

ATTACK ON THESE PEOPLE NOT RACIST, SAYS BRITISH STATE

This essay is an extended version of one I wrote around thirty years ago. When I embarked on the original the savage killing of an 18 year old youth standing at a bus-stop had yet to happen. He was Stephen Lawrence. His murder occurred three years later, in the spring of 1993, and Stephen's family campaign for justice demonstrated clearly that racism was institutionalized within the United Kingdom. This means that racism permeated through each and every department of the British State, that prejudicial attitudes and behaviour toward people of other races and ethnicities began from notions of 'them' and 'us' and were woven into the fabric of bureaucratic policy and strategy.

By October of 1993 the Stephen Lawrence family campaign for justice had reached into Scotland when a benefit night took place in McChuill Bar. Three years earlier a number of people in Scotland expressed their solidarity for a campaign located in Middlesex, England. A hired bus loaded with young folk travelled from Edinburgh to Southall. There they took part in a massive anti-racist demonstration through the main streets of the town, from one end to the other. The local Sikh temple opened its doors to the Edinburgh contingent, and supplied them with sufficient grub to keep them upright on the march.

That particular campaign was that of the Sekhon Family Support Group, formed on 11th November 1989, the day after the

murder of Kuldip Singh Sekhon. Sekhon was a young father of seven children, all girls, the eldest only ten years old. He was one of the legions of low-paid workers who keep London's Heathrow Airport in business. He needed two jobs for the family to survive. As well as the full-time one at Heathrow he drove a mini-cab in the West London area. It was while driving his cab that he was murdered.

Racial harassment in most any of its forms, from daily street abuse through violent assault to murder, is part of the British way of life. We can deny, ignore or accept that this is reality, but if things are to change for the better then we have to acknowledge that it is the case. According to those who monitor such things it is on the increase. I suspect many people from the black and Asian communities go through different ways of coping with what is happening to them, perhaps beginning with denial, not listening to their children, seeking other explanations, in the hope of better things to come, perhaps the problem will somehow disappear or at least visit itself on somebody else.

Not long ago in a public park one evening in Glasgow two middle-aged men were attacked and viciously assaulted by a group of young white people. This was during mid-1990, at the height of the city's year-long reign as European Capital of Culture. It was a shocking attack. Twelve months later one of the victims still lay in a hospital bed, his skull crushed on one side. The man was paralysed and not able to recognise his wife and family. It was the day news came of the sentencing of the only one of the guilty to be convicted.

People find it difficult to cope when they hear about these crimes. Perhaps it is not unnatural that a first response is to turn your mind from the news. Yet none should be too surprised; we all know that racist abuse and violation, including murder, are the experience of the various non-European communities from John O'Groats to Land's End. This sort of incident is not untypical, it could be lifted from the catalogue of abuse and brutality that go to make up the set of horrors found under the label 'Racial Harassment', scarcely worth a second glance to those experienced in the horrors of racial violence.

It is consistent that such violation takes place on the street and, given that the British State is itself racist, people should not act as though it is a social phenomenon, an aberration.

But most people don't act like that. The general public rarely gets to know about everyday racism except where it occurs in front of their nose. In Glasgow an estimated 80% of the victims of racist abuse do not even report the incidents nor register complaints with the police.

On the day following that attack in the park in Glasgow's southside the newspaper carried a report under a headline which read "ATTACK NOT RACIST, say police."¹ Unless misreported, as far as I can understand their comment, the police authorities were issuing a statement in which they 'rule out a racial link'. Only a few hours after the crime? Without having spoken to one solitary witness, never mind caught the actual criminals? How was such a verdict possible? Note that this is what it was, a verdict.

Apparently one of the victims had a wallet missing. I have no direct experience in police procedure, only what I pick up from

reading or watching television. But surely that one finding could not make robbery the sole motive, ruling out all other possible factors? There must be some reasoning or investigatory flaw at play, either on my part or on theirs.

