University of Southampton

Racial Thinking in the British Labour Party

by Georg Lentze

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

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This thesis is a report about my investigations into racial thinking in the British Labour Party between October 1994 and July 1997. The aim of this report is to make a contribution to the debate about racial thinking in British society and beyond by means of a detailed study of racial thinking in the specific institutional setting of the British Labour Party. My research project involved the collection and analysis of Labour Party documentation dating back to the 1950s; the systematic monitoring of a range of newspapers and journals published in the 1980s and the 1990s; the attendance at various Labour Party and antiracist conferences that took place between 1995 and 1997; and the monitoring of Labour's 1997 general election campaign. It also involved the study of historical and theoretical literature on the issues of antisemitism, imperialism, nationalism, racism and antiracism.

In the first chapter of this report, I set out how I came to do a research project on racial thinking in the British Labour Party and how I went about it. There follows a theoretical and historical chapter, in which I explain my understanding of concepts such as 'racial classification', 'racial category', 'racial thinking', 'racism', and 'ethnicity'. I also describe how I think racial thinking in contemporary British society relates to the historical developments of Christianism, European imperialism, nationalism and antiracism.

The following two chapters address the issues of Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the era of nationalism and in the name of antiracism respectively. In these chapters, I suggest that the British Labour Party is not only rather nationalistic, but that their brand of British nationalism is also racialised in a number of ways; that Labour propagates flawed theories of racism; that their antiracist policies are patchy; and that, nevertheless, there are a number of ways in which the Labour Party as a whole as well as individual Labour Party MPs and MEPs have made valuable contributions to the antiracist movement in British society.

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List of Abbreviations Used

AFA   Anti-Fascist Action
ANC   African National Congress
ANL   Anti-Nazi League
ARA   Anti-Racist Alliance
ARM   Africa Reparations Movement
BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation
BNP   British National Party
BSS   Black Socialist Society
CAIAB   Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill
CAFE   Campaign Against Fascism in Europe
CALPS   Campaign Against Labour Party Suspensions
CARF   Campaign Against Racism and Fascism
CRE   Commission for Racial Equality
EC   European Community
EPLP   European Parliamentary Labour Party
EU   European Union
IMF   International Monetary Fund
IPPR   Institute for Public Policy Research
MEP   Member of the European Parliament
MP   Member of Parliament
NAAR National Assembly Against Racism
NBA   National Black Alliance
NEC   National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)
NHS   National Health Service
OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLP   Parliamentary Labour Party
RRA   Race Relations Act
SCORE   Standing Conference on Racial Equality in Europe
SWP   Socialist Workers Party
TUC   Trades Union Congress
UK   United Kingdom
UN   United Nations
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WPB   Waste Paper Basket
YRE   Youth against Racism in Europe

Chapter 1:
Introduction

Between 1994 and 1997, I have devoted a lot of my time to the project of identifying, analysing and assessing elements of racial thinking in the British Labour Party. This thesis is an attempt to report to any interested parties on the origins, the nature and the outcome of my investigations. In this chapter, I will write about how I came to engage in the project, how I went about it, and how this report relates to existing writings on racial thinking. In the other chapters, I will present what I believe to be the most interesting results of my various research activities.

1.1 How I came to do a research project on racial thinking in the Labour Party

Although I could go back much further in my life history, I would single out 13 June 1992 as a crucial date that set me on track for this project. The Anti-Racist Alliance had recently been formed, and I found myself as a visitor at their first National Convention in London. I had great expectations. I was looking forward to lively debate and analysis involving leading independent thinkers and campaigners against racism. In the workshop I attended, some of these expectations were certainly met. The speeches that were made from the platform, on the other hand, left me disillusioned. The American academic Manning Marable spoke powerfully about race and racism in the United States, but failed to include Britain in his analysis. Labour MP Ken Livingstone appeared to be the main speaker for the British context. As a result, it fell to him to set out an antiracist agenda for British society in the 1990s. His skills as an orator combined with his status as a well known MP to guarantee an eager audience, made up of hundreds of antiracist activists from all over Britain. They responded to his speech with a resounding round of applause. This left me feeling rather alone in the conference hall, for as far as I was concerned the content of his speech had been a disaster.

The speech Ken Livingstone addressed to the Anti-Racist Alliance used many words to convey one basic message. This was that at the present time opposition to the Maastricht Treaty, creating the European Union, was an essential element of any anti-racist campaign. The

Maastricht Treaty, Livingstone predicted, would bring a levelling down of race equality programs, immigration rules, and the welfare state. There would follow an increase in poverty and unemployment throughout Europe, and as a result people would turn against blacks, Jews and other minorities. Hence 'No to Maastricht' must be a central component of any campaigns initiated by the Anti-Racist Alliance. Livingstone's analysis left me baffled. Rather than exposing and attacking racial British nationalism, Livingstone's speech itself appeared to carry nationalistic overtones. Rather than being sensitive to the deep historical roots of racist ideologies and practices, Livingstone explained racism as the outcome of poverty and unemployment. Rather than presenting a thorough and independent analysis of racism in contemporary Britain, Livingstone appeared to be using the Anti-Racist Alliance as a platform for promoting the Labour Party's social and economic agenda, and for promoting his own anti-European campaign within the Labour Party.

The fact that a Labour Party MP ostensibly committed to the antiracist cause could speak in the way Ken Livingstone did made me wary of the Labour Party's approach to antiracism as a whole. I began to study Labour's rhetoric and policies on race and the nation in greater detail, thus beginning a research process which I have now carried through to the present stage of writing this report. But why exactly did I respond so critically to what I perceived as certain nationalistic overtones in Ken Livingstone's speech? What was my own analysis of racism in British society in June 1992, and on what grounds did I believe it to be any more valid than that of Ken Livingstone? How have my own views on racism evolved over time, and how did I come to be a visitor at the National Convention organised by the Anti-Racist Alliance in the first place? In order to answer these questions, I need to go back in time slightly further than 1992.

My own views on the issue of the articulation of nationalism and racism have evolved considerably over the last fifteen years or so and are still subject to change. Growing up in West Germany in the sixties and the seventies, as a child my understanding of nationality was informed by a racial concept of the German nation that was then prevalent in German society. Legally, German nationality was defined primarily in terms of descent, and general political discourse stipulated that children born in Germany and of 'foreign parentage' were still to be regarded as 'foreigners'. As a child I did not need to know about any legal definitions or élite political discourse in order to understand that I was 'German' because my parents were 'German', and other children were 'foreigners' because their parents were 'foreigners'. I assumed that this was the way

nationality was defined all over the world. At school these assumptions failed to be challenged. Nazi Germany and the Holocaust were discussed in the subjects of history and German. Yet the impression I was left with following these discussions was that in the final analysis the problem with Nazi Germany had been one of authoritarianism. According to this interpretation, Nazi-antisemitism and the Holocaust happened because a docile population allowed a clique of fanatical leaders to pursue their racial policies. The idea of the history of antisemitism going back to the Middle Ages or even antiquity was hinted at, but I fail to remember any talk of the specific contribution of racial German nationalism to the evolution of antisemitism in Germany. Nor was there any indication that such racial nationalism might have continued to be a structural feature of either West or East German society after 1945. In the absence of alternative interpretations, I considered that the society I lived in was as democratic and recognized fundamental human rights as much as any other Western society. I concluded that in 1945 there had occurred a complete break with the Nazi past in West German society. It was, I think, only when I was in my late teens that it began to dawn on me, firstly, that something was amiss with West German democracy if the rights of citizenship were handed out on the grounds of descent, and secondly, that in principle this type of policy was rather similar to some of the racial policies pursued by the Nazi state.

As a student in the early eighties, I was too preoccupied with achieving academic success and addressing various personal problems for my unease about racism in West Germany to be translated into any serious study of racism or any political activism. In addition, the paucity of debate about the issue of racism in West German society more generally at that time meant that I failed to perceive any obvious opportunities for such study or activism. This was to change dramatically when I became a language assistant at a school near Birmingham in early 1988. There, an English as a Second Language teacher introduced me to the theory and practice of multicultural and antiracist education. I found the ideas and practices she presented to me so new and exciting that they immediately attracted my attention. Over the next 18 months or so, as a language assistant in Sheffield and as a visiting student at the University of Manchester, I began to study more intensively the various histories and theories contained in the literature on multicultural and antiracist education as well as on race and racism in contemporary Britain more generally. Back in West Germany, I specialised in educational sociology and wrote my final thesis on multicultural and antiracist education at three schools in Manchester. In the course of

my various studies, a whole new world of meanings opened up before me, leaving me, or so I thought, with a much clearer view of the operation of racism both in contemporary Britain and West Germany. On the one hand my thinking now included the idea that although there might not be any intrinsic connection between racism and nationalism, racist ideas permeated many people's thinking about the nation both in Britain and in West Germany. On the other hand, I was beginning to see that both in Germany and in Britain racism had also been informed by historical developments other than nationalism, such as the histories of antisemitism and imperialism. Even after I had written my thesis, I felt I needed to deepen my knowledge of all of these histories in order to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the sources of racism in contemporary Britain and West Germany.

In early 1992, a combination of shifting personal relationships, a sense of alienation that derived from the various ways in which I believed racism was implicit in German reunification, and other factors made me move back to Manchester to stay there for good. Shortly after my arrival, I joined the local Anti-Racist Alliance group in Manchester in order to translate my political concerns into action. In the event, I remember going to only two meetings. These were fraught with controversy, antagonism and suspicion between what appeared to be different groups of people who seemed to belong to well-established factions. I also found myself in the midst of a culture of procedural rules and manoeuvres which I was unaccustomed to and which inhibited my active involvement. Nevertheless, I resolved to go to the National Convention where I expected some of the people whose writings I had studied (such as Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Robert Miles, A. Sivanandan or John Solomos) to explain their latest thinking. This expectation was to be disappointed. Instead, I was presented with Ken Livingstone's opinions on the Maastricht Treaty. Undeterred, I sought answers to the questions that preoccupied me by reading *Searchlight* and some historical works on the history of racism. Since I had decided to settle in Britain, my desire to learn more about the history of racism was now complemented by a desire to learn more about British society and politics in general and more particularly about the British Labour Party. In response to this desire, I started studying Tony Benn's diaries and some other books on British politics and history.

Some time in 1993, I first conceived of the idea to do more intensive and systematic research on racial thinking in the Labour Party. There was both a personal and a political dimension to my plans. On a personal level, I was looking for some type of occupation that

would be more flexible, more interesting, and perhaps more meaningful than the translation work I was engaged in at that time. I also considered that the project would give me a good opportunity to learn a lot more about British society and history. I felt that, having arrived in Britain only relatively recently, such a learning process would enable me to relate more meaningfully to many of the social and political situations I found myself in. In particular, I imagined that the project would help me to develop my understanding of racism both in Britain and elsewhere and would perhaps enable me to become more active politically either in the antiracist movement or in party politics. On a political level, I continued to have misgivings about the nature of racial thinking in the Labour Party. I felt that some elements of nationalistic discourse in the Labour Party were potentially racist, while other elements of racial discourse that declared themselves to be antiracist seemed unsatisfactory to me. Yet these problems did not seem to be reflected to a sufficient degree or in sufficient detail either in the academic literature on race and racism in Britain, or in the mainstream national media I consumed, or in the activities of antiracist pressure groups. On the contrary, Labour Party politicians whose racial thinking I viewed with some suspicion continued to be fêted by important sections of the antiracist movement. Perhaps I was not entirely alone in feeling uneasy about this state of affairs. Perhaps there was a potential audience of people in the antiracist movement, the Labour Party and elsewhere who would be interested in the results of a systematic investigation into the nature of racial thinking in the British Labour Party.

Having decided to engage in a research project on racial thinking in the Labour Party, I saw two basic options concerning the question of how to go about it. One was to carry the project through privately, the other to carry it through at a university, as a PhD student. The former option promised unlimited intellectual and procedural freedom and an open time scale, the latter option promised the possibility of a handsome research grant, easy access to libraries and other research facilities, and the glory of a PhD qualification. Without much hesitation I went for the latter, succeeded in securing a place as an MPhil/PhD student at Southampton University under the supervision of John Solomos and began my studies there in October of 1994. As a result of my decision to carry through my research project in an academic context, the audience for which I am writing this report crucially includes my PhD examiners. Inevitably, the shape and content of this report, as indeed the whole way in which I have handled my project, have been influenced by this fact. Nevertheless, I have made every effort to make this report an engaging and

interesting read not just for academics but for anybody interested in the issue of racial thinking in the British Labour Party, or more generally in the issue of racial thinking in British society and beyond. I have also attempted to go about the project in just about the same way as I would have gone about it in a non-academic environment. In the next section, I would like to describe what this has meant in practice.

1.2   How I went about the project

My research activities in the three years since October of 1994 have fallen into four categories:

A.   Activities relating to my position as a PhD student. These have included the adherence to the rules in relation to PhD supervision and examination, including the writing of this report/thesis, the exchange of ideas with other students, and the attendance at certain academic seminars and conferences.

B.   Activities relating to the development of my historical and theoretical understanding of racial thinking in British society and beyond. These activities have included working through various publications, many of them books and articles written by academics, and monitoring the content of a range of newspapers and journals.

C.   Activities relating more specifically to the development of my understanding of racial thinking in the Labour Party. These activities have included the reading of various publications on the Labour Party, the collection and analysis of a range of texts published by the Labour Party, the collection and analysis of texts emanating from prominent Labour Party activists or politicians, the attendance at various Labour Party and antiracist conferences, and a number of conversations with Labour Party members, workers and politicians as well as antiracist campaigners.

D.   Activities relating to my desire to communicate my conclusions to a wider audience than myself and my supervisors. These activities have included the writing of three lengthy essays, one relatively brief commentary on an antiracist charter produced within the antiracist movement, and this report; and the circulation of all of those documents to whoever I thought might be interested in reading them.

What exactly have each of these sets of activities involved, how have they influenced one

another, and how have they shaped or influenced the way in which I am now writing this report? In what follows, I would like to answer these questions for each of the four sets of activities listed above separately.

1.2.1   How I went about being a PhD student

With all PhD students in contemporary Britain and beyond I share the predicament that in general a studentship and easy access to research facilities are only granted in exchange for a commitment to adhere to various rules and regulations relating to research training, supervision and examination. In my case, this has involved the compulsory attendance at various research training seminars, regular supervision sessions and at least annual meetings with my full 'supervisory board' consisting of my main supervisor plus two subsidiary supervisors. As I understand it, my supervisors' job was to give feedback on my research activities and my writings in order to ensure the academic success of my project. It would have been in their power to withdraw their support and, by implication, my funding had they judged my work to be unacceptable in any way. As a result, I have experienced the rules and regulations relating to supervision as a burden rather than a blessing. On the whole, I have interpreted them as a means of controlling my work rather than a means of providing an opportunity for feedback and open discussion.

It is true, of course, that even without any supervision I would have tried to anticipate or imagine the rules the academic world, personified by my examiners, might have wanted my research activities and my writings to adhere to. Still, I believe it would have been easier for me to make my own rules - to find my own voice - if I had been allowed to seek feedback on my research activities and my writings at my pleasure rather than being forced to work under the constant gaze of people empowered to disqualify me from access to research facilities and funding.

I find it difficult to gauge the practical effects of supervision and examination on my research activities. Certainly the format of this thesis (layout, length, structure) is modelled on guidelines that have been issued to me by the university authorities. In addition, I suppose that supervision and examination (or anticipated examination) made me break off some theoretical and historical investigations which I wouldn't have minded continuing for another little while;

they made me contact some Labour Party people and antiracist activists for interviews even when I did not like the prospect of such interviews and although I had not originally envisaged formally interviewing anybody at all; they made me write this thesis in such a way that I signal my knowledge of numerous 'relevant writings' published by academics well known in the field; and they made me extend my account of how I went about identifying and analysing racial thinking in the Labour Party beyond what I had imagined most readers would be interested to know. On the other hand, in some instances at least I declined to follow my supervisors' exhortations to leave out what they considered to be 'inappropriate' for inclusion in this thesis, such as for example the present section on the influence of supervision and examination on my project.

My supervisors and examiners were, of course, not personally responsible for the framework of rules and regulations in which they, too, were constrained to work. As it happens, I think that on the whole their comments on my writings have been very useful. Nevertheless, I have not found it easy to detach their comments on my work from their professional role as my supervisors and examiners responsible for ensuring the academic (rather than the intellectual or political) success of my project. As a result, I have never been able to feel completely relaxed about any kind of feedback I received from them.

In addition to feedback from my supervisors and examiners, I have also sought feedback on my research activities and my writings from fellow students, friends, and people active in the antiracist movement. Such feedback, too, has often been useful, although I found that in many cases people lacked time or interest to study lengthy pieces of writings that were not necessarily related to their own political preoccupations or interests.

1.2.2   How I went about developing a method of identifying and analysing racial thinking in the Labour Party

My investigation of racial thinking in the British Labour Party was motivated by the belief that Labour Party thinking fails to oppose racism as effectively as it might. I also suspected that Labour Party rhetoric and symbolism might themselves contain elements of racism. My aim was to expose these problems in Labour Party thinking as I saw them. In order to do this, I needed a method of identifying and assessing racial thinking in the Labour Party. I began my search for such a method by studying the existing academic literature on the history of racial thinking. By

the time I started working full time on my project in October of 1994, I felt I had read a fair deal of historical, sociological and political writings on the history of racial thinking in Britain and beyond. These included in particular many academic publications, most of which had been published since the 1970s in the United States, Britain, France and West Germany. Nevertheless, I felt I did not know nearly enough about some broad historical contexts in which, at least in Europe, racial thinking has operated over the last five hundred years or more. My various readings suggested to me that there were at least four historical contexts I would have to learn more about if I wanted to be able to identify, analyse and assess racial thinking in the Labour Party. These were the histories of European antisemitism, imperialism, nationalism and antiracism. In order to deepen my understanding of these historical contexts, I searched for helpful publications on the bookshelves of libraries and bookshops in Southampton and occasionally elsewhere. Bibliographies contained in books or journals and my supervisors' advice took me further when I had run out of suitable reading material. In general, however, the literature I found was so vast that I had to limit myself to a relatively small number of books and journal articles that I found particularly interesting to read or that I perceived to be particularly influential and widely read. I have also monitored some newspapers and journals for any articles broadly related to the issue of racial thinking in Britain and beyond. In particular, I have monitored systematically *The Guardian* and *The Observer* (1994-1997), *New Statesman and Society* (from the early nineties to 1996), *New Statesman* (1996-1997), *Searchlight* (1993-1997), *Jewish Socialist* (up to 1996), *The Jewish Chronicle* (1994-1997), *Caribbean Times* (1994-1996), *Asian Times* (1994-1996); and less systematically some other antiracist journals or newsletters including *Campaign Against Racism and Fascism* (*CARF*), *Fighting Talk*, and *Newsletters* of the *Anti-Racist Alliance* and the *National Assembly Against Racism*. From my various readings over the last ten years or so I have derived a number of key ideas which inform my understanding of the history of racial thinking:

1.   A belief in the existence of different 'races' has been an important element of a variety of disturbing historical developments, including for example European colonial slavery, German Nazism, and South African apartheid. For this reason, expressions such as 'race relations', which appear to imply the acceptance of a belief in the existence of different 'races', should be avoided. Rather than studying the 'relations' or 'conflicts' between 'races', racial thinking itself should become the object of historical and theoretical analysis. The concept of 'racism' might be useful

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in order to identify specific types of racial thinking and perhaps specific types of racial practices that have proved particularly damaging.[1]

2.   Although it is desirable to define racism in general terms, racism may take different forms in different situations. Racism 'has no natural and universal law of development. It does not always assume the same shape. There have been many significantly different **racisms** - each historically specific and articulated in a different way with the societies in which they appear'.[2]

3.   The development of racial thinking in Europe has been closely related to the rise and fall of at least four broad socio-political movements: Christianism, imperialism, nationalism and antiracism. Many commentators agree that in contemporary Europe, including Britain, nationalism has become a particularly powerful determinant of racial thinking. In addition, self-professed 'antiracist' ways of thinking and acting have increasingly been singled out as a field of racial thinking that merits critical attention.[3]

My conclusion from this set of key ideas is that much of the body of racial thinking that has accumulated in the course of European history is contained in texts that document or interpret the histories of European Christianism, imperialism, nationalism and antiracism. Many of these texts express racist ways of thinking. Some of the concepts, categories and images used in these texts (such as 'races', 'ethnic groups', 'peoples', 'nations', etc.; 'Jewish', 'Anglo-Saxon', 'black', 'Asian', 'Irish', 'German', 'Scottish' etc.; images of the Union Jack, images of Britannia etc.) continue to be used in British society today. Inevitably, the meanings of these concepts, categories and images are in part determined by the body of texts in which they have been used previously. As a result, racial thinking has left an indelible trace in many linguistic and representational means of expression that are available in the English language, and in other European languages, today.

If this analysis is accepted, then one way of identifying and assessing racial thinking in contemporary texts would be to see how such texts relate to the histories of European Christianism, imperialism, nationalism and antiracism. Do they, for example, reflect on the meanings of concepts or categories or images they employ that may carry particular racial

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[1] Among the numerous writings which have inspired these ideas, I would single out those by Robert Miles. See for example his critique of the idea of 'race relations' in: Miles, Robert. 1989. *Racism*. London: Routledge.

[2] Hall, Stuart. 1978. 'Racism and Reaction'. In: Commission for Racial Equality (eds.). 1978. *Five views of multiracial Britain*. London: Commission for Racial Equality. pp. 23-35. The quote is from p. 26.

[3] These ideas have been inspired by a large number of writings, many of which will be referred to in chapter 2.

connotations? Do they recontextualise concepts, categories or images that have in the past been central to the expression of racist ways of thinking? Do they try to introduce alternative concepts or categories or images that might be able to question racist ways of thinking more effectively than traditional means of expression? Or do they use concepts, categories and images that carry heavy racial connotations unthinkingly, thereby potentially blindly reproducing racial or even racist ways of thinking? Or do they use such concepts, categories and images thinkingly and intentionally in order to express racist ways of thinking? Or, indeed, do they invent new concepts, categories or images that express racist ways of thinking? This is the set of questions which I have applied to texts and images that have been used by the Labour Party in their political campaigns over the last fifteen years or so, with particular emphasis on the last few years.

It is clear that anybody's answers to these questions depend on that person's understanding of racial thinking and racism in general, and her or his interpretation of the history of racial thinking and racism in relation to British society and politics in particular. This is why, in chapter two of this thesis, I will explain in detail what I mean by 'racial thinking', 'racism' and related concepts, and what I perceive to be important events and developments in the history of racial thinking in British society and politics. Much of my time in doing this research project has been devoted to developing my understanding of these concepts and this history because I knew that I would have to rely on it if I wanted to identify and analyse racial thinking in the British Labour Party.

A well-informed understanding of the history of racial thinking in British society would, however, not be sufficient for the identification and analysis of any racial thinking that might be expressed by contemporary texts or images. This is because meaning is not just determined by historical precedent. Rather, it is constantly created and recreated through the use of particular texts or images in particular textual, social and political contexts. In order to determine the meaning of any particular concepts or categories or images, it is therefore necessary to consider the weight of their previous usage combined with an analysis of the textual, social and political context in which they appear. Even then it may not always be possible to deduce or to predict precisely what goes on in the minds of those who use or are exposed to such concepts, categories or images. Historical usage and contextual analysis may, however, provide important clues as to how people would be likely to make sense of them. Thus, when later in this report I consider

Labour's use of particular concepts (such as 'the nation') or categories (such as 'British') or symbols (such as the British national flag), it is true that I cannot always know with certainty how those who have used these concepts/categories/symbols or those who have been exposed to them will have made sense of them. By considering the history of these concepts, categories and symbols as well as the context in which they appear, however, it becomes possible to ponder the potential for any elements of racial thinking they might express.

1.2.3   How I went about collecting Labour Party material

From day one of my project, I was concerned to collect material emanating from the Labour Party which might contain interesting articulations of racial thinking in the Labour Party. Once again, the problem was that the Labour Party is a vast organisation churning out a large volume of speech or writings or images every day. Since it would have been impossible for me to monitor all of this material, I opted instead for a more selective approach.

Firstly, at an early stage of my research project I ordered some forty policy documents that had recently been published by the Labour Party and that covered a broad range of Labour Party thinking and philosophy. The importance of policy documents lies in their status as official representations of Labour's policies and political preoccupations. Although they may not be widely read, I felt they would provide me with a good overview of Labour Party thinking on a variety of issues, including foreign affairs, the economy, education, nationality, the monarchy and other matters.

Secondly, at different stages of my research project I visited seemingly relevant archives or specialised libraries to see what range of historical Labour Party documents they contained. This involved travelling to Manchester for the Labour Party Archives in the History of Labour Museum, to Salford to look at any material in the Working Class Movement Library, and to London to see what material was available in the London School of Economics library, the TUC library and the Labour Party library at Labour's national office. Some of these places contain such large amounts of material that I had to be selective in targeting particular types of documentation. In line with my theoretical and historical understanding of the history of racial thinking in British society as set out in chapter two, I concentrated on the perusal of material that appeared to be linked in one way or another to the issues of nationalism or antiracism in British society and

beyond. The material I monitored included reports of Labour Party annual conferences from 1980 onwards, the Michael Foot papers at the Labour Party Archives in Manchester, and a wide range of policy and discussion documents written or published between 1958 and the early 1990s.

Thirdly, I visited Labour's annual conferences of 1995 and 1996 as well as three conferences organised by the National Assembly Against Racism in February 1996, November 1996 and March 1997. Labour Party annual conferences are an important focus for debate on Labour Party policy and philosophy. They are also used to convey a particular image of the party to the wider public via the media. As a visitor at Labour Party conferences, I paid attention both to policy debates and to any symbolic or visual arrangements that appeared to me to be related to the history of racial thinking in British society. At fringe meetings, I tried to speak to Labour Party politicians about issues touching on my research project. As a visitor at conferences organised by the National Assembly Against Racism, I paid particular attention to the speeches and contributions made by Labour Party politicians who enjoy celebrity status in the antiracist movement.

Fourthly, I examined recent records of parliamentary debates in the House of Commons and the European Parliament in order to identify any debates of particular interest in relation to my research project. I also obtained some parliamentary reports that seemed relevant. The significance of Labour's activities in the House of Commons and in the European Parliament is at least twofold. Firstly, any Labour Party contributions to debates in these settings may shed light on racial thinking among leading Labour Party politicians. Secondly, especially the House of Commons is a forum where racial thinking may be translated into legislation or rules and regulations of practical significance. Since in the period under investigation Labour was in opposition, I was particularly interested to see how the Parliamentary Labour Party responded to any legislative projects of a potentially racialised character that were brought in by the Conservative government. Beyond this, I selected some other parliamentary debates or initiatives for closer analysis that I perceived to be closely linked to the history of racial thinking in British society. In my analysis of these debates, I focused on contributions made by Labour Party politicians who enjoy prominent positions either in the Labour Party or in the extraparliamentary antiracist movement.

Fifthly, I identified and studied some other publications that seemed potentially relevant. Thus, throughout my research project I monitored some newspapers and journals for any articles

on the Labour Party or articles written by Labour Party politicians. In particular, I have monitored systematically *The Guardian* and *The Observer* (1994-1997), *New Statesman and Society* (from the early nineties to 1996), *New Statesman* (1996-1997), and *Socialist Challenger & Socialist Action* (1982-1989). In addition, I looked at some issues of *Labour Party News*, *Labour Briefing*, and *Tribune*. I also read books by Ken Livingstone, Peter Hain and Tony Blair as well as the diaries of Richard Crossman and Tony Benn. My choice of books and diaries was once again guided by my perception of the special status of their authors in the Labour Party and/or in the antiracist movement as well as my feeling that they might contain insights into Labour Party thinking that it might otherwise be difficult to come by.

