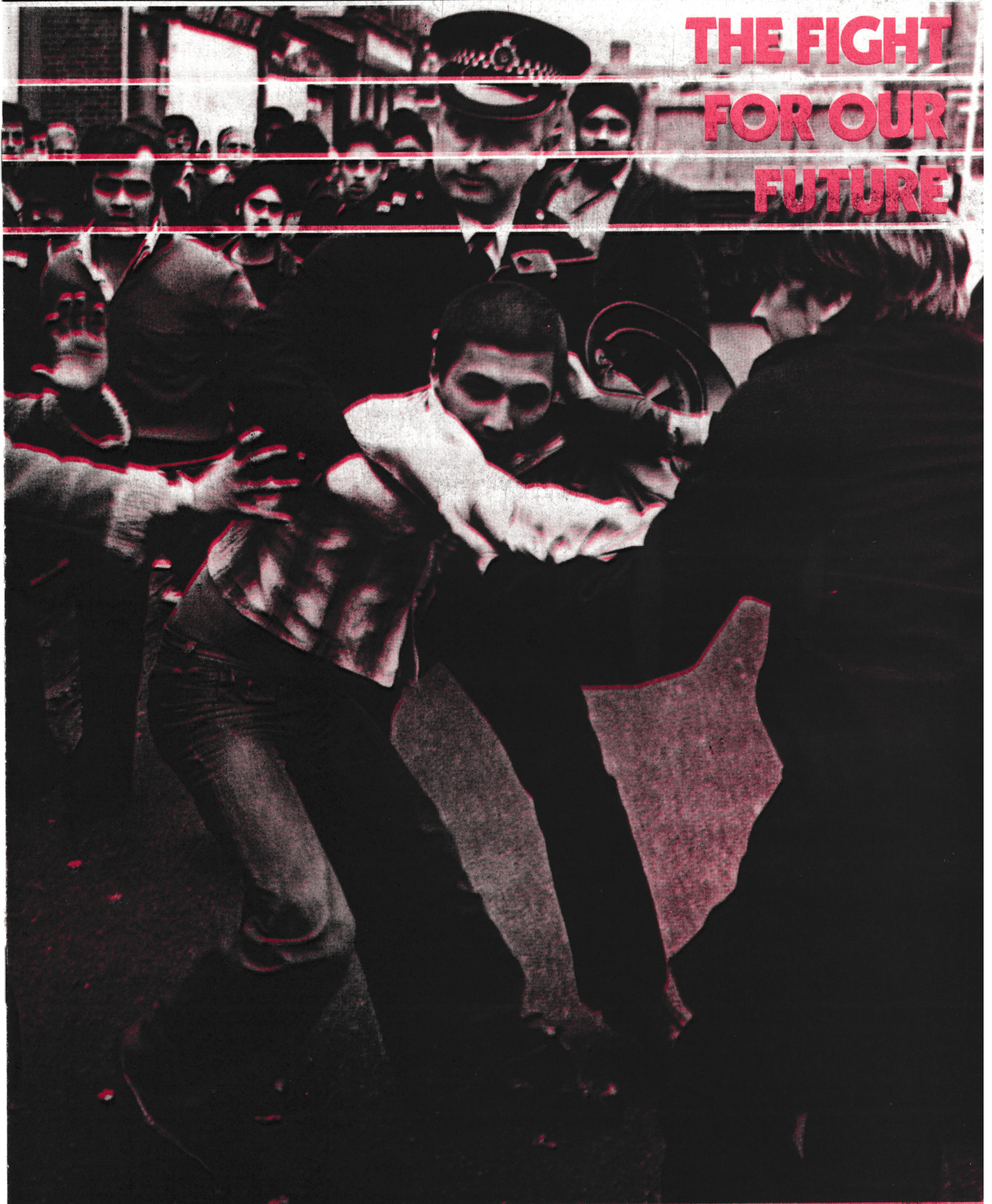


SOUTHALL

**THE FIGHT
FOR OUR
FUTURE**



A Socialist Worker Party pamphlet produced by Southall SWP

15p

WHAT HAPPENED

John Sturrock (Report)



