

seize the time

PLUS Racism and the press in Blair's Britain

FEATURES

8-13 Racism and the press in Blair's Britain

The press today has sharpened its race reportage to reflect the cool 'inclusive' nationalism of Blair's Middle England. Beneath the surface, however, the old hatreds remain

The CRE and the press

What lies behind the vitriolic attack on the CRE?

Europe, the press and crime

Across Europe, thanks to press reporting, 'criminal', 'immigrant', 'Roma' are becoming interchangeable

14-15 Europe's most unwanted race?

British anti-racist work cannot overlook the Roma dimension



NEWS

3 No lessons learnt

Who killed Roger Sylvester?

Michael Menson update

Police admit racism killed Michael Menson

Civil rights rally

Call to support the National Civil Rights Movement



4 People against globalisation

The Inter-Continental Caravan is a grouping of Indian farmers and peasants who are travelling to the UK to speak of the Third World experience of globalisation. Why have they been refused entry?

Deportations

Victory for Haggerston School campaigns

5 Taxi-drivers criminalised

In German border towns, police are prosecuting taxi-drivers who carry foreigners

6-7 Campaign updates

Taj Ahmed and Roberto Brollini, Satpal Ram, Michael Singh, Delroy and Sonia Lindo, Blair Peach anniversary, fascists news

16 Diary of race and resistance

keynote

SEIZE THE TIME



The Stephen Lawrence case has put the question of institutionalised racism back on the political agenda. For over 25 years the fight against racial injustice had been side-tracked into a fight for culture, for ethnicity, for identity – so that racism itself had come to be associated with individual prejudice, on the one hand, and cultural disadvantage, on the other. The Stephen Lawrence case and the campaign surrounding it have returned us to the perspectives and concerns of the '60s and '70s when the fight against racism meant a fight against racist immigration laws, police use of 'Sus' laws, ESN schooling and other aspects of institutionalised racism. But the advance from those times is that the Stephen Lawrence campaign has educated the general public into seeing institutional racism, not individual prejudice, as the cause of racial injustice.

We are in danger, however, of being side-tracked, once again, from the struggle against institutionalised racism – this time not so much by a refusal to accept institutionalised racism as a move to define it out of existence, as when, for example, Commissioner Condon interprets it to mean the collective guilt of all his officers, which he can then go on to show is a nonsense. Then there is the tendency, especially in the media, to reduce Stephen Lawrence to an icon (see 'Icon for a sceptical age', *Observer* 10 January 1999). Stephen Lawrence is a cause, not an icon. An icon is a poster on the wall, a statue in the square, a reified remembrancer; a cause is ongoing, dynamic, vital – a call to struggle. And, then, there are the black academics who abstract living struggle into desiccated theories about the construction of identity and the construction of the nation, which do not speak to the problems on the ground. While lesser black commentators, having made it to the top, declare that there is no longer such a thing as racism as they knew it in their youth.

The most significant aspect of the Stephen Lawrence case is the way it

has mobilised so many people from so many walks of life, and not only raised the issue of institutional racism but gone on to turn it into a campaign, taking on the cases of Ricky Reel, Michael Menson, Roger Sylvester and others – a campaign against a corrupt, inadequate and unjust criminal justice system, so establishing that justice is indivisible, that injustice against one is injustice against all. And that is what has provided the basis for a broader movement.

But if such a movement is to succeed, we must eschew sectarian politics (ie, the politics of 'we know best'), multiculturalist and ethnicist politics (ie, the politics of equal opportunity), identity politics (ie, the politics of self) and, above all, skin politics (ie, blacker-than-thou politics). We have got, instead, to find common denominators of struggle and forge a common purpose in the pursuit of a common goal.

Institutional racism is that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions – reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn.

A civil rights movement by its very nature is inclusive, and that is its great merit. But inclusiveness carries with it the danger of multiple agendas, bandwagonism and loss of focus. And if we are to guard against these tendencies, which in the event will unravel the movement, it is important, firstly, that we do not dilute our principles or deviate from our purpose. Secondly, and even more importantly, we need to give support and succour to the numerous campaigns against institutional racism which are springing up in the wake of the Lawrence case. The life-blood of any movement is its grass-roots campaigns. Conversely, the duty of a movement is to cohere those campaigns. We have the opportunity. Let's seize the time. ■

A. Sivanandan

CAMPAIGN AGAINST
carf
RACISM & FASCISM

■ Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX
■ Tel: 0171-837 1450 ■ E-mail: info@carf.demon.co.uk
■ Website: <http://www.carf.demon.co.uk/> ■ ISSN 0966-1050
■ Printed by Russell Press (TU) ■ Cover photo: Hannah Dee

NO LESSONS LEARNT

Another black death in police custody



Roger Sylvester

The last thing the Metropolitan police needed was another black death in custody. The Lawrence Inquiry report will soon be published; the Michael Menson case is currently revealing a similar pattern of police racism. Yet no lessons have been learnt. On 18 January, Roger Sylvester, a 30-year-old black man was confirmed dead at the Whittington hospital, north London, after having been restrained seven days earlier by eight officers.

Public vigil

Over 500 people, mostly black and many young, joined Roger's family on 24 January in a vigil and procession from his home in Summerhill Road to Tottenham police station. The Sylvester family is still trying to find out what caused Roger's death, whether the police had detained him unlawfully and whether they exercised due care. The inquest, which began in late January, has now been adjourned and more medical tests are required to explain exactly how he died.

Roger was detained just before 10pm on 11 January by eight officers who had been called because of a 'disturbance

caused by a naked man banging on doors'. Roger was restrained, handcuffed and, having been detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, taken to St Anne's psychiatric hospital. During further restraint by officers, he went limp and collapsed and was rushed to North Middlesex hospital.

Everyone in the criminal justice system now appears desperate to be seen to be doing the right thing. So the police immediately put out a statement to say that neither CS spray nor batons had been used, the eight officers have been moved, the Police Complaints Authority brought in, the coroner pledged 'to focus on any undesirable practices or dangers'.

Yet this death bears all the hallmarks of so many other deaths. The language the police have used of him – 'acting erratically', 'flinging himself on the floor', 'vociferous', 'agitated', 'aggressive' – is reminiscent of the words conjured up on previous occasions to suggest the special danger that black men pose. And, as in so many previous deaths, the family is concerned about the unexplained bruising on his body.

Control and restraint techniques

Inquest, which is acting for the Sylvesters, is particularly worried about the restraint methods which were used on Roger. It looks as though little has been learnt from those other deaths – of Joy Gardner, Ibrahima Sey, Shiji Lapite and Omasase Lumumba, who all died while being violently (and, possibly, illegally) restrained. The sudden proposal on 28 January by Commissioner Condon, to train special stand-by teams to restrain the mentally ill and drug users, seems to be a desperate attempt to forestall criticism about yet another black death in custody. ■

Inquest, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2PJ.
Tel 0181 802 7430, fax 0181 802 7450.

POLICE ADMIT RACISM KILLED MENSON

At last, and after extensive campaigning by the Menson family, the police have conceded that Michael's death after being found on fire in the street on 28 January 1997, was the result of a racist attack and not a suicide attempt. The inquiry into his death, now led by John Grieve, Director of the Met's Racial and Violent Crime Task force, is following leads about a group of white youths who purchased inflammable liquid in the area that night and later bragged on a bus of setting fire to people. ■



Michael Menson's brother Kwesi and sister Sam

CAMPAIGN

CIVIL RIGHTS RALLY CALLED FOR 28 MARCH

The heroic struggle waged on behalf of Stephen Lawrence has spurred a nationwide hunger for a movement for racial justice. In response to that hunger, leading families, campaigners and community activists have come together to issue a call to build a new national civil rights movement – an effective and inclusive network which can provide support and solidarity to all those facing racial injustice in whatever form. ■

Meet Sunday 28 March, 12–5pm (Registration 12–1pm) at the Camden Centre, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1.
Called by Southall Monitoring Group, Newham Monitoring Project, Inquest, Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign, the Menson Family and Reel Family.

Speakers include Neville Lawrence, Sukhdev Reel, Kwesi Menson, Mike Mansfield, A. Sivanandan and others.

ENTRANCE BY TICKET ONLY – available from NCRM c/o 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5AA.
Phone: 0181 574 0818 or Fax: 0181 813 9734.