Finally, I got in touch with a number of individuals in the Labour Party in order to obtain a clearer picture of their thinking or their activities. In some cases I asked for an interview or a conversation. Sometimes such an interview or conversation materialised, sometimes it didn't. My feelings in relation to research interviews or conversations with people active in the Labour Party or in the antiracist movement have evolved considerably over the course of the project. In my initial research proposal, I wrote:

> I would consider it as essential to make use of the resources and to consider the opinions of a range of individuals and agencies who in one way or another are likely to have some expertise in relation to the proposed research topic. Thus, it would seem sensible to contact for example the Labour Party (both as an institution and potentially interested individuals in the Labour Party), inviting them to provide any kind of feedback on the suggested scope of the research and to point out to me any literature, documents, or practices they might wish to draw my attention to.

During the first few months of working full time on the project, I developed these ideas further, considering that Labour Party or antiracist agencies or individuals might act as informal 'alternative supervisors' in addition to my academic supervisors. Such a process, I imagined, might make it easier for my project to serve collective antiracist rather than just individual or academic interests. In addition, in consultation with my supervisors I concluded that interviews might be a useful way of eliciting people's thinking on various matters related to racial thinking in the Labour Party. My assessment of the first interview that I conducted, with someone who had seemed perfectly happy to grant me an interview, was, however, rather negative. In my research diary, I noted:

> After the interview I felt quite bad about it and about the project as a whole. I felt it had been pointless, not very interesting, hadn't revealed much and hadn't helped me much as concerns access to material or people either. (...) I just felt that I should either abandon [the] project altogether or do without interviews. It may also be that the interview just brought out all too clearly how inadequate my research agenda and of course my history of involvement and my knowledge is in terms of being able to even consider [what] collective interests [my research project might serve]. It is all too evident that this project is really of a personal and selfish nature. There is of course no problem with this as such, it is just that in that case interviews such as this become a waste of time for those interviewed. (...) Although I don't feel quite so bad any more, the fact remains that there was an air of futility about this interview, and the danger of this recurring in much aggravated form where those interviewed are more hostile altogether seems quite great.

As a private researcher, I can imagine that at this point I would have abandoned the idea of any further interviews. Yet interviews had by now become an important part of my research strategy as agreed with my supervisors. So I just went on contacting people half-heartedly. Over the next few months, on at least two occasions I received what I perceived as a rather hostile response to my requests over the phone. It was only then that I felt I had to persuade my supervisors that interviews would not and should not play as great a role in the research process as initially agreed with them. Only after this was done was I able to look at the possibility of conversations with Labour Party or antiracist activists in a more favourable light again. I considered that my initial approach (as outlined in my original research proposal) of contacting people because of their expertise and knowledge in relation to particular issues was still worth pursuing as long as I was clear about what I wanted to know from these people. I also stopped the practice of tape-recording interviews. Initially I had assumed I would be obliged to do this as a research student even though I viewed it as a potential source of conflict with interviewees. It was only in my third year that I concluded tape-recording did not in my case serve any other interests than that of being able to write a more impressive PhD thesis, upon which I abandoned this practice. Overall, I now consider that the handful or so of conversations I ended up having with Labour Party or antiracist activists have been useful. They have provided me with some relevant pieces of information, and perhaps they have also given me a better feel for some of the debates that are going on in the Labour Party. I believe the problems that arose were mostly related to my perception of my supervisors' and examiners' expectations, as well as to an occasional lack of clarity on my part as

to the purpose the conversations were supposed to serve.

1.2.4   How I went about communicating my conclusions

Writing about what I have read or seen or heard in the course of my project has given me the opportunity to reflect on some of the historical, political and theoretical assumptions that inform my daily perception of social and political events. It has also enabled me to analyse Labour Party discourse more carefully and consciously than would otherwise have been possible. My various writings in the context of this research project have thus fulfilled, and continue to fulfil, important personal functions. They represent a snapshot, or a series of snapshots, of the constant movement of my mind under the influence of continuous reading and analysis. They are always autobiographical and form part of a dialogue with myself in that they enable me to relate any new texts I read to texts produced by myself.

But I have written the texts I have produced in the course of this project not just with myself as an audience in mind. In the main, I have produced three types of texts. Firstly, three extensive essays on 'Labour, Race and Antisemitism', 'Labour, Race and Imperialism', and 'Labour, Race and Nationalism'. I have used these essays primarily to question my historical and theoretical assumptions concerning the meaning and the histories of racism, ethnicism, antisemitism, imperialism and nationalism. The primary audience I had in mind was myself, but my supervisors and friends and people generally interested in these issues also came into the picture. Secondly, I have also produced a commentary on the draft of an 'Anti-Racist Charter' published in 1995 by the National Assembly Against Racism. Here the audience I had in mind was mainly the authors of the draft charter, but clearly I also used my writing to try and clarify some questions in my own mind. Thirdly, I am now writing this report or thesis. By calling it a report, I would like to indicate that the audience I have in mind is not just my supervisors and examiners but anybody interested in the issue of racial thinking in the Labour Party and beyond, including once again myself. By calling it a thesis, I would like to acknowledge that the primary audience I have in mind in producing this text is my supervisors and examiners.

1.3   How this report relates to previous writings on racial thinking in the Labour Party

Since the early 1980s, a number of studies have been published which address different aspects of the issue of racial thinking in the Labour Party. These include writings of a general nature on racial thinking in the Labour Party by Marian Fitzgerald, Zig Layton-Henry and Caroline Knowles. A study of black political participation in the Labour Party has been undertaken by Terri Sewell. John Solomos and Les Back have studied racial thinking in the Labour Party at the local level.[4] In addition, there exist a number of writings on the Labour Party or more broadly the British left which in many ways touch on the issue of racial thinking in the Labour Party, although this is not their primary focus.[5] Finally, there are a number of publications on racial thinking in British society more generally which also include some observations on racial thinking in the British Labour Party.[6] All of these writings have been a useful resource for my own studies, and it seems to me that many of the concerns expressed in them in relation to racial thinking in the Labour Party mirror some of my own.

The writings that most closely resemble this report in that they attempt to provide a wide-ranging overview of racial thinking in the Labour Party at the national level are those by Marian Fitzgerald and Zig Layton-Henry, published between 1984 and 1992, and the book by Caroline Knowles on *Race, Discourse and Labourism*, published in 1992. Although there is much common ground, I would single out three main differences between these studies and my own. Firstly, the writings quoted cover the period up to 1992, whereas this report will take the story up to 1997. Secondly, the range of issues addressed is slightly different in each case, as each author has slightly different ideas about the range of reference of racial thinking in contemporary British society. Both in the writings by Marian Fitzgerald and Zig Layton-Henry and in those by Caroline Knowles, racial thinking in the Labour Party since 1945 is predominantly related to the history of colonial migration to Britain.[7] In this report, I will analyse racial thinking in the Labour

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[4] See: 1) Fitzgerald, Marian; Layton-Henry, Zig. 1986. 'Opposition Parties and Race Policies, 1979-83'. In: Layton-Henry, Zig; Rich, Paul B. (eds.). 1986. *Race, Government and Politics in Britain*. Houndmills: Macmillan. 2) Layton-Henry, Zig. 1984. *The Politics of Race in Britain*. London: Allen & Unwin. 3) Layton-Henry, Zig. 1992. *The Politics of Immigration*. Oxford: Blackwell. 4) Knowles, Caroline. 1992. *Race, Discourse and Labourism*. London: Routledge. 5) Sewell, Terri A. 1993. *Black Political Participation in Britain*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 6) Solomos, John; Back, Les. 1995. *Race, Politics and Social Change*. London: Routledge.

[5] See for example: 1) Gupta, Partha Sarathi. 1975. *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964*. London: Macmillan. 2) Howe, Stephen. 1993. *Anticolonialism in British Politics - The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 3) Alderman, Geoffrey. 1989. *London Jewry and London Politics 1889-1986*. London: Routledge.

[6] A good example would be: Gilroy, Paul. 1987. *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack' - The cultural politics of race and nation.* London: Unwin Hyman.

[7] See for example: Layton-Henry, 1992, pp. 14-19; Knowles, 1992, p. 18 (where she defines racism in terms of 'black disadvantage'), and pp. 22-24.

Party in the 1980s and 1990s in the context of a much broader range of historical developments, including colonial slavery, the Holocaust and various European nationalisms. I will argue that these histories are both of causal and of symbolical significance for the interpretation of racial thinking in British society today. Thirdly, the range of material studied is slightly different in each case. Whilst in the writings of Marian Fitzgerald, Zig Layton-Henry and Caroline Knowles the emphasis is on written documentation, I will also consider some of the images and visual arrangements that have formed part of Labour's recent campaigns.[8]

These fine differences of approach notwithstanding, all of the publications quoted express many ideas and concerns that I share. In her book on *Race, Discourse and Labourism*, Caroline Knowles has for example raised the issue of Labour's reliance on the social deprivation theory of racism. The usefulness or otherwise of this theory has preoccupied me from the beginning of this research project and will be discussed in chapters 2 and 4 of this report. I also share her concern about Labour's persistent unwillingness to subject entrenched racialised ideas about the British nation to a fundamental review. This is an issue which I will take up in chapters 3 and 4 of this report. On the whole, rather than wishing to supersede previous writings on racial thinking in the Labour Party, I would be pleased if this thesis succeeded in complementing them by bringing them up to date and by addressing a range of issues slightly different from those addressed by previous writers.

1.4   Aims and structure of this thesis

In this report or thesis, I aim to identify and analyse significant articulations of racial thinking in the British Labour Party, with particular reference to the period from 1980 to 1997. In selecting texts or images for analysis, I have been constrained by a number of factors such as lack of access, lack of availability and lack of time. From the material which I have ended up monitoring or perusing, I have extracted what I would consider significant, but not necessarily representative, examples of racial thinking in the Labour Party. The process of selecting and analysing Labour Party material presented in this report has been guided by my understanding of the history of racial thinking. 'Selecting' Labour Party material has meant deciding which documents or quotes or images represent significant events in the history of racial thinking in

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[8] In this respect, my approach is closer to, and has been inspired by, Paul Gilroy's book on 'the cultural politics of race and

British society and politics. 'Analysing' Labour Party material has meant relating that material to the history of racial thinking, thus highlighting the range of racial connotations which the material might carry.

My analysis of Labour Party thinking thus depends, firstly, on what I mean by racial thinking, and secondly, on my understanding of the history of racial thinking in British society and politics. In chapter 2, I will give an account both of what I mean by 'racial thinking' and related concepts, such as 'racism', and of my understanding of the history of racial thinking in British society and politics. My account will be informed by the idea that the histories of European Christianism, imperialism, nationalism and antiracism have each contained different histories of racial thinking that continue to be both of causal and symbolical significance for the interpretation of racial thinking in Britain today. In chapters 3 and 4, the historical and theoretical work done in chapter 2 will be applied to the Labour Party. In chapter 3, I will write about Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in a global political environment that is marked by the dominance of nationalism. My account will focus on racial thinking in relation to British nationalism as well as various non-British nationalisms that are of some political significance in contemporary British society. In chapter 4, I will look at Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the name of antiracism. The analysis here will include an examination of Labour's theories of racism, their antiracist policies, Labour's antiracist activities in the British and the European Parliament, and the involvement of Labour Party politicians in the antiracist movement. In the conclusion, I will review the results of the various chapters and try to highlight salient aspects of racial thinking in the Labour Party as they emerge from my analysis.

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nation', published in 1987.

Chapter 2:
Four Brief Histories of Racial Thinking
in British Society and Politics

In this chapter, I would like to present a summary of my understanding of the history of racial thinking in British society and politics. In section 2.1, I will explain what I mean by the concept of 'racial thinking' as well as some other key concepts that I employ in my analysis of racial thinking in the Labour Party. In addition, I will try and give readers an idea of some of my basic political beliefs on racial thinking and racism. In sections 2.2 to 2.5, I will present four histories of racial thinking that in my view continue to be of some relevance in relation to contemporary British society. The analysis in these sections will help me identify and analyse different aspects of racial thinking in the Labour Party.

2.1   Some notes on what I mean by 'racial thinking' and related concepts in this thesis

In this section, I will look at the history of the concept of 'race' in order to define my own concepts designed to help me identify and assess racial thinking in the British Labour Party. Following a historical overview of some of the ways in which the concept of 'race' has functioned in the English and some other languages, I will explain what I mean by expressions such as 'racial classification', 'racial category', 'racial collectivity', 'racial activities', 'racial thinking', and 'racism'. I will also discuss the relationship between racial terminology and ethnic terminology and explain why I tend to refrain from using the vocabulary of ethnicity in this thesis.

2.1.1   'Race'

According to Imanuel Geiss, the earliest recorded use of 'race' in European languages was in Spain between the eleventh and fifteenth century. Its meaning was close to 'descent', and its

main use was to assert membership of the aristocracy.[9] Subsequently, the word came to be used in French, English and German to refer to a wide range of human collectivities, including in particular collectivities deemed to be 'connected by common descent or origin'.[10] In the seventeenth century, 'race' was used for the first time as a name for a few large collectivities the whole of humanity was supposed to be divided into. These collectivities were commonly thought of as communities of descent and believed to be distinguishable with reference to inheritable physical characteristics.[11] A number of collectivities thought to be of European origin also came to be identified as different 'races'. In France, for example, from the eighteenth century Gauls and Franks were identified as different 'races' of separate descent.[12] It is thus possible to identify particular historical usages of 'race' that share a common type of referent. They all refer to human collectivities made up of people who were supposed to be the descendants of one and the same ancestral collectivity. This meaning of 'race' has remained current ever since. Throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, 'race' has been applied to various groups supposed to be of European, American, African, South Asian, East Asian and Australian origin, in addition to Jewish people, and to many more groups of people in Europe and beyond. The ancestral collectivities the expression 'race' has referred to have often been thought of in terms of geography, but in addition they have occasionally been thought of as cultural or political communities, too.[13]

In this thesis, I will not use the expression 'race' myself to refer to any collectivities. This is because 'races' have too often been seen as 'natural' divisions of humanity, and the relationship between different 'races' has too often been thought of in terms of hierarchy or incompatibility. Moreover, the expression 'race' is irrevocably linked to the belief that distinctions between different 'races' are meaningful in that people 'of the same race' tend to share particular mental or cultural characteristics. I am totally opposed to any thinking of this kind. For this reason, I agree with Robert Miles when he demands that, rather than referring to different 'races', people should

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[9] See: Geiss, Imanuel. 1988. *Geschichte des Rassismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. pp. 16-17.

[10] *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Second Edition. Volume XIII. 1989. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 69.

[11] See: Geiss, 1988, pp. 17, 142-143, 147-150.

[12] See: 1) Poliakov, Léon. 1974. *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*. London: Heinemann. In particular pp. 37-53. 2) Franche, Dominique. 1995. 'Généalogie du génocide rwandais: Hutu et Tutsi: Gaulois et Francs?' In: *Les Temps Modernes*. Vol. 50, No. 582. May/June 1995. pp. 1-58. In particular pp. 27-38. 3) For an overview and more references, see also: Miles, 1989, pp. 31-32.

[13] For overviews, see for example: 1) Poliakov, 1974. 2) Mosse, George L. 1978. *Toward the Final Solution. A History of European Racism*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons. 3) Geiss, 1988.

make the language of 'race' the object of their analysis. Like Robert Miles, I think such an analysis should be part of the more comprehensive project of identifying any linguistic or non-linguistic practices that divide people according to their supposed descent from different ancestral collectivities, regardless of whether or not those practices make use of the vocabulary of 'race'.[14] In order to effect such an analysis, an appropriate terminology is needed.

2.1.2   Racial thinking

As indicated above, the vocabulary of 'race' has long been bound up with the practice of classifying people according to their perceived descent. Classifications on the grounds of perceived descent have not always involved the use of racial terminology. For this reason, I would like to introduce a general concept that refers to such classifications regardless of whether or not the vocabulary of 'race' is used.[15] Hence by *racial classifications* I mean *any practices by means of which people are classified as the descendants of different ancestral collectivities.*

An important process involved in racial classifications is that of giving common names to people (such as 'Anglo-Saxon', 'Norman', 'black', 'white', 'Jewish' etc.) who are believed to be the descendants of one and the same ancestral collectivity. Hence by *racial category* I mean *a common name given to people who are classified as the descendants of one and the same ancestral collectivity.* This definition of racial categories implies that practices of racial classification are necessary for any racial category to exist. With respect to such classifications, it is always possible to ask: Who classifies any particular person as the descendant of any particular ancestral collectivity, and on the basis of which criteria is this done? If nobody in the world classified anybody as the descendant of any ancestral collectivity, there would be no racial categories. As it happens, in British society and beyond it is commonplace for people to apply racial categories to other people or to themselves, although there is not always total agreement on how different people should be classified. In fact, one and the same person may classify different people differently or not at all at different times or in different situations. The range of racial categories that are available for people to classify others or themselves is also variable over time. Racial categories come and go as different classificatory schemes tend to be adopted in different

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[14] See: Miles, 1989, pp. 73-75.

[15] My procedure here is analogous to that adopted by Robert Miles in: Miles, 1989, pp. 73-77. R. Miles uses the concept of 'racialisation' rather than 'racial classification' to denote a similar type of practices.

historical contexts.

Common racial categories in Britain today are 'black', 'Afro-Caribbean', 'Asian', 'Indian', 'Chinese', 'Irish', 'English', 'Jewish' and some other names. Other racial categories that are sometimes employed include 'French', 'Italian', 'German', 'Arab', 'Hungarian', 'Hutu', 'Tutsi' and an open-ended list of other names. It is evident that at least some of these categories can also function as non-racial categories. On crossing the border of a nation-state, somebody may for example be requested to produce their passport, which may contain the entry: 'nationality: Irish'. Here 'Irish' would be used as a legal category rather than a racial category. Similarly, in an informal conversation somebody may be asked to state their faith and may answer 'Jewish'. Here 'Jewish' would be used as a religious category rather than a racial category.

Racial categories are often used to refer not to particular individuals but to indeterminate collectivities of people, as in the following phrases: 'African-Americans', 'the English', 'Irish people', 'the Japanese', 'black British people', 'the Asian community in Southampton', 'white people' etc. When racial categories are used in this way, it is usually left to everybody to imagine just who is supposed to be a member of these collectivities. There are no clear-cut, universally agreed criteria for establishing membership of such collectivities. In this sense, collectivities referred to by means of racial categories are always indeterminate collectivities. They can only become (partially) determinate from the point of view of particular social or political actors as the result of concrete acts of classification undertaken by those actors. On this basis, when I talk about *racial collectivities* or *racial groups*, I mean *indeterminate collectivities of people referred to by means of racial categories.*

Although racial collectivities are invariably indeterminate, this does not mean that classifications of people as members of particular racial collectivities will be arbitrary. Usually, there will be a degree of agreement among many speakers of a language regarding the criteria which are relevant for deciding whether or not anybody in particular is to be classified as a member of any particular racial collectivity. If there was no such agreement whatsoever, references to racial collectivities would become incomprehensible and racial categories would cease to exist.

As mentioned above, racial categories don't just exist independently of social and political practices. Some people must actually engage in racial classifications of others or themselves for racial categories to come into existence. Racial classifications will always be undertaken in the

context of wider social or political activities. In this thesis, by *racial activities* I mean *any activities that relate to or involve racial classifications.*

This definition of racial activities is deliberately wide. Examples of racial activities according to this definition would include the writing of this thesis, the publication or dissemination of any theories that divide humanity into different racial collectivities, the allocation of any particular individual to any particular racial category, the exclusion, oppression or persecution of any individual on account of their alleged membership of any particular racial collectivity etc.

Human action and thought are inextricably bound up with one another. Hence by *racial thinking* I mean *any thinking that relates to or involves racial classifications*. Although racial thinking as such is not visible, it may be articulated through speech or writings or other activities. An example of racial thinking would be any thinking that is articulated in this thesis in relation to any practices of racial classification. Another example of racial thinking would be any thinking on racial classifications that is articulated in texts on colonial slavery. On the assumption that the history of colonial slavery has in fact involved racial classifications, any text about colonial slavery is also a text about racial classifications and hence articulates racial thinking. This is the case even when the text does not employ the vocabulary of 'race' and makes no mention of racial classifications. In this way racial thinking can be hidden in texts and may have to be retrieved by means of historical and textual analysis.

2.1.3   Racism

The term 'racism' was first used in the 1930s and 1940s to denounce particular forms of racial thinking and racial activities in Nazi Germany. As a result of its association with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, the expression 'racism' has come to carry strong moral and political connotations.[16] In my view, these connotations are today inherent in any reference to 'racism'. In addition, the use of terms such as 'anarchism', 'liberalism', 'communism', 'socialism', 'conservatism', 'biologism', 'psychologism', 'modernism' etc. suggests that by analogy 'racism' refers to a particular system of social and political ideas and to corresponding ways of acting in the social and political world. In this respect, the expression 'racism' is fundamentally different

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[16] For an account of the early use of 'racism' in publications of the thirties and the forties, see: Miles, 1989, pp. 42-49.

from 'race', which at least pretends to refer to the 'natural world' thought to exist independently of human thought or action. As a result, the expression 'race' is particularly suitable for asserting the existence of different racial collectivities, whilst the expression 'racism' is particularly suitable for questioning or transforming any ideas or practices that serve to divide humanity into different racial collectivities.

But different people hold different views as to how precisely the expression 'racism' should be used. As a result of the political and moral connotations of the term, different ways of applying the term 'racism' are bound up with different sets of political values or priorities. In the field of academic writings, as in public life more generally, some use the term 'racism' to attack any theory that declares the superiority or inferiority of different racial collectivities, while others use it to attack any theory that uses racial classifications in order to derive people's moral or cultural or intellectual characteristics.[17] My own view is that neither judging people nor deriving their cultural characteristics from their presumed membership of racial collectivities is acceptable. Moreover, these two processes will often go hand in hand. On this basis, I would say that *people think in racist ways when they use racial classifications as a key to judging or understanding people or societies*. I think this definition reflects well the historical connotations which the term 'racism' inevitably carries. Firstly, racist ways of thinking as defined above are inherently objectionable. Whether or not somebody's more or less distant ancestors were part of any real or imagined ancestral collectivities is in itself completely irrelevant for judging or understanding that person or the society in which they live. Racist ways of thinking are therefore unjustifiable and unjust. Secondly, the definition identifies a type of racial thinking as racist that was at the heart of what are usually considered prime examples of racism in history: the singling out of black people as particularly suitable for enslavement in the context of colonial slavery, and the singling out of Jewish people as the enemy of humanity in Nazi Germany.

In line with contemporary usage, by *racist texts or practices* I mean *any texts or practices that express or promote racist ways of thinking*. By *racism* I mean the totality of all racist ways of thinking or racist texts or racist practices. Whether or not any particular text or practice expresses or promotes racist ways of thinking will often be a matter of interpretation. My definition is

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[17] For examples of the former type of definition, see: 1) Miles, 1989, p. 79. 2) Geiss, 1988, p. 15. For examples of the latter type of definition, see: 1) Delacampagne, Christian. 1990. 'Racism and the West: From Praxis to Logos'. In: Goldberg, David Theo (ed.). 1990. *Anatomy of Racism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 85. 2) Poliakov, Léon et al. 1976. *Le racisme*. Paris: Seghers. p. 23. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* lists both meanings: '**1a** a belief in the superiority of a particular race (...) **2** the theory that human abilities etc. are determined by race'. (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current*

certainly intended to cover any texts that ascribe 'innate' cultural or mental characteristics to different racial collectivities, since in my view such texts probably express and certainly promote racist ways of thinking. More widely, I would consider that any gratuitous use of racial classifications runs the risk of promoting racist ways of thinking.

Racism always involves racial thinking, but racial thinking need not be racist. Racial ways of thinking are widespread in contemporary Britain. Indeed, it is perhaps inevitable that anyone with a minimum awareness of European and world history will sometimes find themselves classifying people (including themselves) according to their supposed membership of different racial collectivities. Such racialised perceptions of the social world are the result of the internalisation of schemes of racial classification that have marked European and global history. In themselves, they are not racist, although it is perhaps difficult for anyone who has internalised schemes of racial classification to prevent themselves at all times from slipping involuntarily into racist ways of thinking. Nevertheless, there is nothing inevitable about moving from racial ways of thinking to racist ways of thinking.

Racial ways of thinking may even be necessary for identifying and opposing racism effectively. An example of potentially antiracist ways of racial thinking is furnished by the much debated question of black self-organisation in contemporary Britain. If people engaging in or promoting black self-organisation aim to unite those who share a particular experience of racial classification, exclusion, and terrorism in contemporary Britain, then I would not think that by so doing they use or promote racial classifications as a key to understanding. Rather, my perception would be that they recognise the social and political reality of anti-black racism whilst opposing any belief in the inherent significance of racial classifications. In similar fashion, some practices of Jewish self-organisation can potentially be made sense of as a response to racial classifications, exclusion, and persecution that have been perpetrated against Jewish people. As such I would interpret them as responding to and opposing racism rather than asserting the inherent value of racial classifications. In brief, particular historical situations may well demand a recognition of the potential efficacy of racial classifications even while denying their inherent value. As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno warned in 1944:

> For the fascists, the Jews are not a minority but the counter-race, the negative principle as such; supposedly the fortune of the world depends on their extermination. At the

extreme opposite end there is the thesis that the Jews, free from national or racial features, form a group through nothing else but religious belief and tradition. (...) Both doctrines are true and false at the same time. The first is true in the sense that fascism has made it true. (...) The other, the liberal thesis, is true as an idea. (...) By assuming the unity of humanity to be already realized, however, the liberal thesis helps to justify the status quo.[18]

But judgment on these issues always requires the analysis of particular practices within their specific historical context. In my view, the value of racial self-organisation depends on judgments concerning the potential for certain types of racism in any particular historical social or political situation. I fail to see, for example, how any campaign for 'white self-organisation' in contemporary British society could be anything other than a gratuitous promotion of a particular racial classification, and a reaffirmation of racist practices of the past. As such, it would be racist. To give another example, if people told me they were 'proud to be black', I would probably read this as a response to racist statements of the past (and of the present) that have denigrated black people. Unless the context demanded otherwise, I would not interpret such a declaration as a claim that black people have inherent qualities that other people do not share. If, on the other hand, people told me they were 'proud to be white' or 'English' or 'German', I would probably interpret this as a reaffirmation of racist statements of the past (and of the present) that have ascribed superior qualities to white or English or German people. Unless the context demanded otherwise, I would consider such a declaration to be racist. In short, whether or not I would consider any particular practice to be racist depends not only on the intrinsic characteristics of that practice but also on the way it connects with the wider social and political environment as well as any historical precedents.