Gurdip Singh Chagger

Blair Peach



ON MONDAY, 23rd April the nazi National Front organised a rally in the heart of Southall. If there had been no protest the National Front would have regarded this as a victory, and a signal to begin the intimidation of Southall's Asian community. Three years ago, Gurdip Chagger was murdered by racists. The NF meeting would be a clear signal to other racist gangs. But the attempt to stop the meeting was thwarted by a massive and brutal defence of the National Front by London's Police Force. 350 brothers and sisters were arrested, dozens were badly injured, and our comrade, Blair Peach was killed.

The activities of that day have posed a number of serious questions which require to be answered: Was our response correct? Why did the Police protect the nazis? Why have the press and politicians reacted in the way they have? We need to pause and consider, 'What is the way forward now?' The answers we give must be founded on an honest assessment of what actually happened. Let's start with the facts!

THE FACTS

Wednesday 11th April - Meeting of Southall organisations called by the Indian Workers Association (IWA) Executive in response to the National Front booking Southall Town Hall for an election rally on Monday 23rd April. Everyone agreed that the meeting should be stopped. Vishnu Sharma President of the Southall I.W.A. proposed that there should be a petition to the Council, a demonstration on Sunday 22nd April, and a close-down of shops in Southall from 1.00pm on 23rd April. Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members proposed that in addition there should be a call on workers in the area to withdraw their labour from 1.00pm on 23rd April, and that there should be a mass peaceful protest outside the Town Hall to stop the meeting. Both sets of proposals were carried unanimously by the 80 delegates representing a multitude of religious, political and cultural organisations.

Sunday 22nd April - Protest march involving about 5,000. A petition with 7,000 signatures was presented to Ealing Council. But the police unnecessarily harassed the demonstrators and 15 brothers and sisters were arrested. This police provocation angered everyone, setting the scene for Monday's events.

Monday 23rd April, 1.00pm - Most of the shops in Southall were closed and boarded up. During the afternoon many

workers, mainly Asian, went on strike to come to Southall. This included workers from as far away as Fords Langley and the Airport.

1.30pm - Final Stewards meeting at 46 High Street. Arrangements included Balwinder Singh Rana (local Anti Nazi League organiser) as Chief Steward, four Senior Stewards on each of the four main roads, Stewards to assist with the mass sit-downs; legal advice at Southall Rights; loudspeaker outside the NF meeting; communications network with No. 46 as the focus. Because of the use of police dogs at Leicester and some comrades apprehension about the 'official' ambulance services, it was decided to organise a First Aid Post at 6 Park View Road. All this information was conveyed on a leaflet produced by the Anti-Nazi League.

2.00pm - Numbers of Asian youth began to congregate opposite the Town Hall. The Southall Youth Movement (SYM) were concerned that the police might bring the nazis in early and they wanted to picket the Town Hall in case this occurred. They did not want a confrontation with the far superior forces of the police. Agreement was reached with the Police's Community liaison officer that they could stand outside the Town Hall, but the other police ignored this agreement. They forced the youths to 'move on' and a small demonstration numbering about 300, gathered. Although peaceful, this group was then prevented from 'moving on' by the police. Arrests occurred and tempers flared. Balwinder Singh appealed to youths and police for calm, recognising that it was fruitless for arrests to occur at this juncture. The police were panicking and becoming violent. They attacked not only youths, but late shoppers and people returning to their homes.

3.30pm - There were already over 40 arrests. The police had taken control of the centre of Southall around the Town Hall, and they gradually moved their lines of police further and further out. Heavy rain dampened tempers in the mid afternoon, but there were still a number of incidents, particularly on and to the North of the Broadway. This included the wrecking of a 207 bus.

5.00pm - The official assembly time for mobilising outside the Town Hall, which had been previously agreed between the police and the Co-ordinating Committee. Not only did the police remove our 'democratic' right to protest peacefully, they prevented parliamentary candidate Tariq Ali from canvassing, prevented legal workers at Southall Rights from

reaching their office, and prevented citizens from reaching their homes. So much for impartiality.