Why would they issue such a statement? As far the Evening Times newspaper was concerned the *possibility* of a racial motive was clearly established. Otherwise why blaze the headline in the way way they had? This particular case was in conflict with everyday common sense from which we know that when somebody of Asian origin is attacked by a group of white youths, *on a balance of probability*, the crime will be motivated by race hatred. In other words racist motivation is the rule. The *Evening Times* newspaper and the general public take it for granted that racist attacks occur and are not extraordinary phenomena.

The headline, 'ATTACK NOT RACIST', states a counterpoint to the obvious, that this is an exception to the rule. That is why it was 'news'. Although the statement was placed there by the newspaper, it could have been put there as presented on the Press Release information passed on to them by the police department. This would indicate that even the police authorities see such an attack not being racially motivated going against common sense.

I am not arguing that robbery, indicated by the 'missing wallet', would have played no part at all. But at this particular point in the procedure the racist roots of this horrific assault on the two men was *the one and only factor* that could not be excluded, not until the crime was actually investigated. The background of the suspects would have entered into this. One of the victims had a wallet missing. Does such a finding stop the investigation?

Why was this racism immediately ruled out of this mindless and cowardly attack on two human beings? Why did the authorities see *a need* to rule it out at the outset?

In the same area of Glasgow and not long afterwards a white man was attacked and killed. The *Evening Times* newspaper ran a headline of such appalling prejudice that I would have preferred not reproducing it here: "NATIONWIDE HUNT FOR KILLER ASIANS."

It turns out the widow of the dead man was 'Asian'. Presumably she was the one 'Asian' in the whole of Britain who was not being hunted down.

When these brutal assaults occurred I was following the progress of a campaign for justice on behalf of the family of a man murdered in West London. It was in November 1989 Kuldip Singh Sekhon, a part-time mini-cab driver, part-time worker at Heathrow Airport, was stabbed to his death fifty-eight times. The police caught the culprit quite quickly and declared that the attack was not racist.

An action committee was formed to support the family of the dead man the day after the murder. They conducted their own investigation. Almost at once they discovered the suspect had 'a history of perpetrating racial attacks on black families.' Not only that. He had already received a prison sentence for assaulting an Asian man. Before he came to trial the Sekhon Family Support Group stated publicly that the killing would be 'shorn of any racial motivation'. They were castigated for this by the police.

The evidence of racist motivation they had gathered and forced to the attention of the authorities was rejected. In his final

summing up the judge declared: 'I would say that there is no evidence that this was a racist attack.'

The detective superintendent who led the investigation had been convinced from the outset, just like their Glasgow colleagues:

Racial motivation was never a factor, right from the start. If I had found one piece of evidence, I would have investigated it to the hilt . . . Let's be honest, ninety per cent of kids like him in that sort of area are going to be racist. They're not of high intelligence, they're poorly educated, ignorant of the history of ethnic minorities in this country and the emergence of a multiracial community. It wouldn't surprise me if he was a racist .

. . .2

Apparently a man can be a known racist, convicted previously of the criminal assault of a member of the race he is known to hate; he can be involved in diverse abuses of the race he is known to hate; and now, finally, this person has murdered a member of the race he is known to hate: yet none of that has a bearing on the crime. It is extraordinary.

Neither the police nor the judge saw it as having any undue significance in respect of the murder. Nothing from his background was considered to provide sufficient evidence that the perpetrator might also have been motivated by his attested hatred of black people.

It seems that when the murder of an Asian man takes place the police examine the scene of the crime and arrive at a verdict. They make their own judgment based on whatever they get from that.

They have no interest in the actual suspect whose previous criminal record and known criminal behaviour has been proven as criminally motivated.

What it amounts to is an *a priori* denial of motivation as a material factor at all. Leave aside, but don't forget, the reprehensible ignorance and elitist prejudice of the Detective Superintendent; his equation of education with intelligence, of education with non-racism. We're talking only of the *possibility* of racism as a motivational factor. Surely this is what the police investigation team "ruled out right from the start?" Recall the words of the Detective Superintendent: "If I had found one piece of evidence" to suggest the possibility of "racial motivation . . ." This upon the discovery of an Asian man murdered by a white man already identified as racist by the courts who either forgot or did not have time to rob the victim he managed to stab fifty eight times. Fifty eight times he stabbed this man with a knife.

