was in charge. The result was that children and young people coming out of the club were terrorised and arrested at random, and a 16-year-old girl had a five-inch by two-inch chunk bitten out of her leg by a police dog controlled by its handler.

Chapeltown's black population and its meeting places such as the Hayfield pub and the youth club have long been targets of oppressive policing and scurrilous reporting by the local press – an unholy alliance which caricatures the black community as a thieving, violent bunch of drug-pushing single parents, and treats them accordingly.

The trial of the ten people charged with violent disorder is due to start on 15 April at Leeds Crown Court. Campaigners held a number of meetings and pickets in the immediate aftermath of the events, and organised a successful march from Chapeltown to Leeds city centre in December 1995. They are calling for pickets of the court on the first day of the trial. ■

Contact Black Direct Action for Justice and Equality on 0113 262 6043 for further details.



S. O'Neill

Family and friends of Alton Manning held a protest outside Blakenhurst prison in February. Official reports claimed that he collapsed after a heart attack but an independent pathologist's report has stated that Alton died of asphyxia, suggesting yet another use of the fatal neckhold. Alton's family are collecting

signatures on a petition calling for the prison officers responsible to be charged, but they need funds to help them in their fight for justice. Please make cheques payable to 'Justice for Alton Manning Campaign' and send c/o BRAMU, 339 Dudley Road, Winson Green, Birmingham B18 4HB. ■

Satpal Ram

Dear friends,

As you know I'm back in solitary... I would have telephoned you during the week but I've been banned from using the phone because I refused to squat during a strip search... I spent last night in the box again, having to sleep on the floor. At the moment I'm sitting in a bare cell, they've got all my property again... no radio, no change of clothes, no washing or toilet facilities, all I've got is a little potty in the corner of my cell... Thus Satpal Ram described to his friends and supporters the daily harassment he suffers in prison. His resistance to the degrading practice of squatting for internal examination, which he claims is used rout-

inely, resulted in his segregation for two weeks in a 'strongbox' with no natural lighting, no furniture, bedding or clothing. Since he sent this letter from Long Lartin on 5 March, he has been subjected to more forcible strip-searches, during which he says he was assaulted, and on 12 March he was taken in a body belt to Horfield's prison in Bristol.

The Free Satpal campaign has worked to publicise his protest against the conditions of his detention, and so far over 70 protest letters and faxes have been sent to the prison authorities. The campaign also held a day of action on 14 March, with demonstrations at Long Lartin and Bristol. ■

You can write to Satpal Ram (E94-164) at HMP Horfield, Bristol. Free Satpal Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham. Tel: 0121 507 1618.

Lawrence murder trial

The trial of the three white youths accused of the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence is due to begin at the Old Bailey on 16 April, three years after Stephen was stabbed to death by a racist gang in south-east London.

The Lawrence family made legal history last year when they launched the first ever private prosecution for a racist murder, after the Crown Prosecution Service dropped the charges claiming insufficient evidence. That a black family has resorted to a private action, financed by a fundraising campaign in the black community, in order to see their son's killers convicted has starkly exposed the CPS's attitude to prosecuting perpetrators of racist violence.

The Lawrences have raised £69,000 so far but they still need funds; if the prosecution is unsuccessful they may have to pay £100,000 in costs. ■

Please make donations to Stephen Lawrence Appeal Fund, Nat West Bank, PO Box 3202, 540 Brixton Road, London SW9 8EB. Account no 61797200 Sort code 60-03-36.

Faith, hope and deportation

The French Catholic Church was at the centre of an almighty row in March when it allowed riot police to storm the Saint-Ambroise parish church and evict 400 Malian and Senegalese refugees who had sought sanctuary there. Over 60 people were then held in detention, many of whom now face deportation. The archbishop of Paris justified the act: 'We did give the police our blessing but we were urged to do so by the interior ministry'. But a spokesperson for the Human Rights League said that the refugees and their supporters had been conned by both church and state, which had given assurances about the safety of the asylum-seekers. ■

Free Véronique

The European Association Against Violence Against Women (AVFT) has launched a campaign to free Véronique Akobé, a young domestic worker from the Ivory Coast who wounded her employer and killed his son after they had raped and sodomised her three times. In 1990, she was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by a Nice court – five years longer than the maximum sought by the prosecutor.