By this time the centre of Southall had become a 'Police State' and a curfew had been imposed. There were row after row of foot police with riot shields and dogs at hand, hoards of mounted police with 30 inch batons and Special Patrol Group (SPG) vans driving into crowds without concern for peoples lives.

Because of this 'control', it was difficult to communicate between different groups of demonstrators. Gradually three concentrations developed: one on the South Road railway bridge, the largest on the High Street by Park View Road, and a third along the Broadway. Police blocks prevented us from organising a fourth concentration in Lady Margaret Road.

In South Road, demonstrators, many organised by the IWA, tried to hold a peaceful sit-down. A large number were truncheoned and arrested.

Opposite Park View there were about 2,000 demonstrators, mostly young, organised by the SYM, Peoples Unite and the ANL. Clarence Baker, of Peoples Unite, was one of the many leaders who called for peace. Comrades were still arriving and it would have been foolish to fight with the police at this stage when the odds were against us. But it became increasingly difficult to hold back the youths who had been harassed all afternoon by the police. At about 6.30pm some of them left the pavement and rambled, rather than charged, into the police lines. This was not a co-ordinated attack. However, the police now had the excuse they wanted for a full scale riot.

The first lines of foot police opened up and made way for SPG men with riot shields and hoards of baton-wielding police on horse-back. Some demonstrators tried to defend themselves by throwing bricks. But it was useless. The mounties ran amock, joking, laughing and making racist remarks as they smashed skulls with their batons. The footmen followed up using riot shields as weapons and arresting anyone. Some women and girls even had their breasts grabbed as policemen made crude and insulting sexual remarks. The police violence did nothing to control the situation.

The worst violence was at 6 Park View Road. This was being used as the First Aid Post, and as the SPG moved into the crowd, many comrades ran into it to escape the vicious violence going on outside. But they were pursued by the police. As the baton-wielding police stormed 6 Park View Road, comrades

inside realised they were trapped, and tried to defend themselves. Inside the house the police went berserk. Many bothers and sisters had to have their heads stitched after receiving truncheon blows. Clarence Baker was hit with 'killer blows' and later developed a blood clot. **No one complained of bruises on the shoulder or back - only head wounds.** Among those injured were a doctor and an ambulanceman in a ground floor room clearly marked 'First Aid'. They were treating injured persons. But they and a solicitor, John Witzendfeld, were all viciously assaulted, receiving head wounds, along with the others. 6 Park View Road was evacuated by the police, and then occupied by them. They smashed up £10,000 of equipment and ripped up floor boards.

The crowd by Park View Road was dispersed, but some joined up with demonstrators in the Broadway. Here there was more violence from the police. Some demonstrators retaliated.

7.00pm - The NF arrived mostly from the Lady Margaret Road direction. They were mostly 'heavies' from outside the area. In the meeting one of the speakers told the audience that when the NF came to power they would demolish Southall and construct a beautiful English hamlet.

8.00pm - By this time the crowds had been dispersed, and any possibility of trouble from the demonstrators had long since passed. But despite this SPG snatch squads continued to be active. They travelled around in vans, and, directed by the helicopter overhead, they moved into the dispersing groups and assaulted and arrested anyone they could grab.

One such SPG group trapped Blair Peach and friends at the end of Orchard

Avenue. There were at least six witnesses to this event. They saw an SPG policeman, without a number, hit Blair Peach with a truncheon on at least two occasions. He fell and later died.

THE CONCLUSIONS

It is impossible to escape the following conclusions:

1. The NF's intention was to provoke trouble.

The Town Hall could only seat 57, and most of these were taken by the 'heavies'. The Front were not interested in convincing the public by the arguments they put forward in the meeting. But they knew that if they got away with holding the meeting it would be seen as a victory, and they would be able to attract support in the surrounding areas. This boost in morale would encourage an increase in racist violence.

2. The Tory Council in Ealing were responsible

Political prejudice and senseless ineptitude led them to accept the booking, despite advice that they could discover legal means of preventing the meeting, as was done by the neighbouring Brent Council.