2.1.4   The relationship between racial, ethnic and national terminology

As stated earlier in this chapter, people may employ racial categories or classify people as belonging to particular racial collectivities without using the vocabulary of 'race'. This was evidently the case when particular names of collectivities functioned as racial categories before racial terminology had even entered the respective language. In the British context, for example, categories such as 'Normans' or 'Anglo-Saxons' appear to have functioned as racial categories

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[18] Horkheimer, Max; Adorno, Theodor W. 1988. *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 177.

before the arrival of any racial terminology.[19] My readings suggest to me that racial vocabulary became a more important element of racial and racist practices from the seventeenth century, when attempts were made to classify the whole of humanity systematically by devising comprehensive classificatory schemes of racial categories. But even then rival terminologies continued to be used to refer to different racial collectivities. In particular, national terminology and ethnic terminology have provided a vocabulary of similar structure. This structure, as I view it, is reflected in the following table:

	'National' terms	'Ethnic' terms	'Racial' terms
Terms commonly used to refer to a general field of discourse and related practices (as in titles of books or essays)	Nation Nationalism Nationality?	Ethnicity	Race Racism
Terms commonly used to refer to (the idea of) a particular collectivity	Nation National minority	Ethnic group Ethnic minority Ethnie?	Race Racial group Racial minority
Terms commonly used to refer to somebody's membership of a particular collectivity	Nationality	Ethnicity?	Race?
Terms commonly used to refer to practices, beliefs or sentiments that celebrate or promote divisions of the social world into different collectivities	Nationalism	Ethnicism? Ethnicisation?	Racism Racialisation Racialism?
Terms commonly used to refer to practices, beliefs or sentiments that prioritise the presumed interests of one collectivity over those of other collectivities	Nationalism	Ethnicism? Ethnocentrism?	Racism Racialism?

The explanation of usages in this table is, of course, rather limited and provisional. In reality, the expressions included in the table are not just used to 'refer to' certain ideas, practices, or situations that exist independently of those expressions. Rather, they also serve to intervene in, transform or sustain those ideas, practices and situations in accordance with particular social and political projects or preoccupations. I have already referred to some of these functions in relation to the terms 'race' and 'racism'. In similar fashion, words such as 'nationalism' and 'ethnicism' tend to emphasise the idea that the collectivities that are being 'referred to' are historically variable,

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[19] This interpretation is based on my reading of: Hill, Christopher. 1965. *Puritanism and Revolution - Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century.* London: Secker & Warburg. pp. 50-122.

invented, or manufactured. They point to the factor of human agency in the making or imagining of these collectivities. They are thus particularly suitable for questioning or transforming certain ideas or practices that serve to divide humanity into different collectivities. By contrast, many uses of words such as 'nationality' and 'ethnicity' (I am thinking of their use in writings such as application forms and passports as well as political or academic writings) demand a recognition of the existence of certain collectivities. These words may thus be particularly suitable for maintaining and sustaining ideas or practices that serve to divide humanity into different collectivities. It may be an interesting reflection on the state of today's academic and political debates that expressions such as 'nationalism' and 'racism' are frequently used while the word 'ethnicism' is virtually unheard of.[20]

There are similarities between 'national', 'ethnic' and 'racial' terminology not just in structure, but also in content. In particular, national, ethnic or racial vocabulary may equally be used to refer to different racial collectivities as defined in this thesis:

Range of reference of national terminology

Range of reference of ethnic terminology

References to racial collectivities as defined in this thesis

Range of reference of racial terminology

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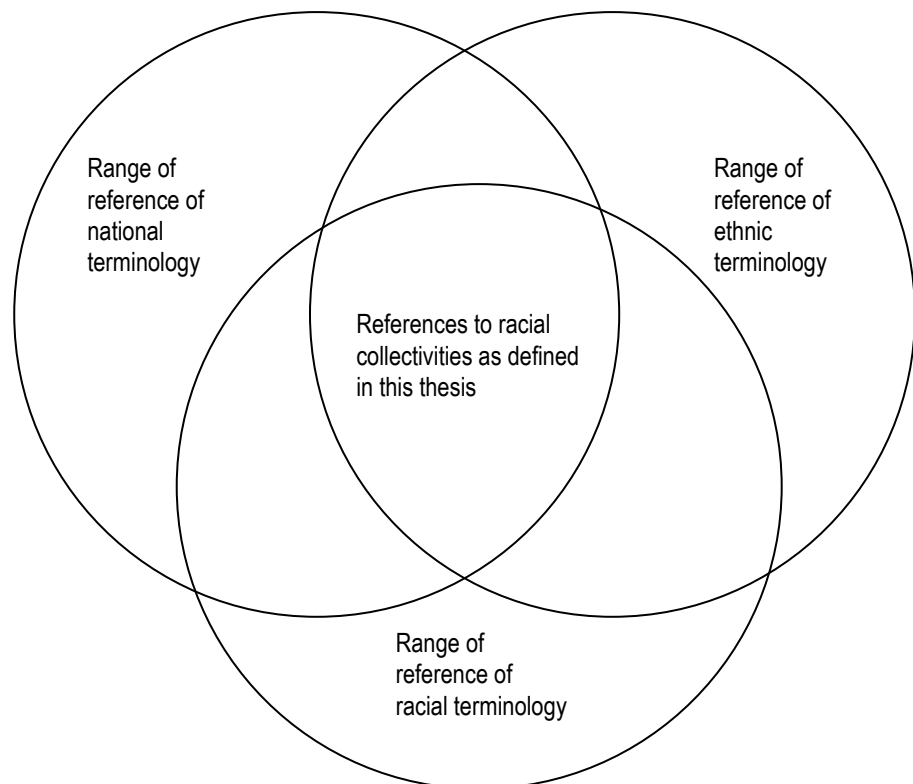
[20] I have come across the expression 'ethnicism' in: Smith, Anthony D. 1995. *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era.* Cambridge: Polity Press. The word 'ethnicisme' appears in the title of a French language book: Fourier, Martine; Vermès Geneviève. 1994. *Ethnicisation des rapports sociaux - Racismes, nationalismes, ethnicismes et culturalismes.* Paris: Editions

But national terminology is also used to refer to collectivities other than racial collectivities. This idea will be expanded on in the section on nationalism, where I will also provide my own definitions of terms such as 'nation' and 'nationalism'. Ethnic terminology on the other hand tends to refer very much to the same type of collectivities as racial terminology.

My various readings inform me that ethnic terminology was used to refer to 'racial characteristics' as early as the nineteenth century, when it was used in particular by colonial administrators and ethnologists. In the United States, Jewish people and people whose ancestors were believed to be from various European countries came to be called ethnic groups in the first half of this century.[21] In more recent works they continue to be classified in ethnic terms, but in addition black people have also begun to be classified as ethnic groups. This development is mirrored in the census law of 1990, which classifies Hispanics, Blacks, Whites and American Indians as different ethnic groups.[22] In Germany, racial vocabulary has been virtually taboo since 1945, but recently ethnic terminology has begun to be used to refer to the same type of groups that were characterised in *völkisch* or in racial terms in Nazi Germany. In France, too, it would appear that ethnic terminology is increasingly used to refer to Jewish people and the descendants of various groups of immigrants.[23] A shift from racial to ethnic terminology without any change of referent has also occurred in British society. I would now like to briefly analyse this shift and set out its consequences for this thesis.

L'Harmattan.

[21] See: 1) Wieviorka, Michel. 1993. *La démocratie à l'épreuve - Nationalisme, populisme, ethnicité*. Paris: La Découverte. pp. 99-101. 2) Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 1995. *Ethnicity and Nationalism - Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press. pp. 3-4. 3) Polenberg, Richard. 1986 [1980]. *One Nation Divisible - Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938*. Penguin: Harmondsworth. In particular pp. 8-9, 24, 34-39, 203, 207, 286.

[22] See: 1) Reed, Ishmael et al. ' "Is Ethnicity Obsolete?" '. In: Sollors, Werner (ed.). 1989. *The Invention of Ethnicity*. New York: Oxford University Press. In particular pp. 226, 232. 2) Goldberg, David. 1993. *Racist Culture - Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 76. The *Guardian* of 24/4/1997 (p. 1) lists 'black, white, Hispanic, American-Indian, Alaskan native, Asian, Pacific islander and "other"' as the 'current census choices' in the United States.

[23] For the situation in Germany, see for example: 1) Bielefeld, Uli. 1991. 'Einleitung'. In: Bielefeld, Uli (ed.). 1991. *Das Eigene und das Fremde. Neuer Rassismus in der Alten Welt?* Hamburg: Junius. 2) Heckmann, Friedrich. 1992. *Ethnische Minderheiten, Volk und Nation: Soziologie interethnischer Beziehungen*. Stuttgart: Enke. A classification of the population of Germany into ethnic groups, including for example 'Jews' and 'Romanies', can be found on p. 5. For the situation in France, see: Wieviorka, 1993, pp. 101-111.

2.1.5 The 'ethnic shift' in British society

When I leaf through books on politics, history and sociology written in Britain in the first half of this century, I find that, in order to refer to different racial collectivities, abundant use of racial terminology tends to be made.[24] Today, racial terminology certainly continues to be used in many contexts. Nevertheless, at least since the thirties a gradual 'ethnic shift' has occurred in Britain, too. A book published in 1935 is perhaps symbolic of this shift. Its authors recommended that 'race' should be dropped from the scientific vocabulary because of the way it was used in Nazi Germany. Yet they proceeded to produce a classification of humanity that differed from previous racial classifications only in that it talked about 'ethnic groups' rather than 'races'.[25] Such preference for ethnic terminology without any change of referent has since become a more widespread phenomenon in British academia. The process of transition from racial to ethnic terminology is illustrated by two comments I found in the British literature on 'race relations': In the late fifties, Kenneth Little noted that '(...) some biologists and anthropologists prefer to speak about 'ethnic groups' instead of 'races'. The main thing to stress, however, is that both expressions involve a biological concept which is not to be confused with groups based upon nationality, language, religion or any other non-biological criterion'.[26] In 1970, the Social Science Research Council established a 'Race Relations Unit' to co-ordinate research on 'race relations'. Michael Banton has written that, due to concern over the expression 'race', the name was soon changed to 'Research Unit on Ethnic Relations', but there was to be 'no change of policy'.[27]

Today in Britain the idea of 'ethnicity' is institutionalised in the 1976 Race Relations Act, in countless application forms and monitoring programmes, and in the census question on ethnicity. Various test census questions in the seventies and the eighties used the following categories:

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[24] For example in the following works: 1) Godard, John George. 1905. *Racial Supremacy Being Studies in Imperialism*. Edinburgh: Geo. A. Morton. 2) Hobson, J. A. 1968 [1938]. *Imperialism - A Study. 3rd Edition*. [First edition 1902]. London: Allen & Unwin. 3) Hertz, Frederick. 1944. *Nationality in History and Politics - A study of the psychology and sociology of national sentiment and character*. London: Kegan Paul.

[25] See: 1) Miles, 1989, pp. 43-44. 2) Malik, Kenan. 1996. *The Meaning of Race - Race, History and Culture in Western Society*. Houndmills: Macmillan. pp. 125-126.

[26] Little, Kenneth. 1958. *Colour and Commonsense.* Fabian Society and Commonwealth Bureau. p. 25.

[27] Banton, Michael. 1973. 'The Future of Race Relations Research in Britain: The Establishment of a Multi-Disciplinary Research Unit'. In: *Race*, Vol. XV, No. 2, pp. 225-229. The quotes are from p. 226.

1975	1977	1979	1989
White (European descent) West Indian Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi West African Arab Chinese Any other race or ethnic origin Mixed descent	White West Indian African Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Arab Turkish Chinese Any other	English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish Other European West Indian or Guyanese African Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Arab Chinese Any other racial or ethnic descent (please indicate below)	White Black - Caribbean Black - African Black - Other (please describe) Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese Any Other Ethnic Group

The 1989 version was finally adopted for the 1991 census, with the addition '(please describe)' behind 'Any Other Ethnic Group'.[28] Once again, it is clear that in the ethnic census question 'ethnic group' is merely used as a euphemism for 'race' or 'racial group'.

Social scientists have used the census data on ethnicity to study social or geographical characteristics of different ethnic groups.[29] The results of such studies as well as the results of the census itself are sometimes reported in the mass media, thus turning the ethnic categories of the census question into public knowledge. Other ways in which ideas about ethnicity are disseminated is through a range of application forms and monitoring programmes. In a 1995 University of East Anglia job application form, for example, applicants are told:

Please indicate your ethnic origin by ticking the appropriate box:

White □
Black-Caribbean □
Black African □
Black Other □
Indian □
Pakistani □
Bangladeshi □
Chinese □
Other, please specify

Ethnic questions are not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. They are about colour and broad ethnic group. UK citizens an belong to any of the groups indicated.

The concept of ethnicity is also used in the Race Relations Act of 1976. This Act prohibits any discrimination on 'racial grounds' or discrimination that involves a disadvantage for

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[28] For the test census questions see: Leech, Kenneth. 1989. *Runnymede Research Report: A Question in Dispute: the debate about an 'ethnic' question in the Census.* London: Runnymede Trust. For the version adopted for the 1991 census see: Mason, David. 1995. *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 34.

any particular 'racial group'. The meaning of 'racial grounds' and 'racial groups' is specified as follows:

> "racial grounds" means any of the following grounds, namely colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins; "racial group" means a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.[30]

The Act is silent on the question of the conditions a group of people must meet in order to be defined by reference to 'ethnic origins'. This issue has therefore been dealt with on a case by case basis by agencies involved in interpreting the law, including the Commission for Racial Equality, industrial tribunals and the courts. According to a commentary on the Race Relations Act published by the Commission for Racial Equality, 'in most cases, there is no argument as to what a person's racial group is, and Industrial Tribunals are satisfied with descriptions such as "Indian"'.[31] There have, however, been a few cases which have centred precisely on the meaning of 'ethnic' in the phrases 'ethnic origin' and 'ethnic group'. In 1982 the Court of Appeal decided that Sikhs did not form an ethnic group on the grounds that 'ethnic' meant 'pertaining to race' and Sikhs could be distinguished from other people not by racial characteristics but only by their religion and culture. Jews on the other hand were declared to constitute an ethnic group in this sense.[32] In 1983 this ruling was overturned by the House of Lords. Here it was argued by Lord Fraser of Tullybelton that

> the word "ethnic" still retains a racial flavour but it is used nowadays in an extended sense to include other characteristics which may be commonly thought of as being associated with common racial origin.

Sikhs were said to be 'almost a race' and to have a 'cultural tradition of their own', thus making them an ethnic group. In this ruling then, it seems that the racial content of 'ethnicity' was largely preserved and combined with a belief in the theory that racial groups tend to share particular cultural characteristics. Later rulings have concluded that Rastafarians or Muslims do not

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[29] See for example: Mason, 1995, pp. 36, 38, 45, 46 etc.

[30] *Race Relations Act 1976*, London: HMSO. Part I, Section 3.1, p. 2.

[31] White, Robin M. et al. (eds.). 1990. *Race Discrimination Law Report. Volume 1*. London: Commission for Racial Equality. p. 17. The following quotes are from pp. 1983/53 & 1983/60.

[32] See: Ibid., pp. 1983/34-49.

constitute a 'racial group' in the ethnic or in any other sense, while Romanies do.[33]

In Britain the concept of ethnicity is of course not just used in institutional contexts. It is also part of the language used in many academic writings, in the mass media and in informal social situations. In these contexts references to ethnicity may involve references to a wide variety of groups both in Britain and elsewhere. These include references to 'black' or 'Asian' people, 'Irish' people[34], 'the English'[35], 'Hungarians', 'Hutus', 'Tutsis', the 'aborigines of Taiwan' and many other names. As names of 'ethnic groups', all of these categories function as racial categories. Often the racial meaning is simply conveyed by the use of ethnic terminology, but sometimes it is made explicit. An article about the ethnic origin of Hungarians recently published in the *Guardian*, for example, includes claims made by Hungarian scholars that Hungarians 'were descended from Turkic tribes in central Asia' and that 'ancient Hungarians left Xinjiang [in China] no later than the 5th century'.[36] An article about the Taiwanese aborigines quotes one of their representatives claiming that 'we can trace our origins in Taiwan back at least 6,000 years'.[37]

In summary, it seems to me that the use of ethnic terminology in the English, German and French language is today an important way of expressing racial thinking without making use of the vocabulary of 'race'. But ethnic terminology is not well suited to my own purposes in this thesis, for two reasons. Firstly, it constructs a symbolic difference between racial thinking of the past and racial thinking of today. My own view is that such a construction is misplaced since it obscures important continuities of thought in European societies and beyond. Secondly, debates conducted in the language of ethnicity often take a positive view of ethnicity, as evidenced in the lack of any critique of 'ethnicism'. In my view, a more critical perspective is needed. But due to the largely identical range of reference of ethnic and racial terminology, a critique of 'ethnicism' can be conducted adequately by using the concepts of 'racial thinking' and 'racism'. In short, whilst I will be vigilant regarding the use of ethnic terminology in the British Labour Party, I will largely refrain from using the vocabulary of ethnicity for the purposes of my own analysis.

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[33] See: Ibid., p. 18.

[34] An article in the *Guardian,* for example, reports 'increased pressure from the Commission for Racial Equality for Whitehall, local government and the health services o use "Irish" as a category in ethnic monitoring programmes'. (*The Guardian,* Society, 24/5/1995, p. 2)

[35] Glenn Morgan has written that '(...) there ought to be a clear recognition that we live in a society composed of a number of ethnic groups, one of which is the English.' (Morgan, Glenn. 1985. 'The analysis of ethnicity: conceptual problems and policy implications'. In: *New Community*, Vol. XII, No. 3, Winter 1985. p. 521.)

[36] *The Guardian*, 8/2/95, p. 8.

[37] *The Guardian*, 24/3/96, p. 21.

2.2 Racial thinking in the context of Christianism

By *Christianism* I mean *any social or political activities celebrating or promoting a belief in the supreme moral significance of the bible, and in particular of the teachings of Jesus Christ as represented in the bible*. Christianism thus includes, for example, the establishment of various Christian churches, any missionary activities, the dissemination of Christian writings and the preaching of Christian values or codes of conduct by Christians to other people, be they fellow Christians or non-Christians. My various readings on the history of racism have persuaded me that, throughout its history, Christianism has been an important context of racial thinking and activities in relation to a range of different racial collectivities.

2.2.1 Christianist myths of the origins of humanity

According to Imanuel Geiss, the oldest racial classification to have survived in written form is based on biblical genealogy.[38] It was first developed in the context of Judaism and later adopted by the Christianist movement. According to biblical genealogy, the whole of humanity is descended from Adam and Eve. A few generations further down the line, God set out to destroy humanity apart from Noah and his wife and Noah's sons and their wives. He or she told Noah to build an ark so that Noah and his family would survive the flood that was to 'put an end to all people'. The biblical account continues as follows:

> The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth. Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. (...) When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers". He also said: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave".[39]

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[38] For the following account, unless specified otherwise, see: Poliakov, 1974, pp. 7-8; Geiss, 1988, pp. 23, 147-148.

[39] *The Holy Bible - New International Version*. 1995. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp. 10-11 (Genesis 9).

The biblical text then continues to list various 'nations' that are said to be descended from Shem, Ham and Japheth respectively. Although, according to the biblical text, it was only Canaan who was cursed, it was customary to consider that the curse applied to all of Ham's descendants. This interpretation had consequences for the ways in which biblical genealogies have tended to be used in the context of Christianism. The dominant tendency of Christianism was to consider Japheth, Shem and Ham and their wives as the distant ancestors of Europeans, Asians and Africans respectively. The same genealogies were, however, also adapted to rationalise social and political structures in medieval Europe. In one variation, for example, Ham and his wife were taken to be the ancestors of the serfs, Shem and his wife those of the clerks, and Japheth and his wife those of the nobles.

Since biblical genealogy postulates a common ancestry for the whole of humanity, it is not inherently racist. On the contrary, it has the potential of functioning as an anti-racist ideology, and in some historical situations it has done so. My readings suggest to me, however, that there have been specific interpretations of biblical genealogy that can be characterised as racist in that they have used the biblical account of the differential ancestry of all human beings from Japheth, Shem and Ham and their wives respectively in order to explain the prevailing social and political order. Such explanations also rationalised that order by reference to God's supreme authority. Once widely accepted, racist interpretations of biblical genealogy could also serve to justify social and political change. Biblical genealogy was, for example, capable of serving as a justification for the enslavement of Africans in the context of European overseas imperialism. In a more general way, it has served to lend authority to numerous racial classifications undertaken by nationalists and their enemies in the context of European nationalism and by travellers, missionaries, scientists and administrators in the context of European overseas imperialism.[40]

2.2.2 Christianism and antisemitism

Some definitions of 'antisemitism' restrict any application of the term to hostility towards Jewish people when they are perceived as members of a particular racial collectivity. For Hannah Arendt, for example, 'antisemitism, a secular nineteenth-century ideology (...) and religious Jew-

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[40] For an account of how biblical genealogies have been used in the context of various nationalisms, see: Poliakov, 1974, pp. 11-128. For an example of the specific application of biblical genealogies in colonial Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see: Franche, 1995.

hatred (...) are obviously not the same'. In her opinion, the belief that the dichotomy between Jewish people and non-Jewish people is racial rather than a matter of creed and faith 'is clearly the *sine qua non* for the birth of antisemitism'.[41] Most of the writings on antisemitism I have consulted, however, take a broader view of *antisemitism* as *any hostility towards people that is associated with their being classified as Jewish, regardless of the grounds (religious, racial, cultural or otherwise) on which they are so classified*.[42] The broadness of this concept has been justified by Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz with reference to important historical continuities of antisemitism across a range of views of the boundary between Jewish and non-Jewish people in different historical contexts:

> (...) the view that 'racial' or 'scientific' anti-Semitism of the late nineteenth century formed a radical break with the 'medieval' religious tradition of Jew-hating because of its self-confessed atheism is rooted in a simple misunderstanding of the nature of the secularization of religious models within the biological sciences of the nineteenth century. The basic model of the Jew found within 'religious' contexts is merely secularized in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[43]

I find this view plausible, and for this reason I have adopted the broad definition of antisemitism quoted above. For my specific research project, however, I am nevertheless particularly interested in any uses of 'Jewish' as a racial category. For this reason, I will distinguish between antisemitism in a broad sense, as defined above, and *racial antisemitism*, by which I mean *any forms of antisemitism in which 'Jewish' is used as a racial category*.

The preceding quotes have already indicated that Christianism might have been an important historical context within which different forms of antisemitism have developed. A number of writings on early forms of antisemitism agree that, although there were some manifestations of antisemitism in pagan antiquity, the emergence of pervasive and persistently

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[41] Arendt, Hannah. 1968 [1951]. *Antisemitism. Part One of 'The Origins of Totalitarianism'*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. pp. vii-viii. For a similar distinction, see also: Lebzelter, Gisela C. 1978. *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939*. London: The Macmillan Press. pp. 1-3.

[42] See for example: 1) Grosser, Paul E.; Halperin, Edwin G. 1978. *The Causes and Effects of Anti-Semitism: The Dimensions of A Prejudice*. New York: Philosophical Library. p. 5. 2) Holmes, Colin. 1979. *Anti-Semitism in British Society. 1876-1939*. London: Edward Arnold. p. 1. 3) Kushner, Antony R. J. 1986. *British Antisemitism in the Second World War*. Ph.D. thesis, Department of Economic and Social History, University of Sheffield. p. 3. 4) Poliakov, Léon. 1974(b). *The History of Antisemitism. Volume 1*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 4.

[43] Gilman, Sander L.; Katz, Steven T. 'Introduction'. In: Gilman, Sander L.; Katz, Steven T. (eds.). 1991. *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*. New York: New York University Press. pp. 1-19. The quote is from p. 2.

violent forms of antisemitism was linked to the rise of Christianism.[44] According to Léon Poliakov, early instances of the idea of Jewish people forming a racial collectivity can also be found in Christian thinking and doctrine. Likewise, some historical myths about Jewish people (such as ritual murder myths) and myths that continue to be recycled (such as Jewish conspiracy myths) have been explained with reference to Christian thinking and anxieties.[45]

My view of the evolution of racial antisemitism, based on my various readings on the history of antisemitism, can be summarised as follows: In antiquity, conversion to Judaism was a widespread phenomenon, and it seems that in general Jewish people were viewed as different from other people only in terms of their religion. In medieval Europe, Judaism continued to exert a definite attraction on the Christian population. Perhaps in order to undermine this continued appeal, decisions taken by the Church authorities were increasingly aimed at the segregation of Christian and Jewish people. These measures can be understood as the result of a socio-religious Christian-Jewish rivalry. Jewish people were not at this stage viewed as a racial collectivity. They ceased to be classified as Jewish when they converted to Christianity. The crusades in the eleventh and twelfth centuries led to widespread massacres of Jewish people, but still Christian people attacked Jewish people as the adherents of a rival religion rather than as members of any racial collectivity. In the context of increasing segregation by means of ghettoisation and the compulsory wearing of distinctive signs, however, theological thinking took root in Spain according to which baptized Jews were still Jews by nature. From 1449, racial antisemitism was institutionalised in Spain in regulations concerning the 'purity of blood' with a view to distinguishing between 'conversos' and 'old Christians'. From the fifteenth century, representations of Jews with long noses and horns appeared in Germany, thus beginning a lasting tradition of depicting Jewish people as physically different from non-Jewish people. By the sixteenth century, German humanists argued that Jewish people were foreigners in Germany and could not become German simply by being baptised. Meanwhile Jewish people were completely

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[44] The writings I have consulted on this question include: 1) Abel, Ernest L. 1975. *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*. London: Associated University Presses. 2) Gager, John J. 1983. *The Origins of Anti-Semitism - Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 3) Poliakov, Léon. 1981. *Histoire de l'antisemitisme. Vol. 1. L'âge de la foi*. Calmann-Lévy. 4) Delacampagne, Christian. 1983. *L'Invention du Racisme*. Paris: Fayard.

[45] See: Poliakov, 1981, pp. 160-161, 254-259. Unless specified otherwise, the following account is based on: Poliakov, 1981. For the references to antisemitism in antiquity, see in particular: pp. 16, 17, 20. For the references to medieval Europe, see in particular pp. 231-266. For the references to developments in Spain see in particular pp. 151-161, 174-198, 185, 198. For the references to Germany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see in particular pp. 312, 362-364. For the dates of the expulsion of Jewish people from England, France and Spain, see pp. 333, 353, 169. For an account of the readmission of Jewish people under Cromwell, see pp. 355-358.

banned from England (1290), France (1394) and Spain (1492). In these countries, views about Jewish people were henceforth transmitted through ballads, legends and images. As a result, in 1655, when Cromwell made plans to readmit Jewish people to England, his project met with intense public hostility. The result was that Jewish people were quietly tolerated but not officially readmitted. In Spain, Jewish people were officially readmitted only in 1869.

From the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, discrimination faced by Jewish people on the grounds of culture or religion was progressively eased in various European countries. In Britain, for example, the requirement for Members of Parliament to swear a Christian oath was abolished in 1860.[46] At the same time, however, throughout Europe Jewish people were increasingly referred to as a separate 'race' - evidence of the fact that Jewishness was now widely seen as a quality that was transmitted from one generation to the next, regardless of any religious or cultural affiliations. The racial category 'Semitic' that was now increasingly imposed on Jewish people was derived from 'Shem', one of the figures in the biblical genealogies referred to above.[47] By the beginning of the twentieth century, Jewish people were pervasively believed to form a racial collectivity. Racial antisemitism was rationalised with reference to myths about Jewish people conspiring to undermine nations and to dominate the world. In the context of increasingly fervent racial nationalism, Jewish people were regarded as foreigners in European nations.[48]

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler depicted Jewish people both as a political threat to the German nation and as a threat to the particular racial make-up of the German people. But he also appealed to religion to justify his antisemitic views: 'By warding off the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord's work'.[49] From the moment when the Nazi movement came to power in Germany in early 1933, various policies targeting Jewish people as a racial collectivity were introduced. These policies were aimed at progressively eliminating Jewish people from the 'national community'. When Germany invaded Poland and Russia, special task forces murdered over 1.5 million Jewish people. From the end of 1941, mass murder was carried out in industrial fashion in death camps.