SUPPORT THE NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

DEPORTATIONS

VICTORY FOR HAGGERSTON SCHOOL ANTI-DEPORTATION CAMPAIGNS

The Nanga and Lemba families, who both have children at the Haggerston School for Girls in Hackney, have won their struggle against deportation to Angola. The campaigns of both families were led by the children, Mansanga Nanga (aged 18), Felician Nanga (aged 15) and Muyeke Lemba (aged 15). They addressed a number of public meetings, including a 1,000-strong audience at the National Union of Teachers' conference, and spoke on radio programmes. They have lived in the UK for eight years. The campaign received strong support from staff at the school. ■



From left to right: Felician Nanga, Mansanga Nanga and Muyeke Lemba

CAMPAIGN

FIGHT NEW ASYLUM BILL

As CARF goes to press, the government is expected to publish a new Asylum Bill. The measures will include: ■ **Withdrawal of benefits from all asylum-seekers, replacing them with vouchers** ■ **Compelling asylum-seekers to live in designated accommodation in any part of the country** ■ **Extending the use of detention and powers of Group 4 officers** ■ **Requiring compulsory financial bonds from visitors needing a visa** ■ **Ending the right of appeal against deportation even for those who have been here for over seven years** ■ **Granting more police powers to the immigration service** ■ **An increase in internal immigration controls.**

**Demonstration and Rally
Saturday 27 February, 12 noon
Embankment, London WC2**

Called by the Coalition for Asylum and Immigration Rights

GLOBALISATION

SOLIDARITY AGAINST GLOBALISATION



There was a palpable sense of disappointment at the open meeting of the London Welcoming Committee of the Peoples' Global Action (PGA) where social and environmental groups had gathered to hear speakers from Karnataka and Maharashtra Farmers' Organisations and the Adivasi movement talk about foreign investment and its effects on rural India. Speakers were denied entry into the UK. The aborted talk was, however, just the first of a series of events planned for spring and summer 1999 when the Inter-Continental Caravan (ICC) from India will come to Europe for united action against globalisation.

The idea for the ICC originated in several Indian grassroots movements' attempts to combat economic globalisation, 'free' trade and corporate rule, which undoubtedly has its biggest and most devastating effects in the rural areas of the Third World. Since 1992, when India embarked on its path of 'structural adjustment', there has been increasing resistance to the construction of large dams, the patenting of Indian seeds by companies such as Monsanto and the domination by the interests of international capital. From the National Fish-Workers' Forum and the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM) to the Joint Forum of Indian People Against Globalisation (Jafip) and the farmers' movement of Karnataka (KRRS), there has been a massive mobilisation by hundreds of local grassroots campaigns to fight 're-colonisation' through tariffs (or rather the lack of them) and

corporate supremacy. Given the transnational nature of the 'enemy', groups in India decided to join forces with social and environmental grassroots campaigns in Europe, highlighting the interdependence of North-South relations. Deliberately coinciding with the EU summit and the meeting of the G8 leaders in Cologne on 18 June this year, several hundred campaigners from India are planning to come to Europe in May to meet movements in the North and draw up a programme of united action.

The British High Commission, however, has already told Nanjunda Swamy, the leader of the KRRS, not even to bother applying for a visa, as the Caravan's purpose is not in the interest of the British state. Whereas in Germany, the state has responded to the Caravan for the Rights of Refugees by deporting politically-persecuted Nigerians, the British have a different strategy for the participants of the Inter-continental Caravan (ICC) – they won't let them enter in the first place.

Although the caravans have different agendas, they face similar problems, namely Fortress Europe. On the one hand, European 'integration' and external border controls have led to the practical denial of the right to asylum, and to exacerbated illegal human trafficking, resulting in increasing death tolls of asylum-seekers (CARF forthcoming). On the other, it means that people are denied the right to enter Europe on grounds of their political beliefs and actions – in this case, the protest against Europe's role in foreign capital investment which is directly undermining their livelihoods. Western governments seem determined not to let Third World struggles against imperialism strengthen campaigners against globalisation in the West.

Despite the difficulties that the ICC is facing, the plan to demonstrate in Cologne and meet relevant organisations in Britain is still going ahead. The PGA and the ICC are asking relevant organisations to join them in planning events for 18 June. ■

E-mail: listproc@gn.apc.org (for information on activities at the Cologne summit on 18 June); London Welcoming Committee, 39 Thornhill Square, London N1 1BE; E-mail: icc99uk@hotmail.com

TAXI-DRIVERS CRIMINALISED

In German border towns, police are prosecuting taxi-drivers who carry foreigners.

There are towns near the border of Germany with Poland and the Czech Republic where, if you appear foreign, you can't get a taxi for love or money. No-one will pick you up, even if you stand there all day. The reason? The taxi-drivers don't want to go to prison. To avoid it, they've been told by local police not to pick up passengers who don't look 'German'.

On Human Rights Day, 10 December 1998, several hundred people – taxi-drivers, their families and friends, anti-racists and refugee groups – packed into a meeting in Berlin to launch a public campaign against the criminalisation of taxi-drivers who carry undocumented immigrants as passengers. The meeting heard how, in Zittau, a small Saxony town near the Polish and Czech border, nearly a third of the town's 70-odd taxi-drivers have court cases pending against them for picking up fares who turned out not to have valid residence documents. Six of them have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment and three – Bernard Ludwig, Michael and Andreas R – are serving prison sentences, just for doing their job.

Michael R, in prison for 18 months for picking up the same refugee family twice, told CARF: 'We got a call to pick up a group of eight from a petrol station and take them into a nearby town. Two drivers went and we took four in each car. I dropped my passengers off and on the way back I was stopped by police. It turned out that some of the passengers in the other driver's car had no valid documents. They must have come across the border illegally. Because of that, it was assumed that my passengers were illegal – even though they were never found.' The judge told Michael R that he should have suspected that the passengers were illegally in Germany. He was convicted of assisting illegal immigrants under the Foreigners' Law.

His appeal to the Constitutional Court has been rejected. Now, Michael R's

wife has left him over the case. His employer is supporting him and will give him his job back when he is released. But he says in future he won't pick people up without asking them for their papers – although, as he accepts, he has no idea what to look for. So, like other taxi-drivers, he'll probably end up not picking up anyone 'foreign-looking'.

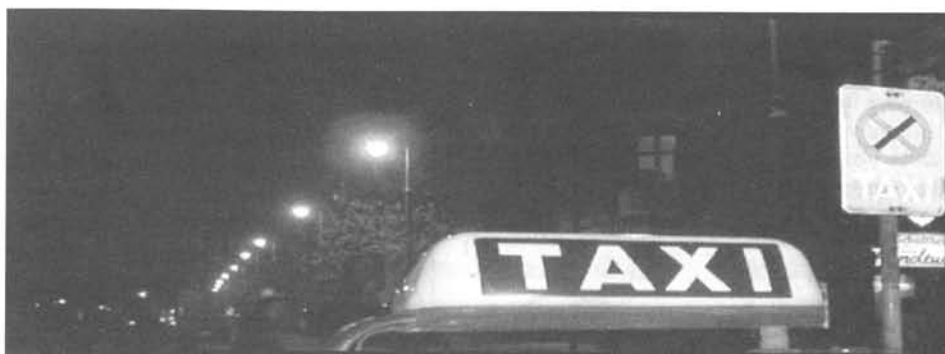
This is what the police advise. A leaflet put out by the border police advises drivers not to pick up anyone with wet or dirty clothes (some refugees enter Germany by swimming the river Oder) or whose appearance otherwise suggested illegal entry. The Dresden chamber of commerce was given the same advice in April 1997. Local taxi-drivers' associations have been told members should 'ring police to check' whenever a passenger or their documentation looks suspicious. In September 1997, Biplab Basu, a German citizen of Indian origin and a founder member of Anti-Rassistische Initiative in Berlin, went to a border town and tried to get a taxi. Colleagues filmed the unsuccessful attempt and the film was shown on television, causing a scandal. The film showed a woman police officer telling the taxi-driver that he should not take any passengers who did not look or sound German. The town's authorities said they would ensure that such discriminatory treatment would be dealt with. A year later, Basu and his film crew returned, and found (and filmed) exactly the same situation.

Although the border towns have seen the worst police action, taxi-drivers in towns which are not near the border, even Berlin, have experienced some harassment. The December 1998 meeting heard how, after a number of their colleagues had been stopped and questioned about their passengers by Aliens' police, 200 Berlin taxi-drivers had signed a declaration, the 'Görlitz declaration' in which they declared that they would carry all passengers without regard to race, colour, language proficiency, cleanliness or other personal characteristics.

On 11 December, MPs from the PDS sponsored a parliamentary resolution in the Bundestag proposing repeal of the sections of the Foreigners' Law which criminalise the carrying as passengers of illegal entrants. The resolution pointed out that such laws can only create more racism by turning taxi-drivers into unwilling immigration control agents. The Berlin meeting was told of an incident in Zittau where a Turk was beaten up by a gang of 15 racists. When he staggered bleeding to seek help from local taxi-drivers to take him to hospital, they refused, for fear of police action against them.