3. The police provoked disturbances, by not allowing a peaceful protest.

Many brothers and sisters believe there was a high level decision to 'teach the

Police field test of the new 'Riot Brolly'



SOME QUESTI

bastards a lesson'. Such comments were heard on police radios and the police have made no secret of the fact that they wanted to get their own back after events three years ago. Certainly the evident racism and lust for violence of most of the rank and file police rendered any peaceful policing operation impossible.

4. The police brutality, was absolutely unnecessary.

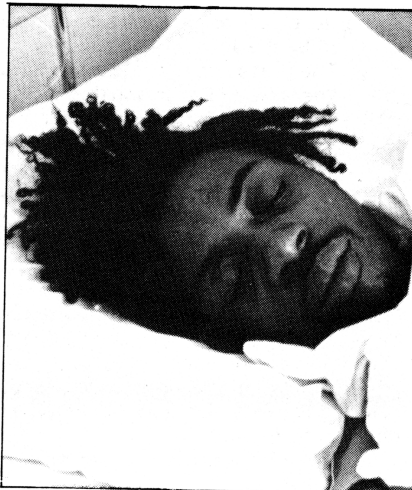
It cannot be justified even in the police's own terms of the need to preserve order.

5. The police killed Blair Peach.

THE DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Following the riot we have been faced with the immediate responsibility of organising a Defence for the 350 who were arrested. Early on a Co-ordinating Committee of Southall organisations. was convened to co-ordinate the defence. The Committee included representatives of the Anti-Nazi League, the Southall Youth Movement, the Indian Workers Association (Southall) Peoples Unite, National Association of Asian Youth and Southall Rights and Sikh Temples.

This Committee has called for a public enquiry, all charges to be dropped, McNee to be sacked, the SPG to be disbanded and 6, Park View Road to be returned to Peoples Unite. An Independent Inquiry is now being organised. The Committee also organised a commemoration march on Saturday 28th April. This was to pay respect to Blair Peach and demonstrate to the police and



Clarence Baker lies ill in hospital

NF that the community was not defeated. The 15,000 strong march was militant yet absolutely peaceful.

The defence in court of the 350 is now proceeding; as is the collection of funds for court costs and fines.

It is important that we mount a political defence. The magistrates, with all their prejudices, will read the Tory press, listen to the police evidence and ignore what we have to say. If we are to succeed we must mobilise support outside the courtroom. To do that successfully depends a lot on our behaviour in the court, and how we organise the cases. For instance, it is no good us saying 'Southall Kids are Innocent', 'Police provoked the violence', and then pleading guilty in the courtroom! If we are to succeed in the courts and succeed in convincing others about police behaviour, we need a political defence.

Why did the police protect the Nazis?

AFTER THE events of Monday 23rd April, many people have come to believe that the police are the same as the NF nazis. The hatred of the police is justified: they were extremely brutal that Monday and continually harass black people. But they should not be confused with the nazis.

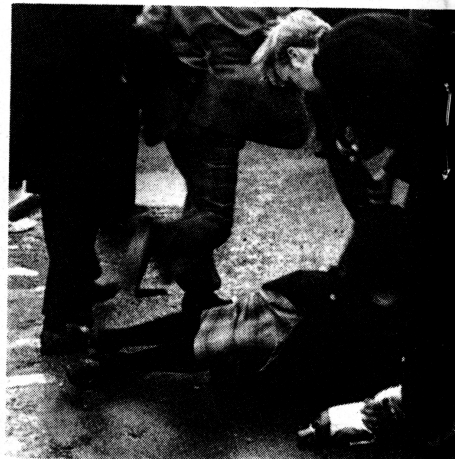
The NF's politics are like those of Hitler's nazis. They base their support on white racist hatred of black people, just as Hitler built his party on opposition to the Jews. But they are not just racists (after all there are plenty of racists in the Labour Party and especially amongst the Tories). The nazis will also wipe out socialists and destroy the unions. They want to establish a militaristic dictatorship and are willing to use any means necessary to come to power. But they are not yet in power. They are building their support among confused whites who are alienated from the present system—they are against it. But the rich and powerful people who make all the important decisions in society, are for the present system. At the moment they do not support the nazis.