We may give the authorities the benefit of the doubt and not question their own motives in disregarding the blatantly obvious. We might conclude that the difficulty they had was not to prove that the killer was a racist, they accepted he probably was one. We need to prove that the attack carried out by the racist in this particular instance was motivated by racism or that the fact of his racism was *material*.

For those of us who are able to award the police and judiciary the benefit of the doubt we seem doomed to accept that racist motivation requires to be established 100%. Maybe I'm completely out here but I thought motivation was by definition 'circumstantial'. If so 100% proof is a contradiction in terms. No

doubt they would say, no no, it only has to be beyond reasonable doubt. So what is 'reasonable doubt', 99.9999999999%?

As John La Rose reminds us, "The struggle to get such attacks accepted as racial only succeeded after 1981."³ That was in the wake of the New Cross Massacre in London, when "the lives of 13 black youths, all between the ages of 15 and 20 years old, were snuffed out on Sunday 18th January 1981 by a racist fire- bomb." An action committee was formed and immediately organised a "protest against the racial massacre, the indifference of the government and the media, and the inadequacy and bias of the police investigation." The families of the dead and their friends and supporters sought to stop the "police and coroner [proving] that the massacre had *not* been the result of a racist attack."

That last sentence has to be read twice.

The campaign action committee succeeded to the extent that the coroner was obliged to return an 'open' verdict. It surely is an indictment of the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that "not a single person has been charged and brought to account."

In crimes of racial violence, whether in Scotland or in Britain as a whole, it can seem as though there is an obligation on the police and judiciary. They must seek to prove that the crime did not take place, that it was another crime altogether. In case after case, in crimes of racial violence, whether in Scotland or the United Kingdom as a whole, the first requirement of the State is to prove such a crime did not take place; that it was another crime altogether, a crime which may well have been violent, a murder even, but not a crime that was racially motivated.

Why is there such a requirement? This appalling breakdown of justice has forced members of the black communities to act on their own behalf. Yet when they do they are castigated and victimised, to the extent that they themselves are criminalised. Witness the hostility directed against those who dare offer support to the victims. The reaction of the police to the Monitoring Group based in Southall, Middlesex is a prime example of that.

In this as on other occasions the family and support group were forced to risk breaking the *sub judice* law to highlight the real issues. The way the legal system operates, in order to bring these real issues to the attention of the public, people are forced to breach the *sub judice* law. There is no other way. If you don't do that then you leave social justice at the mercy of the police and the legal system, at the mercy of the institutions of the British State which as we know are themselves racist. It was Franz Fanon who said that racism is not a phenomenon, it is a logical and consistent aspect of this society which is colonialist.

As has been pointed out on previous occasions including one editorial by the journal Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF), the first priority of these campaigns is to publicise the racist motivation in such horrific and brutal violations. Time after time after time racist abuse, assault, physical violation and actual murder are being 'shorn of motivation'. The police appear to seek evidence of motivation only from the scene of the crime, never from the background of the actual suspect. Amid the confusion is this most murky area between 'motivation' and 'causation'. In the report mentioned earlier the same Detective Superintendent who led the team investigating the murder of

Kuldip Singh Sekhon said of the killer: "None of us, not even the four psychiatrists who examined him, was able to get inside his mind."

But what could any of them have found if they had got "inside his mind"? A fibrous tissue of 'racist cancer', a molecule of 'causal energy' buried beneath an earlobe? This Detective Superintendent seems to have thought so, that some physical entity might be withdrawn by a pair of surgical tweezers.

And why were 'the four psychiatrists' hired by the authorities in the first place? And who were the authorities: the CPS and the police? What evidence had the investigating team discovered "right from the start" (or even later on) to warrant the possibility of mental or psychological disorder? Surely the perpetrator's known history of racial harassment had to have been a mental within any such evidence?

Perhaps it was not really motivation they were seeking at this stage but a form of 'physical impulse', a causal factor. That might connect with the emphasis laid on the "three pints of lager" the murderer had swallowed prior to the crime, in conjunction with background evidence they had gathered of occasional 'drug abuse'.