The campaign group intends to fight until the criminalisation law is repealed and all those currently in prison or awaiting trial on charges under the law are released. ■

Taxi ins Gefängnis c/o Antirassistische Initiative, 00 49 30 785 7281.



FASCISTS

BNP 'MONEY MAESTRO' KICKS BUCKET

The 58-year-old British National Party (BNP) treasurer, David Bruce died of a massive heart attack after a strenuous bout of exercise at the beginning of December. Bruce was a former executive member of the National Front (NF) and treasurer during the 1970s before becoming north London organiser and running its Enfield branch. In 1980 he left the NF with John Tyndall to become a founder member of the BNP. Bruce was a long-time advocate of the BNP's current 'electoral route' to fascist dictatorship. He won't be missed. ■

PRISONS

HOW LONG TILL SATPAL IS FREE?



Satpal Ram has once again been the victim of alleged prison officer brutality. Last year, following his complaints of an attack by officers at Nottingham prison (see photo left), Satpal was placed on

'continuous assessment', meaning that he is moved from prison to prison every four weeks and held in solitary confinement for up to 22 hours a day (see *CARF* 44). Then in November, while at Frankland prison, Durham, Satpal and a number of other prisoners were ordered to strip and squat for an anal inspection. After prisoners refused on the grounds that this was a sexual assault, they were segregated and one prisoner somehow ended up with his hand broken and his eardrum perforated. Since then Satpal has been moved once again, this time to Belmarsh, south London, bringing his total number of moves to 57. Satpal is now 33 years old; he was 20 when he was first imprisoned for defending himself against a racist attack by a gang of white youths in a restaurant in Lozells, Birmingham. ■

Send messages of support to: Satpal Ram, E94 164, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, Thamesmead London SE28. Free Satpal Ram Campaign, PO Box 3241, Birmingham B8 3DP
Satpal Ram websites:
<http://www.asiandubfoundation.com/satpal/>,
<http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/>

ANTI-FASCISM

SUPPORT TAJ AND ROBERTO'S RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENCE

Taj Ahmed and Roberto Brollini, from Rossendale, Lancashire, have each been jailed for 12 months for defending themselves against a drunken racist attack by two BNP thugs

In May 1998 Taj Ahmed was racially abused by a white woman at Rawtenstall bus station. When he remonstrated with her, Taj and Roberto Brollini were abused and attacked by a Preston BNP election candidate and his friend. The two fought back and the racists ended up concussed and in hospital.

Despite this and despite the proven violent track record of the local BNP it was the fascists who were portrayed, both in court and the local press, as the 'victims'. In fact Taj had previously been the victim of a brutal racist attack by six racists armed with a machete, which left him, as he said 'needing 112 stitches inside my right shoulder and 24 staples to close the wound. My face, neck and lung were punctured and my face was severely disfigured. I was also kicked like an England penalty shoot-out. I was left to die but managed to get to safety.'

In the light of the assurances at all levels of the criminal justice system that the lessons of the Lawrence investiga-

tion had been learnt and the mistakes not repeated, the outcome of the trial is an outrage. However, it is not surprising, as the police inquiries into the killings of Ricky Reel and Michael Menson reveal.

A 'Justice for Taj and Roberto' defence campaign has been launched and is calling for letters of protest at the handling of the case to be sent to Lancashire police and the Crown Prosecution Service at the addresses below. ■

Crown Prosecution Service, Burnley Branch Office, Burnley Wharf, Burnley, Lancashire BB11 1JG.

Mr Tarique Ghaffur, Assistant Chief Constable, Lancashire Constabulary HQ, PO Box 77, Hutton, Lancashire PR4 5SB.

The campaign is supported by MEPs Glyn Ford and Mike Hindley, Burnley ANL, Searchlight and the TGWU (Region 6).

Letters of support can be sent to Taj Ahmed (BT9173) and Roberto Brollini (CC5829) at HMP Kirkhead, Freckleton Road, Preston PR4 5AB.

The 'Justice for Taj and Roberto' campaign can be reached c/o Cllr. Jean Hayler, Rossendale Town Hall, Lord Street, Rawtenstall, Lancashire BB4 7LZ.

RACIAL VIOLENCE

PRISON OFFICER BANGED UP FOR RACIST ATTACK

Belmarsh prison officer Barry Lugg, from Poplar, east London, was sacked and jailed for ten weeks in January for threats and racist assault.

Belmarsh magistrates' court heard how Lugg racially abused and attacked black traffic warden Sunday Ajifowowe in Lewisham, south London, then drove to Lewisham's parking depot and racially abused a member of staff who refused to divulge Ajifowowe's home address, hunted down Ajifowowe and launched a second unprovoked attack.

He told him: 'I'm going to treat you like I treat my prisoners.' Lugg attempted suicide when he realised that he could be sent down, which persuaded magistrate Howard Riddle to jail him for the minimum ten weeks on the grounds that he had suffered enough and that the attack 'was out of character'.

If participation in three racist incidents in a single day is not a pretty accurate indicator of a racist character, what is, one might be tempted to ask? ■

REMEMBER BLAIR PEACH, ANTI-RACIST TEACHER

This year is the twentieth anniversary of the death of Blair Peach, killed by police on an anti-fascist demonstration in Southall in 1979



Marchers in Southall honour Blair Peach in 1979

It was 23 April 1979 when Peach was truncheoned to death by members of the Special Patrol Group of the Metropolitan police in a Southall side street. He had been a part of the anti-racist demonstration against the National Front, which was allowed by the police to meet and march in Southall to celebrate St George's Day. The police had cordoned off the centre of Southall and made it a no-go area to anyone who was not a racist or a fascist sympathiser.

Peach was a New Zealander and teacher in Phoenix school in Bow. He was known as a fine teacher and passionate anti-racist who had already been targeted by fascists – some of them had even attacked him at home.

As an active member of the National Union of Teachers, Blair Peach was at the time of his death president of the East London Teachers' Association. He had been a dedicated trade unionist and active in local anti-racist groups such as the Anti Nazi League for many years.

As a teacher he had worked many extra hours in literacy classes, and was much respected by his students and

their parents.

The anniversary of his death will be commemorated by a series of events designed to relaunch a national movement of anti-racist education among Britain's teachers. (The imposition of a heavily prescriptive and culturally-narrow National Curriculum, and the continuous surveillance of teachers' work through OFSTED have meant that curriculum initiatives against racism have been under intense attack.)

These events will be signalled on 6 February at the education conference Blair Peach Lives! Later a concert in his memory with Jeremy Hardy and other comedians will be held on 28 February at the Hackney Empire.

During the week of 19 April a series of local events is planned in schools culminating in anti-racist activities on 23 April ('Blair Peach Day') and a mass demonstration on Saturday 24 April beginning from the Dominion Centre, Southall at 1pm. ■

Details on all events from: Alex Kenny, East London Teachers' Association, tel: 0181 980 3601.

SPOTLIGHT ON TOTTENHAM POLICE

Racism at Hornsey police station has again come under the spotlight, this time from supporters of Winston Silcott and Delroy and Sonia Lindo. Silcott's conviction for the killing of Antony Smith at a party in 1985, was reviewed last year and it is for this reason, say the Lindos, that they are being targeted by Tottenham police. Delroy, a friend of Winston's since childhood, has carried out his own investigation into the killing of Antony Smith in an attempt to clear his friend's name. After interviewing several witnesses he presented a dossier to the Criminal Cases Review Commission, showing that Winston acted in self-defence. Since then Delroy claims he and Sonia have faced persistent harassment from the police, Delroy being taken to court four times (acquitted each time) and Sonia being arrested several times in front of their children. The Lindos claim that the harassment is directly related to their campaigning for Winston. 'A lot of police officers still believe Winston killed PC Blakelock, that his appeal was won on a technicality.' The Lindos say that they will now launch a civil action against the police, as well as continuing their campaign to free Winston. ■

The Lindo Campaign, c/o The Shady Grove Club, 7 Bruce Grove, Tottenham, London N17 6RA.

CAMPAIGN

JUSTICE FOR MICHAEL SINGH



Michael Singh is a Bradford man who has served nearly ten years of a life sentence for a murder he did not commit. At his trial vital evidence was not disclosed, which was later destroyed by police.