The police are the section of the state that most of us come up against most frequently. They are not controlled by Parliament, but by their own Senior Officers. And most of these Senior Officers like the Judges and Army Chiefs, have many links with the rich and powerful directors and bankers. They come from the same families, went to the same schools, drink in the same clubs: they belong to the same ruling class. All have interests in common and they need each other. The role of the police is to protect property and the system as it is.

The police



protect ...



We are a threat to that system, but so are the NF nazis.

Obviously, many individual policemen, if not most, are racists, and some are National Front sympathisers.

But this is not the real explanation why the police are an organised force, acting under orders from Senior Officers, protect the NF: it is simply a reason why many of the rank and file police enjoy their work. The important reasons are twofold. First, although the ruling class and the NF do not have the same interests at present, the bosses may need the nazis in the future.

In Germany, the bosses began to support the nazis because they felt threatened by the organised working class, and the communists in particular. The nazis were seen by the bosses as the lesser of two evils because they were willing to work with them, unlike the communists who wanted to destroy capitalism. Secondly, here and now, the National Front play a useful role in dividing the working class. That's why some brothers and sisters shout the slogan: 'National Front is a bosses front!' 'Smash the National Front'.

Should We Use Violence?

We are not so naive as to believe that the police would allow us to peacefully stop the NF meeting. We wanted to stop the meeting peacefully but the police acted under orders to defend the Front. We had no choice but to use force to defend ourselves. It is important to understand the tremendous violence which was used against us on Monday and also that the police are prepared to use far greater violence against us in the future if it is necessary to maintain their control.

The level of police violence is only equalled by the level of hypocrisy of the press. The press has not protested about the murder of Blair Peach and they did not protest at the murder of Kevin Gately or Gurdip Chagger or the four blacks killed by racists in East London over the last few years. The press are hysterical about the violence of the IRA and are quiet about the violence of the British Army. They condemned the violence of the Independence Movements in India and elsewhere, and condoned the actions of the imperialists. So when the police or press or politicians complain of violence, they are only concerned when the violence is directed towards the establishment not when it is directed by them.

In Southall, it was not because we were violent that we were defeated. On the contrary, there was very little violence from our side. The swiftness and brutality of the police operation prevented any organised defence. If we measure violence in terms of bricks thrown; then Lewisham was undoubtedly more violent. On the latter occasion anti-fascists were successful — we routed the NF and defeated the police in the process. But what made the difference between Lewisham and Southall, between victory and defeat, was not the level of violence. The police will always be better armed than us. At Lewisham we were successful because we, the anti-fascists were better organised and particularly because our numbers were greater. At Southall many youths lacked discipline, and there were fewer people experienced in mass action.

Should outsiders be involved?

Callaghan and some sections of the press

suggested that the troubles on Monday were caused by outsiders/troublemakers. This is obvious nonsense to anyone present that day. The arrest figures demonstrate that it is rubbish. The argument is also grossly hypocritical; Front Members came from outside the area as did most of the police.

However, Mr. Khabra, General Secretary of the Southall IWA echoed this attack on outsiders. The attack on outsiders is based on similar prejudices to the attack on immigrants.

If the attack on outsiders is so clearly unfounded why was it made? There are three reasons. First, it is an attempt to destroy our unity. Southall residents against the rest. There is a second, more insidious reason. By attacking outsiders the press and others attempt to give the impression that it was wrong for non-Southall residents to be present in our town that Monday. But solidarity is the most precious weapon we hold. Without support — whether physical, moral, financial or political, we are weakened immeasurably. Just as in a strike you need the support of brothers and sisters in other factories, so too in the anti-racist movement we require similar solidarity.