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[46] See: Alderman, Geoffrey. 1992. *Modern British Jewry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. pp. 51-56.

[47] See: Poliakov, 1974, pp. 226, 235; Geiss, 1988, p. 23.

[48] See: Mosse, 1978, p. 185.

[49] The account of antisemitism in Nazi Germany in this section is based on: 1) Burleigh, Michael; Wippermann, Wolfgang. 1991. *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2) Landau, Ronnie S. 1992. *The Nazi Holocaust*. London: Tauris. 3) Poliakov, Léon. 1981(b). *Histoire de l'antisemitisme. Vol. 2. L'âge de la science*. Calmann-Lévy. The passage from *Mein Kampf* is quoted in: Burleigh/Wippermann, 1991, p. 40.

Over three million Jews are thought to have died in the extermination camps. In total, about six million Jews are thought to have died as a result of ghettoization, internment and mass murder.

As a result of my readings, I conclude that Christianism was a determinant of the Holocaust in that the racial classification of Jewish people first evolved in the context of the socio-religious rivalry between Judaism and Christianism. Some of the myths concerning Jewish people that preoccupied the Nazis and many other people resident in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century also had their roots in Christianism. The consequences of this racial classification and these myths in Nazi Germany, however, can only be understood by relating them to the evolution of German racial nationalism and imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Today, any hostility towards Jewish people on the grounds of their being Jewish carries racial connotations because of the pervasive use of 'Jewish' as a racial category over at least the last two hundred years or so. In view of this, it has become difficult in practice to distinguish clearly between racial and religious/cultural antisemitism.

2.2.3   Christianism and antimuslimism

The expression 'antimuslimism' has been used in a recent publication by Fred Halliday. His definition, which is basically in line with the definition of antisemitism given above, is suitable for my own purposes in this thesis, and I will adopt it here. By *antimuslimism*, then, I mean *any hostility towards people that is associated with their being classified as Muslims, regardless of the grounds (religious, racial, cultural or otherwise) on which they are so classified.*[50]

In the case of antimuslimism, it is perhaps less clear than in the case of antisemitism whether 'Muslim' has ever functioned as a racial category. In considering this question, it seems noteworthy to me that the Inquisition in Spain targeted not only Jewish people and their suspected descendants but also Muslims and their suspected descendants, regardless of whether they had converted to Christianity.[51] Léon Poliakov's account of this episode in Spanish history suggests, however, that they were targeted not as 'Muslims' but as 'Moriscos'. Eventually, all

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[50] See: Halliday, Fred. 1996. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation - Religion and Politics in the Middle East.* London: Tauris. p. 160.

[51] See: Poliakov, 1974(b), pp. 333-354.

Moriscos were expelled from Spain between 1609-1614. I suppose it may be that at this time the collectivity of 'Muslims in Spain' was equated with the racial category of 'Moriscos' and to this extent 'Muslim' may have functioned as a racial category in this particular historical context.

My personal perception is that in contemporary British society people do not generally use the category 'Muslim' as a racial category. They may, however, occasionally view specific collectivities such as 'Bradford's Muslim community' or even 'Britain's Muslim community' as being composed of a number of particular racial collectivities. This kind of thinking is articulated in a number of newspaper articles I have come across in the course of doing this research project. In a detailed article about the background to the 1995 'Bradford riots', for example, the categories of 'white' and 'Muslim' are used in a way that suggests their mutual exclusivity. 'Muslim' is here essentially used as a subcategory of 'Asian', as are the categories 'Sikh', 'Bangladeshi', and 'Hindu'. The categories of 'Asian' and 'Muslim' are both contrasted with 'white'.[52] On the national level, too, Britain's Muslim community has been described as being composed exclusively of non-white people.[53] Side by side with such views, however, the media I have monitored have also carried reports of conversions of white people to Islam and readers' letters or articles in which the non-racial nature of Islam is emphasised.[54]

In his account of antimuslimism in the contemporary world, Fred Halliday stresses that, historically, there have been many different forms of antimuslimism, and 'even in the present historical period there may be no single reason for the re-emergence of anti-Muslimism'.[55] According to Fred Halliday, within Europe, 'for reasons above all of geographical location, but also of differential imperial experience, the role of anti-Muslim sentiment varies from country to country'. These differences become even more marked on the global level. For the purposes of closer analysis, F. Halliday selects four different contexts in which antimuslimism has recently

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[52] See: *The Guardian Weekend*. 15/7/1995, pp. 21-24. Quoting a local resident, the article states that there are '60,000 Asians in Bradford, three quarters of them Kashmiri Muslims'. A councillor is quoted as saying that there was unending conflict at street level 'not just between Asian and white, but between Muslim and Sikh, Bangladeshi and Hindu. Apart from the Kashmiris, there were 18,000 other Asians in the district (...)'. The author of the article himself describes a scene in which 'a white boy appeared hand-in-hand with an Asian girl. A group of Muslim youths nearby began to glare and mutter; one picked up a fistful of gravel, but didn't throw it.'

[53] An article in *The Guardian*, for example, includes the following passage: 'Mr Versi [the editor of The Muslim News] said that the Muslim population was doubly discriminated against, firstly because of their skin colour, and secondly because of their religion.' (*The Guardian*, 20/9/1995, p. 7)

[54] See for example *The Guardian*, Part 2, 17/5/1996, p. 5 (on the experience of a number of converts to Islam); *The Guardian*, 11/11/1995, p. 27 (on why hundreds of prisoners are converting to Islam); *The Guardian*, 22/9/1996, p. 18 (a reader protesting that 'Islam has absolutely nothing to do with race or colour, but is entirely a question of creed').

[55] Halliday, 1996, p. 161. For the following quotes from this work, see: pp. 161, 178, 179, 181, 186,

been articulated world-wide: 'Orthodox Christianity: Serbia and Greece', 'India', 'Israel', and 'The West: Europe and the USA'.

As regards the latter context, F. Halliday acknowledges a long history of antimuslimism, initially in the context of religious conflict. Thus, from the eighth to the seventeenth centuries, wars with the Islamic world were 'a major preoccupation of Christian Europe'. According to F. Halliday, it would be wrong to conclude, however, 'that contemporary anti-Muslimism can be explained in terms of this past'. Rather, 'while (for both sides) history certainly provides a reserve of ideological themes upon which to draw, the question of why and how a certain rhetoric emerged when it did still has to be asked'. As regards the contemporary scene, F. Halliday distinguishes between a 'strategic' type of antimuslimism, more important in the United States than in Europe, and a 'populist' type of antimuslimism, more important in Europe than in the United States. Rejecting any 'transhistorical explanations', F. Halliday describes the growth of contemporary 'populist' anti-Muslim sentiment in many European countries as an expression of 'the new racist and anti-immigrant politics that has emerged'. But, according to F. Halliday, it is only recently that Muslims have been targeted as a particular group in this context. Since the beginning of this century, terms of abuse used in Britain to refer to Asian immigrants, many of whom have been Muslims, have mostly carried racial rather than religious connotations. In F. Halliday's view, this applies for example to the expression 'Paki', which is 'almost wholly a racial epithet, referring to skin colour and clothing, and is applied indiscriminately to South Asians of any religion'. According to F. Halliday, 'it was indeed only in the late 1980s, and more particularly with the *Satanic Verses* affair and the Gulf war, that an identifiable anti-Muslimist trend emerged at the mass level in Britain'.

In summary, my various readings suggest to me that in Europe antimuslimism first emerged in the context of Christianism, but has since been articulated in different contexts, notably in the contexts of European imperialism and nationalism. As is the case with antisemitism, it has taken different forms in different countries. Although in Britain antimuslimism has perhaps become more important in the late eighties than it has been in recent British history, 'Muslim' is not generally used or understood as a racial category. Occasionally, however, it may be used to refer to collectivities that are believed to be composed of a particular number of racial collectivities, in particular non-white collectivities.

2.2.4 The significance of Christianism in relation to racial thinking in contemporary British society

Although historically Christianism has been an important context within which racial thinking has been articulated, it seems to me that Christianism is of relatively little relevance in relation to racial thinking in contemporary British society, and perhaps of even less relevance in relation to a study of racial thinking in the British Labour Party. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, in contemporary Britain Christianism is no longer a powerful political movement. Those in power only rarely gesture in the direction of Christianism. Christianism is basically perceived as a movement individuals may get involved in privately. Politicians do not generally engage in Christianism in any ostentatious way. According to a recent sociological assessment, 'taking faith or religion seriously is becoming, increasingly, the exception rather than the norm in British society'.[56] Although recent statistics have classified more than 60% of the population as 'nominal Christians', only 14% have been classified as 'active members' of Christian churches, and the usual attendance at Church of England Sunday services has been estimated at no more than 2% of the population.[57]

Secondly, the teachings and preachings of Christianism have been subject to change. This has reached a point where I suppose most people, and perhaps even many Christianist activists, will hardly be aware any more of the role biblical genealogy has played in the evolution of racial classifications in European society. Far from promoting racial classifications, Christianist groups are today a significant part of the antiracist movement. In particular after the Holocaust, some activists of Christianism have also attempted to re-examine and change Christian attitudes to Jewish people. As a result, I suppose that in contemporary Britain an affirmation of Christianist values and priorities would not generally be perceived either as an affirmation of the validity of biblical racial classifications or as an expression of support for any forms of antisemitism or antimuslimism.

And yet, some people may perceive it so. They may wonder why, if the British Christianist movement is serious about its opposition to antisemitism and antimuslimism, it continues to support the special place Christianism still enjoys in British public life and in the

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[56] Davie, Grace. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945 - Believing without Belonging*. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 69.

[57] See ibid., pp. 49-50, and: Hunter, Brian (ed.). 1996. *The Statesman's Year Book - A statistical, political and economic account of the states of this world for the year 1996-1997*. London: Macmillan. pp. 1296, 1345.

British constitution. Why is it, for example, that the British head of state is also Supreme Governor of the Church of England and as such must be a member of the Church?[58] Why is it that 26 Church of England bishops have the right to sit in the House of Lords, while representatives of other faiths have no such right?[59] Why is it that Sunday, the Christian day of rest, continues to be granted special status in law? Why is it that the Christian calendar doubles as the official calendar, and much official thinking is currently concerned with the question of how best to celebrate 2000 years of Christianity? Why is it that, by law, assemblies in schools must be of a 'broadly Christian character' and religious education 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian'?[60] Why is it that the blasphemy laws grant special protection to the teachings of Christianism but not to any other systems of thought? Why is it that Muslim schools appear to find it difficult to gain state approval and funding when schools associated with other religious ideologies appear to encounter no such difficulties? All of these cases of real or suspected discrimination are, in the first instance, cases of cultural or social or political discrimination. They favour one cultural-social-political movement over a range of other cultural-social-political movements. To the extent, however, that some of the categories commonly used to refer to people affected by these discriminations, such as 'Jewish' and 'Muslim', sometimes function as racial categories, it is not out of the question that some of the supporters as well as some of the opponents of these culturalist discriminations may perceive them as directed against particular racial collectivities rather than just particular cultural collectivities. Today this is perhaps the main way in which Christianism is related to racial thinking in contemporary British society.

But the cases of discrimination in favour of Christianism listed above are not in the hands of the Christianist movement. Rather, Christianism has in these instances become part of public policy and the constitution. As such it has become an element of national self-definition. For this reason, I will consider the extent to which the Labour Party projects an image of the British nation as a collectivity of Christian people in chapter three on 'Labour's Entanglement in Racial Thinking in the Era of Nationalism'. The question of whether Labour incorporates opposition to culturalist discriminations in their anti-racist thinking and policies will be considered in chapter 4

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[58] According to opinion polls, support among the Anglican laity for the monarch holding the position of Supreme Governor of the Church of England has fallen in recent years (from 88 per cent in 1984 to 71 per cent in 1996), but continues to be substantial. See: *The Guardian*, 28/8/1996, p. 6.

[59] See: Davie, 1994, p. 141.

on 'Labour's Entanglement in Racial Thinking in the Name of Antiracism'.

2.3   Racial thinking in the context of imperialism

The concept of 'imperialism' has been defined in many different ways. For this reason, I will begin this section by explaining what I mean by imperialism myself, and how my own definition relates to previous definitions of the term. I will then discuss some ideas regarding the significance of racial classifications and racist activities in the context of European imperialism. I will conclude by looking at the relevance of the history of European imperialism in relation to racial thinking in contemporary British society.

2.3.1   The concept of imperialism

The word 'imperialism' was first introduced into the English language to refer to the autocratic leadership of Napoleon in France during the period 1852-1872.[61] It seems that, in this case, 'imperialism' denoted the practice of running and/or building an 'empire' in the sense of a hierarchically structured state. Following its application to autocracy in France, the term soon came to be used to refer to the widespread enthusiasm in British society for the consolidation and development of the British Empire towards the end of the nineteenth century. This was a logical extension of the application of the term in that the British Empire, too, was a hierarchically structured state containing various classes of rulers and subjects. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the term was increasingly used by opponents of European political and economic activities overseas. J. A. Hobson, for example, defined imperialism as the attempt by a nation-state to 'absorb the near or distant territory of reluctant and unassimilable peoples'. In J. A. Hobson's view, such attempts were illegitimate since they ran contrary to the principles of nationalism.[62] A few years later, I. Lenin defined imperialism as 'the monopoly stage of capitalism'.[63] In more recent academic writings, imperialism has been defined as 'the body of

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[60] See: *Statutes in Force. Official Revised Edition. Education Reform Act 1988. Chapter 40*. London: HMSO. pp. 6-7.

[61] Unless specified otherwise, the following information on the history of the word 'imperialism' is based on: Koebner, Richard; Schmidt, Helmut Dan. 1964. *Imperialism - The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[62] See: Hobson, 1968, p. 6.

[63] Quoted in: Koebner/Schmidt, 1964, p. 270.

European ideas about the conquest and administration of non-Western countries and peoples (...) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries',[64] as 'an incursion, or an attempted incursion, into the sovereignty of another state',[65] and as 'a culture-clash between two people[s?], where one in effect changes and in the process also destroys the other by "touching" its culture'.[66]

It seems to me that most of the definitions quoted above are so closely tied up with particular historical situations and political preoccupations that they seem almost unrelated to one another. For my own purposes, I would like to go back to the early derivation of 'imperialism' from 'empire'. By defining 'empires' as territorial states of a particular type, 'imperialism' can be defined, like other 'isms', as a system of social and political ideas that is associated with particular social or political activities. Hence, by *imperialism* I mean *any social or political activities that promote the establishment of empires or sustain their existence.* By *empires*, I mean *territorial states whose members are accorded differential legal and political status and control of which is vested in relatively small ruling élites.* These definitions of empire and imperialism are not restricted to any particular period nor to the activities of European states. My interest here is, however, confined to particular forms of imperialism European states have engaged in over the last five hundred years or so. This is because I believe racial classifications and racist activities have been an important element of European overseas imperialism as well as German continental imperialism. The history of these imperialisms continues to be of great symbolic significance in contemporary Europe and, more particularly, in contemporary British society.

2.3.2   Racial thinking in the early period of European overseas imperialism in America

According to G. V. Scammell, during the early period of European overseas imperialism the establishment of European empires was rarely due to the initiative of European governments:

> Most pioneering voyages and expeditions, apart from those of the Portuguese, were undertaken not at the instance of monarchs or states, largely indifferent to the pursuit of apparently unrewarding fantasies, but on private initiative. (...) In their earliest days in new lands most European peoples established their title, if

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[64] Curtin, Philip D. 1971. *Imperialism*. London: Macmillan. p. ix.

[65] Cain, P.J.; Hopkins, A.G. 1993. *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*. London/New York: Longman. pp. 42-43.

[66] Nash, Fred. 1994. *Meta-Imperialism: A Study in Political Science*. Aldershot: Avebury. p. 489.

they could, by some symbolic act of possession, exacted where possible native recognition of their suzerainty, and set up a military or authoritarian regime. What happened next depended on their own and their parent society's beliefs and aspirations and on the nature of indigenous political organization and the degree to which its members were, or could be, subjugated.[67]

In many cases, then, early European overseas imperialism seems to have been marked by the establishment of relatively unstable and perhaps informal empires with varying degrees of political links to European states. At least in some such empires, racial classifications appear to have been important in the allocation of legal and political status. G. V. Scammell notes, for example, that

> Columbus imposed tributes in gold (or whatever else was available) on the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean islands (...) Thus there was introduced what was in effect a capitation tax on able-bodied Amerindians between the ages of 18 and 50. It (...) provided the state with a useful revenue (...) and with a tax capable of extension to such other classes as mulattos, free blacks and people of mixed Amerindian and African blood.[68]

According to Imanuel Geiss, early Spanish colonial society was in fact structured rigorously along racial lines. I. Geiss believes this was at least in part due to racial thinking that had developed in the context of Spanish antisemitism:

> In the Spanish colonial empire only 'pure-blooded' Spaniards or their descendants - as (white) 'Creoles' they were supposed to be 'racially pure' descendants of the *conquistadores* - were allowed to take public office. Thus it came to be that the principles of the proto-racism that had first been practised in the first place against Jews (in the second place against Moriscos) were transferred into the New World and were now turned against the masses of Indians, half-castes and slaves ('indios y castas') who had by force been imported from Africa. 'Purity of blood' became the elementary basis of the first modern race/caste society of the modern period. This society prefigured in turn the black-white dimension of modern racism.[69]

In the Spanish colonial empire, as in other European colonial empires, only non-white people were enslaved. Since the institution of slavery in various European overseas empires has had a

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[67] Scammell, G. V. 1989. *The First Imperial Age. European Overseas Expansion c. 1400 - 1715*. London: HarperCollins*Academic.* p. 141.

[68] Scammell, 1989, pp. 92-93.

[69] See: Geiss, 1988, pp. 121-127. The quote is from p. 121.

marked effect on the development of racial thinking in Europe, I will consider it in more detail below.

2.3.3   Racial thinking in the context of European colonial slavery

Milton Meltzer, in his world history of slavery, makes it clear that slavery has been a constant feature of human societies ever since people began to cultivate land and discovered that they could put captured warriors to good use by making them work the land.[70] He explains that slavery was more or less taken for granted as a social institution throughout antiquity. Towards the end of the Roman empire, in agriculture free people and slaves tended to move into the common condition of serfdom. Serfs did not have the status of being the property of a master, but were permanently bound to the soil on which they worked. Serfdom, too, was hereditary. This trend increased in medieval Europe. Nevertheless, the institution of slavery proper survived throughout the Middle Ages. The Church's opposition to slavery was initially restricted to cases of 'infidels' enslaving Christians. In the thirteenth century Christians were forbidden to trade in Christian slaves, but Slavs and Saracens continued to work as slaves in Christian monasteries. The rich and famous, including Pope Pius II (1458 - 1464), collected 'exotic slaves', including blacks. The European trade in African slaves started to grow rapidly in the fifteenth century. In 1455 a papal bull authorized Portugal to reduce to servitude all heathen peoples. Soon black slaves were made to work on sugar cane plantations on islands off the Atlantic coasts of Europe and Africa. Before the end of the fifteenth century the slave trade had moved down the West African coast as far as Angola. According to G. V. Scammell and Robin Blackburn, in the popular imagination blacks were at this time associated with evil, corruption and ugliness, and the enslavement of black people was widely rationalised with reference to the biblical genealogies referred to earlier in this chapter.[71]

Once Europeans had arrived in the Americas, they moved swiftly to enslave the native population. The Spanish system of 'ecomiendas' provided that Spanish soldiers and colonists were granted tracts of land together with its inhabitants. When Indian slave labour was found

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[70] Unless specified otherwise, the following account is based on: Meltzer, Milton. 1993. *Slavery - A World History*. [Two volumes]. New York: Da Capo Press.

[71] See: 1) Scammell, 1989, pp. 116-117. 2) Blackburn, Robin. 1997. *The Making of New World Slavery - From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*. London: Verso. In particular pp. 64-76.

insufficiently effective and the enslavement of Indians met with opposition both from Indians and the metropolitan government, the settlers demanded that they be supplied with black slaves. Africans had long known domestic slavery and had traded slaves internally before the arrival of European slave traders. According to M. Meltzer, however, the fluid status of slaves in Africa meant that domestic African slavery was very different from New World slavery. European slave traders acquired African slaves mostly by trading with the élites of African coastal societies who had themselves raided slaves or acquired them through trade from further inland. The volume of the transatlantic slave trade increased quickly. By sixteen hundred, 900,000 black people had been taken to the Americas to be sold as slaves, by seventeen hundred another 2,750,000 had arrived. The overall number of Africans actually arriving in the Americas as a result of the transatlantic slave trade has been estimated at just under 12 million.[72] African slaves and their descendants came to be used on plantations, in mines, for domestic work and many other types of work by white European colonisers throughout the American continent. At different times different European nations dominated the transatlantic slave trade. The English were particularly active from 1672 when Charles II chartered the Royal African Company. According to Meltzer, 'until 1783 the British government did all it could to encourage the trade'.[73]

Peter Fryer reports that in England itself as early as 1569 a court ruled that 'England was too pure an Air for Slaves to breathe in'.[74] Subsequently, however, West Indian planters brought in thousands of African slaves into Britain whose status was a matter of uncertainty and legal wrangling until slavery was finally abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833.[75] The Abolition of Slavery Act of 1833 provided for West Indian planters to be compensated with a sum of £20 million pounds. The slaves themselves were obliged to cover a significant proportion of the cost of compensation during an 'apprenticeship' period, which bound the slaves for another six years to their masters and mistresses.[76] Elsewhere in the West Indies and the Americas abolition came in some cases earlier than in the British Empire, in some cases later. The slave population of Haiti revolted in 1791 and put an end to slavery on the island. In 1794 the French National Assembly declared slavery abolished in all colonies. Napoleon's subsequent attempts to

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[72] See: Geiss, 1988, p. 124.

[73] Meltzer, 1993, Vol. II, p. 44.

[74] Fryer, Peter. 1984. *Staying Power - The history of black people in Britain*. London: Pluto Press. p. 113.

[75] See: Fryer, 1984, pp. 113-132.

[76] Blackburn, Robin. 1988. *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*. London: Verso. p. 457.

reintroduce slavery in Haiti came to nothing. The slave trade to Cuba and Brazil, on the other hand, continued into the 1880s. In the United States slavery was abolished in 1865 in the aftermath of the American Civil War.[77]

Practically from the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, a population of free blacks or people of mixed descent co-existed with the black slave population in the Americas. Blacks could become free either by fleeing and establishing autonomous communities in remote areas or by being freed by their masters or mistresses. In many cases, however, even free blacks did not enjoy the same status as whites. Meltzer mentions for example that even in a relatively liberal colony such as the New Netherlands at the middle of the seventeenth century (later to become New York) 'race was nevertheless equated with slavery, and free blacks who could not show proof of their status risked enslavement'.[78] Prior to the American Civil war in the 1860s only five states granted free blacks the right to vote, the testimony of blacks was not allowed in the courts, many states refused black children access to their schools, churches shut their doors on blacks or separated them from the white congregation, and white workers resisted the employment of blacks.

In the academic literature, the slave trade and colonial slavery are rarely described as racist institutions. I note that, on the contrary, some writers are at pains to point out that poor white Europeans were frequently treated just as harshly as many African slaves. Meltzer reports that significant numbers of whites were in fact 'sold into servitude, sometimes for life if they were rebels or criminals'. As indentured servants they received no pay, and beating, branding, or chaining were common practices.[79] T. O. Lloyd makes a point of stating that 'the conditions for the crossing [that prevailed in the transatlantic slave trade] were not much worse than for the criminals who were just beginning to be shipped across from England in the 1670s, and the death rates were not much higher'.[80] As far as I can see, however, the overall picture is one of markedly different treatment of white and black people respectively in the context of colonial slavery. In all of the literature I have consulted I have not come across one reference to a single white person becoming a slave on a hereditary basis. Moreover, quotes such as the one from Lloyd above can be turned round to read rather differently: 'The conditions for the crossing [that prevailed in the

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[77] For the year of abolition, see: Geiss, 1988, p. 194.

[78] Meltzer, 1993, Vol. II, p. 131.

[79] See: Meltzer, 1993, p. 128.

[80] Lloyd, T .O. 1984. *The British Empire, 1558-1983*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 37.

transatlantic slave trade] were even worse than for the criminals who were just beginning to be shipped across from England in the 1670s, and the death rates were even higher.'

Racism is, however, frequently portrayed as a rationalisation of colonial slavery in response to pressure for its abolition.[81] My own view is that the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of colonial slavery were themselves racist institutions. Firstly, there was racism in the targeting of particular collectivities for enslavement. I accept that those involved in the slave trade thought in economic categories (ready supply, low price) and perhaps in religious categories (non-Christians) when they targeted particular people for enslavement. But, as M. Meltzer's, G. V. Scammell's and R. Blackburn's accounts suggest, they also thought in racial categories. Settlers specifically demanded black slaves, and traders delivered. This suggests to me that both groups, and presumably the respective colonial and metropolitan authorities whose views they were trying to anticipate and conform to, used a racial classification that distinguished between black and non-black as a key to the understanding of people or society. Secondly, there was racism in colonial systems of institutionalised racial stratification that extended not only to slaves but also to 'free blacks' and other racial collectivities. By allocating differential legal and political status to such people, these systems used and promoted racial classifications as a key to the understanding of society. Over time, the slave trade and colonial slavery charged the pre-existing racial classification of people as 'black' (or corresponding names) with additional meanings (for example of black people as a menace) that continue to be ingrained in many people's imagination in Europe and elsewhere.

2.3.4   Racial thinking in the context of British imperialism in Trinidad

The following remarks on Trinidad and Tobago are based on Bridget Brereton's history of modern Trinidad.[82] My choice of Trinidad and Tobago for taking a somewhat closer look at the history of a non-European society that was under direct European imperial rule until relatively recently is entirely due to the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is the only non-European country I have ever visited. When Columbus arrived in Trinidad in 1498, the country was inhabited by Arawaks and Caribs. It was Columbus who named the island Trinidad (after Trinity), but the first

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[81] This is the line taken, for example, in: 1) Fryer, 1984, pp. 133-134; 2) Geiss, 1988, pp. 124, 151-155.

[82] Brereton, Bridget. 1981. *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783 - 1962*. Heinemann: Kingston. The quotes are from pp. 14, 98-99, 102, 109, 111, 113.

permanent Spanish settlement was founded no earlier than 1592. Trinidad remained a Spanish colony until the British took over in 1797. In areas of Spanish settlement, tobacco and cocoa plantations were established. Indians were enslaved to work on the plantations. However, most of the island remained untouched by Europeans until the last decades of the eighteenth century. Between 1777 and 1797 the Spanish encouraged the immigration of French sugar planters and their African slaves from Caribbean islands that had been taken over by Britain or were engulfed in revolution and counter-revolution following the revolutionary events in France. Free settlers of mixed European and African descent and free black settlers (henceforth collectively referred to as 'coloureds') were also encouraged to immigrate. By 1797 the population of Trinidad numbered 17,718 and was composed of 56.4% slaves, 25.2% free coloureds, 12.1% whites, and 6.3% Amerindians. Under Spanish immigration rules, new settlers were granted the rights of citizenship after five years regardless of whether they were white or coloured. Free coloured property-owners were thus granted 'fuller civil rights than they enjoyed anywhere else in the West Indies'.