**Public Meeting
Friday 19 February, 7.30pm
Bradford Central Library**

**Speakers include: Paddy Hill (Birmingham 6)
Justice for Michael Singh Campaign,
21-23 Albion Street, Bradford BD1 2LY**

**The press in this country
– the ownership of
which is one of the most
concentrated in the
western world –
has never been exposed
to official scrutiny of
its activities.**

**Yet, at a time when the
police and other
institutions are at last
being taken to task for a
lack of public
accountability and a
failure to deal with
institutionalised racism,
the overt racism of the
press is flourishing
unchecked.**

**CARF, in urging anti-
racists to make
campaigns against press
racism a priority,
examines how the press
today has sharpened its
race reportage to reflect
the cool 'inclusive'
nationalism of Blair's
Middle England. Beneath
the surface, however,
the old hatreds remain...**

Racism & THE PRESS in Blair's Britain

In the summer and autumn of last year a few hundred refugees fleeing the conflict in Kosovo arrived in Kent. This is the story of how a local newspaper in Dover instigated a campaign of racist resentment towards the refugees which was then picked up by the national press, in particular the one national paper which has taken a lead in defining a new middle England agenda on race, the *Daily Mail*. The result was a media-orchestrated campaign of hostility against asylum-seekers which led to violent attacks against them and the creation of a climate in which the government's asylum reforms package could be presented as a firm and fair response.

Sanctuary by stealth

The present government likes to be all things to all people. On the one hand it has been talking tough to the press on

immigration since coming into office. Meanwhile, to stem criticism from human rights groups, it has been quietly increasing the proportion of applicants given refugee status or exceptional leave to remain. But this delicate balancing act could not last long. It was only a matter of time before the press started to get mileage out of making the government live up to its tough talk.

By the end of 1997, the arrival of Roma refugees fleeing racist persecution in the Czech Republic and Slovakia brought a wave of media attacks on so-called 'bogus' asylum-seekers. Then, last autumn, with the arrival of more Roma and Kosovan refugees, a renewed and more vicious attack began, first with a brutish editorial in the *Dover Express* and later with an ongoing campaign by the *Daily Mail*. The government then found itself faced with daily calls from the tabloids to stop the 'madness' and

This is the story of how a Dover newspaper instigated a campaign of racist resentment towards refugees which was picked up by the national press, in particular the paper which has taken a lead in defining a new middle England agenda on race, the *Daily Mail*.

'send asylum spongers packing'. In response the Home Office went into fast spin mode in an attempt to wash away tabloid criticism. Jack Straw announced in his *News of the World* column that the government was bringing in reforms to address the problem of 'bogus' asylum-seekers. And with so much press attention focused on this issue, the policy of 'sanctuary by stealth' came to an end.

The Dover Express campaign

On 1 October 1998, the *Dover Express* ran an editorial headed 'We want to wash dross down drain'. Directly addressing the Home Office, the editorial spoke of 'illegal immigrants, asylum-seekers (when they get to asylum are they happy?), bootleggers (who take many guises) and the scum of the earth drug smugglers who have targeted our beloved coastline... We are left with the backdraft of a nation's human sewage and no cash to wash it down the drain'. Editor Nick Hudson, formerly of the *Sunday Sport*, claimed he was 'reflecting his mailbag'.

As the weeks went by the *Dover Express* continued to promote the views of local racists, so that by November an atmosphere of bitterness and animosity had been built up in the area against refugees. A public meeting was organised by local racists and leaflets were printed listing 33 reasons why 'we should send them back and close the door'. The leaflets, which were displayed in shops, distributed on doorsteps and handed out in the town centre, included the ludicrous claims that 'an epidemic of venereal diseases will undoubtedly become rife' and that the local hospital had 'advised against any blood contact with refugees'. The leaflet ended with a

warning to the Labour government that it deserves to fail because 'it just isn't helping the people who put them there in the first place'. At the same time, in a long-standing tradition of extreme right-wing agitation, residents in Folkestone received a hoax letter, claiming to be from an imaginary United Nations Worldwide Asylum Seekers Association, informing them that they were to have a Slovakian family staying in their home for six months. In December the National Front, capitalising on the situation, organised a march through Dover.

Meanwhile asylum-seekers faced a sharp rise in racist violence following the October editorial in the *Dover Express*. Families of refugees had lighted rags and fireworks pushed through their letter boxes and bottles thrown through their windows. The words 'we will burn you out' were painted on one house.

The Daily Mail – voice of suburbia

The '80s was the decade of the *Sun*, which more than any other daily paper articulated Thatcherism into a working-class identity, and entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with the Thatcher government, boosting sales for the paper and votes for the government. A crucial part of this process was the championing by the *Sun* and the government of little-England racism and attacks on the anti-racist movement and 'loony lefties'. Recent years have seen the circulation of the tabloids, including the *Sun*, decline steeply, suggesting to many of their editors that their '80s style may be out of favour. But sales of the *Daily Mail* – the archetypal tabloid of middle England – have been steadily increasing and the talk among tabloid editors is of moving 'upmarket' in a bid to emulate the *Mail's* success.

In the late '90s the *Daily Mail* has entered into an analogous relationship with Blairism as the *Sun* had to Thatcherism, coming to define the middle ground of the New Britain. The middle classes are on the move, and the *Daily Mail* and New Labour have been able to tap into that movement and catch history on the wing. Labour's wooing of 'middle England' has given the middle classes a stronger political weight and, at the same time, middle-class attitudes are reflecting the new mood of Blair's

Britain. Blair himself, of course, thinks that we can all be middle-class now. And just like the Labour government itself, middle England now wants to present itself as inclusive, multi-cultural, touchy-feely and caring in a Princess Diana sort of way. A crucial index of this new mood is the question of racism.

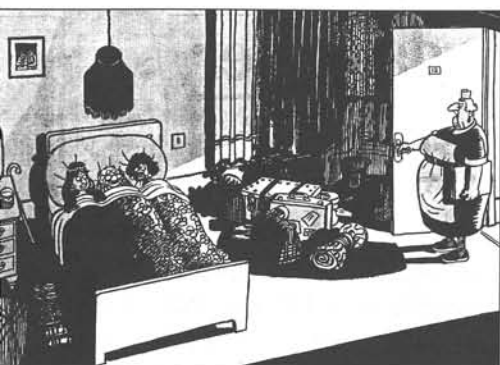
In the '80s the *Daily Mail* made a

**THE GOOD LIFE:
ON ASYLUM
ALLEY**

**BRUTAL
CRIMES
OF THE
ASYLUM
SEEKERS**

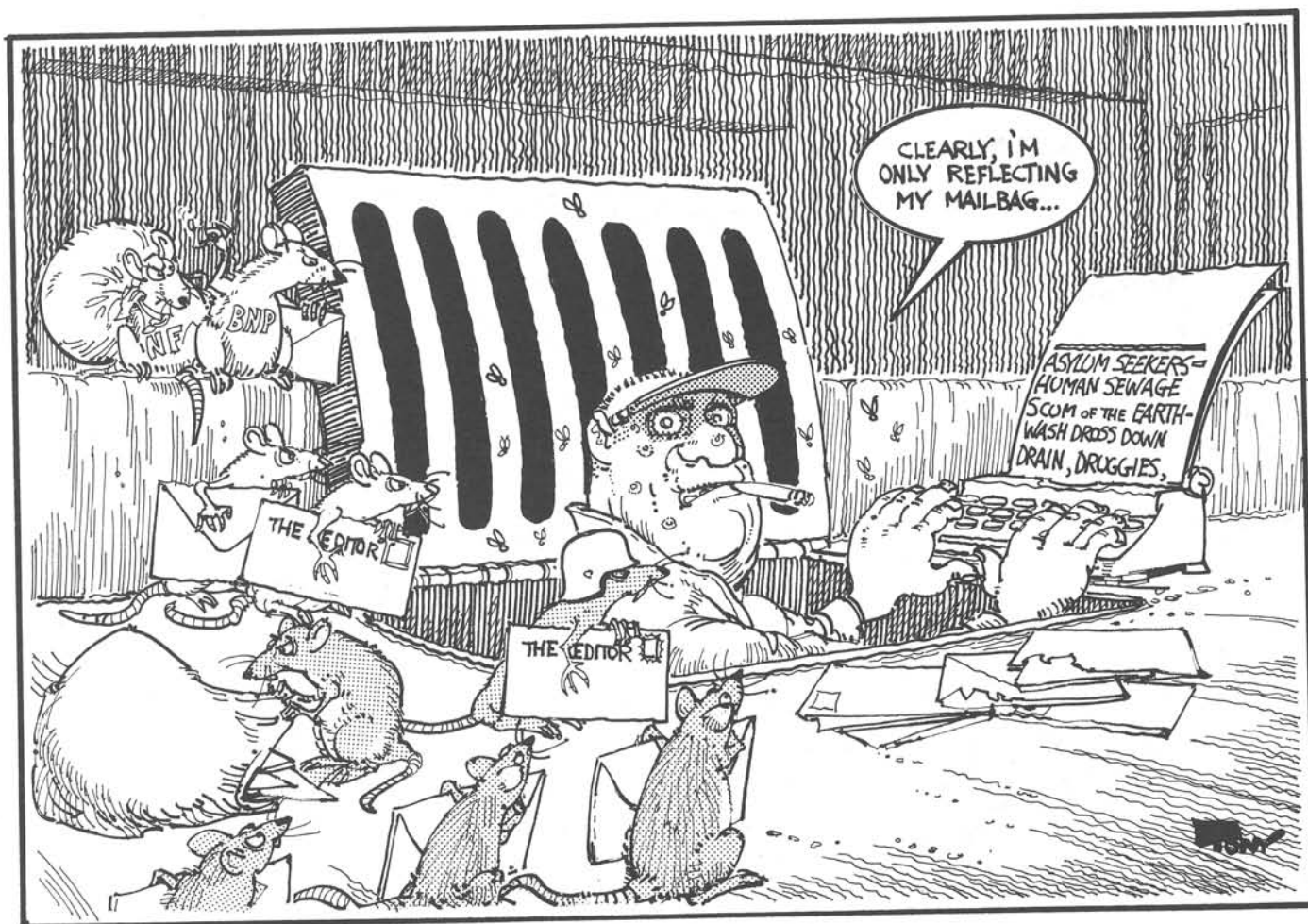
**Gypsies must go...but
don't blame them for
seeking a better life**