There is a third reason. Outsiders implies 'trouble-makers', 'extremists', 'revolutionaries'. Some papers have even come straight out and blamed the ANL or the SWP for the riot. What nonsense! Once again they are trying to divide committed revolutionaries from young Asians who hate the NF and the police, but are not yet socialists. Are they worried that we the revolutionaries might persuade some of the young Asians that our analysis is correct and show a way forward?

our freedom



SOCIALISM: THE ONLY ANSWER

IN FIGHTING racism and fascism we come up against the full force of the British capitalist system.

In the 1950s and early '60s when British capitalism was expanding Tory politicians were in the forefront of attracting commonwealth citizens to take on the foulest and worst paid jobs in Britain. In those days the fascists were regarded as lunatics. But by the late 1960's capitalism was on the decline and unemployment was increasing. That was when, in 1968, Enoch Powell made his 'rivers of blood' speech and helped to make racialism respectable. Ever since racialism has been used to divert workers attention from the failures of the capitalist system.

The same system which encourages racialism condemns most of us to eight hours a day or more in boring jobs, working for wages which decline in real value, to produce profits for people who couldn't care less for our well being. The same system consigns thousands of builders to the dole while the standards of housing decline. Nurses and teachers remain without jobs while hospital waiting lists get longer and class sizes get bigger. All this is because production is not for people's needs, but to increase profits. If it's good for profits to throw workers onto the dole or cut back social and public services, then that's just tough luck. We may not benefit, but the powerful 7% of the population who own 84% of the wealth of Britain certainly do!

And the suffering is not confined to Britain. In India, Tata and Birla exploit workers in much the same way as Fords and Walls and EMI. And in India scapegoats are found for the failure of capitalism to feed the millions who suffer starvation: not racism this time but casteism and religion. All of the biggest companies today are multinationals.

The only system which can replace the 'anarchy' of capitalism is one where the working class is in control—a socialist society. Such a society will only come about by workers, black and white, fighting in their own interests. Such a society would be fantastically more democratic; not just a once in five year vote. There would be mass meetings in factories to decide how they should be organised, and assemblies of workers' delegates to plan the economy.

We must begin to fight on the basis of our class not our 'race'. It is true that Asian businessmen suffer from the racism of English businessmen, but Asian businessmen exploit their workers too. How many Asian businessmen



G. M. Cookson (Socialist Challenge)

Memorial marchers go past the spot where Blair Peach was killed

dirtied their suits demonstrating on Monday 23rd? It was the workers and youth that stood up against the racism of the Police and the Nazis, not the bosses. And many of those businessmen voted for the Tories because it was good for profits, even if it was bad for Asian people in general.

Some brothers and sisters will say that white workers are racist. Racism has existed for a long time in Britain. It existed firstly to justify British Imperialism in Ireland and India. More recently many workers have accepted the racist myths because it is easier to do that than to accept that you have to organise and fight to change society. The increase in National Front support in the Post Office was directly connected to the defeat of the postal workers strike in 1971. But now the struggle in the post office is

starting to rise again. A month ago two thousand post office workers besieged their union headquarters. They were complaining about new attempts by their union leaders to destroy jobs. The workers shouted for their unofficial leader Frank Oseitutu who has been campaigning to protect jobs.

Frank is a Nigerian immigrant. There were a number of National Front members amongst the demonstrating post office workers. **They too shouted for Frank.** Incredible; yet it means that their position as workers is more important than their feelings as racists.

At the Booths Gin factory in Brentford, workers who were once racist, changed their views when they went on strike before Christmas and discovered that the Asian workers were their allies against the bosses. **When workers are**

Workers at Sunblest bakery, Southall, collected £800 for Blair Peach



Virginia Turbett

JOIN US!

successful in fighting the bosses class, racism among white workers declines.

WE NEED SOCIALISM

A Tory Government has just been elected. There is no doubt that they will be worse than Labour.

However a Labour Government would not have changed society in any fundamental way. There would still have been capitalists and racism. The last government allowed unemployment to go over 1½ million. Six of their MP's, including Syd Bidwell, signed the select committee report recommending the sort of vicious controls on immigrants which the Tories are calling for. The 'concordat' paved the way for the attacks on the unions which the Tories will now enforce by law.