British rule started with the 'monstrous tyranny' of Thomas Picton, who was military governor and commander-in-chief of Trinidad from 1797 to 1801. Under Picton, slaves fared particularly badly, but free coloureds were also targeted. Picton's rule marked the start of an erosion of their rights that continued until 1826. Trinidad was now a Crown Colony under the direct supervision of London and without any assembly of its own. The question of an assembly was considered in 1810. According to B. Brereton, London decided in favour of retaining the status quo since an all-white assembly would have been unacceptable to the free coloureds and an assembly including free coloureds was deemed to be out of the question. Up to 1834, Britain pursued a policy of limiting the slave trade to Trinidad and ameliorating the condition of slaves. In practice, however, these policies failed to be enforced by local officials and were sabotaged by slave owners. The Act of Emancipation, abolishing slavery in the whole of the British Empire, became law on 1 August 1834. It provided for a six year period of apprenticeship during which slaves continued to be bound to their masters and mistresses without receiving any wages for their labour. This was later cut to four years.

Since after emancipation many black ex-slaves moved away from the plantations, the planters looked elsewhere for cheap labour. Initially the workers of other Caribbean islands and ex-slaves, who were freed by the British intercepting slavers on the Atlantic, provided such a

labour source. European labour was also considered as an option but rejected:

> It was often argued that the immigration of Europeans would create a white middle class of farmers which would be a stabilizing influence and would increase the number of whites in relation to blacks and coloureds. But the immigration on a large scale of European peasants or labourers was never really feasible in nineteenth-century Trinidad. For such a movement would conflict with the basic strategy for developing a tropical colony, that Europeans owned and managed, while the coloured races did the manual labour.

Small scale immigration of Chinese labourers was followed by large scale 'indentured' immigration from India between 1845 and 1917. In 1854 an ordinance stipulated that the immigrants had to spend 10 years in the colony before they were entitled to a free return passage. For the first three years they were bound to a single employer. Indentureds also 'had to carry tickets of leave when off the estate during working hours, on pain of criminal punishment (jail sentences)'. Even free Indians were subjected to restrictions, with one ordinance of 1897 authorising 'the arrest of free Indians if found on a public highway without their certificates of exemption from labour'. Non-Indian society soon developed stereotypes about the Indian community that were linked to their oppressed position in society. Thus planters, even while pressing for further immigration, soon began to fear the growing Indian population as a menace, 'an attitude similar to that of the slave-owners towards their African slaves'. Nevertheless, during the whole of the period of Indian immigration, 'there is little evidence of serious inter-racial conflict'.

Was the system of indentured Indian labour racist? B. Brereton's account suggests to me that it established a particular racial classification (in this case 'Indian' vs. 'non-Indian') as a key to the understanding of Trinidadian people and society. As such, in my view, it was racist. The consequences of colonial racism as evident in contemporary Trinidadian society have been described in the following terms:

> Any attempt to deal with the politics of Trinidad must start with the issue of race. The population of Trinidad is split amongst several ethnic or racial groups, the major ones being Afro-Trinidadians (hereafter referred to as Blacks) and Indo-Trinidadians (hereafter referred to as Indians). These two ethnic groups are equally balanced and together account for approximately 84 per cent of the population. The remainder of the population is split between those of mixed ancestry and several small groups of descendants of Europeans, Chinese, and Syrian/Lebanese, among others. Race (...) does condition how

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people act and participate in Trinidadian society. (...) Political parties can be distinguished by the race of the leader, which influences the racial composition of their supporters. (...) However, it must be noted that strict separation of the races (...) is not present in Trinidad. There are many instances of inter-mixing. (...) All sectors and strata of the population live in what may be termed 'peaceful co-existence'. These various influences also give rise to a unique blend which is the 'Trinidadian culture'.[83]

2.3.5   Racial thinking in the context of German continental imperialism

When Nazi Germany started World War II, they set out to build an empire that was to be structured along racial lines.[84] Racial classifications used by the Nazis fundamentally distinguished between people of 'German and related blood' and 'other races'. Within both groups, further distinctions were made. Of those not deemed to be of German or related blood, Jews and Roma and Sinti were singled out as particularly dangerous. There was to be no place for them in the Nazi's projected racial empire. In the course of World War II, a policy of persecution of these collectivities turned into one of extermination. Further distinctions were also made between people deemed to be racially German and, for example, East European. Especially the latter were intended to work as slave labourers in a racially structured empire. The fulfilment of Nazi Germany's 'racial utopia' fundamentally depended on the success of Nazi Germany's imperialist projects.[85]

The Holocaust can thus be located not only as an event in the long history of Christianism but also as an event in the relatively short history of Nazi Germany's continental imperialism. But racial minorities were persecuted in Germany before the Nazis embarked on their imperialist projects, and in the case of Roma and Sinti even before the Nazis came to power. In the context of German racial nationalism prior to Nazism, both Jewish people and Roma and Sinti and other groups had been declared to be 'foreign' to the German nation or the German people. German

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[83] Ragoonath, Bishnu. 1993. 'The Failure of the Abu Bakr Coup: The Plural Society, Cultural Traditions and Political Development in Trinidad'. In: *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*. Vol. XXXI, No. 2, pp. 33-53. The quote is from pp. 34-36.

[84] The ideas in this section are broadly based on or inspired by: 1) Burleigh/Wippermann, 1991. 2) Claussen, Detlev. 1994. *Was heißt Rassismus?* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. In particular pp. 138-139. 3) Landau, 1992, in particular p. 62. For racial categories as used in Nazi regulations, see also: Pätzold, Kurt (ed.). 1991. *Verfolgung, Vertreibung, Vernichtung. Dokumente des faschistischen Antisemitismus 1933-1945*. Leipzig: Reclam. In particular pp. 114-123. For an account of state persecution of Roma and Sinti in pre-Nazi Germany, see: Burleigh/Wippermann, 1991, pp. 113-116.

[85] For documents in which the Nazis' thinking in relation to East Europeans is expressed, see for example: Michalka, Wolfgang (ed.). 1985. *Das Dritte Reich. Band 2: Weltmachtanspruch und nationaler Zusammenbruch 1939-1945*. München: dtv.

racial nationalism thus potentially prefigured policies that became a reality in the extreme political, social and economic conditions of World War II.

2.3.6 The significance of imperialism in relation to racial thinking in contemporary British society

As in the case of Christianism, overseas imperialism in British society has lost most of its former force. Following the process of decolonisation, the nation-state rather than the imperial state has become the dominant model of political organisation world-wide, and the British state is generally thought to adhere to this model as much as any other state. Even South Africa, one of the last major outposts of the history of European overseas imperialism, has recently begun the road to conversion from an imperial state to a nation-state. Nevertheless, the history of European overseas imperialism and German continental imperialism has given rise to or promoted racial classifications many of which continue to be widely used in British society today. References to 'blacks', 'whites', 'Asians', 'Indians', 'Chinese', 'West Indians', 'Afro-Caribbeans' etc. inevitably carry references to the history of European overseas imperialism, while references to 'Jewish', 'Romany'/'Gypsy' and 'East European' carry references to German continental imperialism. Racial thinking and racial stereotypes that relate to these racial categories may include racist ways of thinking that have been handed down through texts and tales from those periods.

In the summer of 1995, for example, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Paul Condon, wrote a letter to prominent members of the black community in order to tell them about an anti-mugging initiative for London. The letter included the following statement: 'It is a fact that very many of the perpetrators of muggings are very young black people, who have been excluded from school and/or are unemployed'.[86] This statement appears to reproduce and promote a racist stereotype of black people as a menace. A number of comments people have made to me over the last few years suggest to me that a view of black people or 'black areas' such as Moss Side in Manchester as dangerous or menacing is relatively widespread. Even Suzanne Moore, a commentator whose antiracist credentials I had not previously questioned, endorsed such sentiments in the context of replying to critics of P. Condon's statement in her column in the *Guardian*: 'We cannot say in public what we experience the case to be in private, that in some

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[86] Quoted in *The Guardian*, 8/7/1995, p. 5.

areas a disproportionate number of muggings are carried out by young black men'.[87] I believe the image of black people, in particular of black men, as a menace may to some extent be a carry-over from white colonial perceptions of black people as a menace. Fears of black people being prone to rioting may also be related to similar fears in colonial times.[88] What is racist is when such racial fears are accepted rather than questioned, when they are rationalised rather than recognised as irrational, when they are acted on rather than kept in check so they don't govern one's behaviour. For these reasons I would describe both Paul Condon's statement and the rationalisation of racial fears by Suzanne Moore as racist. Such racism, although linked to the history of imperialism, may take on new meanings in the post-imperial political context of racism today. One response to Condon's statement from an 'ordinary resident' of London, quoted in the *Guardian*, was for example as follows: 'They are putting us down all the time. It's the white man's way of telling us to go home'.[89]

In British society, representations of British imperial history are today widely used for the purposes of nationalist rhetoric, antiracist rhetoric, anticapitalist rhetoric, and in other contexts. German continental imperialism, too, retains a political presence in contemporary British society through representations of Britain's successful involvement in World War II and the defeat of Nazism as elements of national self-definition. All of these historical representations cannot fail to take up some position in relation to racial thinking and activities in the contexts of European overseas and German continental imperialism.

Representations of Britain's and Europe's imperial past as elements of British national self-definition can be used by a variety of social and political actors, including political parties and the state. On an informal and local level, residents of Southampton can for example have their hair cut at 'Empire Hairdressing', which is accommodated in a house painted in the colours of Britain's national flag; they can buy 'Empire apples' in the local supermarket; they can acquire property on 'Imperial Road'; or they can choose not to engage in any of these activities. Academics and other writers, like myself, may produce particular representations of European imperialism in their writings. Some of these will get taught in schools and colleges up and down

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[87] *The Guardian*, Part 2, 7/9/1995, p. 5.

[88] Such fears were for example played on by Bruce Anderson, political correspondent to the *Daily Express*, in order to rationalise Paul Condon's letter. On the *Moral Maze* program of 13/7/1995 on BBC Radio 4, Bruce Anderson said: '[Paul Condon's] problem is, if you go let's say to a squat in some largely black area, and try to arrest six black youths on suspicion of mugging, you may very well have a riot on your hands because that community unfortunately may identify with its criminals. (...) So Sir Paul wrote, in private, to community leaders, asking for a more responsible and civilised approach. And he didn't get it.'

the country, others will appear in newspapers and journals, or on the radio, or on TV. Governments and political parties may use representations of Britain's and Europe's imperial past in their political rhetoric, which may be disseminated through party political literature or the mass media. The state may issue representations of imperial history in the form of images on stamps and notes and coins and celebrate or commemorate particular events within that history. All of these contemporary references to imperial history may incorporate particular forms of racial thinking in that they may comment on or interpret racial activities of the past in particular ways. Any analysis of this process relies in turn on the analyst's interpretation of racial thinking and activities in the context of European imperialism. In this section, I have attempted to summarise my own interpretation of such thinking and such activities as based on my various readings on the history of European imperialism.

In the context of this thesis, I am particularly interested in representations of European imperialism in the rhetoric of the British Labour Party. In chapter 3 on Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the era of nationalism, I will investigate how some examples of such representations have functioned or continue to function within Labour Party rhetoric on the British nation.

2.4   Racial thinking in the context of nationalism

Nationalism is a political movement of great importance not only in Europe but globally, not only historically but also in the present. I also think that much contemporary racial thinking in British society in general, and in the British Labour Party in particular, can be explained with reference to particular forms of nationalism. This is why, in this section, I would like to review some manifestations of racial thinking in the context of a number of nationalisms that are of some political significance in British society today. These are British nationalism, European Union nationalism, British regional nationalisms and some other nationalisms. In addition, in order to clarify further the significance of racial thinking in the context of British nationalism, I will compare the racialisation of legal concepts of nationality in Britain, France and Germany.

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[89] *The Guardian*, 8/7/1995, p. 5.

2.4.1   Nations, nation-states and nationalisms

Liah Greenfeld writes that in ancient Rome, the expression 'natio', from which 'nation' is derived, was used to refer to collectivities of people from one and the same geographical region.[90] Medieval universities termed a nation a group of foreigners united by place of origin. In the early sixteenth century in Europe the term nation was for the first time applied to the population of a territorial state. Increasingly, it came to be associated with the political struggle for greater political equality in a number of European territorial states. Nationalists demanded that sovereignty should be vested in the 'nation' or in the 'people', not just in the hands of a privileged few. I believe that today the expressions 'nation' and 'nationalism' are inextricably linked to the idea of 'sovereignty over territorial states'. This association of ideas has given rise to the idea of the 'nation-state'. In nation-states, sovereignty is vested in all of the members of the state, who enjoy equal legal and political status in relation to that state. Nation-states can thus be contrasted with 'empires' or 'imperial states', where political power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small, privileged class.

Membership of nation-states, that is to say nationality, is essentially a legal category and as such not a question of subjective belief. On this basis, by *legal nation* I mean *the collectivity of all the members of an existing nation-state*. By *nation-states* I mean *territorial states sovereignty of which is vested in all of the members of the state, who enjoy equal legal and political status in relation to that state*. From this there flows naturally a definition of *nationalism* as *any social or political activities that promote the establishment of nation-states or sustain their existence*. Legal nations are relatively determinate collectivities of people and must not be confused with the subjective and variable ideas people have about who are or who should be the legitimate members of any existing or imagined legal nation. Such ideas can for example inform the political agenda of nationalists trying to construct nation-states (or political entities resembling nation-states), or they can be part of political debates in existing nation-states. Since membership of a legal nation implies equal legal and political status in relation to a particular territorial state, ideas concerning the membership of existing or imagined legal nations are of great social and political significance. In this thesis, I will refer to any such ideas as *social concepts of the*

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[90] Among other texts, the following account of the history of the word 'nation' and its contemporary significance is based upon and inspired by: 1) Greenfeld, Liah. 1992. *Nationalism - Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press. In particular pp. 3-87. 2) Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1992. *Nations and Nationalism since1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. 2nd edition.

nation.[91]

Historically, nationalisms have taken different forms, and there are many different nationalisms in the contemporary world. One way of distinguishing between different nationalisms is according to the way in which they define the legal nation or construct social concepts of the nation. It is here that racial thinking may come into play. Some people may, for example, adhere to social concepts of the nation as a racial collectivity or a mix of different racial collectivities. Racial thinking may also be reflected in the criteria governing access to the legal nation. These may, for example, be designed such that they tend to include people deemed to belong to particular racial collectivities whilst excluding others.

I do not believe, however, that racism is in any way inherent in nationalism. The definitions of 'nation' and 'nationalism' given above do not contain any reference, direct or indirect, to racial thinking or racism. Although legal definitions of nationality or social concepts of the nation may rely on racial classifications, they may equally rely on entirely different criteria. Examples of non-racial social concepts of the nation can be found dating back to the early days of European nationalism. Emmanuel Sieyès' classical pamphlet 'Qu'est-ce que le tiers état', published in 1789 in revolutionary France, essentially addresses the question of why imperial France should be transformed into a nation-state. At one point in the pamphlet, Sieyès asks: 'Where is the [French] nation to be found?' And he answers: 'Where it is. In the forty thousand parishes which comprise all of the territory, all of the inhabitants and all of those who pay tribute to the state; it is there, no doubt, that the nation is to be found'.[92] Clearly, in this case territorial, residential and economic rather than racial criteria are used to construct a social concept of the French nation.

It is true, however, that in contemporary European society there are many people, including social scientists, who actively promote racialised social concepts of the nation. The most straightforward way in which this can be achieved is by using the expression 'nation' to refer to racial collectivities. This was frequently done in the early days of European nationalism, from perhaps the sixteenth century onwards.[93] In imperial England, for example, nationalists routinely

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Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See in particular pp. 9-10.

[91] My definitions are inspired by the distinction between legal and social concepts of the nation in: Hertz, 1944.

[92] Sieyès, Emmanuel. 1989 [1789]. *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?* Paris: Quadrige. p. 72.

[93] An explanation of the sense in which nationalism can be said to have its beginnings in this period is contained, for example, in: Greenfeld, 1992, pp. 3-87. For a brief summary, see p. 14.

identified the nation with the collectivity of 'Anglo-Saxons' and denounced their enemies as 'Normans'. Both categories generally functioned as racial categories.[94] Likewise, the writings of Sieyès notwithstanding, nationalists and their enemies in imperial and revolutionary France widely identified the French nation with the racial collectivity of the 'Gauls', whilst the ruling aristocracy was identified with the racial collectivity of the 'Franks'.[95] In contemporary Europe, racialised social concepts of the nation remain extremely influential. They may structure the social behaviour of individuals or underlie the rhetoric and policies of governments and political parties. They are also promoted by a formidable array of social scientists, who describe nations as 'ethnic units' and stress the importance of the 'ethnic basis' of modern nation-states.[96]

Both the criteria governing access to the legal nation and social concepts of the nation can be racialised to a greater or lesser extent. They can either be at odds with one another or they can be in line with one another. They can undermine one another or they can reinforce one another. When social concepts of the nation promote the idea of the nation as a racial collectivity or as a particular mix of racial collectivities on the grounds that these racial collectivities share particular characteristics, then I would view such social concepts of the nation as racist. Likewise, when the procedures governing access to the legal nation are designed to construct the nation as a racial collectivity or as a particular mix of racial collectivities in order to adhere to racist social concepts of the nation, then they are racist, too.

In contemporary British society there are three types of nationalism that are of some political significance in relation to various actual or imagined nation-states. These are British nationalism (relating to the United Kingdom, or at least to Great Britain), European Union nationalism (relating to the European Union), and British regional nationalisms (relating to various regions in the United Kingdom). I would now like to enquire to what extent racial thinking is in evidence in the context of these various nationalisms.

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[94] Among other texts, this interpretation is based on my reading of: Hill, 1965, pp. 50-122.

[95] Among other texts, this interpretation is based on: 1) Poliakov, 1974, pp. 17-36; 2) Franche, 1995.

[96] For relatively recent texts in which this type of thinking is advocated, see: 1) Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 1-2. 2) Kellas, James G. 1991. *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*. Houndmills: Macmillan. 3) Smith, 1995. There are many more texts in which the possibility or significance of racialised definitions of nationality is played down. See for example: 1) Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd edition. London: Verso. pp. 143-145. 2) Schnapper, Dominique. 1994. *La Communauté des citoyens - Sur l'idée moderne de nation*. Gallimard. pp. 106-107.

2.4.2   Racial thinking in the context of the constitution of the British legal nation

For centuries, membership of the English state (and - following the integration of Scotland in 1707 and the temporary integration of Ireland between 1801 and 1922 - membership of the British state) was defined in terms of subjecthood.[97] The relationship between monarch and subjects was essentially based on the idea that monarchs were supposed to protect their subjects, and subjects were supposed to be obedient to their monarch. By the end of the thirteenth century, as a rule people became subjects by virtue of being born in the monarch's dominions. Over the centuries, the imperial state of England (and later Britain) was gradually transformed into a political entity closely resembling the model of a nation-state as defined above. Membership, however, continued to be defined through the concept of subjecthood, and for a long time 'place of birth' remained the primary criterion of access to membership of the state. In the eighteenth century, the 'place of birth' criterion was supplemented by a series of measures granting access to membership of the state to the descendants of British subjects through the male line, regardless of their place of birth. Between 1922 and 1981, it was possible for nationality to be passed on indefinitely through the male line regardless of place of birth. In the nineteenth century, statutory provisions were also made for people to become members of the British state as a result of naturalisation. Today, naturalisation may be granted at the discretion of the Home secretary after a minimum period of residence of five years. Automatic acquisition of nationality by place of birth was abolished in the British Nationality Act 1981. This Act provides that in order for a child born in the United Kingdom to acquire citizenship of the United Kingdom, at least one of the child's parents must themselves be a citizen of the United Kingdom or must be settled there. In this context 'being settled' basically means having been granted permanent leave to remain.

On the face of it, there is no racial dimension to the rules concerning the acquisition of nationality by place of birth in the United Kingdom or the rules concerning naturalisation. There is, however, a racial dimension to the criteria based on descent in that racial ideas also utilise the idea of descent. Furthermore, naturalisation has remained rather difficult to obtain. But even if, for example, the traditional place of birth criterion had been retained in the 1981 Nationality Act, and if the option of naturalisation had been granted to long term residents of Britain as of right,

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[97] Unless indicated otherwise, the following account of the constitution of the British legal nation is based on: Dummett, Ann; Nicol, Andrew. 1990. *Subjects, Citizens, Aliens and Others - Nationality and Immigration Law*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. The quote later in this section is from p. 112.

people's access to British nationality on these grounds might still be limited. For, as long as relatively few people are allowed to enter Britain in the first place, relatively few people will be able to benefit from liberal naturalisation procedures or acquisition of nationality based on place of birth. This is where the politics of immigration crosses over with the politics of nationality. Immigration rules are thus both of practical and symbolic relevance to the question of access to the legal nation.

According to Dummett/Nicol, the history of systematic controls on migration to and from Britain dates back to the Aliens Act of 1793, passed during the war between Britain and revolutionary France. In Queen Victoria's time (1838-1901), however, there were no controls at all on entry and stay. This changed in 1905, when the Aliens Act established an Aliens Inspectorate and thus revived systematic controls as they had first been introduced in 1793. But aliens could only be excluded if they were deemed 'undesirable', primarily on the grounds of inadequate means or ill health. Thousands of foreigners continued to arrive and settle without scrutiny, until the 1914 Aliens Restriction Act was passed on the eve of World War I. The Aliens Restriction Act enabled orders to be made to prohibit any alien from landing and prescribed that all aliens must register with the police. According to Dummett/Nicol, 'the First World War was the great turning point in the history of British immigration control. (...) The greatest shift of all was from the historic presumption that an alien could come and go freely unless there was a specific reason to exclude him, to the new presumption that an alien had no claim to be received, or to remain'. Dummett and Nicol note that the establishment of systematic immigration controls early in the twentieth century took place in the context of various racial ideas and theories enjoying widespread credibility. Such ideas and theories extended not only to non-European populations but also to Jewish people and different groups of Europeans. The establishment of controls also took place in the context of increasing mobility of ideas and people on a global scale due to new systems of communication and transport.

The restrictions imposed by the 1914 Aliens Restrictions Act were confirmed and extended in the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919, amid fears among the political élite that aliens might import revolutionary ideas. Shortly afterwards, new rules allowing the indefinite transmission of nationality by descent were introduced. The specific circumstances of specific legislation notwithstanding, to me the general picture of British nationalism in the first two decades of the twentieth century is that of a desperate attempt to protect the legal nation,

perceived in racial terms as a community of descent, against the perceived threat of a tide of ideas and people unleashed by the forces of globalisation.

My various historical readings and contemporary observations persuade me that up to the end of the twentieth century the general picture of British nationalism has remained exactly the same. As soon as black British subjects in Britain's colonies started to make their way to Britain in significant numbers in the late 1940s, a debate about how they could be stopped began.[98] All British subjects resident in the colonies were at this point potential members of the legal nation since they were not subject to immigration control. On becoming resident in the United Kingdom, their legal and political status became equal to that of all other British subjects resident in the United Kingdom. As a result, there was a considerable pool of people in the colonies who were able to join the legal nation of the United Kingdom simply by virtue of migrating there. But such additions to the legal nation were at odds with social concepts of the nation as a community of descent. Today it is generally accepted that the Commonwealth Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968 and the Immigration Act 1971 were designed to curb and eventually stop black people resident in the Commonwealth from joining the legal nation of the United Kingdom. The British Nationality Act 1981 gave the title of British citizen only to those who were exempt from controls under these Acts. In historical perspective, the immigration control and nationality acts introduced since the 1960s can be seen as elements of a continuous and longstanding effort to keep intact the image of the legal nation as essentially a community of common descent. They can thus be described as instances of racial nationalism.

At least two other dimensions of the politics of immigration are relevant to the analysis of British nationalism today: firstly, the rules governing the migration to Britain of nationals of member states of the European Union; secondly, the rules governing the migration of refugees to Britain. Migrants from member states of the European Union are free to enter the United Kingdom and, once there, they enjoy many, though not all, of the rights of members of the legal nation. The British government has thus signed up to agreements permitting a huge pool of potential migrants to attain quasi-membership of the legal nation. Although the government has attempted to curb some of the rights of EU nationals resident in Britain, such attempts run counter to the general drift of European legislation and have not necessarily had the desired

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[98] See: Layton-Henry, 1992, pp. 28 ff.

effects.[99] On balance, the government and society as a whole seem far more tolerant of any migration of EU nationals from the Continent than any migration of black people from the Commonwealth. Two possible explanations seem plausible to me. Firstly, it may be that the legal nation is perceived first and foremost as a community of European descent and only in the second instance more narrowly as a community of British descent. Secondly, it may be that white migrants do not disturb any belief in a British community of descent as much as black migrants since they do not remind people of the falsity of such beliefs merely by virtue of their appearance. As regards refugee policy, it is important to note that the pool of migrants who may qualify as refugees potentially includes migrants from all over the world. It fits into the picture of racial British nationalism at the end of the twentieth century that strenuous efforts have been made to limit the numbers of such migrants granted access to the territory of the United Kingdom, let alone to the legal nation.

2.4.3 Racial thinking in the context of social concepts of the British nation

The emphasis in my account of British nationalism has up to this point been on the constitution of the legal nation. But racial thinking can also be articulated through particular social concepts of the nation. Clearly, at any given time social concepts of the nation are implicit in a multitude of texts, images and social acts, each of which may function in different contexts and may be open to different readings. They can and need to be analysed individually, but it may also be possible to speculate about their cumulative effect in relation to a particular existing or imagined legal nation at a particular point in time. Here, I would like to inquire into social concepts of the British legal nation past and present, and speculate about their cumulative effect at the end of the twentieth century.

One important source of social concepts of the nation is the whole body of legislation on immigration and nationality just described, with all its concomitant regulations, physical implementation, related media reporting, etc. An occasional reader of newspapers in Britain today can, for example, hardly fail to notice that occasionally people, many of them non-white,

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[99] The 'habitual residence test' was introduced by the government in August of 1994 to prevent non-British European Union nationals from gaining easy access to the British welfare system. A report published in February of 1996 claims the government expected 5,000 EU nationals to be caught in the first year. In the event, 25,757 people failed the test, of whom 9,553 were EU nationals and 5,431 British citizens. In the media (I have monitored the *Guardian* and the *Observer*), the test has been criticised not so much for its anti-foreign bias as for the fact that it has also affected British citizens. (See: *The Guardian*, 14/12/94, p.3;

who have been living in Britain for most of their lives are forcibly removed from their homes and families by the state authorities, bound, gagged, put on a plane where they are kept separate from the other passengers, and flown out of the country. They will note that people subjected to this treatment have died as a result, and that their killers have gone unpunished. They will also know that the only offence committed by those expelled (or killed) in this way was that somehow they fell foul of British immigration and nationality rules. The symbolic message of these media reports, and of these acts, is clear. People who have merely lived in Britain for most of their lives have no right to being here whatsoever. On the contrary, their removal can be of the greatest urgency, demanding swift and forceful action by the state. Who then, does have a right to be here? Perhaps only people who were born in this country? Any observer of current affairs who was around when the British Nationality Act 1981 was debated might remember that even that is not enough. The details of that debate seemed perhaps rather complicated, but somehow parentage and descent came into the picture. In this way and in many more is it possible for rules and regulations governing immigration and nationality, and the practices that flow from them, to become a source of people's thinking on the boundaries of the legal nation.