**Straw: I'll
act over
refugees**



'Mr Henderson, should the necessity arise we will decide whether or not to take in asylum-seekers, not you' – from the *Daily Mail*, 8 December 1998

From top to bottom: *Daily Mail* 6/10/98, *Daily Mail* 30/11/98, *Sunday People* 13/12/98, *News of the World* 6/12/98



name for itself with its racist reporting of crime and policing and trumpeted a simplistic 'get tough' stance on law and order with scant regard for accountability. In fact it helped to establish a climate in which police indifference to racial violence was allowed to go unchecked. The paper's offices were picketed by the Working Group Against *Daily Mail* Racism, an organisation established in response to a series of offensive articles in 1985.

Anti-racism *Daily Mail* style

But in February 1997, the paper uncharacteristically took a stand on the Stephen Lawrence murder, famously printing the faces of the five white racists who were widely believed to have been guilty, but whom the criminal justice system seemed unable to convict. The move by the *Daily Mail* opened up the process by which anti-racism in the form of the Lawrence family campaign has now become palatable to a middle England keen to demonstrate its new-found caring side. Since then the *Mail* has also given sympathetic coverage to other cases such as Michael Menson, running a two-page spread of Michael's sister's own account of the racist murder.

But on closer examination, of course, the limits to the *Mail's* stance are clear. Every mention of the Lawrence case

points out Stephen's great 'promise' as a student and how 'respectable' his family is, as if the murder would have been less wrong were these not the case. Met chief Paul Condon is given absolute support as a supposedly 'decent' figure and Condon's own refusal to accept institutional racism is thereby supported. And it is on the question of institutional racism that the contradiction at the heart of the *Mail's* new anti-racism is most pronounced. Its image of the new Britain is of a meritocracy in which everyone has the opportunity to get on and, therefore, the *Mail* cannot acknowledge the reality of institutional racism. Hence the current attacks on the Commission for Racial Equality (see right), an organisation which has regularly pointed to systematic racial discrimination in most areas of British life. Hence also the *Mail's* penchant for articles celebrating ethnic minority business or academic success.

Implicit in this is a Victorian distinction between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor which, when applied to asylum, becomes 'bogus' and 'genuine' asylum-seekers. And, for the *Mail*, the majority of asylum-seekers are, like the poor, only interested in getting their hands on state benefits. Therefore, even as the *Mail* has been condemning racist violence against black UK residents, it has also been contributing, through a series of misleading reports last autumn,

to the atmosphere of hostility towards asylum-seekers in Kent and once again fanning the flames of racist violence.

The nationals pick up the story

Five days after the *Dover Express* published its 'human sewage' editorial in October, the *Mail* picked up the story and published its own 'investigation into Britain's immigration crisis' headed 'The good life on asylum alley'. Focusing on the situation in Dover, the *Mail* asked how the government would 'stem the tide' of Gypsy migrants, the majority of whom, the *Mail* claimed, are 'playing the asylum appeals process' as a tactic to milk state benefits. Little mention was made of the well-documented racism against Roma in eastern Europe while the refugees' own stories of anti-Roma racism in Slovakia were dismissed. In spite of distancing itself from what it saw as 'xenophobic' remarks made about the hygiene of refugees by Dover locals, the article nevertheless began by printing the address of one asylum-seeking family in

STOP PRESS

Campaigners picket *Daily Mail* offices

On 28 January, British Somali organisations picketed the *Daily Mail* offices in protest at the hostile coverage of Somali asylum-seekers in the paper.

Dover. This led to the family's home being attacked and windows smashed. As the *Mail* followed up its 'investigation' through October and November with more virulent attacks on refugees (accusing the Home Office of operating a 'virtual open door policy' and of 'going soft' in the 'war against bogus asylum-seekers'), the level of harassment and verbal abuse which asylum-seekers were facing on the Kent coast increased. With local tensions rising, one local anti-racist commented: 'It's starting to feel like Montgomery, Alabama down here.'

By 28 November the *Daily Mail* was revelling in having taken the government to task for its sanctuary by stealth policy. Under the headline 'And still they flood in' the *Mail* revealed how there had been 'a 50 percent increase in successful applications since Jack Straw became home secretary'. Then two days later the paper launched its most vicious assault yet, with a story headlined 'Brutal crimes of the asylum-seekers'. This piece claimed that asylum-seekers were having a 'devastating impact' on crime in London. From a 'dossier' of just 44 cases, the *Mail* called, once again, for an end to the government's supposed 'open door' policy on asylum.

Through December and January the question of asylum became an obsession for the *Daily Mail*. We read about 'Kosovo-on-Sea, Devon' where 'old folk must quit resort homes to let in asylum-seekers'. Later we had 'Suburbia's little Somalia' about Somali asylum-seekers who had settled in 'affluent, middle-class Ealing... thousands of miles from the dusty plains of East Africa'. Meanwhile other papers began to jump on the *Mail*'s bandwagon. The *Sun* reported on a Dartford hospital which had been reopened to house Romanian refugees and called on the government to 'harden its heart'. Two days later the story was followed up with 'Inn-sane: refugees move from hospital to a £65-a-night luxury hotel'. Reporting on the same hospital the *Mail* headlined 'They couldn't find my dying granny a bed but they open the wards for gypsies'. Kent Social Services was then forced to move Romanian women with newborn children to a third secret location due to harassment from racists (including the NF) every time the papers ran a story. Among the tabloids only the *News of the World* offered an alternative view with a more sympathetic report on 'innocent families fleeing hell of

continued on next page

WASTEFUL, DIVIDED, DESTRUCTIVE, DANGEROUS, CHAOTIC, SELF-SERVING, DIVISIVE...

The CRE and the press

Wasteful, divided, destructive, dangerous, chaotic, self-serving, divisive. That is how the press recently described the Commission for Racial Equality in a clamour for its demise. What lies behind the vitriol?

The public story began on 15 December when the opinions of Blondel Cluff, a city lawyer and former CRE commissioner, were published by the *Daily Telegraph*. (Cluff, who is black, but does not seem to have had any race-relations interests or activities, appears to have been offered a warrant as commissioner by then home secretary Michael Howard, after they met at a dinner party at Nicholas Soames' house in 1996.) She said the CRE was inefficient and unable to manage its £15m budget; its staff were 'sloppy'. She reported friction between Afro-Caribbean and Asian commissioners and said they were all out of touch, especially with young and working-class people. Condemning the CRE's 'litigious and aggressive attitude towards race relations' she called for it to be wound up.

The Mail campaigns

By the next day the *Daily Mail* joined the fray. Its Irish reporter denounced the CRE for 'insulting the Irish' by looking at anti-Irish racism. But that was before the *Mail* had really got into its stride. For a few days it pestered commissioners to get more gossipy stories. Then it found one. Raj Chandran, another Howard-nominated commissioner, a Nottingham doctor with an interest in private nursing care (and a number of Rolls Royces with customised plates), attacked Herman Ouseley's management style. He should go, he told the *Mail* on 17 December, arguing that by talking about racism the CRE was encouraging it.