Even if there was a majority of communist or SWP MP's it would not bring about socialism, because changing MP's does not change the system. The power of the capitalist class lies in their control of the factories, and the state (including the police) and the media. It is that control which we have to put an end to. In Chile socialists formed the government. But when they attacked the capitalists there was a murderous counter revolution because the leftwing government did not dismantle the capitalist state. We need a revolution led by workers because that is the only way in which socialism can come about.

Asian militants should become trade union militants. They need to look to the power which exists at the workplace. At the local Sunblest bakery Asian brothers led a very successful strike a few months ago. There is no doubt that it is the power of organised labour which frightens the capitalists and their pals more than anything. That power can be used in fighting racism as well as in fighting for higher wages. On Monday 23rd the most effective part of our action was the withdrawal of labour by Asian workers from as far away as Slough.

Brother S. S. Bajwa a senior Shop Steward at Crown Cork in Southall has recently learnt to his cost that you cannot rely on the trade union officials. Brother Bajwa has been victimised by a racist management who disliked his militant leadership of the production workers. But the officials have not given him full support, because to do so would challenge the system.

It was the same story too with the low paid workers strike when the union leaders refused to call an all out

strike because it would have been too effective. It is always the same story.

Don't trust the leaders. Trade Union leaders don't have the same interests as ordinary workers. They are better paid, have different life styles and are not even elected. Their position depends on their ability to negotiate successfully in a capitalist society, we would not need them under socialism. We do need trade unions but the success of trade unions depends on the success of rank and file organisation. We need our unions to be fully controlled by ordinary workers and we need links with other groups of workers.

THE SWP

Trade Union organisation and militancy is not enough to succeed in the struggle for our rights. We require an organisation which can link workers in different industries, and in different parts of the country. An organisation which has the experience and political clarity to lead workers and links the trade union struggle to the fight against racism, for womens rights, and against imperialism and so on. The Socialist Workers Party exists to build such an organisation. At present we are small. Nationally we have 4,500 members, about a dozen in Southall. But we are active and we are growing.

To build that Party means being active in many different fields. Central to that work is the *Socialist Worker* newspaper. *Socialist Worker* combats the lies of the Tory press, reports on the struggles of workers, and carries the arguments we all need to fight against racism and for socialism.

Our one objective is to build our party where the working class has its strength in the work places. That is why our members are active in their unions. They produce bulletins and leaflets arguing socialist politics on everyday issues. They produce rank and file papers with other militants and build rank and file organisations to strengthen trade unions and link workers in the same industry. However, we recognise the importance of other areas of work. In particular, over the last four years our party has gained an excellent reputation for fighting racism. Our party is the main force behind ANL. Paul Holborow the national secretary of the ANL is a member of the SWP, as is Balwinder Singh the Southall Organiser who was Chief Steward on Monday 23rd.

We are proud of the work we have done in the ANL.

THE NATIONAL Front received a very poor vote in the last election. There is no doubt that the SWP and Anti Nazi league can take the credit for this. Those who have continually canvassed the ANL to stop attacking the NF 'because you give them publicity' have been proved wrong. The ANL has stopped the nazi in its tracks.

But now we face the new Tory Government. This will be the harshest government since the war. Long standing rights of trade unionists are going to be threatened. Asian workers face a double threat. Their trade union rights will be attacked and they will be attacked because they have the wrong skin colour. Thatcher has already made this clear when she whipped up racist feelings by complaining about British 'culture being swamped'.

The defence of workers' rights, the defence of black peoples' rights is going to require **strong organisation**. We need the active involvement of the maximum number. But we also need ideas about how and why to fight.

We know from the last five bitter years that those ideas won't come from the Labour Party or the trade union leaders.

Those ideas are most likely to come from us, the Socialist Workers Party, the largest and fastest growing force to the left of the Labour Party.

We have a proven record on fighting racism. But this by itself is not enough. Now we have to transform the fight against racism and the defence of trade union rights into a struggle to transform society itself. **We can only do it if you take part. So why don't you join us.**

Socialist Workers Party

FOR WORKERS POWER AND
INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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Cover photo by John Sturrock (Report)



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