The AVFT is petitioning for her immediate release and the removal of the threat of deportation. It is asking for the case to be reopened given the fact that her lawyer (who had also represented the Front National) had withheld information about the rapes during her court case, suggesting instead that she had killed in order to steal. After its successful campaign to stop the execution in the United Arab Emirates of Filipina maid Sarah Balabagan, who also killed her employer after he raped her, the AVFT hopes that international opinion will help to change attitudes in France. ■

Messages of support should be sent to the AVFT, 71 rue St Jacques, 75005 Paris and for Véronique's release to President Jacques Chirac, Palais de l'Elysée, 55 rue du Fg Saint Honoré, 75008 Paris.



Kick 'n' tell

Führer-Ex tells the story of former east German neo-nazi Ingo Hasselbach. Hasselbach first became involved with fascism after a brief flirtation with punk when he founded the Movement of the 30 January in East Germany in 1988. Later, under the guidance of the founder of German post-war neo-nazism Michael Kuhn, he helped set up the National Alternative following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. He documents the rise of the organisation, which had 800 members by 1990, until the author left the movement at the beginning of 1993.

Hasselbach records the violent clashes between German neo-nazis and the courageous anti-fascist and squatter groups who confronted them. The daily attacks on refugees and migrants are another recurring theme of the book. One particularly appalling attack on a refugee shelter in Lichtenberg, which was disinterestedly observed by police 'like spectators at a Roman arena', stands out.

The sorry cast of weirdos, psychopaths and sad bastards that feature in this book – the hypocrisy of führer Michael Kuhn (who died of Aids in 1991), Gottfried Kussel and his anti-Semitic 'house of horrors', and Bendix with his fixation on the corpses of nazi soldiers – gives it an almost surreal quality.

Nonetheless, there is an unfortunate lack of detail that would have filled out the anecdotal narrative of the book. For anti-fascists, names, dates and places are the key to successfully mobilising to counter fascist activity on the ground. Despite this lack, Hasselbach's memoirs make a disturbing read. ■

Führer-ex: memoirs of a former neo-nazi, Ingo Hasselbach (with Tom Reiss) Chatto & Windus, 1996.

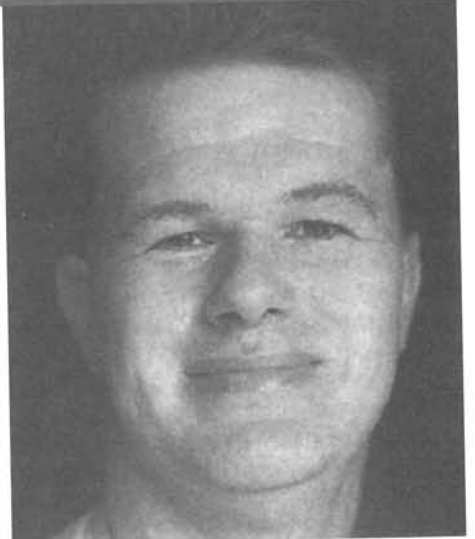
• FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP •

Racist school governor

Michael Cooper, Hull organiser of the National Democrats and a National Front candidate in the May 1994 local election, is acting as a parent governor at two Hull schools. The Humberside Education Committee was told that under the 1988 Education Act it is powerless to take any action against him.

Cooper's election literature contained a tirade of bigoted accusations against 'ethnic minorities', refugees and immigrants, threatening 'humane repatriation for all coloured people currently resident in Britain'. As well as mass deportation, Cooper called for the restoration of the death penalty. He described the NF as 'an openly democratic and very friendly political party.'