Andrew Alexander, one of the *Mail*'s long-serving Thatcherite New Rightists (who, 18 years ago, took pride in his 'stand in favour of racialism') now claimed that the Commission for Racial Enmity [sic] was worse than the National Front where racial tolerance was concerned. Simon Heffer, a former deputy editor at the *Spectator*, then took up the refrain, saying Sir Herman should be out on his ear, and Norman Tebbit in the *Mail* on Sunday went on to echo the sentiment.

Racial equality board is 'chaotic and self serving'

Tolerance - a loser in this race war

Time you quit, 'divisive' equality chief is told

Whitewash

Race commission 'destructive and dangerous'

Wasteful and divided race body should be wound up, says report

Put this Holy Cow out to grass

Racism & The Press

The broadsheet bleat

By and large the broadsheets provided more balanced accounts of the spat - except, that is, the *Sunday Times*. For its columnist Melanie Phillips' bugbear is anti-racism. And she bleated out all the fallacious arguments that first irritated her *Observer* readers. Don't exaggerate racism, Britain is a tolerant place; US-inspired Political Correctness has redefined racism to mean 'prejudice plus power' (no-one says that now and, if it were ever said, it was long before any whiff of PC); such a definition means that only white people can be racist (it does not); white working-class prejudice is being fomented by multiculturalism (her proof is the suspect report on Greenwich critiqued in *CARF* 40); an emphasis on institutional racism means all whites are racist (no, it shows she does not understand the term). Finally, she ended up with all the tabloid reactionaries: racism should be tackled via individual initiative and the CRE should be closed down.

Why now?

The attacks on anti-racism from the Right in the press, which occur at least every five years, do not come out of the blue. They come when anti-racists are making headway. It is not coincidental that this onslaught has come now, just when the Lawrence Inquiry has Middle England concerned about racial violence and police perfidy and proposals are afoot to strengthen race laws.

There does not seem to be much accidental in the breaking of this story. Blondel Cluff's husband, Algy Cluff, the oil tycoon, is proprietor of the *Spectator* and close associate of Conrad Black, owner of the *Daily Telegraph*, which first broke the story. And the timing of the story seems odd. Cluff's report went to the home secretary in August (soon after her two-year term as commissioner ended) and was, presumably, available to the press then. Why was it suddenly published in late December? Could it have had anything to do with Jack Straw's December visit to the CRE where he promised a strong reaction to the Lawrence Inquiry findings and a bill in the next parliamentary session to strengthen legislation along the lines of some of the CRE's proposals? ■

continued from previous page

war-torn Kosovo... Behind the headlines are stories to tear at the heart.'

The asylum issue also kept the columnists busy in December, with articles by Lynda-Lee Potter and Simon Heffer in the *Mail*, Jane Moore in the *Sun*, Tony Parsons in the *Mirror*, Peter Hitchens in the *Express* and Carol Sarler in the *Sunday People*. It was with the columnists that New Britain's post-Diana caring side found expression with some attempts at showing understanding. 'Don't blame them for seeking a better life... I understand why they tried to flee,' said Carol Sarler. Or as Tony Parsons put it: 'I don't blame them for coming. But that doesn't mean they have the right to be here.' But having stated that they 'had nothing against foreigners' (Tony Parsons again), the columnists were united in their demands that the 'gypsies must go'.

Labour spins itself round

The story of how national newspapers responded to the so-called 'asylum crisis' is telling. It reveals a curious relationship between the Labour government and the press, whereby a campaign by the *Daily Mail*, the flagship tabloid of middle England, can force the home secretary to abandon his sanctuary by stealth policy. From October through to December, Jack Straw brought in a series of new measures to deal with the asylum problem: fines on lorry drivers who carry refugees, the ending of social security benefits for asylum-seekers and their replacement with a voucher system and smart cards, a new Europe-wide database of fingerprints and new visa requirements for Slovaks entering the UK. The government could no longer afford to risk criticism by quietly giving more asylum-seekers permission to stay. Rather they embarked on an attempt to minimise criticism from selected newspapers, and implicitly conceded the *Mail's* contention that all asylum-seekers should be assumed to be 'bogus'.

It also reveals the privileged position of a newspaper which, placing itself between its readers and the government, claims to speak for middle England. And the government chooses to listen. ■

For more information about anti-racist activities in Dover, contact: Dover Residents Against Racism c/o Refugee Link, PO Box 417, Folkestone, Kent CT19 4GT.
Website: <http://www.canterbury.u-net.com/Dover.html>.

Across Europe, thanks to press reporting, 'criminal',

Europe, the pr

In focusing on immigrant crime, the press reflects the priorities of police and politicians who are the main sources for such stories.

Police crime statistics

The raw material for immigrant crime stories are police reports, particularly the release of selective and ethnically-based crime statistics. In many European countries – such as the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Greece – ethnically-based crime statistics, similar to those released by the UK Metropolitan police on Afro-Caribbean youth and mugging in 1982, have been released. Norwegian criminologists were furious when Oslo police issued selective and misleading crime statistics that sought to prove that immigrants were over-represented in violent crime such as rape, assault and robbery. But the voice of rationality was drowned out in the din of prejudice as the press orchestrated calls for new laws to deport foreign criminals and new measures to penalise immigrants who failed to assimilate into Norwegian culture.

Some fifty years after the Holocaust, police still stigmatise Roma communities through the compilation of 'Gypsy' crime statistics. The Association of Romanian Romani has called for international support in its campaign to stop police compiling and publishing data on the alleged criminal offences of Roma and foreigner groups (no statistics on any other groups are collated). Police stories about 'Gypsy' crime, says the Association, fuel the far Right. For instance, in August 1998, after a particularly sensational police press release, the leader of the Greater Romania Party proposed that the Roma should be isolated in 'special colonies' in order 'to stop Romania being transformed into a Gypsy camp'. The police practice of compiling data on Roma does not stop in eastern Europe. The Central Committee of German Sinti and Roma

Organisations has launched a legal challenge against the recording of information exclusively on Gypsies in police data banks and interview records in Bavaria.

Political opportunism

Another source of immigrant crime stories is opportunist politicians. In an interview with the *Bild am Sonntag* on 29 July, Gerhard Schröder, Social Democrats' leader, played directly to the gallery of popular prejudice when he commented that 'organised car crime is after all dominated by the Poles, the business of prostitution is dominated by the Russian mafia' and 'drug dealers largely come from south-east Europe and black Africa'. In the run-up to the Hungarian parliamentary elections in May 1998, the (then) prime minister Gyula Horn shocked members of his own Socialist government when he accused foreigners of 80 percent of all robberies and murders.

When the French Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin described youth involved in the latest round of rioting in the French banlieues as 'little savages', and his interior minister went on to suggest that the parents of these 'little savages' should be denied welfare as punishment for their children's crimes, the subliminal race message was not lost on the French press.

Fodder for the far Right

In broadcasting uncritically the message that immigration means crime, the press not only gives the far Right a platform to mobilise on but also affords it a legitimacy as the only force willing to act on a subject of immense public concern. The situation in Milan, Italy is a case in point. Since the New Year, there has been panic about crime as newspapers focused on a series of murders, claiming that 'Milan's getting like Chicago in the 1930s'. Despite an appeal to good sense from the award-winning author Dario

'immigrant' , 'Roma' are becoming interchangeable

Press and crime

Racism & THE PRESS

Fo, and the release of statistics to show that Milan's murder rate is actually declining, the city is up in arms about lawlessness and immigrants.

The killing of a street trader was immediately linked to immigration, despite the fact that the police are seeking two Italian suspects. Ten thousand people marched through Milan at the instigation of the far-Right National Alliance and other opposition partners, and several days later the racist Northern League mobilised several thousands in an anti-immigrant demonstration. 'For citizens, criminality and the control of illegal immigrants are not just problems for the security forces,' Northern League leader Umberto Bossi told the assembled

masses. 'The reality is that citizens don't want a multiracial society.'

Orchestrating public opinion

The press, however, not only reflects racism but creates it; orchestrates it even, to the extent that its message becomes so extreme as to invite parallels with the far Right. A spokesperson for Kent police blamed inflammatory and unacceptable news reporting on Roma asylum-seekers for heightening tensions and attracting far-Right groups to Dover. And, in an unprecedented move, police issued a warning to the group editor of a number of weekly newspapers including the *Folkestone Herald* and the *Dover Express* that he risked being charged

with inciting racial hatred. In Ireland, where net immigration in 1997 of 15,000 people (mostly from the EU) has been described in the press as a 'wave crashing Ireland', the editor of the *Wexford People* has been similarly accused by the Irish Council of Civil Liberties of inciting a poisonous racism. A front-page editorial of the *Wexford People* accused refugees of buying designer clothes, eating in expensive restaurants and living in posh hotels, all courtesy of the Irish taxpayer. Asylum-seekers, readers were told, were running up the streets waving welfare cheques, frightening old women living alone and attempting to get Irish girls pregnant because a baby would bring a passport.