So why did the authorities not hire four publicans or four drug dealers along with the 'four psychiatrists' to give their verdict? Why not four full-time administrators of community art to give their opinion? Or four sociologists who could discuss the infinite potential of this, that and the next thing, in possible situations involving possible crimes engendered by particular cultural environments where "ninety per cent of kids like him in that sort

of area are going to be racist . . . are not of high intelligence . . . poorly educated, ignorant of the history of ethnic minorities in this country and the emergence of a multiracial community."

Maybe they could have hired four experts in racist violence. That would have been useful. Who decides? What are the criteria?

Reasoning flaws have a habit of cropping up where the State is involved in things they wish would go away. Thus we find in so many instances that victims are thoroughly examined by the police not to discover the extent of the violation they've suffered, but to find the 'cause' of the assault on them.

The situation is turned back to front. The authorities want to know why the victim effected his or her own violation. This is paralleled in cases of rape where the defence seeks to discover of the victim, "did she dress provocatively." Was she "no better than she should have been?" Was she a woman who 'liked' men? And in cases of racist violence where a young black man has been killed by white racists, the police and legal representatives advise us of their own findings about the murdered man, e.g. that "he had an attitude problem", that "he wears fancy jewelry", "drives a flash car", is 'loud-mouthed' - and, presumably, shows no signs at all of being grateful. Being grateful? What for?

The victim of the violation is transformed into its cause. Why is it that the police and legal authorities appear duty-bound to consider the victim as the 'cause'? Why is it racist murders are so confusing for the authorities? Perhaps one day a judge will pronounce as suicide what the rest of us - apart from the police - thought was murder.

Racism is described commonly as a 'cancer' but the use of the term leads to confusion. You can't perform surgery on a person suspected of racist crimes in order to find a motivatory droplet or tissue. No physical specimen lurks in the suspect's body. No matter how many biopsies are performed on the suspect there is no trace of 'racist fibre' to show the court. Evidence of motivation is to be gained from an examination of the facts surrounding the crime, by an investigation of the killer or killers' personal background and circumstances.

In many cases it is left to the campaign - the friends, families and supporters of the victims - to piece it all together. Clashes arise with the authorities are doing their utmost to 'rule out' the possibility of racist motivation by their cloistered examination of the evidence. It is difficult for the friends and supporters of the victims even to report their findings. It is not enough to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the killer is racist. None of that proves the crime was motivated by racism. The family, friends and supporters try influencing the police and the courts to accept the evidence. They find ways to help them to see why it is that they should accept the evidence.

But nobody likes being told how to do their job, by implication meaning they aren't doing it already. This is always there with the police and judiciary Are you trying to say we're not doing our job? Whether you are or aren't is irrelevant: here is vital evidence you missed, or seem to have missed.

You can't force people to accept what they have the power to reject. The police will direct the prosecution as they see fit; and

the prosecution will direct the judge who directs the jury. ATTACK NOT RACIST, says jury, READ ALL ABOUT IT.

Perhaps before that another crime will have been committed, this time by the friends and supporters of the murdered victim who will have been threatened and now are charged with a breach of the *sub judice* ruling. This happens when the campaign tries to present to the public evidence being ignored or concealed by the police. They are in danger of are 'prejudicing' the outcome of the trial. The State condemns them for flouting the law and "destroying the case for the prosecution." They may be so accused when presenting evidence of motivation. The police inform the victim's widow or parents of the dead that if they persist in claiming racist motivation or a racist motivational factor – i.e. showing evidence of the killer's attested history of hatred for the race of which his victim was a member – then the trial will have been 'prejudiced' and the killer or killers will walk free.

The mainstream media will have resorted to its own devices for transferring guilt from the murderers and criminals both to the family and to supporters of the campaign. In the town of Livingston in the late 1980s a friend of mine was involved in a similar situation when acting in support of two men who were attacked in a particularly savage manner. By producing a leaflet to advertise a public meeting to highlight the crime he brought down the wrath not only of the police, but the Livingston town councillors, who went to great pains to point out that racism was 'not a problem' in their town. The Edinburgh *Evening News* published a silhouette profile of the man on its front page just so

racists on the east coast of Scotland would get more of an idea of his identity.