Cooper secured a paltry 103 (3.5%) votes, putting into perspective his claims that the NF represented 'Britain's fastest growing party' and his preposterous comparisons with the French Front Nationale. Like its French namesake the NF hides its fascist agenda beneath a veneer of nationalism, but unlike the FN its recent electoral strategy has led to humiliation and a rapid decline in membership. The failure of the NF's 'friendly' electoral ambitions (which were constantly thwarted by outbursts of violent fascist activity) led to Ian Anderson ditching the name in favour of the National Democrats in July 1994. This cosmetic name change is a pathetic attempt to echo the electoral success of



Michael Cooper

Italy's MSI by distancing itself even further from its fascist ideology.

Between elections the NF/ND operates by setting up community campaigns or getting members into existing housing and education bodies. The discovery that Cooper, who has expressed a preference for apartheid-style 'whites only' schools, is a governor at the Griffin primary school and at the Andrew Marvell secondary school, both of which have black pupils, has led to pickets and petitions signed by parents and teachers.

The case has revealed shortcomings in the 1988 Education Act. Under the Act Cooper can only be removed before the end of his 4-year term if he is convicted of

Mosque myths

MOSQUE IN BECKTON UNDER THREAT



The Muslim community in Beckton are proposing to build a mosque to serve the needs of the Beckton community. This has been opposed by the British National Party (BNP) and local racists in the area. These people have been active in the area organising large meetings and petitions against the mosque. BNP activists have also leafleted Beckton and put up stickers around Beckton saying 'KILL THIS MOSQUE'. In the 1994 local elections the BNP were only 66 votes short of having a majority. These racists intend to stand again in the next general election and they are stirring up anti-muslim racism to attack all our community.

Already the racists have smashed our windows, beaten our children and tried to burn down our homes. We need to stop these people together.

Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) is a local group formed by the community after the racist NF murder of Ashraf Ali Balg. NMP has been helping our community the racist NF murder of Ashraf Ali Balg. NMP has been helping our community the racist NF murder of Ashraf Ali Balg. NMP has been helping our community the racist NF murder of Ashraf Ali Balg.

We have launched a campaign against the BNP and their attempts to attack our community. NMP calls for your help in ensuring that community are allowed to practice their own beliefs and live in harmony. If you would like to get involved in the campaign please use the cut-off slip provided.

SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY - FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE RACISTS -

NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT
382 KATHERINE RD, FOREST GATE LONDON, E7 8NW

Tackling racism in the white working-class community in the south of Newham is becoming more urgent in the run up to the general election. The BNP's intellectual guru, Derek Beackon, has already stated his intention to stand in the newly-formed Canning Town and Poplar constituency which encompasses the parts of Newham and Tower Hamlets which have been the most susceptible to its racist lies.

In recent months the BNP has stepped up its 'Rights for Whites'-style campaign by focusing on a proposal to build a mosque on some disused land in Beckton,

south Newham. Although the mosque-building plans have not become concrete, and an application for planning permission has not yet been received by the local authority, the BNP leafleted local residents urging them to attend a local consultative meeting organised by the council to oppose the mosque as their right and duty. Over 100 local white residents attended the meeting to express concern about the mosque - but the meeting was taken over by BNP members (many of whom were not local) who promoted ridiculous

racist myths about the Muslim community such as 'they don't allow women and children into the mosque'.

Newham Monitoring Project, which is campaigning against the racism being whipped up by the BNP, is investigating the source of an anonymous leaflet containing false claims that there will be calls to prayer from sunrise to sunset and a 100 ft minaret dominating the skyline, as well as containing detailed maps and plans of the mosque. NMP, which has been working with the local St Mark's Church and Community Centre, recognises that to condemn every white Beckton resident as racist would be wrong and counterproductive: 'Many of Beckton's residents, black and white, have legitimate concerns about a large building programme on this site - a decision has to be made on what is best for the whole of the community'. The support of St Mark's has been crucial to NMP's work in Beckton, as one of the BNP's claims is that the centre, whose local authority funding has been cut by £17,000, will have to close so that the mosque can open. NMP's priority is to expose the BNP's involvement in this campaign and to stop it forming the foundation of a racist 'Rights for Whites' scenario in the election. Part of the impetus for NMP's Unity festival in south Newham last year was the acknowledgement that the BNP gained a significant vote in the local elections and that local Lib-Dem and Tory politicians helped that happen.