A poisonous negativity

Undocumented workers, asylum-seekers, the children of immigrants, Roma – just to mention such groups is to invite negative press comment. The perversity and all-pervading nature of this negativity was at its height in Sweden when, at the end of October 1998, 63 youngsters, mostly the children of immigrants, burned to death in a discotheque fire in the working-class district of Gothenburg. Even in this awful tragedy, some sections of the Swedish press managed to find something critical to say, suggesting that many young men trapped inside the hall had acted selfishly and refused to help others struggling to escape. It was left to the fire service to right a scandalous wrong. It held a press conference in which firefighters described the heroic efforts of the youngsters in the operation to save lives. One 16-year-old youth repeatedly entered the burning building, carrying out at least eight helpless victims, before returning once too often and perishing in the flames. ■

For the French press, second-generation immigrant youth only become newsworthy at the point of riot – confirming the government's view of them as 'little savages'



'Europe's most unwanted

The history of the Romany Gypsy people has been shaped for five centuries by 'two brute historical facts' – in the words of Britain's first professor of Romany, Thomas Acton: 'enslavement (particularly in Eastern Europe) and attempted genocide (especially in Western Europe)'.

As late as 1956, anyone turning to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* for information on 'Gypsies' could read: 'The mental age of an average adult Gypsy is thought to be about that of a child of ten. Gypsies have never accomplished anything of significance... Loving bright colours, they are ostentatious and boastful but lack bravery. They have no idea of time, proportion or measurement, and are superstitious...'.

'The blacks of Europe'

It is a familiar litany of scientific racism. Yet anti-racist groups in this country have not had the information to gain any real sense of urgency or solidarity with the East European Roma, who may now be facing a renewed wave of genocide. In Britain the Roma are usually seen as 'European' rather than 'black', though they are precisely 'the blacks of Europe'. They call themselves, and are called, black; the walls of housing estates across Europe are sprayed with graffiti threatening death to the 'Black Dogs', 'Black Pigs' and 'Black Mugs' (along with despatching them 'To the Gas' and 'Back to India').

Black British tourists are warned by *The Rough Guide* not to visit the Czech Republic, as they are in danger of being attacked and will almost certainly be refused service in restaurants and shops on the basis of skin colour alone.

Over half the Romany population of Europe was enslaved in Romania, a slavery that lasted almost the exact length of the Atlantic slave trade. It was a British king, Henry VIII, who called Romanies 'Europe's most unwanted race' and prescribed death simply for being an 'Egyptian'. Flogging, branding

and forced labour were some of the lesser penalties in the Egyptians Acts in England, along with banishment or deportation. The last hangings simply for being a Gypsy took place in Scotland in 1714.

In the Netherlands the 'heathen' Gypsies were literally hunted until there were none left; in France and Spain, they were taken to the galleys; in Austria and Hungary, their children were forcibly taken away. The Romany language and dress were banned. There were notices at every crossroads in German lands showing Gypsies being whipped or hanged. It was as if every country in Europe was competing to drive away the 'unwanted race'.

Rules tested on Roma

Today, that picture still feels familiar as national governments and local councils vvy with each other to produce the most forbidding reception and push the Roma on. The most disturbing features of new UK legislation on asylum and immigration were put into practice with Roma refugees, long before the White Paper was presented for consultation. An asylum-seeker used to have 28 days to add evidence to the first rushed interview at the port, where new arrivals are exhausted, confused and without knowledge of asylum law. For the Roma who arrived in autumn 1997, that time was cut to five days. The White Paper is now adopting the five-day rule for all port arrivals. The White Paper also proposes abolishing legal representation at that crucial first interview – in practice, for Roma this was hardly ever obtainable.

The White Paper's chilling 'presumption of detention pending removal following dismissal of an appeal' – contrary to international law – has already been put into practice with several Slovakian Roma. In one case the head of a family went to court to renegotiate bail and ended (alone) in Terminal Four at Heathrow awaiting deportation.

Last July, 47 Romanian Roma arrived in Ireland after crossing Europe in a freight container. Although Ireland has a waiting list of some 4,000 asylum-seekers stretching back many years, the Department of Justice felt able to refuse every one of the Roma applications within one month. The Anti Racism Campaign and the Irish Travellers' Movement bought the Roma families down from Monaghan to demonstrate outside the Department of Justice. It was the first time that the asylum-seekers had been seen; media interest was immediate and (perhaps because of Ireland's own emigrant past) largely sympathetic. The deportations scheduled for October were halted and the Roma are now awaiting decisions on appeal. ■

For further information ring ARC on 00 353 1 453 6700 x 4400. The Dublin *Big Issue* now has some Romany vendors.

The Home Office is now sending British immigration officers to police exit points from the Czech Republic. Since the only way to separate emigrants from tourists will be to look for Romany names or darker skins, the UK government will be using race as an entry criterion in a way that would be against the law inside Britain.

d race'...

British anti-racist work cannot overlook the Roma dimension, writes Amanda Sebestyen

At first all Slovak asylum applications were not only rejected in the courts but deemed totally unfounded. Later adjudicators began to grant a few of the most serious cases leave to remain. At his point the Home Office started counter-appealing each case. A large number of the Slovak appeals were adjourned to the new year, indicating that a big push is intended to deport the Slovaks this year.

The system of 'support in kind' was also pioneered in the case of the Roma refugees. After the second exodus in summer 1998, almost no cash payments were made. When visiting Camden's emergency housing in a disused school building, the Roma Refugee Organisation saw whole families attempting to exist on emergency payments which did not even cover the price of food, without facilities for cooking, and with illness beginning among the children. Meanwhile at a meeting of Camden Labour Party, councillors applauded the emergency housing scheme – a scheme regarded by many as a way of discouraging asylum-seekers from entering the borough.

The White Paper makes it clear that payment in kind is a less efficient option than paying refugees cash benefits and/or allowing them to work. The choice has been made for admittedly political and punitive reasons, with the result that refugees singled out by the food voucher system are being spat at, insulted and harassed. A community worker from Hackney, speaking on Radio 4's recent 'Them and Us' debate, pointed out that in ten years the number of refugees in the borough had gone up and down many times: what had changed in the last year was the hate campaign in the press leading to these expressions of hatred in the street.

New focus for racism

It would be wrong to see the xenophobic press as a tabloid phenomenon, when (as the White Paper shows) the lead is being given from much higher up. Not only has home secretary Straw dismissed the Romany asylum claims as 'all bogus' in answer to a question from Jeremy Corbyn MP, but Robin Cook's ethical Foreign Office has helpfully provided the Czech government with ammunition against its own Romany citizens, in statements later recycled through the Czech press to become a new focus for racial hatred there. BBC television and

radio perpetually repeat the word 'Gypsy' in preference to 'Roma', triggering long established British hatreds. While the word Gypsy has been proudly reclaimed by many British Travellers, in Europe it remains a racial insult, so it is as if the BBC were constantly using the word nigger or wog.

Last summer's panic about the Roma exodus in fact began with a small Home Office story at the foot of the front page of *The Times*, about the need for visa restrictions. BBC Radio news extrapolated a tale of 'Heathrow inundated by Gypsies' in its morning headlines round-up (strange, because the *Times* article hadn't been a leading headline), and the whole press pack charged off to the airport. The Roma Refugee Organisation found itself repeatedly harassed by a *Times* journalist, who only wanted to 'talk numbers' and refused to listen to the clear reason why Czech Roma were fleeing: a particularly brutal racial murder where yet again the perpetrators had gone free.

Solidarity

Ironically, a populist UK government running scared of 'the people's prejudice', and an opportunist press looking for easy targets, may both be misjudging the real feeling about refugees in Britain. The Radio 4 'Them and Us' debate was broadcast from Haringey over Christmas and asked the question: 'Do asylum-seekers put too much of a burden on the host country?' Not only was the motion – put forward, sadly, by a Haringey activist of African descent together with the despicable *Dover Express* – defeated by 55 to 7 by an opposing team led by the Refugee Council and Faisal Kawani from Kurdistan. But the later phone-in, where a heavy anti-refugee vote could have been expected, only reversed the result by 612 votes to 582. The votes from London and the South-East, the region which actually has the most asylum-seekers, were the most favourable.