Thus the choice: break the law or sit by and watch the State try to prove, *a priori*, the non-existence of racist violation, including murder: either reject the law and settle for justice, or accept the law and leave justice in the hands of the police and the legal system. Of course it is ludicrous. It is not that the police and the legal system 'fail' in their job. In crimes where racism and its effects are at issue it is difficult to grasp what the job of the State authorities actually is. By their reluctance to allow racial motivation to these acts of criminal violence, justice is consistently obstructed and even becomes impossible due to the inherent prejudice of individual officers and their rejection of racial motivation in the first instance

Why does it happen? Why do State agencies consistently deny and reject the obvious? Why do they turn the exception into the rule? What sort of spurious theory do they hope to fulfil by it? What are their obligations? To whom or to what do they owe them? It is rarely an option to charge individual members of the police or judiciary with racism. But this is what the State would do when backed into a corner. The need here is to confess to a series of aberrations in an otherwise ordered whole. Once we examine the evidence we see the opposite. Racism is endemic within the British State and its authorities cannot be divorced from that.

One of the features of the campaign for justice on behalf of the family of Kuldip Singh Sekhon were the attacks directed by the police against the Monitoring Group in Southall. The typical

inaneities were trotted out, e.g. that this campaign is 'politically motivated'. There came more than that from Chief Superintendent McLean whose remarks were published by different media organs; one local newspaper carried the banner headline: RACE GROUP TOLD: YOU ARE A CANCER.⁴

A year before this the same Chief Superintendent was also involved in attacking the Monitoring Group. It followed the racist attacks on 'Ramesh K.' and his family which led to them being "hounded out of their Feltham off-licence." The Monitoring Group In Southall were supporting the family, having been asked to do so by 'Ramesh K.' himself who explained:

We . . . used to ring them up in the middle of the night. We used them. We were always looking for someone who could give us help. Because they are Asian they give extra help. Being the same colour, you feel more at home. They put in a bit of extra effort.⁵

The Metropolitan Police viewed matters differently. He described the Monitoring Group as a "pernicious organisation spewing out lies and propaganda in pursuance of their own ideological aims."⁶ He also attacked Ealing and Hounslow boroughs: "the sad fact is that the (Monitoring Group) are financed by (these) two boroughs which are sympathetic to their aims."⁷ I can understand

It doesn't take much digging to discover why the police have such hardened, hostile attitudes to the Monitoring Group. Its very existence challenges the authorities to inform the public what the function of the police happens to be in cases of this nature:

In Southall, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the black residents were quickly shown police indifference to racist attacks when police did nothing to apprehend those who attacked shops and premises and did nothing when, in 1970, a gang of skinheads rampaged through the town. By 1973 allegations of police misconduct were so numerous that the Indian Workers' Association, the Pakistani Action Committee and Afro-Caribbean Association asked the Home Secretary to set up an independent enquiry into police brutality.⁸

There was no such inquiry but an independent report was commissioned, the Pullé Report, which in 1973 "concluded that there was a *prima facie* case against the police on charges of brutality and partial conduct against the immigrant community in Ealing." This report aroused a storm of protest from the Metropolitan Police.⁹ Not the police brutality itself, just the fact it was reported, verified and made public.

Three years later "a Sikh schoolboy called Gurdip Chaggar was murdered. Seen symbolically as the first racial killing; it led to the foundation of the Southall Youth Movement."¹⁰

The chairman of the British National Party (BNP) in those days was John Kingsley Read who, at one meeting, declared:

'Fellow racials, fellow Britons, and fellow Whites, I have been told I cannot refer to coloured immigrants. So you can forgive me if I refer to niggers, wogs and coons.'

Then, referring to the murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar . . . Read said, 'Last week in Southall, one nigger stabbed another nigger. Very unfortunate. One down, a million to go.'

For this he was *charged* with incitement to racial hatred. At the trial in 1977 Judge Neil McKinnon "directed the jury that the law against incitement to racial hatred did not cover 'reasoned argument in favour of immigration control or even repatriation.'" The learned fellow concluded that "it was difficult to say what it is that this defendant is alleged to have done that amounts to a criminal offence."