As Simon Vincent of the St Mark's Centre says, 'There must be space for all reasonable concerns to be heard, and we should expect the authorities to listen. But if we allow bigotry and intolerance to undermine that debate, fuelling division and hatred, the whole of Beckton will lose out.' ■

• FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP • FASCIST ROUND-UP •

a criminal offence or declared bankrupt. This led to calls for a reform of the Act to make parent governors subject to annual election. Governors at the schools appear to have been unaware of Cooper's racist and fascist background, despite the requirement under the Act that candidates disclose full details of their background.

If Mr Cooper is allowed to stay on, he could be elected on to a school selection panel, where he would be able to veto black teacher candidates. The danger of a man who has acknowledged that he 'may well object on the grounds of colour or religion to a black or Asian teacher' is obvious.

C18 members in Birmingham racist attack

Combat 18/National Socialist Alliance supporters took part in a vicious attack on SWP members following a meeting on the Asylum and Immigration Bill at the Library Theatre in Birmingham at the end of February. The attack took place as the meeting adjourned to the Royal Mail pub in the city centre. A young Asian man had his arm fractured during the attack.

One of the attackers was identified as Charlie Sargent, who faces trial with Will Browning at the Old Bailey on 8 July on charges of possession of material likely to incite racial hatred and conspiracy to distribute it. Another of the attackers has been identified as Rob Wild, the C18 West

Midlands organiser, who has attempted to infiltrate anti-racist groups in the past.

Given his track record, anti-fascists will be interested to see if Sargent is charged for this attack, particularly as it is reported to have been caught on a security video camera.

Dumbarton BNP trashed by local paper

Congratulations to the *Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Reporter* which, after receiving a letter from the Dumbarton unit of the British National Party (BNP) announcing their intention to stand a candidate at the general election, published a front-page article warning their readers against allowing them to establish a foothold in the area. In a stinging attack on the fascists the paper made clear that it would not allow the BNP to publish its propaganda in its pages, and advised its readers to 'dispose of [the BNPs] leaflets and propaganda, which is exactly what the *Reporter* will be doing.'

The *Reporter* promises that 'This will be the last time we will mention the group of hateful racists who try to hide behind the democratic rights of a political party'.

Since the article the paper has received the predictable death threats and stickers and graffiti have appeared outside their offices. As the paper points out, the BNP are 'a very small minority' in Dumbarton and their intimidatory tactics should, as the *Reporter* advises, be treated with contempt. ■

The December elections in **Austria** were won by the Social Democrats with 38.3% of the vote. Jörg Haider's far-right Freedom Party took 22.05%, losing one seat in parliament. The FPÖ is still the strongest far-right movement in Europe. Since the elections there have been calls for Haider to resign because of his connections with the neo-fascists.

Also in December, the **Russian** elections (which were won by the Communist Party) saw an 11.1% vote for Zhirinovskiy's neo-fascist Liberal Democrats. Boris Yeltsin's 'Our Home is Russia' party took 9.6%, and the right-wing nationalist National Congress of Russian Communities, led by General Alexander Lebed, took 4.3%.

The **Spanish** general election held in March saw the Conservative Popular Party, led by José Aznar, defeat Felipe Gonzalez's Socialist Party, but it left them 19 seats short of an overall majority. The Communist-led United Left took 21 seats and the conservative Catalan Convergence and Union party took 16 seats.

In the **German** state elections held in March, the Republikaner Party took 9.6% of the vote in Baden Württemberg and now has a representative in the state parliament. At Lübeck (in Schleswig-Holstein), where many serious racist attacks have recently taken place, the far-right German People's Union (DVU) took 6.1% of the vote. ■