VRAZI

TIBOR DANIHEL
25. 9. 1975 - 24. 9. 1993

**NESMÍ
ZÚSTAT**

NEPOTRESTÁNI

The murderers must not go unpunished

The friends and family of Tibor Danihel – like those of Stephen Lawrence – have been campaigning since 1993 to see the armed skinhead gang who murdered Tibor brought to justice. Now, in an unprecedented move, the Czech Supreme Court has ruled the skinheads must face a retrial.

Anti-racists have a world to win. The Roma are in the front line across Europe and now here. It is my dream that one day the family of Tibor Danihel – who have been fighting since 1993 to prosecute the Czech skinheads who murdered their son – will meet the Stephen Lawrence Campaign. Romany refugees in this country, too, include activists of stature who have much to teach and learn from the British anti-racist movement. Critiques of Eurocentrism must not prevent anti-racists from dealing with the racism at the heart of this continent. ■

Amanda Sebestyen works with The Roma Refugee Organisation, the first self-help group organised by Czech and Slovak Roma. The group welcomes support of all kinds, and can send public speakers. Contact: RRO, c/o PO Box 14874, London NW1 0WF. Tel: 0171 272 9449.

The Refugee Council's report *Unwanted Journey: why Central European Roma are fleeing to the UK* surveys conditions in the towns that Czech, Slovak and Romanian refugees have fled. Available from the Refugee Council, tel: 0171 582 9929.

NOV 26 Pakistani and Bangladeshi families in Britain are almost four times as likely to be living in poverty than white families, according to research from Essex University **NOV 29** Bristol police say they are seeking a racist gang for an attack on three Sikh teenagers and for several other assaults carried out on the same night... Scotland Yard says it is taking legal advice as to whether it can 'name and shame' officers disciplined for racist behaviour **NOV 30** Survey by Southampton City Council reveals that ethnic minorities living in the city are three times more likely to be living in crowded conditions than whites... Southampton City Council begins proceedings to evict racists from housing estate... National Health Service in Wales is discriminating against black patients and denying promotion chances to black staff, says the CRE... Government comes under pressure to ease visa restrictions on Slovaks after a majority of their asylum hearings are successful **DEC 1** Home secretary Jack Straw says he will overhaul race laws and force public bodies to publish figures on the employment and promotion of black staff **DEC 2** Police Complaints Authority announces that four police officers, who arrested a black trainee solicitor when he arrived at a police station to see a client, will face disciplinary charges **DEC 4** Sheffield Wednesday and Leeds United football clubs come under fire for booking racist comedian Bernard Manning for club dinners **DEC 5** Britain's top civil servants claim that racial discrimination is endemic in Downing Street and at every level of the civil service **DEC 6** Road hauliers condemn government plans to fine lorry drivers for unknowingly transporting stowaways to Britain **DEC 7** 16-year-old Celeste Shirley becomes youngest person to take an employer to an industrial tribunal by launching action against Sainsburys for racial discrimination... Black Training and Enterprise Group accuses TECs of failing to ensure black trainees obtain parity of job outcomes with white counterparts **DEC 8** Home Office research reveals that black people are on average five times more likely to be stopped and searched than whites, and six times more likely to be jailed **DEC 9** Essex police deny racism in their force despite figures showing that black people were seven times more likely to be arrested than white, and six times more likely to be stopped and searched... Birmingham chief education officer accuses local school heads of discrimination against classroom staff **DEC 10** White receptionist who quit her job at van rental company in disgust after being told to discriminate against black people, wins claim for racial discrimination **DEC 11** Asylum-seekers and immigrants should not be held in jails unless they have committed criminal offences, states chief inspector of prisons Sir David Ramsbotham **DEC 12** Kenyan Asian British Overseas Citizen Manjit Kaur wins right to launch test case in European Court to decide whether she is an EU national with the right to live and work in Britain... government figures show that in some parts of the country black children are 15 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white counterparts... National Front is reported to be drawing up plans to transmit right-wing propaganda programmes by satellite from America's Deep South in order to circumvent English laws on political broadcasting **DEC 14** Arsenal footballer Patrick Vieira is fined £20,000 for making a V sign at rival supporters but claims that it was in response to racial taunts **DEC 16** Dozens of deportations are suspended after Court of Appeal rules that Jack Straw acted illegally in ordering the deportation of a Nigerian woman on the same day as refusing her asylum application, giving her no chance to appeal **DEC 17** Egyptian swimming pool attendant tells employment tribunal that his boss at an exclusive south-west London health club had printed his name beneath a picture of a camel and told him that Egyptians were dishonest and smelly... Court of Appeal quashes hijacking convictions of six Iraqis who commandeered a plane to Britain from the Sudan in order escape persecution and claim asylum in Britain **DEC 18** Preliminary report of the Stephen Lawrence public inquiry

contains scathing criticism of 24 police officers including the former third highest-ranking officer in the force, according to the *Independent*... Police Inspectorate report to the home secretary says that the police have made little progress in tackling racism in the past year **DEC 23** Britain's first publicly funded Sikh school gets go-ahead to open in west London **DEC 26** Police Federation, representing nine of the officers criticised in the Lawrence report, says that it will seek an injunction to prevent publication of certain passages **DEC 28** New private member's bill proposes that football hooligans be required to surrender passports and be banned from grounds for up to ten years **DEC 29** Prison Service announces that it will appoint a Muslim adviser following an increase in the number of Muslim inmates... Police Complaints Authority warns that police should no longer use the US-style long-handled batons because of fears that they will cause long-term injuries **JAN 1** Cabinet papers released under the 30-year rule reveal that immigration was the most inflammatory political issue of 1968, and that the dockers and porters who marched in support of Enoch Powell were organised by undercover right-wing extremists **JAN 3** Government announces that the next official census will ask Britons for their religion... Customs officers reported to be seeking High Court order to seize home of Clifford Norris, father of Stephen Lawrence's alleged killer David Norris, after reports that it was bought with drug money **JAN 4** Racially-motivated crime has fallen by a third according to Strathclyde police, but local REC questions accuracy of statistics... Foreign Office refuses to allow a British citizen's two-year-old child to visit her father in a British jail, alleging that her Filipina mother may try to claim state benefits if she enters Britain **JAN 7** Three-week-old baby found dead in lorry container in France after family flees eastern Europe **JAN 9** Campaigners demand an official inquiry into killing of Blair Peach by police at anti-racist demonstration as the twentieth anniversary of his death approaches... Immigration minister Mike O'Brien flies to Eastern Europe for talks aimed at preventing refugees coming to Britain **JAN 11** Home Office minister Paul Boateng launches national drive to recruit more black police officers... Scottish Office research shows that a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities, as compared to whites, are appearing before the courts without legal representation **JAN 12** All officers involved in Stephen Lawrence case are cleared of racism by Police Complaints Authority investigation as Lawrence family proposes possible civil action for negligence **JAN 13** Major Eric Joyce told to resign from the army after describing it as racist and class-ridden... Home secretary orders four riot squads of prison officers on standby at Medway Secure Training Centre, Britain's first child jail **JAN 15** Two Manchester youths aged 13 and 14 are locked up for three years after taking turns to batter Asian children with a metal bar and nail-studded planks, and bragging that 'they're probably dead'... Young Asian women are losing out on jobs because white professionals consider them 'too oppressed' by their close-knit families, says Sunderland University study **JAN 17** Hundreds march through Edinburgh to mark tenth anniversary of racist murder of Somali refugee Ahmed Shek **JAN 19** Detective Inspector Ben Bullock announces that he will delay his retirement to answer seven charges of neglect of duty arising from the Stephen Lawrence investigation... 38-year-old George Ellis has conviction for armed robbery overturned after Court of Appeal hears that vital evidence was planted by a police officer now facing criminal charges of dishonesty **JAN 24** Police Complaints Authority to investigate death of Robert Allotey four days after his arrest in Brixton **JAN 28** New Cross fire of 1981 was not a racist attack according to forensic report **JAN 29** Albert Patrick, the detective heading Lawrence investigation (who faces internal disciplinary action from another case), is replaced by John Grieve **FEB 1** Black motorist, Carl Josephs, stopped 34 times by Birmingham police, loses harassment case.

- ☐ I wish to receive copies of CARF each issue to sell.
- ☐ I wish to subscribe to CARF for one year starting with issue No 49 and enclose £7.50 (individuals)/£12 (institutions).*
- ☐ We wish to become a CARF supporting organisation and enclose £70 for one year's subscription of 10 copies per issue.*
- ☐ I wish to become a CARF supporter and make a regular donation to CARF. Please send me a banker's order form.
- ☐ I enclose £..... donation to CARF.*

Name _____

Address _____

Please return to: **CARF, BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX.**
 (*All cheques payable to CARF)