Accordingly the jury found John Kingsley Read not guilty and Her Majesty's judicial representative, the learned fellow, gave Kingsley Read, some cordial advice for the future, perhaps with a wink and a cheeky grin: "By all means propagate the views you may have but try to avoid involving the sort of action which has been taken against you. I wish you well."¹¹

A year later came the run-up to the general election that brought the Conservative Party into power, led by the establishment hero, Margaret Thatcher. She and the rest promised "a new nationality law . . . along with new restrictions on the entry of dependants, husbands and fiancés." Enoch Powell had "returned to the subject of race after a relative silence of some years [and] racial violence reached a new height in 1976."¹²

Amid acts of of barnarism enacted against black people in general, including murder, sickening attacks on immigrants came not only from street thugs acting unlawfully on the street, but from thugs working lawfully and unlawfully in police and prison

uniforms, and other thugs working in civilian clothes on behalf of the British State Department of Immigration. Include in this sorry catalogue not only paid employees of the department but the thousands of others who perform occasional dirty work on its behalf; this list is inexhaustive and includes people who work in airports, hospitals, the DWP, the education system and so on. Further attacks on the diverse black communities came from local, regional and national politicians and, of course, the media. During this period and in the run-up to the 1979 general election the behaviour of many media organs was particularly loathsome:¹³

the incidence of racist attacks has been closely related to the level of government and media-inspired mass resentment against immigration. Of the sixty-four racist murders that took place between 1970 and 1986, no fewer than fifty occurred in the five years – 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981 – when immigration scares reached fever pitch.¹⁴

On 17 April 1979, Margaret Thatcher "stood by her statement . . . of the legitimacy of 'British people's fears' about 'being swamped.'" Thus in a few weeks' time the fascist "National Front vote collapsed."¹⁵ Their voters had been stolen by Her Majesty's Party of Government who did the job every bit as well. And so began eighteen years of Tory Government.

But before they had come into power the National Front (NF) was stepping up its own "reasoned argument [against] niggers, wogs and coons," in the words of the judge who delivered the Not Guilty verdict on the John Kingsley Read charge of inciting racial behaviour. They "organised a public meeting in Southall on St

George's Day,"¹⁶ the very place where the fourteen-year-old schoolboy Gurdip Chaggar had been murdered. The meeting held by the NF on 23 April was countered by an "historic community mobilisation" from Southall itself.¹⁷

However, Her Majesty's forces of law and order were also assembling to protect the freedom of citizen racists, including those going about their legal entitlement of "propagating views" that could end in the slaughter of "a million niggers":

the police cordoned off Southall . . . thus creating what they revealingly called 'a sterile zone' in the town centre, they did so in order 'to teach Southall a lesson' for the past. In a police action without precedent in Britain, 2,756 police officers, including units of the Special Patrol Group, occupied the areas. In the ensuing confrontation, the police killed one man – Blair Peach – fractured the skull of another, caused innumerable injuries to hundreds, arrested 700 people and charged 342 . . . No police officer was ever prosecuted for Blair Peach's death even though the inquest jury, in returning a verdict of 'death by misadventure', accepted that he had been killed by the police. Eleven eye-witnesses told the inquest under oath that Peach had been hit by a police officer; there was no evidence that he had resisted arrest, assaulted police, or even tried to flee.¹⁸

A report on the day's events concluded that police behaviour had "left a scar on the people of Southall that will take years to heal. The racial abuse that accompanied the violence, the wanton destruction of property . . . and the pursuit of persons running

away and/or trying to seek shelter, all give the lie to any suggestion that the police were merely defending themselves, and are consistent with Superintendent Hurd's comments early in the afternoon that Southall needed to be "taught some discipline."¹⁹

This was a quite extraordinary demonstration of the racism at the heart of the British police authority. It further revealed how functional such institutional racism is for the British State, and its willingness to commit to its use.