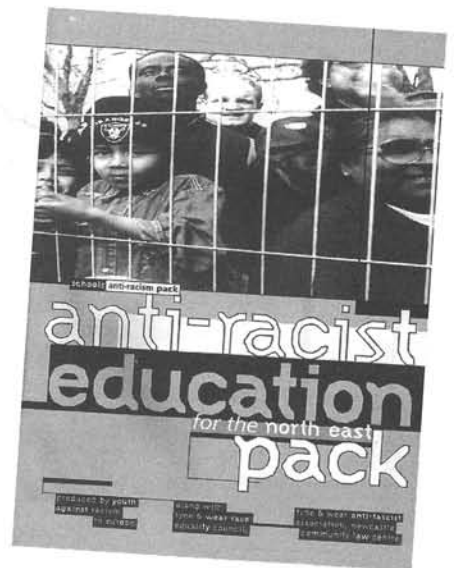
Earl Marshal victory

Sheffield city council, urged on by local MP David Blunkett, may have removed one of the few remaining progressive headteachers in the country when they sacked Chris Searle as head of Earl Marshal school, but the fight of the pupils and governors means that anti-racist and internationalist education at Earl Marshal will not die. The council has bowed to the demands of the community after a campaign involving a huge public meeting in Chris' support and many letters condemning their actions in suspending the powers of the predominantly black governors. The council has now issued a public statement praising Chris Searle's contribution to education in Sheffield. They are giving the governors full participation in the selection of a new headteacher and will fully reinstate the governors' powers by the new academic year. Chris Searle said that the governors had fought in 'a determined and courageous way' to win rights for black children in the education system. ■

Anti-racist education for the north east

Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) has been the principal catalyst behind this new anti-racism pack aimed at schools in the north east. A number of local organisations have contributed to the pack, including the Newcastle Law Centre, Tyne and Wear Anti-Fascist Association and the Tyne and Wear Race Equality Council. The result is more like a magazine in style and content than anything else, with quizzes and historical nuggets of information spread liberally through it. The layout is lively, with pictures, drawings and one-line definitions of terms used, making it easy to read and absorb the wealth of factual material in it.

There are historical sections on Newcastle and the north east, and much general material on the nature of racism and fascism. The pack is strongest on the nature of fascism. Where it is weakest is on the black experience of policing, education, health and housing, and on the role of community struggles against racism. Used



in conjunction with other materials on institutional racism, it can perform a useful role. ■

Copies of *Anti-racist education for the north east* are available at £2.50 including p&p from YRE, 1 Drury Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1EA.

1996

CALENDAR OF RACE AND RESISTANCE

JAN 30 Nigerian pro-democracy activist Akin Adeboye is granted asylum after two-year fight against deportation **FEB 5** Social Security benefit is removed for in-country and failed asylum applicants **FEB 6** Row erupts after two Asian pupils expelled from Sheffield school for violence say they were provoked by racist abuse from white pupil **FEB 7** Black sailor in court martial for assault says his Navy career was marked by continuous racist taunts and jibes **FEB 9** 28-year-old Kevin Clark admits support for British National Party after being found guilty of unlawful wounding for glassing black football player at charity match in Cumbria **FEB 13** Metropolitan police say they will consider making racist officers personally liable for damages after black detective wins £30,000 settlement for racial discrimination **FEB 14** United Nations investigation into racism condemns British government for failure to tackle racist violence, deaths in custody, and new Asylum and Immigration Bill **FEB 15** Southampton Race Equality Council says that racist firebomb attack on offices will not deter them **FEB 16** Actors' union Equity attempts to stop Trinidadian actor Michael Cherrie from appearing at National Theatre, saying the part should be taken by a British actor... Southend footballer Dave Regis claims he was racially abused by Croatian Igor Stimac before being sent off for elbowing him **FEB 17** Tower Hamlets council issues free mobile phones to frequent victims of racist attacks... Up to 30 Asian families request move from St Matthews estate in Leicester after enduring months of racist terror **FEB 18** Mohajir Altaf Hussain says he will become 'the Ken Saro-Wiwa of Pakistan' if the British government succeed in extraditing him to Pakistan **FEB 21** Report from Newcastle city council says that racist violence is rife in the city's schools... Ford motor company apologises and pays £1,500 to four black workers after their faces were removed from workforce photo for Polish advertising campaign **FEB 24** Dole queues in Haringey, north London, are targeted by police recruitment officers who say they will offer special training courses to young blacks to encourage them to join the police... *News of the World* claims that nazi Mark Hodder finances 'Wansee Directive' group through sale of dangerous bad quality Ecstasy tablets at black clubs **FEB 25** BBC *Watchdog* programme condemns vetting procedures of British Association of Counsellors after application from Bernard Manning is accepted as a racial awareness specialist... Cancerlink charity says NHS is failing black and ethnic minority sufferers... Welsh builder Richard Hoyle fined £100 after refusing to pay restaurant bill and racially abusing waiters **FEB 26** Ukrainian-born 74-year-old Michael Czytajlo, who survived Nazi labour camps, dies from heart attack after suffering racist harassment and taunts of 'foreign scum' from youths in Oldham **FEB 27** Home Office minister Ann Widdecombe denies that sanctions on employers of 'illegal immigrants' will lead to discrimination and passport checks... C18 members Charlie Sargent and Will Browning appear in court to deny charges of conspiracy to distribute materials intended to stir up racial hatred **MAR 3** Tory backbenchers condemn relaxation of visa requirements for Hong Kong passport holders **MAR 5** 26-year-old David Aitken given 21-month jail sentence for attack with bicycle chain which left Oxford man Mohammed Ahiya needing five stitches **MAR 6** Keighley