But public discourse on immigration and nationality is only one such source. The social nation is established and re-established every day through countless texts, images and social acts in politics, education, science, cultural products, the media, the private sphere and elsewhere. One important source that permeates all of these spheres consists in references to 'the peoples of Britain', 'the British people', or even (less frequently) 'the British race'. A one volume 'History of Britain' I recently came across in the history section of a local bookshop may serve as an example. The ten historians who have contributed to the volume are all academics and are described as 'distinguished authorities in their field'. The book begins with a foreword written by one of these authorities:

> The distinctiveness, even uniqueness, of the British as a people has long been
> taken for granted by foreign observers and native commentators alike. (...) But
> the nature or essence of the Britishness of the British is far easier to proclaim
> than to define, let alone to explain. (...) [Trevelyan made a remarkable attempt
> with his 'History of England']. None of Trevelyan's themes can be dismissed.
> Equally, none can be accepted uncritically in the more tormented, doubt-ridden
> age of the late twentieth century, with its well-founded suspicion of national
> and racial stereotypes. The problem of trying to come to grips with the

14/2/96, p.11; 1/5/96, p. 6; *The Observer*, 23/4/95, p.7).

essential reality of the British experience remains as pressing and as fascinating as ever. (...) The history of the British people is a complex, sometimes violent or revolutionary one, full of disjunctions and abrupt changes of pace or of course. The idea of a tranquil, undisturbed evolutionary progress even for England, let alone the turbulent, fractured, schizophrenic history of the Celtic nations, comes out here as little more than a myth.[100]

The first chapter in the book is about 'Roman Britain', the second chapter is on 'The Anglo Saxon Period (c. 440-1066)'. Here, one can read that

Archeology (...) shows that there were some Germanic warriors in Britain before 410. (...) If so, the continuous history of Anglo-Saxon settlement begins under Roman rule. The English of later centuries dated their ancestors' arrival some decades after this, and it does seem to have been from the 430s onwards that Germanic settlers arrived in large numbers.

The following chapters are entitled 'The Early Middle Ages', 'The Later Middle Ages', 'The Tudor Age', 'The Stuarts', 'The Eighteenth Century', 'Revolution and the Rule of Law', 'The Liberal Age', and 'The Twentieth Century'. By virtue of the packaging of the book as 'authoritative', the book as a whole and the passages and chapter headings quoted above in particular constitute a significant symbolic representation of the British legal nation. Unexplained references to 'the British people' elsewhere in society rely for their meaning on the explanations given in texts such as this. My own reading of the passages and chapter headings quoted is as follows: 'Although one must be suspicious of racial-national stereotypes, the British people are distinctive in a racial sense and unique in that they display unique characteristics which it is fascinating to study. The racial composition of the British is basically some Celtic groups plus the English. The English are basically a mixture of tribes whose origin is in Germanic lands, in fact basically they are Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxons ruled Britain until 1066, since when others have taken over. Generally speaking, what is notable about later centuries is not so much the arrival of any other groups, but the passing of time and some changes in government.' According to my reading, then, the history book I found in the bookshop picks up the story racial nationalists have told ever since nationalism became a serious political force in England.

Another important element in the making of the social nation is the use of or references to particular images in order to symbolically represent the legal nation. In the case of Britain,

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[100] Morgan, Kenneth O. (ed.). 1993. *The Oxford History of Britain.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. v-vii. The following quote is from p. 61.

representations of John Bull, Britannia and Britain's kings and queens have been identified as prominent examples of images of symbolic significance in relation to the nation.[101] All imagery related to such figures may carry a wide range of connotations. In the case of British monarchs, for example, it is widely known that access to the position of the monarch is based on the principle of heredity, and that for this reason, as long as everything 'goes well' with the monarchy, there is not going to be a British head of state generally perceived to be of completely non-European descent. Therefore, to the extent that people think in racial terms at all, the social concept of the nation that is suggested by imagery related to the monarchy is that of a collectivity of white people. Likewise, many people may be aware that the monarch is the head of the Church of England and as such must be a member of that church. Hence the social concept of the nation suggested by imagery related to the monarchy is in fact that of a collectivity of white, Christian people.

Not only images of well known national figures but also of unknown individuals or of anonymous collectivities may serve to symbolise the legal nation where this is suggested by the context in which such images appear. National party political literature, for example, which addresses a voting public and hence the legal nation, may allude to a particular social concept of the nation by virtue of the apparent addressee of that literature as evident both in the words and images used in that literature.

2.4.4 Racial elements in British, French and German nationality law: continued contrast or convergence?

In my experience, there is a general trend in the literature on nationality and nationalism to regard British nationalism as particularly liberal, individualistic and non-racial by comparison with other nationalisms. The main reason advanced in defence of this view is that British nationality is essentially based on *ius soli* rather than *ius sanguinis*, on birth in a particular territory rather than birth into a particular racial group. Similar claims are frequently made of French nationalism, whereas German nationalism is often cited as incorporating an extreme application of the principle of *ius sanguinis*, in other words of a racial concept of nationality.[102]

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[101] See: Samuel, Raphael (ed.). 1983. *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Volume III: National Fictions*. London: Routledge. In particular pp. 3-86.

[102] See for example: Dummett/Nicol, 1990, p. 21; Greenfeld, 1992, p. 14; Wieviorka, 1993, p. 30; Castles, Stephen; Miller, Mark

My own view is that historically the contrast between British, French and German conceptions of nationality has perhaps been less pronounced than some authors have suggested, particularly on the level of social concepts of the nation, and that, in addition, in recent years there has been a remarkable convergence of legal concepts of the nation in these three countries that has as yet received little attention.

Various writers agree that in the nineteenth century social concepts of the French nation as a fusion of particular racial collectivities, in particular of Gauls and Franks, were 'commonplace' or even 'universal'.[103] On the legal plane, however, membership of the French nation has for a long time been influenced by the principle of *ius soli*. By the sixteenth century, common law had established that for the purposes of inheritance law people were French subjects if they were born in France, had at least one French parent and were domiciled in France. By the eighteenth century either of the first two criteria in combination with the third was sufficient. These rules were by and large maintained in the early post-revolutionary codifications of nationality law. In Rogers Brubaker's view, confidence in the ability of the French nation to assimilate foreigners has prevailed for most of the past 200 years, with dissenting voices being heard during the Dreyfus Affair around the turn of the century, the Vichy period and the 1980s. 'But even a government partly sympathetic to these voices was unable to enact a mildly restrictive reform of citizenship law in 1986-1987'.

Shortly after the publication of R. Brubaker's book, a new nationality act was in fact introduced, abolishing the principle of *ius soli* for second generation immigrants. Henceforth, for people born in France of foreign parents access to French nationality is governed by rules that bear a striking resemblance to the current rules governing access to German nationality. Access to French nationality must now be applied for between the ages of 16 and 21, and the application will only be accepted if the applicant has not been sentenced to six months or more in prison.[104] The change of the law on nationality was an election issue in the French presidential elections of 1995, which was won by Jacques Chirac, a supporter of the new code of nationality. Furthermore, it seems that since the mid-eighties there has been a near political consensus that there should be no (non-European Union) immigration to France. Tough action against 'illegal immigrants' is

J. 1993. *The Age of Migration - International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Houndmills: Macmillan. pp. 39, 224.

[103] See, for example: Brubaker, Rogers. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. p. 101. The following account of the evolution of French nationality law is based on this book. See in particular pp. 38, 86-89, 96, 98, 112.

perceived as a vote winner both on the left and on the right.[105]

According to R. Brubaker, the German tradition of nationhood was informed by the 'idiom of German Romanticism [which] was perfectly suited to the elaboration of the ethnocultural conception of nationhood'.[106] This ethnocultural or racial conception of nationhood is reflected in the legal concept of nationality that was introduced in Germany in 1913. The 1913 Nationality Act retained the principle of descent for the acquisition of nationality that had been established in Prussia in 1842, and extended it to the loss of nationality. Henceforth emigrants and their descendants retained their citizenship indefinitely, whilst immigrants and their descendants were excluded indefinitely unless they were admitted under discretionary naturalisation procedures.

The racialisation of citizenship was carried even further in the Nazi period when full nationality ('*Reichsbürgerschaft*' = 'citizenship of the German empire' as opposed to mere '*Staatsangehörigkeit*' = 'membership of the German state') was made conditional on strictly racial criteria ('German or related blood'). It seems noteworthy to me that by no means did the Nazis limit full access to German nationality to people who they declared to be members of a single racial group. Rather, in Nazi terminology 'German blood' and 'German and related blood' referred to a whole range of racial groups. According to a Nazi decree of 1936 interpreting the Nuremberg laws, 'the German people comprises members of different races (...) and of any mixtures of these races. German blood is any blood that is present in the German people as a result. Related blood is the blood of those peoples the racial composition of which is related to the German composition. That is generally true of all the peoples that are settled in any particular region of Europe and of those descendants in other continents who have not become mixed up with unrelated races. All the other races are unrelated races. In Europe, in addition to the Jews this applies in general only to the Gypsies'.[107] The case of Nazi Germany highlights the fact that nationalism takes on racial and perhaps racist qualities not only when a nation is declared to be congruent with a single racial group, but also when a nation is thought to be composed of any particular number of racial groups.

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[104] For the text of the law, see: *Code de la nationalité et textes annexes. 2e édition.* 1994. Montreuil: Papyrus.

[105] See for example: Naïr, Sami. 1996. 'Immigration: assez de mensonges!' In: *Le Monde*, 3/9/1996, p. 13. Smith, Alex Duval. 1996. 'Chirac reaps racist votes'. In: *The Guardian*, 26/8/1996, p. 8.

[106] Unless specified otherwise, the following account of the evolution of German nationality law is based on: Brubaker, 1992. See in particular: pp. 9, 71, 114, 174.

[107] Quoted in: Pätzold, 1991, p. 122.

In the period after 1945, German nationality law was once again exclusively governed by the provisions of the Nationality Act of 1913. The social concept of the nation as a community of descent underlying this law also informed policies on immigration and naturalization. The German Guidelines for Naturalisation, in force since 1977, state that Germany 'is not a country of immigration'.[108] This has since become a political slogan repeated with mechanical regularity by government spokespeople in the debate about nationality and immigration. According to R. Brubaker, the phrase is not intended to deny the fact of large scale immigration into Germany, merely to reassert the position that the German nation is thought of as a community of descent and that therefore the vast majority of migrants should not be allowed to become German citizens.

Eventually, however, some limited concessions regarding access to citizenship were made in the early nineties. Thus a law of 1991 grants long term foreign residents the right to acquire German nationality provided they give up their previous nationality and have not been convicted of certain offences. Significantly, these provisions were not incorporated into the Nationality Act of 1913, which remains in force unchanged. Instead, they have been included in the so-called 'Foreigners' Law'.[109] On a symbolic level, then, the new provisions are made to look not like a fundamental recasting of German nationality law, but rather like special provisions for 'foreigners' that have become unavoidable due to exceptional political and social circumstances.

One theme in my presentation of British, French and German nationalism has been that in the eighties and the nineties British and French nationality law has departed from *ius soli* and has moved in the direction of *ius sanguinis* while the opposite is true of German nationality law. How can this trend be explained? I think it has been facilitated by the fact that even in Britain and France racial thinking about the composition of the nation has a long tradition. In both countries the principle of *ius soli* seems to be as much a legacy of feudal arrangements as an expression of a philosophy of membership of the nation that is based on residence rather than descent. This fact has made it easier for racists in both countries to push for greater racialisation of the rules governing access to nationality as soon as the idea of the nation as a community of descent was threatened in a very practical way as a result of the increasing mobility of people on a global scale.

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[108] See: *Deutsches Ausländerrecht. 8. Auflage.* 1993. München: Beck. p. 167.

[109] See: *Deutsches Ausländerrecht*, 1993, pp. 67-68.

To facilitate a comparison between the various legal concepts of nationality before 1981 and since 1993, I have summarised in a table what seem to me to be the most important provisions for all three countries respectively.[110]

Principal ways of acquiring nationality automatically or as of right before 1981 in				Principal ways of acquiring nationality automatically or as of right since 1993 in		
Britain	**France**	**Germany**		**Britain**	**France**	**Germany**
Yes			**Automatically, on the grounds of birth in the national territory**			
Yes	Yes		**Automatically, on the grounds of birth of oneself and one's parents in the national territory**		Yes	
Yes, no other conditions	At the age of majority if resident in France then and for the preceding five years		**Automatically, on the grounds of birth in the territory combined with other conditions**	If either the father or the mother are British or settled in Britain		
			On application on the grounds of birth in the territory or long term residence and other conditions	If born in the territory and continuously resident in Britain up to the age of ten	If born in the territory and aged between 16 and 21 and resident for the previous five years and not sentenced to six month or more in prison	If aged between 16 and 23 & student at a German school for six years & legally res. for eight years or leg. res. for 15 years, not convicted of a criminal offence & previous nationality is given up.
Descent from a British father	Descent from a French father or mother	Descent from a German father or mother	**Automatically, on the grounds of descent**	Descent from a father or mother who are British otherwise than by descent	Descent from a French father or mother	Descent from a German father or mother

Although significant differences remain, I believe the laws on British, French and German nationality have in recent years converged to a remarkable extent. Apart from two weakened *ius soli* provisions in Britain and France, since 1993 the main way of acquiring nationality automatically or as of right in Britain, France and Germany is either by descent or following an application acceptance of which is subject to various conditions. On the one hand, in some respects the conditions to be met by potential applicants remain stricter in Germany than in either Britain or France. On the other hand, it is only in Germany that an applicant can acquire nationality as of right even though he or she was not born in the national territory.

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[110] See: 1) *British Nationality Act 1981.* London: HMSO. 2) *Deutsches Ausländerrecht*, 1993. 3) *Code de la nationalité et textes annexes. 2e édition.* 1994. Montreuil: Papyrus. 4) Lagarde, Paul. 1975. *La Nationalité Française.* Paris: Dalloz.

2.4.5 Racial thinking in the context of other nationalisms

The Treaty of Rome of 1957 established a European Economic Community of Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.[111] This treaty has since been amended on numerous occasions, notably by the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 creating the European Union, and a number of other countries have joined. In the preamble to the Treaty of Rome, the founding countries express their determination to 'lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'. Three elements of this formulation are of great significance in relation to the issue of European Union nationalism. Firstly, the founding nations expressed a desire for '*ever closer union*'. To the extent that this goal has been realised, and forty years after the Treaty of Rome it seems that at least some significant steps in the direction of ever closer union have been taken, one may ask to what extent the Treaty of Rome and subsequent treaties can be described as nationalistic and to what extent they have in fact created political structures resembling those of a single nation-state. Secondly, the founding nations envisaged an ever closer union between various '*peoples*'. As indicated in section 2.4.2 above, 'peoples' is an expression heavy with racial connotations. If there had been any intention to avoid the danger of racial connotations, this could have been achieved easily by using different expressions such as 'people' or 'residents'. Nor is the reference to 'peoples' in the Treaty of Rome simply a relic of the fifties. In the preamble to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Kings, Queens and Dukes of Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as well as the presidents of Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy and Portugal speak for example of their desire 'to deepen the solidarity between their peoples', their determination 'to promote economic and social progress for their peoples' and their resolve 'to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'. Finally, ever closer union is meant to be achieved exclusively between the peoples '*of Europe*'. The reference to Europe implies, in the first instance, a delimitation of the greatest geographical extent of the European Union as envisaged by the signatories of the Treaties of Rome and Maastricht. But why limit the geographical extent of the proposed 'ever closer union' to Europe? And who are 'the peoples of Europe'? In many people's imagination, Europe is the ancestral 'home' of a particular racial group, that of white and perhaps also that of non-Jewish people. In this view, all white people are ultimately of 'European origin', while non-

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[111] For all quotes from EC-treaties in this section, see: Foster, Nigel G. (ed.). 1996. *Blackstone's EC Legislation, Seventh Edition.*

white people are of 'non-European origin'. All too easily, such thinking can go one step further by equating 'white' with 'European' and 'non-white' with 'non-European'. It is not just fanatical racists that make such racial distinctions. They are part of everyday discourse in Britain and beyond and can even underlie anti-racist campaigns, as evident in an 'anti-racist' poster/postcard published in 1994 by the European Youth Campaign Against Racism and supported by the British Commission for Racial Equality:
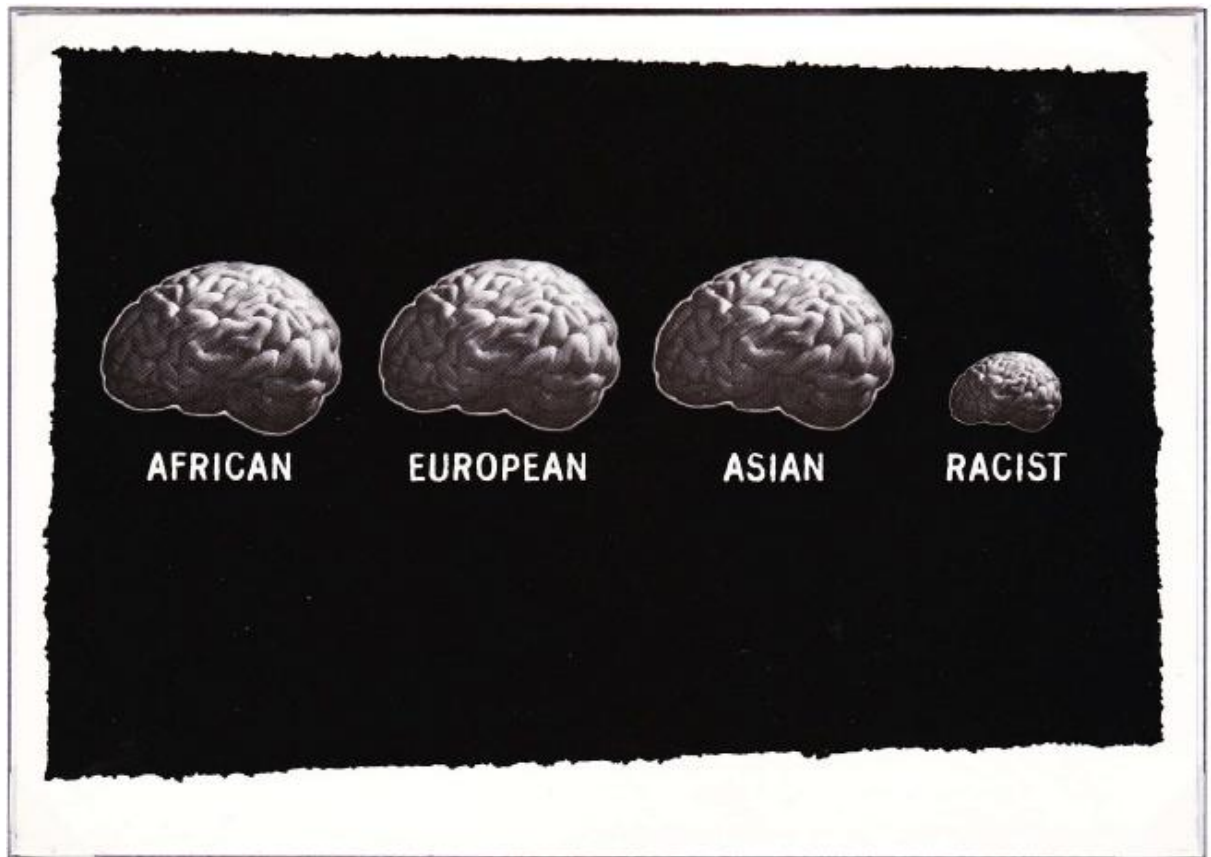
Fig. 1

There is thus a possibility that many people may perceive the policy of admitting only 'European' countries to the European Union as an attempt to create prosperity and a single political structure first and foremost for white and non-Jewish people.

If there is a potential for social concepts of membership of the European Union to incorporate racial ideas, what can be said about legal concepts of membership of the European Union? The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 did in fact create a 'citizenship of the European Union'.

London: Blackstone Press.

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The meaning of this citizenship is analogous to 'nationality' in that, according to Article 8 of the Treaty of Rome as amended by the Maastricht Treaty (hereafter: EC Treaty), all citizens of the Union 'shall enjoy the rights conferred by this Treaty and shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby'. Access to citizenship of the Union is regulated according to the rule that 'every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union' (Article 8, EC Treaty). This means that access to citizenship of the Union is based on the sum total of the rules that govern access to nationality in the various Member States. As a result, those racial elements that are today inherent in the rules governing nationality in the Member States are of course also inherent in the current definition of citizenship of the Union and would in all likelihood be carried over into any independent definition of citizenship of the Union.

One of the rights enjoyed by citizens of the Union is the right to 'move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States' (Article 8a, EC Treaty). This right resembles similar rights usually enjoyed by nationals of a nation-state within the territory of that state. In a nation-state, however, the same right is usually accorded to most non-nationals who are legally resident in that state. This is not true of the European Union. Although efforts are underway to establish a universal right to free movement within the Union, people who are legally resident in the Union but not citizens of the Union (so-called 'third country nationals') meet additional obstacles when trying to travel or reside freely in the territory of the Union. In this respect, discrimination between citizens and non-citizens in the Union is more severe than is usually the case within European nation-states.[112]

Access to citizenship of the Union is limited not only by means of the definition of citizenship but also by the rules that govern the movement of people between the European Union and third countries. Whilst in the main policy in this field is framed by the individual Member States, there have also been a number of activities on the level of the European Union. The legal basis for this can be found in Article 100 of the EC Treaty. It entitles the Council (consisting of representatives of each Member State authorized to commit the government of that Member State) to 'issue directives for the approximation of such laws, regulations or administrative provisions of the Member States as directly affect the establishment or functioning of the common market'. On these grounds the treaty prescribes a common visa policy and entitles

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[112] See: Commission of the European Communities. 1995. *Proposal for a Council Directive on the elimination of controls on persons crossing internal frontiers.* COM(95) 347. Brussels: Commission of The European Communities. And: Commission of the European Communities. 1995(b). *Proposal for a Council Directive on the right of third country nationals to travel in the*

EU bodies to harmonize policies on refugees. Numerous press reports suggest to me that the opening of the EUs internal borders is linked to a tightening of the EUs external borders both in rhetoric and in practice. I do not doubt that such rhetoric and practices are fuelled in part by social concepts of 'Europeans' as a racial group. The same rhetoric and practices may in turn contribute to the entrenchment of racialised social concepts in many people's minds.

There are a number of nationalisms other than British or European Union nationalism that are of some political significance in contemporary Britain. These include Irish nationalism, Scottish nationalism, Welsh nationalism, and English nationalism, all of which can be characterised as British regional nationalisms in that they aim to transform certain regions of the British nation-state into largely autonomous or independent nation-states or to incorporate those regions into another nation-state. Any casual reader of academic writings on British national identity and British regional nationalisms could be forgiven for concluding from these writings that it is indeed questionable whether there is anything like a 'British nation' whilst it is evident and beyond reasonable doubt that there is a 'Welsh', a 'Scottish' or an 'English nation'. What these writings signify to me is that regional nationalism permeates British political thought not only in the field of party political and pressure group activism but also in the supposedly more detached spheres of British political science. According to my own concepts, there does not exist any legal nation of Irish people in control of the whole of Ireland, nor any Scottish, Welsh or English legal nation. There may, however, exist aspirations for the establishment of nation-states in Ireland, Scotland, Wales or England, or nostalgia for some such states now lost in history, and people nurturing such aspirations or such nostalgia are bound to entertain certain social concepts of an Irish, a Welsh, a Scottish or an English nation. A question that is of particular interest in the context of this thesis is to what extent different social and political actors subscribe to racialised social concepts of an Irish/Scottish/Welsh/English nation. My suspicion is that quite frequently a racial interpretation of references to 'the Irish', 'the Welsh', 'the English' or 'the Scottish' is implicit or taken for granted in the context of the debates surrounding Irish, Welsh, English or Scottish nationalism. In this thesis, I can only illustrate my suspicion with reference to two recent academic articles that address the issue of British regional nationalisms.

The first of these is a recent article by Bernard Crick on 'The sense of identity of the indigenous British' that appeared in a special issue on British national identity of the journal *New*

Community.[113] Early on in his article, B. Crick gives a concise characterisation of 'Britishness' as a 'common property to three nations, to a large element of a fourth and to immigrant ethnic communities'. It is clear that the four 'nations' B. Crick refers to are those of the Irish, the Welsh, the Scottish and the English. According to B. Crick's formulations, 'immigrant ethnic communities' do not form part of any of these 'nations'. Why should that be? Clearly, 'immigrant ethnic communities' is a barely coded reference to people who B. Crick classifies as belonging to particular non-European racial groups. B. Crick implies that they cannot be part of any Irish, Welsh, Scottish or English nation because of their membership of these racial groups. This means in turn that, for B. Crick, the Irish, Welsh, Scottish and English nations, too, are essentially racial communities, defined negatively in racial terms as not including any 'non-Europeans'. By calling these collectivities 'nations' rather than simply racial or perhaps ethnic groups, B. Crick aligns himself with or at least expresses nostalgia for racial versions of various British regional nationalisms. Since B. Crick refrains from calling the British a nation, it seems that for him greater 'racial diversity' make the British less of a nation than the English, the Welsh, the Scottish or the Irish.

Bernard Crick's article is followed by an article by David Marquand on the subject of 'British identity after Whig imperialism'.[114] Like B. Crick, D. Marquand opens his article with a declaration of support for British regional nationalisms: 'The British state was (and is) multi-national, not national. It was brought into being by the Act of Union of 1707, and the Act of Union was the product of hard-headed calculation on the part of the ruling élites of the sovereign states of England and Scotland, not of any groundswell of popular feeling'. Why, according to D. Marquand, was (and is) there no such groundswell of popular British nationalism? Simply because '(...) the ties of loyalty and mutual obligation which hold real societies together depend, at least in part, on a sense of common origins and a common destiny which makes it possible to evoke a shared identity'. Marquand is not explicit about what he means by 'common origins'. But clearly he implies that the experience of citizenship shared by an existing collectivity of citizens cannot give rise to a sense of 'common origins'. So what then can give rise to a sense of 'common origins'? I would hazard the guess that Marquand is talking about the sharing of experiences over

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[113] Crick, Bernard. 1995. 'The sense of identity of the indigenous British'. In: *New Community*. Vol. 21, Nr. 2, April 1995. pp. 167-182. The following quotes are from pp. 167 and 180.

[114] Marquand, David. 1995. 'Can there be a British identity after Whig imperialism?' In: *New Community*. Vol. 21, Nr. 2, April 1995. pp. 183-193. The following quotes are from pp. 183, 184, 188, 189.

many generations, certainly going back in time much further than the year 1707. Only if the very distant ancestors of an existing collectivity, too, formed a collectivity can the present collectivity possess a sense of 'common origins'. The idea that people may be happy not to define their 'national' belonging with reference to 'common origins' at all but simply with reference to shared membership of a vaguely democratically organised state (such as Britain) is apparently completely beyond Marquand's imagination. As a result, for Marquand British nationalism needs to be replaced by other nationalisms. Since the existence of the British Empire was 'the only reason for being British as opposed to English or Scots or Welsh', the obvious nationalisms to fall back upon are English, Scottish and Welsh nationalism. Perhaps Marquand senses that the logic of his argument is leading him to support what looks like a racial version of British regional nationalisms. To overcome any misgivings, he makes an appeal to human nature: 'To deny or suppress the human need to belong is to wound the soul, and wounded souls are apt to turn nasty'. This attempt at justifying racial nationalism is dubious since, even if there is a universal 'human need to belong', it is far from clear that such belonging must in the first instance be a national belonging, even less that it must be a national belonging based on a sense of common origins.