The funeral of Kuldip Singh Sekhon was an historic occasion in Southall. A march and day of mourning took place to commemorate his life and it brought more than 3,000 people together. Local shopkeepers all closed their doors in solidarity. Even the betting shops closed the doors. I went along with the Edinburgh squad. Many images are imprinted in my memory. One when a contingent of young punks and mohicans, having been invited into a temple by locals, were taking off their shoes, then being dished out dal and pastries by two or three elderly Sikhs. Another image is of Kuldip Sekhon's ex-workmates, mainly white taxi drivers, forming a guard of honour. A third clear memory is from an Evening of Culture and Resistance held in April, organised jointly by the Blair Peach Anniversary Committee and the Sekhon Family Support Group. Tom Leonard and myself were among the writers and musicians performing that evening and I remember being sold raffle tickets by two wee girls with big grins, obviously sisters, daughters of the dead man.

In the interval between his murder and the funeral an eleven-year old girl, Tasleem Akhtar, was raped and murdered not far from her home in Birmingham. A sixteen-year-old white youth

was eventually convicted of the crime. "Crowds of demonstrators and protestors gathered outside the court during the trial." The judge said that it was "quite plain from everything I have read and heard that the sole motive for this terrible crime was sexual and had no racial association in any way." The Akhtar family thought otherwise. The girl's uncle spoke of the "tension [and] racial hatred [within] the community . . . [and that we] will carry on demonstrating until such murders and killings stop."²⁰

Kuldip Sekhon's body was retained by the authorities for a very long period, despite the wishes of the family. The man was murdered on 10 November 1989 and it was not until 1 January 1990 that the funeral was allowed to take place. The body had decomposed badly. It seemed another needless and enduring hardship to be endured by the family. In keeping with religious practice the coffin remained open during the funeral and at its conclusion those with the fortitude could exit by. Some thought that the reason for such a scandalous delay could only be political, having more to do with dampening the emotional temperature in Southall. Either way there was little or no regard at all for the family.

This lack of humanity by the State authorities for bereaved family members is a common thread. In cases of racist violation this can deteriorate from veiled to blatant acts of hostility. The reality of British institutionalized racism was again demonstrated, clearly and unequivocally when: "two Punjabi teenagers . . . the niece and nephew of Mr Kuldip Singh Sekhon [were] banned by the Foreign Office from entering Britain to attend their murdered uncle's funeral because they failed a test on how many water

buffalo their father owned."²¹ Apparently this was one of the key questions the British State used to authenticate identity in these circumstances. Maybe it still does, it probably depends on who controls title to ownership.

¹ Glasgow's Evening Times, 30 August 1990

² The Independent, 13 October 1990

³ In the pamphlet, *The New Cross Massacre Story: Interviews with John La Rose* (Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, Black Youth Movement and Race Today Collective, London 1984).

⁴ *Recorder*, 3 August 1990.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Guardian*, 13 December 1989. 'Ramesh K.' was the name given to the father of the family to conceal their identity.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Page 28, chapter 2 of *White Law: Racism in the Police, Courts and Prisons* by Paul Gordon (Pluto Press, 1983).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See the *Independent*, 13 October 1990

¹¹ See chapter 5 of *White Law: Racism in the Police, Courts and Prisons* by Paul Gordon (Pluto Press, 1983), and for further information on the racism of the judiciary.

¹² Ibid., chapter 2.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51–2 especially.

¹⁴ Page 78 *Under Siege: Racial Violence in Britain Today* by Keith Thompson (Penguin Special, 1988).

¹⁵ Page 106 *White Man's Country: Racism in British Politics* by Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (Pluto Press, 1984).

¹⁶ See the *Independent*, 13 October 1990.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See chapter 2 of *White Law: Racism in the Police, Courts and Prisons* by Paul Gordon (Pluto Press, 1983). There was an 'Unofficial Committee of Enquiry set up by the National Council for Civil Liberties [which] came to the 'inescapable conclusion' that Peach had been killed by a blow deliberately inflicted by a member either of Unit 1 or Unit 3 of the Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group.'

¹⁹ Ibid. The inner quotation here is from 23 April 1979, *Southall Rights 1979*.

²⁰ Wednesday 6 December 1989; this report from *Newlife* (Asian newsweekly), Friday 3 August 1990.

²¹ *Guardian*, 22 January 1990.