Race Equality Council claims that more than 200 British citizens living in Bradford have been refused benefits on return from trips abroad... Court hears how home of Southampton skinhead Darren Rigby is full of nazi memorabilia when jailing him for attack on three Asian youths **MAR 7** 20-year-old Graham Ellis is jailed for six months after attacking 80-year-old Asian man in Wolverhampton with a hammer... Fairground workers convicted for attack which left Bristol teenager Marlon Thomas in a coma have sentences increased for racial element in attack **MAR 9** 2,500 march through Manchester to protest at treatment of Amer Rafiq who lost one eye after his arrest... Home office suppresses research which reveals the depth of racism in the police force against black officers **MAR 12** Ministry of Defence spokesperson says there are few black people in the armed forces because Afro-Caribbeans are more interested in sport and music **MAR 14** Prime Minister says he will crack down on foreign activists to ensure they do not use Britain to foster dissent in their home countries **MAR 15** Judge David Pearl, chair of Immigration Appellate Authority, says new asylum legislation will not succeed in cutting backlog of cases... Two men who terrorised Asian shopkeepers in drunken affray jailed by Swansea crown court **MAR 17** Government considers plans to set new deportation efficiency targets by Immigration and Nationality Department... Irishman Paul Moran awarded £7,500 damages after claiming racial abuse and assault by west London police **MAR 18** Police refuse to suspend trials of CS spray after Ibrahima Sey's death in Ilford police station... European Union agrees German-sponsored plan to clamp down on printing and dissemination of racist books and pamphlets... Immigration Service describes recent computerisation of immigration control at entry ports as 'unqualified success' and Home Office announces additional £10 million to expand system **MAR 21** Nurse dismissed from Maudsley hospital in south London wins record £50,000 settlement after bringing race discrimination case against NHS trust... Three white soldiers from Cheshire regiment to be court martialled following complaints from two black women that they were racially abused during visit to army barracks... Car factory worker Abdul Sattar tells industrial tribunal how he was dubbed 'the Paki from hell' by colleagues **MAR 22** Southampton council say they will evict a 15-year-old and his family from council housing after he was convicted of inciting racial hatred... Lionel Jeffers, the only black probation officer in north Wales, is awarded £3,500 by an industrial tribunal who heard that he was a victim of racial discrimination...

Foreigners applying to stay in Britain on the basis of common-law marriages will be automatically refused, announces Immigration Minister **MAR 26**

Mercury telephone company calls off casting session for advertising campaign after outrage at advert asking for white babies... Two High Court judges say that withdrawal of benefits to asylum-seekers will have 'drastic and unwelcome consequences' **MAR 27** Manchester's Jewish community suspect racist arson attack when fire guts classroom at religious school **MAR 28** Chinese hairdresser Kenneth Hsu wins record £220,000 damages for racist assault and wrongful arrest by south London police... Ministry of Defence and Commission for Racial Equality announce plans to oust racism from the Household Cavalry.

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