I do not claim the two articles discussed above are representative of what is a large volume of recent academic writings on British regional nationalisms, but neither do I think they stand out particularly. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the articles discussed appeared in a journal published by the Commission for Racial Equality, in other words a journal whose authors and editors should be particularly sensitive to the racial meanings implicit in any articles published in the journal. As a result, in my view they represent significant examples of the racialisation of current debates on British regional nationalism.

In addition to nationalisms that are related to various British territories, other nationalisms have at times become the subject of intense political debate in British society. At different points in the 1980s and the 1990s, this has for example been true of ANC nationalism and Zionism. ANC nationalism can perhaps be thought of as a movement trying to transform the imperial state of apartheid South Africa into a nation-state. As a result, any position on ANC nationalism is bound to involve some form or other of racial thinking. Zionism can equally be thought of as a movement that has become the subject of much racial thinking. The principal characteristic of historical Zionism as I understand it is support for the establishment of a nation-state open to any Jewish people who wish to live there. Such a nation-state now exists in the form of Israel.

Modern Zionism can thus be described as a form of Israeli nationalism that grants Jewish people privileged access to the Israeli nation. In 1975, Zionism was called 'a form of racism' in a United Nations resolution.[115] In the seventies and the eighties, this formula was used by anti-Zionist campaigners on the left of the political spectrum in Britain and elsewhere.[116] Conversely, some writers have labelled some campaigns in the name of anti-Zionism antisemitic and, by implication, potentially racist.[117] My own perception is that neither is hostility to Zionism necessarily motivated by antisemitism, nor is Zionism inherently racist. Hostility towards Zionism may for example be motivated by concerns about the status of non-Jewish people in Israeli society rather than by antisemitism. Support for Zionism may for example be inspired by the perceived threat of antisemitism in the modern world rather than by any racist notions of what it means to be Jewish or Israeli.

2.4.6 The significance of nationalism in relation to racial thinking in contemporary British society

Particular forms of British nationalism, European Union nationalism and British regional nationalisms rely on racial thinking in order to construct social concepts of the nation or to regulate access to the legal nation. The history of European racial nationalisms shows that they are grounded in discourses that have constructed racial collectivities as inherently different in terms of cultural or intellectual characteristics. For this reason, those who promote racialised social concepts of the British nation, British regions or the European Union can be described as engaging in racist activities. Those who accept racialised social concepts of the British nation or British regions or the European Union accept racist ways of thinking and may also tend to engage in racist activities. Racialised social concepts of the nation may, for example, give rise to the idea that members of particular racial collectivities do not share the same rights (to housing, to social security benefits, to residence etc.) as 'legitimate' or 'full' members of the nation.

Some of the racial categories that inform racialised social concepts of the British nation or

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[115] See: Sharif, S. Regina (ed.). 1977. *United Nations Resolutions on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1975*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies. p. 7.

[116] In the early 1990s, the UN resolution was rescinded, and left-wing anti-Zionism became less vocal. See 1) *Encyclopedia Judaica, Decennial Book, 1982-1992*. 1994. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing. p. 209. 2) Institute of Jewish Affairs. 1993. *Antisemitism World Report 1993*. London: Institute of Jewish Affairs. p. xiv.

[117] For an analysis of left antisemitism in the name of anti-Zionism, see for example: Cohen, Steve. 1984. *That's Funny You Don't*

British regions or the European Union have been inherited from developments in the contexts of European Christianism and imperialism. Others are more closely tied to the history of European nationalism. Anybody who is not perceived as racially Welsh, or Scottish or English, for example, is in danger of being excluded from racialised social concepts of the British nation. This is a predicament that is shared by black people, Asian people, Irish people, Jewish people, Muslim people and many more categories of people. The intensity or nature of racial terrorism directed at non-Welsh, non-English, non-Scottish people in the context of racial nationalism may, however, vary according to how exactly they are classified racially. Racialised social concepts of a Welsh or Scottish nation may be even more narrow than racialised social concepts of the British nation, whilst racialised social concepts of the European Union are most likely to exclude non-white people. They may, however, also exclude Eastern European people, Jewish people and others.

In view of the historical force and continued acceptance of racial thinking in the context of various European nationalisms, it will be of paramount importance for me to consider carefully any social concepts of the nation that are implicit in Labour Party discourse on Britain, the European Union or any British regions, and to analyse to what extent these are racialised. In this context, it will be of interest to find out how, if at all, Labour incorporates the histories of Christianism or European imperialism into social concepts of the British nation.

Furthermore, current legal concepts of nationality in Britain and in the European Union are racialised to the extent that they emphasize 'descent' as a criterion of access to nationality at the expense of other potential criteria, such as 'place of birth' or 'residence'. The racialisation of access to nationality is reinforced further by immigration policies aimed at keeping the inflow of migrants from outside the European Union to a minimum. On these grounds, it will be important for me to analyse Labour's policies on nationality and immigration with a view to finding out how these policies relate to the racialisation of nationality in Britain and the European Union. I will consider all of these issues in chapter 3 of this report.

In view of the fact that ANC nationalism and Zionism have been important points of reference for some political debates in the Labour Party in the 1980s and the 1990s, my consideration of Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the era of nationalism in chapter 3 will also contain a discussion of racial thinking as articulated in Labour Party discourse on ANC

nationalism and Zionism.

2.5   Racial thinking in the context of antiracism

Much of my motivation for engaging in this research project derived from dissatisfaction with the analysis of racism found in parts of the British antiracist movement and the British Labour Party. Media reporting of Labour Party thinking and my limited involvement in the antiracist movement in the early nineties persuaded me of the need to subject antiracist politics to critical antiracist analysis. Subsequently I discovered a number of academic texts that appeared to mirror some of my own concerns, though the emphasis in these writings was slightly different from my own preoccupations.[118] This is not surprising, considering that any antiracist analysis of antiracism depends on the analyst's personal perception of the prevalence or desirability of particular forms of antiracism. Earlier in this thesis, I explained my own understanding of racism. As I have made clear, I believe that racist ways of thinking or acting as defined earlier in this report should be opposed wherever possible. My own idea of *antiracism* is shaped by my ideas about racism and includes *any social or political activities that promote opposition to racism as defined in this thesis*.

Not all social or political activities that claim to be antiracist are antiracist according to my particular idea of antiracism. Rather, racial thinking that claims to be antiracist can be analysed like any other forms of racial thinking, using the concepts of racial classifications, racial categories, and racism as defined in this thesis. I would consider that in contemporary Britain *antiracism* in the sense of *any social or political activities that claim to be opposed to racism* is a relatively powerful social movement. The writing and dissemination of this thesis, and much other academic activity, can be considered to be part of antiracism in this sense. Beyond academia, public opinion, including the official position of all major political parties, overwhelmingly claims to be opposed to racism. The Labour Party in particular plays an important role in the antiracist movement. The Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968 and 1976 were brought in under Labour; sections of the Labour Party, including a number of MPs and MEPs, are active in the extra-parliamentary antiracist movement; some societies affiliated to the Labour

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[118] Writings on antiracism that I am in general agreement with or that have inspired my own thinking include: 1) the essays by Paul Gilroy and Philip Cohen in: Donald, James; Rattansi, Ali (eds.). 1992. *'Race', Culture & Difference*. London: Sage. 2) Taguieff, Pierre-André. 1995. *Les fins de l'antiracisme*. Paris: Éditions Michalon. 3) Solomos, John; Back, Les. 1996. *Racism*

Party list opposition to racism as one of their prime aims.

In this section, I would like to analyse the principal forms antiracism takes in contemporary Britain and the European Union. I will use this analysis to identify distinct fields of racial thinking in the British Labour Party that I would like to look at in greater detail in chapter four of this thesis.

2.5.1   Three dimensions of antiracism: practice, theory and social or political context

As the expression implies, antiracism is always a movement of opposition against whatever those who are involved in it think of as racism. Generally speaking, it seems to me that antiracist action may involve at least three types of practices: reform, repression or reparations. Antiracism may, for example, aim to reform existing racist structures. This can take the form of attempting to reform people's thinking by means of education, for example such that people unlearn racism and/or learn opposition to racism. Or it can take the form of attempting to reform racist texts or monuments (for example fiction, or textbooks, or laws, or rules and regulations, or images, or statues) by rewriting or recontextualising them such that they do not articulate or reinforce racist ways of thinking any more. Such reforms of racist structures may be attempted at all levels of society. People may, for example, try to educate themselves or others when they perceive themselves or others to engage in racist ways of thinking or acting in informal social situations. Antiracist education may be practised in schools. Those who have access to the mass media or mass audiences of any kind, for example popular entertainers or politicians, may speak or write in ways that challenge racist ways of thinking or acting. Political parties and governments may make it their priority to rewrite laws or rules and regulations that can be interpreted as articulations of racist ways of thinking. Where the reform of racist structures proves difficult, antiracism may aim to repress racist ways of acting by means of verbal or physical threats or by means of laws or rules and regulations that threaten to sanction or punish anyone who engages in racist abuse, racist attacks, the dissemination of racist texts or any other forms of racist terrorism or discrimination. Repression, too, can function at all levels of society. Repression of racist activities may be attempted in informal relationships as well as in formalized, institutional contexts. It may be engaged in by individuals or by antiracist groups or

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and Society. Houndmills: Macmillan. pp. 102-120.

organisations or by the state, each using the means of repression that are at their disposal. Where reform and repression have failed or have never been attempted, antiracism may aim to offer reparations to those who have been subjected to racist structures or racist ways of acting. Reparations may come in the form of apologies or compensation. Reparations, too, can function both at the individual level and at the level of institutions, including the state. They may be directed at individuals or collectivities. They may help to repair any material damage that's been done as a result of racist ways of thinking or acting, or they may serve as symbolic expressions of opposition to racism.

In contemporary Britain, preferences for different types of antiracist practices tend to be informed by different theories of racism. Generally speaking, theories of racism can be part of racist as well as antiracist campaigns. Some theories may, for example, rationalise racism by declaring it to be inevitable in certain situations. Such theories can easily be incorporated into racist campaigns, for example campaigns in favour of racial separatism. In this section, I will only look at theories of racism that are used in the context of self-professed antiracist campaigns. On the basis of my various readings, I would identify at least five antiracist theories of the causes of racism that appear to enjoy some currency in Britain today. These are that racism is caused by 1) capitalism; 2) social deprivation; 3) nationalism; 4) fascism; 5) cultural ignorance. There is also a range of views regarding the nature of racism in British society. Many of the texts that articulate different theories of racism agree that racism in Britain today involves racial myths and stereotypes, racial discrimination and racial terrorism, but some add that racism can also take the form of culturalism. Different texts name different collectivities as the main target groups of racism. Those most frequently cited are black people (including Asian people), Jewish people, Irish people, migrants, refugees, and national, ethnic or religious minorities.

Finally, different models of antiracist theory and practice are elaborated in a range of social and political contexts. These contexts include, for example, private relationships, academia, the mass media, antiracist journals and organisations, and the state. For the purposes of this research report, I am particularly interested in the fields of antiracist journals and organisations and the state. In what follows, I will try to highlight some of the theories and practices that can currently be found in these two contexts.

2.5.2   Antiracism in antiracist journals and organisations

A number of political organisations that are vocal in the field of antiracism in contemporary British society stress the idea of a causal link between racism and capitalism. This theory is for example expressed in a Socialist Workers Party (SWP) pamphlet that seems to have been published some time after 1991:

> [Racism] has only existed since the emergence of capitalism some 500 years ago and is not just a set of bad ideas or attitudes. Racism has material causes. It is rooted in the way in which capitalism has developed and has divided the working class. This means a number of things. First of all it means that we can get rid of racism. Secondly, that fighting racism is inseparable from the struggle against the capitalist system itself. Thirdly, that the main force in these twin battles against racism and capitalism is the working class.[119]

Similar ideas are expressed in a more recent SWP pamphlet:

> [Fighting racism effectively] would mean breaking with a capitalist system that needs racism to divide and weaken workers in order to maintain its rule over us. (...). The key to achieving that lies in black and white workers organising together and uniting in struggle against the common enemy - the bosses and governments that run our world.[120]

This kind of analysis of racism implies a preference for particular types of antiracist action. As far as the SWP is concerned, antiracist action should ideally help to transform the existing economic and political system.

The theory of racism put forward by the SWP puzzles me, since I cannot see any immediate connection between capitalism as I understand it (private ownership of the means of production; the existence of poorly regulated labour markets; the existence of poorly regulated markets for commodities; the production of commodities for profit rather than need; the existence of an extensive monetary system) and racism.[121] The SWP's answer to this would appear to be that capitalists tend to conspire to divide the working class along racial lines in order to weaken it. But neither SWP literature nor my other readings on the history of racism have

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[119] Callinicos, Alex. [undated - 1992?]. *The Fight Against Racism - A Socialist Worker pocket pamphlet.* p. 7.

[120] Taylor, Ian. [undated - 1996?]. *The Case Against Immigration Controls. A Socialist Worker pamphlet.* p. 21.

[121] The elements of capitalism listed here reflect my own preconceptions checked against the entry under capitalism in: Marshall, Gordon (ed.). 1994. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 38-40.

persuaded me that the production and reproduction of racism is either confined to or controlled by capitalists. For this reason, I have great difficulty reading the SWP pamphlets quoted above as inquiries into the origins or nature of racism. Rather, I read them essentially as pamphlets that use the rhetoric of antiracism in order to articulate or reinforce opposition to capitalism.

Some organisations blame particular social or economic conditions for racism rather than the capitalist system as such. Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) is an example of an organisation that has taken this line. A handbill distributed by Militant Labour in 1994 informs me that YRE was originally set up by Militant Labour. YRE publicity material that I have obtained in the last few years states that 'we fight racism - locally, nationally and internationally - racist attacks are on the rise across Europe. We fight the causes of racism - mass unemployment, homelessness, low pay - the results of 15 years of Tory rule'. I have frequently come across similar explanations of the causes of racism in meetings and workshops organised by a variety of antiracist organisations. In addition, over the last few years I have repeatedly found mainstream newspapers lending credibility to such explanations. Such explanations were, for example, widely employed to explain racist ways of thinking in the aftermath of the election of a BNP councillor in Millwall, London, in September of 1993. One article published in the *Guardian* at this time wonders about the effects of 'the racist sentiment unleashed by the European Community's recession'.[122] Another article published on the same day asserts that 'in a country with widespread unemployment and rising crime, social deprivation and political alienation, the wonder is that the neo-fascists have not done much better, much sooner. (...) Yesterday (...) Westminster spokesmen for all the parties duly agreed that racism has no place in our society. It is a touch condescending to Isle of Dogs voters squeezed between recession, poor housing and yuppie Canary Wharf'.[123]

The 'social deprivation theory' of racism, too, implies a preference for particular types of antiracist action. It suggests that ultimately racism can be tackled effectively only by improving the social conditions of those who engage in racist ways of thinking or acting. Occasionally this consequence is made explicit, as in the following proposal for fighting racism on the Isle of Dogs in London put forward by Hugo Young in the *Guardian*:

Where the incoming Asian poor meet the native white deprived, the result is a

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[122] *The Guardian*, 18/9/1993, p. 3.

[123] *The Guardian,* 18/9/1993, p. 26.

social jungle of acute complexity, dominated by the coarse politics of housing allocation. If the BNP wins two more seats in May it will control the power, and the £23 million budget, of the local neighbourhood council, and will be able to start delivering on its virulently anti-Asian promises. Nobody in mainline politics wants this. Leaving aside the manifest incompetence of the BNP people as anything other than nasty single-issue agitators, naked racism would have been endorsed and violence legitimised. (...) Plainly it's too late to undo the neglect that produced the alienation fascists thrive on. (...) There's such a commodity as anti-racist realism. Even the Commission for Racial Equality, for example, discusses the case for Tower Hamlets imposing a moratorium on allocation of any more homeless - ie Asian - families to the Isle of Dogs: a policy that would fall short of even-handedness but perhaps ease pressures and damp the tinder the BNP wants to set alight.[124]

In my experience, the theory that racism is caused by the social deprivation of those who engage in it is only rarely questioned either in the antiracist movement or in the media or in academic publications. Personally, I fail to see any immediate causal connection between racism and social deprivation. I simply fail to see how being socially deprived would make anyone particularly susceptible to using racial classifications as a key to their understanding of people or society. Likewise, I fail to see how being affluent would make anyone particularly immune to using racial classifications as a key to their understanding of people or society.

For these reasons, people and organisations in contemporary Britain who promote theories of racism as caused by capitalism or (white) social deprivation do not, in my view, pursue an antiracist agenda. Their main concern seems to be opposition to capitalism or (white) social deprivation rather than racism. Using the rhetoric of antiracism merely serves to lend additional force to their political campaigns. Ironically, when people demand that priority be given to the improvement of social conditions for *white* people as a means of combating racism, the rhetoric of antiracism appears to be used to promote ways of thinking and acting that can properly be described as racist.

Another theory that displaces the fight against racism into different and potentially unrelated spheres is the theory of racism as caused by nationalism. My impression is that although this theory is not widely supported in the organised antiracist movement, it does occasionally surface in debates at antiracist workshops, and it has been given credibility by left-wing journals. In 1989, for example, *Living Marxism* published an article by Pat Roberts on

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[124] *The Guardian*, 24/3/1994, p. 24.

'racist politics in Europe'. Here 'the elevation of nationalism into an official state philosophy' is described as 'the foundation for racist politics'. Consequently, according to the article, 'it is impossible to tackle racism without confronting the problem of nationalism'.[125]

Although I believe that, in contemporary Britain, inquiring into the relationship between racism and nationalism is of paramount importance, I do not subscribe to the formulations used by Pat Roberts. As should be clear from my presentation up to this point, I do not believe that nationalism inevitably includes elements of racism nor that racism can only be tackled by 'confronting the problem of nationalism'. The rationalisations of racial fears by Paul Condon and Suzanne Moore mentioned earlier in this chapter, for example, constitute forms of racism that do not necessarily rely on any form of nationalism. My suspicion is once again that those who focus entirely on nationalism as a source of racism may pursue an agenda that is not strictly antiracist. Various formulations in the article by Pat Roberts point to the fact that the attack on nationalism as 'racist' is here used as a pretext for a more generalised attack on the capitalist state. Thus readers learn that 'nationalist philosophy can only be exposed by challenging the legitimacy of the capitalist nation state, and all of the conventional norms and values that are bound up with it'. Since the capitalist nation state thus turns out to be the main enemy, state agencies cannot, or should not, take part in the fight against racism:

> There is an unfortunate tendency to implore the state - usually its judiciary and police - to deal with the extreme right. Such a perspective is dangerously short-sighted. It is the state which endows racism with the cloak of respectability. So how can an institution which excludes, deports, harasses and discriminates against immigrants play a positive role against racism? (...) Effective action needs to be independent of, and directed against, the state.

Like the analysis of racism as caused by capitalism put forward by the SWP, the analysis of racism as caused by nationalism contained in the article by Pat Roberts ends up severely limiting the scope for antiracist action by ruling out the efficacy of any initiatives that might be taken by the state.

Some of the organisations that are commonly viewed as part of the antiracist movement in Britain today, such as the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) or Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), describe themselves primarily as anti-Nazi or antifascist rather than antiracist. According to ANL publicity

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[125] Roberts, Pat. 1989. 'Fertile ground for fascism'. In: *Living Marxism*. May 1989. No. 7. pp. 28-32.

material of the year 1995, the ANL was first formed in the seventies 'to specifically target and defeat the National Front'. It was relaunched in January of 1992 'reacting to the growth of Nazi strength in Europe and Britain (...) with the specific aim of exposing and destroying this newly emergent Nazism'. In 1995, the ANL claimed to have 'tens of thousands of individual members, including over 100 Labour MPs and MEPs' as well as the support of many trade unions and celebrities.

Over the last few years, ANL campaigns have been directed not just against fascist or Nazi-type organisations such as the British National Party (BNP) but also against racist attacks committed by individuals and scientific racism as espoused by Christopher Brand at Edinburgh University. In relation to both of these issues, the ANL has claimed that racism boosts the confidence of Nazi organisations such as the BNP. A leaflet distributed in 1996, for example, demanded the sacking of Christopher Brand, arguing that

> there should be no place for racists on campuses teaching their vile doctrines which seek to divide us. Brand's scientific racism feeds the confidence of those Nazi organisations, such as the British National Party, that seek to scapegoat black people.

In an ANL handbill distributed at a demonstration in response to the murders of Siddik Dada and Mohammed Sarwar in Manchester in 1992, the ANL states that

> racists seek to divide black and white people. If tolerated they can create an atmosphere in which awful atrocities such as racist murders can take place. Every racist attack encourages the likes of the BNP and their supporters. That is why today, both black and white, we are united in giving a clear message to Nazis and racists: "Go back to your sewers, we will not tolerate you".

Conversely, the same handbill also suggests that racism can best be 'undermined' by opposing Nazi-organisations:

> The Anti Nazi League is a national organisation. We aim, jointly with other anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations, to mobilise black and white people to physically stop the growth of the Nazis. (...) Only an active movement of blacks and whites can stop the Nazis in their tracks and undermine the racists.

In similar fashion, in campaigning material attacking Nazi-organisations, racist terrorism is described as the outcome of Nazi-activity:

The Nazis [British National Party, National Front and National Democrats] scapegoat blacks and Asians for the problems in society. Every time the Nazis organise, racist violence soars. In the area around the BNP HQ there have been four racist murders and a 210 percent increase in racist attacks. When the BNP won a council seat in 1993, racist attacks in the area shot up an amazing 300 percent. The Nazis in Britain remain on the margins of society. They are outside of the political mainstream. Let's keep it that way.

These ANL statements are suggestive of a simple formula concerning the relationship between racism and Nazism: By fighting racism, you undermine Nazism - by fighting Nazism, you undermine racism. Such a conclusion would come close to identifying the fight against racism with that against Nazism, playing down the idea that racist ways of thinking or acting may permeate the mainstream rather than just the margins of British culture and politics. According to this analysis, it would make sense to concentrate on opposition to Nazi-type organisations in order to eliminate racism.

Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) is an organisation whose rhetoric is more consistently focused on opposition to fascism rather than any other cause. In their journal *Fighting Talk* they describe their aim as

no platform for fascists - no meetings, no marches, no paper sales, no leafleting - and we mean it, as the fascists know only too well. Our aim is to cause the maximum disruption to fascist activities.

An article on the aims of AFA, published in the January 1995 issue of *Fighting Talk*, underlines that

it has always been the case that AFA cannot be all things to all people. This is because AFA has never tried to be, some can easily point to things that we seemingly don't do, or say that we over emphasise the things we do do. (...) AFA provides a class based, militant and effective response to fascism, and that's all it's been set up to do.[126]

From other articles, it is clear that by 'fascism' AFA primarily means the activities of organizations such as the BNP and the National Front. A handbill distributed by Manchester Anti-Fascist Action in response to the racist murders in Manchester mentioned above does link

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[126] *Fighting Talk*, No. 10, January 1995, pp. 12-13.

the fight against fascism to that against racism, but takes care not to reduce one to the other:

> Although we know that defeating fascism would in no way end the problems of racism, we do believe that if we can drive a wedge between the fascists and their potential recruits it will give us a chance of winning more people in the white working class communities to anti-racist politics.

In this way, AFA rhetoric tends to avoid the identification of racism with fascism that is suggested by some of the publicity material published by the ANL.

Other journals and organisations that link opposition to racism to opposition to fascism include *Searchlight*, *CARF* and CAFE (Campaign Against Fascism in Europe). *Searchlight* describes itself as an international anti-fascist monthly. In its reporting, it concentrates on organised fascism but also covers unorganised or non-fascist manifestations of racism in British society and elsewhere. *CARF* (*Campaign Against Racism & Fascis*m) is a bimonthly that puts more explicit emphasis on antiracism as opposed to antifascism than does *Searchlight*. Publicity material distributed in 1995 states that '*CARF* believes in fighting racism and therefore fascism'. *CARF* is here described as 'the only UK magazine to situate the rebirth of neo-nazism in its breeding ground of popular anti-black racism [and to] offer in-depth analysis of state racism and Euro-racism'.

Since 1991, two new national organisations whose focus has been unequivocally on antiracism have at various times taken centre-stage in the British antiracist movement. One of these is the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). According to ARA publicity material and the ARA founding statement, the ARA was founded in November of 1991 in response to the rise of racist attacks and racist organisations in Europe. A letter which I obtained from the organisation in May 1995 describes the ARA as 'the first Black-led, broad-based coalition, campaigning to stem the rising tide of racism, anti-Semitism and support for the extreme right'. The letter also claims that the ARA is 'supported by a large number of affiliated organisations including Black and Jewish organisations, national trade unions, over 90 MPs and MEPs from all the main political parties, community groups and organisations (...) as well as thousands of individuals'. Since 1991, the ARA has campaigned widely on issues ranging from racial attacks and the BNP to the position of migrants in the European Union and racism at the workplace.[127] ARA publicity material is

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[127] See for example: 1) ARA Annual Report of 1995; 2) Abrams, Kingsley. 1995. 'The ARA and the anti-racist struggle'. In: *Asian Times*, 22/4/1995, p. 4.

cautious about the causes of racism. In particular, there are no suggestions that racism is caused by capitalism or fascism or British or European Union nationalism, though it may be articulated in the context of each of these movements. As should be clear from my presentation up to this point, this type of analysis is close to my own understanding of racism, which is, I suppose, one of the reasons why I was attracted to the ARA when I moved to Manchester in 1992.

But the ARA has been riven by conflict since it was founded in 1991. Personal and political divisions within the ARA leadership came to a head in November of 1994, when a substantial section of the newly elected national leadership resigned their posts, claiming their work was being obstructed by the old guard.[128] According to one of those who resigned, sections of the executive committee were unwilling to learn from past mistakes including arrogance in relation to victims of racial violence and a sectarian stance in relation to other antiracist organisations such as the ANL.[129]

The National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR) was founded in February of 1995. According to one of their founding members, the NAAR emerged from co-operation between the trade union movement and local anti-racist organisations based in East London.[130] Following the split in the ARA, it also became a focal point for several of the antiracist campaigners who had walked out of the ARA a few months earlier. In 1995, the NAAR circulated an 'Anti-Racist Charter' for discussion in the anti-racist movement. The final version of the Charter was published in early 1996. At this time, it was claimed the Charter had the support of nine MPs, nine trade unions and a host of anti-racist and other organisations. In the Charter, racism is described as having 'deep roots in British and European society: it is a mainstream malaise rooted in the history of the salve trade, colonialism and imperialism, which racism justified'. According to the Charter, racism is 'directed against Black communities, migrants, asylum seekers, Jewish people, gypsies, Irish people and other minorities. (...) Every concession to racism by mainstream political parties and institutions legitimises it and encourages its most dangerous exponents on the streets and in the parties of the extreme racist right'. The Charter calls for

> unity in the struggle against racism and the fascists; action (...) against racial
> violence and harassment; immigration and asylum rights free of racism;

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[128] See for example the articles in: *Caribbean Times*, 24/9/94-19/11/94. *The Guardian*, 5/11/94, p. 4.

[129] Interview with Kumar Murshid, ex-national secretary of the ARA, on 28/2/1996.

[130] This interpretation is based on my conversation with Kumar Murshid, a founding member of the NAAR and former national secretary of the ARA, on 28/2/1996.

positive action against racial discrimination in employment and education; equal political representation of minority communities (...); no place for fascists in a democratic society; freedom of religion and religious tolerance; the right to self-organisation for black and minority communities in all fields of life and the leading role of those oppressed by racism (...) in the antiracist struggle; solidarity with all peoples struggling against racism and imperialism across the globe; the celebration of a multicultural society.

Each of these points is elaborated on in some detail in the Anti-Racist Charter. According to the NAAR, then, racism may be directed against a wide range of collectivities. It may take different forms and may be articulated through fascism or nationalism or culturalism without being reducible to any of these. This non-reductive approach to racism resembles the line taken by the ARA and distinguishes the Anti-Racist Charter from many other documents produced by antiracist organisations. But the Anti-Racist Charter also includes some formulations which I consider more problematic. One of these is 'the inclusion of key elements of anti-racism within the mainstream curriculum including the fostering of respect and understanding of the diverse cultures, religions and traditions of Black people'. The reference to the 'cultures, religions and traditions of Black people' seems unfortunate to me in that it relies on or at least plays on the idea that racial difference determines cultural difference, that it makes sense to use racial classifications in order to derive the cultural characteristics of people or collectivities.

Both the ARA and the NAAR are distinguished from other anti-racist organisations by their emphasis on black leadership. The position of the NAAR on this issue is slightly more ambiguous than that of the ARA. Thus on the one hand the NAAR recognises specifically 'the importance of Black self-organisation and leadership - as an embodiment of the leading contributions to be made by communities, families and individuals facing racism'. On the other hand it demands that the 'leading role' in the antiracist struggle should be taken more widely by 'those oppressed by racism, the Black and other minority communities'.[131]

Some organisations that are active in the anti-racist movement are organised specifically with reference to racial categories. At the present time, the most prominent national antiracist organisation of this kind is perhaps the National Black Alliance of Asian, African and Caribbean organisations (NBA). The NBA was founded by twelve organisations in 1994 in order to 'reassert the unity of African, Caribbean and Asian peoples in Britain in the face of increasing racism and

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[131] Both quotes are from the final version of the Anti-Racist Charter published by the NAAR in 1996.

violent attacks'.[132] In 1996/97, the NBA published a substantial document, addressing 'the situation facing Asian, African and Caribbean people in the Britain and what the next government must do to address it'.[133] Whilst focusing on demands that are specifically related to the situation of black people in Britain, the manifesto also includes demands relating to migrants, refugees and religious collectivities.

2.5.3   Antiracism in British state institutions

Antiracism in the sense of state action that claims to be opposed to racism has been observable in mainstream British politics at least since the 1960s. It is true that at this time the concern was mainly with the improvement of 'race relations' rather than opposition to 'racism'. However, my readings on the history of racial terminology suggest to me that since the 1930s texts making use of the vocabulary of 'race relations' have sometimes functioned very much like texts making use of the vocabulary of 'racism' and 'antiracism', in particular when they have expressed opposition to 'prejudice' or 'racial discrimination' or similar concepts. In particular, I would consider that the passing and implementation of the three Race Relations Acts (RRA) of 1965, 1968 and 1976 constitute examples of state antiracism in this sense. Even if an interpretation of these Acts as 'antiracist' was not widespread at the time, I believe it has become so with the passage of time as a result of the gradual replacement of some of the debates about 'race relations' by debates about 'racism' and 'antiracism'.

The forms of racism that are addressed by the RRA of 1965, 1968 and 1976 mainly consist in sets of practices that discriminate against people on 'racial grounds' or as members of particular 'racial groups'.[134] The stated intention of the legislation was to oppose a defined range of such practices by means of public education and legal repression. To assist these ends, the 1976 RRA set up the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). The duties of the members of the CRE are defined as follows:

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[132] Quoted from the founding statement, published in: National Black Alliance. [undated - 1997?]. *A Black Manifesto*. p. 17.

[133] National Black Alliance. [undated - 1997?]. *A Black Manifesto*.

[134] The following statements about the Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968 and 1976 are broadly based on the articles contained in: 1) Commission for Racial Equality (ed.). [undated] *Racial and Ethnic Relations in Britain: Past, Present & Future*. Reprinted from: *New Community*. Vol. XIV. Nos. 1-2. Autumn, 1987. 2) Minority Rights Group (ed.). 1983. *Race and Law in Britain and the United States*. Report No. 22. Third edition. Quotes from the Race Relations Act are from pp. 1, 2, 26, 45-46 of: *Race Relations Act 1976*. London: HMSO.

a)   to work towards the elimination of discrimination;
b)   to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons
of different racial groups generally; and
c)   to keep under review the working of this Act, and, when they are so required by
the Secretary of State or otherwise think it necessary, draw up and submit to the
Secretary of State proposals for amending it.

The RRA of 1976 defines racial discrimination in two ways:

A person discriminates against another in any circumstances relevant for the purposes of
this Act if -
(a)   on racial grounds he treats that other less favourably than he treats or would treat
other persons; or
(b)   he applies to that other a requirement or condition which he applies or would
apply equally to persons not of the same racial group as that other but -
(i)   which is such that the proportion of persons of the same racial group as
that other who can comply with it is considerably smaller than the
proportion of persons not of that racial group who can comply with it;
and
(ii)   which he cannot show to be justifiable irrespective of the colour, race,
nationality or ethnic or national origins of the person to whom it is
applied; and
(iii)   which is to the detriment of that other because he cannot comply with it.

'Racial grounds' is defined as 'colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins'. 'Racial group' is
defined as 'a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national
origins'. According to a guide to the RRA published by the Home Office, 'nationality' is meant to include
'citizenship'.[135] Racial discrimination is declared unlawful in a limited set of fields (employment; the
police; education; the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises; and advertising) all of which
are subject to a number of exemptions. For example, acts done under statutory authority, acts safeguarding
national security and acts that relate to employment in the service of the Crown are allowed to be
discriminatory on all or some of the grounds that the Act defines as 'racial grounds'.

The RRA 1976 also amended the Public Order Act 1936 to include a provision on 'incitement to
racial hatred'. According to this provision,

A person commits an offence if -
(a)   he publishes or distributes written matter which is threatening, abusive or
insulting; or

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[135] Home Office. 1977. *A guide to the Race Relations Act 1976.* p. 4.

(b)　　　he uses in any public place or at any public meeting words which are threatening, abusive or insulting,

　　　　　in a case where, having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up against any racial group in Great Britain by the matter of words in question.

The RRA 1976 covers a relatively wide range of collectivities but excludes any groups that are defined solely with reference to cultural characteristics. The field of practices to which the Act applies also appears to be relatively wide, but important areas, not least certain fields of action related to the state, are exempt from the provisions of the Act.

In tandem with national antiracist legislation, there have been numerous antiracist initiatives involving local state institutions, for example local authorities. Since my interest in this report is on national rather than local politics, I will not consider local forms of state antiracism in any detail. At times, however, initiatives taken by state agencies at the local level have become the focus of national debates. Some of my readings suggest to me that this applies in particular to certain developments in the state education system in the 1970s and 1980s.[136] During that time, different models of 'multicultural education' and 'antiracist education' were developed in schools, local education authorities, teacher training institutions and in academia. The debate about the relative merits of different multicultural and antiracist education models was carried over into a report commissioned by central government, the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (Swann Report).[137] The decision to institute a Committee of Inquiry was taken in 1977 by the Labour government then in power in response to concern over underachievement among 'pupils of West Indian origin'.[138] The Committee began its work in 1979 under the chairmanship of Anthony Rampton. In 1981, the Committee published an interim report, which concluded that 'racism, both intentional and unintentional, has a direct and important bearing on the performance of West Indian children in

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[136] See for example the accounts and assessments in: 1) Tomlinson, Sally. 1986. 'Political Dilemmas in Multi-racial Education'. In: Layton-Henry/Rich, 1986, p. 201. 2) Macdonald, Ian et al. 1989. *Murder in the Playground - The Report of the Macdonald Inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester schools*. London: Longsight Press. In particular pp. xvii-xxv. 3) Ball, Wendy; Solomos, John. 1990. 'Racial Equality and Local Politics'. In: Ball, Wendy; Solomos, John (eds.). 1990. *Race and Local Politics*. Houndmills: Macmillan. In particular pp. 12-13.

[137] Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups. 1985. *Education For All - The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (Swann Report). London: HMSO.

[138] For an account of the history of the Swann Report, see: Troyna, B. 1986. '"Swann's song": The origins, ideology and implications of Education for All'. In: *Journal of Education Policy*. Vol. 1. No. 2. pp. 171-181.

our schools'.[139] Following publication of the interim report, Anthony Rampton resigned from the Committee and was replaced by Lord Swann. When the final report was published in 1985, it became clear that the Committee of Inquiry had interpreted their terms of reference widely. Thus the report develops a model of education, termed 'education for all', that includes some ideas on how best to implement antiracist education in schools. According to the Swann Report

> much of the task in countering and overcoming racism is concerned with attitude change and with encouraging youngsters to develop positive attitudes towards the multi-racial nature of society, free from the influence of inaccurate myths and stereotypes about other ethnic groups.[140]

And elsewhere:

> It is necessary to combat racism, to attack inherited myths and stereotypes, and the way they are embodied in institutional practices. (...) All schools should adopt clear policies to combat racism.

But even while attacking racial myths and stereotypes, the Swann Report contains crucial passages that can be read as an endorsement of the idea that racial difference determines cultural difference. Thus in an introductory section on 'the nature of society', the Swann Report considers that

> a multi-racial society such as ours would in fact function most effectively and harmoniously on the basis of pluralism (...). The ethnic majority community in a pluralist society cannot expect to remain untouched and unchanged by the presence of ethnic minority groups. (...) Similarly, however, the ethnic minority communities cannot in practice preserve all elements of their culture and lifestyles in their entirety.

Like in the passage on education in the Anti-Racist Charter published by the NAAR, cultural categories and racial categories are here fused into one. The Swann Report thus gives credence to the idea that racial classifications are of cultural significance. In the section of the report in which the principles of the 'education for all' model are set out, ignorance of the cultural meanings of racial classifications is identified as a cause of racism:

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[139] Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Ethnic Minority Children. 1981. *West Indian Children in Our Schools - Interim Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Ethnic Minority Children* (Rampton Report). London: HMSO. p. 12.

[140] Committee of Inquiry, 1985, p. 321. The following quotes are from pp. 769f., 5, 321.

If youngsters from the ethnic majority community leave school with little if any understanding of the diversity of cultures and lifestyles in Britain today, and with their misunderstandings and ignorance of ethnic minority groups unchallenged or even reinforced, then there is little likelihood of the efforts of multi-racial areas overcoming the climate of racism which we believe exists.

The report continues to state that 'much of the evidence we have received has stressed this view', indicating that, at least in the first half of the 1980s, the cultural ignorance theory of racism was enjoying considerable credibility in the British education system.[141]

2.5.4 Antiracism in the institutions of the European Union

In addition to the levels of the local state and the British national state, significant antiracist initiatives have also developed at the level of the European Union. The history of these initiatives goes back at least to 1984, when 10 candidates put up by the far-right French Front National were elected to the European Parliament. Following a request by 113 MEPs in September of 1984, the European Parliament instituted a Committee of Inquiry into the Rise of Fascism and Racism in Europe.[142] The report of the Committee of Inquiry (Evrigenis Report) was published by the European Parliament in December of 1985. The Committee of Inquiry was requested to report on

1.   the growth and size of fascist, racialist and related groups within Europe, both inside and outside the Community;
2.   the inter-connection and links between these groups;
3.   the relationship between their activities and racism in Member States;
4.   the relationship between the growth of fascism and racism and the worsening economic and social conditions, for example, poverty, unemployment etc.;
5.   an examination of the machinery already used by Member States' Governments to respond to these organizations;
6.   ways of combating them.

The terms of reference indicate that organised racism or fascism rather than racism as such was to

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[141] Evidence was submitted to the Committee of Inquiry by hundreds of schools, local education authorities and other educational or ethnic minority organisations, and individuals involved in education.

[142] See: Committee of Inquiry into the Rise of Fascism and Racism in Europe. 1985. *Report on the findings of the inquiry.* Published by the European Parliament. p. 9. For the following quotes from the report, see pp. 11, 21, 24-25, 71.

be the focus of the inquiry. In relation to racism, the terms of reference called for an examination of the fascism and the social deprivation theories of racism. I assume this was done because those who drafted the terms of reference took these two theories to offer the most plausible explanations of the origins of racism. The conclusions presented in the Evrigenis Report, however, urge caution in relation to both of these theories. Fascism is defined as 'a nationalistic attitude essentially hostile to the principles of democracy, to the rule of law and to the fundamental rights and freedoms as well as the irrational exaltation of a particular community'. In relation to racism, the report refers to various definitions adopted by the UN and UNESCO, quoting one UNESCO definition of racism as 'antisocial beliefs and acts which are based on the fallacy that discriminatory intergroup relations are justifiable on biological grounds'. On the link between fascism and racism, the report states that

> racism, and especially anti-semitism, extends far beyond historical fascism, while the latter by no means always comprises racism in its original constituents. However, (...) almost all the extremist movements of the Right today contain a racist element and explicitly racist ideologies invariably tend towards authoritarianism. (...) But it would be wrong to believe that the association of racist and extremist tendencies is an inflexible rule subject to no exceptions or nuances. (...) Less extreme forms of racist attitudes or racially-conditioned behaviour need not entail authoritarian tendencies. They may occur within political organizations or social strata which could not be accused of fascism or even authoritarianism.

In relation to the link between racism and fascism on the one hand and the economic situation on the other, the report suggests that, in a general sense, social deprivation may be one of the factors that can lead to a radicalisation of pre-existing attitudes:

> The tensions resulting from the economic situation therefore feed on the prejudices and difficulties which already existed. More significant than the economic situation, perhaps, is the way in which society reacts to the challenge presented by that situation (...).

In conclusion, the report states that

> the economic crisis is certainly an essential contributory factor, but one that is too closely tied up with other aspects of the problem to be singled out arbitrarily.

These conclusions on the relationship between racism and fascism and between racism and social

deprivation seem plausible to me. Sadly, as I will indicate below, they do not appear to have had much effect either on subsequent statements and debates in the European Parliament and other institutions of the European Union or on the political debate in the antiracist movement in Britain.

The findings of the Evrigenis Report mostly relate to racism and fascism as articulated by far-right political organisations or parties in European countries. Institutional or informal forms of racism are dealt with only in passing. In 1989, the European Parliament set up a new Committee of Inquiry into Racism and Xenophobia, whose findings were published in 1990 (Ford Report).[143] The Ford Report is somewhat broader in scope than the Evrigenis Report, covering not only right-wing extremist movements but also racial terrorism in European countries, racist statements or practices by mainstream politicians, and racism in the field of cultural production. It does not contain any discussion of the concepts of racism and xenophobia or of the causes of racism and xenophobia. The report makes 77 recommendations, which are variously addressed to the European Parliament, the Commission of the European Communities, the Council of the European Communities, the Member States, and the Foreign Ministers meeting in political co-operation. One recommendation to the European Parliament is that the Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights should have added to its terms of reference responsibility for questions pertaining to racism, antisemitism and xenophobia within the European Community and all matters relating to third country nationals residing within the European Community. Another recommendation is that there should be an annual debate of the European Parliament on xenophobia and racism in the Community. According to Glyn Ford MEP, the author of the Ford Report, by 1995 these two recommendations were the only ones that had been put into practice.[144]

In addition to these activities of the European Parliament, a number of antiracist initiatives have also been taken by the Commission and the Council of the European Union. At the meeting of the European Council in Corfu in June of 1994, the Council set up a Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia, which was instructed to 'make recommendations (...) on cooperation between governments and the various social bodies in favour of encouraging

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[143] Committee of Inquiry into Racism and Xenophobia. 1990. *Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee of Inquiry into RACISM and XENOPHOBIA on the findings of the Committee of Inquiry*. European Parliament, Session Documents. Document A3-195/90.

[144] See: *Debates of the European Parliament*. 25/10/95. No 4-469/95. By this time, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights had been reconstituted as the Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs.

tolerance, understanding and harmony with foreigners'.[145] The final report of the Commission was published in May of 1995. It included a range of recommendations in the fields of education and training, the media, police and justice and institutional questions. One of the recommendations was to establish a European Observatory to disseminate information and coordinate research on racism in Europe. The Consultative Commission was then asked to explore the feasibility of such an observatory in greater detail. The final report of the Consultative Commission, containing detailed proposals for the establishment of a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia, was published in May of 1996.[146] In early 1997, opposition to these proposals by the British government meant that it was not clear whether they would be implemented.[147]

In December of 1995, the Commission of the European Union published a 'Communication on Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-semitism'.[148] The authors of this document endorse the social deprivation theory of racism and, accordingly, highlight the importance of policies that improve the social conditions of those who engage in racist acts:

> What is clear is that the root causes of racism go well beyond blatant, irrational prejudice. A range of other factors - such as poor education, incomplete integration, unemployment, poverty, exclusion and urban decay - also contribute to create a climate that is conducive to racism. (...) It follows that action against racism will only be effective where it is embedded in a wider range of policies which aim to improve social and economic conditions which are seen as potentially aggravating factors. Indeed, such indirect action is the key ingredient for success, in as much as it prevents the rise of conditions on which racism and xenophobia thrive.

In detailing what antiracist action the Commission is proposing to take, the Communication quotes the European Social Fund as one of the means which can help overcome 'social conditions which favour the spread of racist prejudice and resentment'. Although the Communication emphasises the social deprivation theory of racism, some other ideas about the causes of racism

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[145] See: Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia. 1995. *Final Report - Activities of the Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia* . Brussels: European Union - the Council. p. 2

[146] Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia. 1996. *Final Report - Feasibility study for a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia*. Brussels: European Union - the Council.

[147] *The Guardian*, 28/1/97, p. 14.

[148] Commission of the European Union. 1995. *Communication from the Commission on Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-semitism and Proposal for a Council Decision designating 1997 as European year against Racism*. The following quotes from this document are from pp. 1, 6, 19.

and priorities for the struggle against racism are also raised. Attached to the Communication is a proposal for the designation of 1997 as the European Year Against Racism. The aim of the Year, which has since become reality, is described in the following terms:

> to raise awareness of the problem, and particularly the continuing presence of racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in our societies. Second, to promote and develop a specific European-level contribution to efforts to overcome this problem, in particular by encouraging exchanges of experience and closer cooperation, between Member States and particularly between organisations in Member States involved in the day-to-day realities of the fight against racism.

2.5.5 The significance of antiracism in relation to racial thinking in contemporary British society

Many of the most public and overt expressions of racial thinking in Britain today are made in the context of antiracism. Sometimes they proclaim their antiracist credentials directly by making reference to 'antiracism', sometimes more indirectly by expressing opposition to 'racial inequality', 'racial/racist discrimination', 'racial/racist terrorism' or similar concepts. Although antiracism can operate at all levels of society, in this section I have concentrated on organised antiracist campaigns and state action. The latter includes state action at the national level, such as the passing of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the rulings and commentaries it has given rise to; state action at the local level, such as multicultural and antiracist education policies as well as many other initiatives, such as schemes for 'ethnic monitoring'; and state action at the European level, exemplified by action taken by the institutions of the European Union. My emphasis on organised antiracism and state antiracism derives from the fact that the Labour Party can be situated within both of these fields. On the one hand, the Labour Party in opposition can be thought of as a campaigning organisation, trying to influence the political agenda of the government of the day through propaganda and public debate. This can, but need not, include the participation of sections of the party in the wider antiracist movement. On the other hand, the government of the day may itself be a Labour government able to set the agenda in relation to antiracist policy at the level of the state. The Labour Party is thus a significant political actor in at least these two field of antiracist politics: the extraparliamentary antiracist movement and the state. I will give an account of Labour Party thinking in relation to these two fields in chapter 4 of this thesis on Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the name of antiracism.

2.6   Some concluding remarks on the history of racial thinking in British society and politics

Racial thinking in Britain today feeds on a broad range of racist texts that relate to different periods of European and world history. My various readings have suggested to me that the racial categories most commonly applied to people in contemporary British society mainly derive from three strands of European social and political history. These are the social and political movements of Christianism, European imperialism and European nationalism. For this reason, the way in which any party's political thinking relates to the histories of Christianism, European imperialism and European nationalism may contribute to the range of racial thinking in that party.

But racial thinking in British society and politics today is not just a passive continuation of racial thinking of the past. Whilst the social and political power of Christianism and European imperialism have declined (and whilst these movements are perhaps in the process of declining further), the social and political power of nationalism is very much alive. Some racial classifications that have been prominent in the history of Christianism and European imperialism continue to be incorporated into various social concepts of European nations. Other racial classifications are more intimately connected to the history of nationalism, and some are struggling to gain currency as a result of being promoted by nationalist movements of the present. This raises the question of how political parties in Britain today relate to various nationalisms in the modern world, and in particular how they define the British nation itself, whether in social or in legal terms. Do they, for example, express or promote social concepts of the nation, and of the British nation in particular, that are racialised in any way? Or do they, on the contrary, make every effort to counteract any racial elements in social or legal definitions of the British nation? Or else, do they aim to transcend the current global political order, founded as it is on the principles of nationalism, altogether? These are some of the question I would like to ask of the British Labour Party in chapter 3 of this thesis.

At least since 1945, another social and political movement has appeared on the scene that has helped to shape dominant modes of racial thinking in contemporary British society and politics. This movement declares its opposition to racism and constructs ideologies and policies of an avowedly 'antiracist' nature. In this research report, too, I have declared my opposition to

racism and have thus made this thesis part of that movement. Writing or acting in the name of antiracism does not mean, however, that what you write or what you do is antiracist according to everybody else's definition of racism. In chapter 4 of this research report, I will give an account of Labour Party thinking and activities in the name of antiracism, and I will analyse that thinking and those activities in the light of my own understanding of racism and the history of racial thinking as set out in this chapter.

Chapter 3:
Labour's Entanglement in Racial Thinking
in the Era of Nationalism

In this chapter, I would like to identify various ways in which the Labour Party is entangled in racial thinking that relates to the histories of European Christianism, imperialism and nationalism. As described in chapter 2, as the social and political power of Christianism and imperialism has declined, some of the racial categories such as 'black', 'white' or 'Jewish' that have been employed by these movements to make sense of the world have been incorporated into nationalist ways of thinking. In addition, as nationalism became the dominant political ideology in Europe and beyond, a range of new national racial categories, such as 'French', 'British' or 'German' were invented. Today, various social and legal concepts of the nation in Europe and beyond tend to exclude, either symbolically or physically or both, particular racial collectivities from full access to the nation.

As a national political party, the Labour Party is forced to take up particular positions on the issue of racial thinking in the era of nationalism. In this chapter, I will look at how the Labour Party has responded to this challenge in relation to a number of nationalisms that are of some political relevance in British society today. In section 3.1, I will give two examples of the ways in which British nationalism in the Labour Party has been racialised since 1945. I will then illustrate the importance of British nationalism in Labour Party rhetoric under Tony Blair since 1994. Labour's present emphasis on British nationalism raises the question to what extent Labour Party nationalism is racialised today. In sections 3.2 and 3.3, I will argue that Labour's construction of social and legal concepts of the British nation are at least as racialised today as they have been in the recent past. But racial thinking in British society is also articulated in relation to some non-British nationalisms. In section 3.4, I will analyse the position of different sections of the party in relation to European Union nationalism, British regional nationalisms, ANC nationalism and Zionism. In section 3.5, finally, I will present an interpretation of racial thinking as expressed in the course of some recent Labour Party campaigns, taking account not just of written documentation but also of visual and procedural aspects of these campaigns. The three campaign

events I have chosen for this purpose are Labour's annual conferences of 1995 and 1996, and the general election campaign of 1997.

3.1 Setting the scene: Three examples of Labour's involvement in British nationalism since 1945

Gregory Elliott has described the Labour Party as it emerged at the turn of the century as the authentic expression of 'social *difference* plus national *identity*'.[149] In his view, the Labour Party was founded to represent the interests of the working class *within* the political structures of the British nation-state. In my terminology, this means that Labour was a nationalistic party from the beginning. Apart from Elliott's general verdict, I have failed to find any writings devoted specifically to Labour's response to or involvement in British (as opposed to regional) nationalism before 1945. For the period after 1945, I have been able to gain an impression of some aspects of Labour's involvement in British nationalism from numerous Labour Party documents as well as academic publications. In this section, I would like to discuss some of the documents and writings on Labour's involvement in British nationalism since 1945 that I have come across in the course of my studies and that have struck me as particularly interesting or significant. Two of the examples given are historical. The issue of the 'swastika stamps' in 1965 highlights how British nationalism can be embroiled in racial thinking by virtue of the way it relates to racial thinking of the past, for example in Nazi Germany. The issue of Labour's response to migration from the New Commonwealth shows that Labour Party thinking on the British nation has been racialised in relation to 'coloured people' at least from 1945. The third example I provide takes me to the last few years, during which, I believe, British nationalism has become an ever more important ingredient of Labour Party rhetoric and sloganising.

3.1.1 1965: The issue of the 'swastika stamps'

A couple of years before the thought of doing a research project on racial thinking in the Labour Party first occurred to me, I found myself stopping to think as I was reading a passage on the issue of the 'swastika stamps' in Tony Benn's diaries. In the summer of 1965, Tony Benn was

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[149] Elliott, Gregory. 1993. *Labourism and the English Genius.* London: Verso. See p. 24.

Postmaster General in Wilson's Labour government and had just issued a number of new stamp designs. One series of stamps issued was called the 'Battle of Britain stamps' and was designed to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Britain. On 2 August 1965, the entry in Tony Benn's diary contains the following passage: 'The row about the swastika on the Battle of Britain stamps is boiling up. Jewish members have put down questions and John Hynd [Labour MP for Attercliffe] has written to the Prime Minister and Herbert Bowden has written to me. I think the answer is clear and I am seeing that it is furnished to everyone who asks. Here is a shattered swastika on the split tail plane of a shot-down bomber in the English Channel with four British fighters above'.[150] In a note included in the published version of the diary (first published in 1987) Benn comments that 'the Board of Guardians of British Jews objected to the appearance of a swastika in any shape or form on the stamps and I was sharply criticised for having approved the stamps. In the event, those stamps were honoured and praised all over the world and I believe it was a storm in a teacup'.[151]

On reading these passages, T. Benn's explanation of his approval of the stamps seemed unsatisfactory to me. According to Tony Benn, it seems, opposition to the stamps was irrational, and that was sufficient grounds for discounting it. My own interpretation is rather different. It is that there might have been a perfectly rational explanation for opposition to the stamps, which should not have been discounted as lightly as Tony Benn did in 1965 and again in 1987. The fact that the 'swastika stamps' were issued as part of a series of stamps to commemorate the 'Battle of Britain' suggests to me that the swastika was used in these stamps as a German national symbol in order to symbolise a battle between two nations. But the swastika is also a symbol that is associated with the Holocaust. In the stamps, the connotations of the swastika as a symbol associated with the Holocaust were thus instrumentalised for British national commemorative purposes. The wider context of the use of the symbol was not opposition to the Nazis' genocidal policies - this was not a series of stamps on 'the battle against Nazi genocide'. Rather, the wider context of the stamps was a celebration of British nationalism - perhaps this is why apparently no representatives of groups who had been targeted by the Nazis' genocidal policies were consulted. It seems noteworthy to me that apparently T. Benn failed to recognise the possibility of such an interpretation either at the time of the incident or when he wrote the explanatory note.

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[150] Benn, Tony. 1988. *Out of the Wilderness - Diaries 1963-67*. London: Arrow Books. p. 303.

[151] Ibid., fn. 23, p. 313.

Although I think there is some irony in Tony Benn's use of a British idiomatic expression ('storm in a teacup') to assert the insignificance of the issue of the 'swastika stamps', I would not claim that the issue has been of any great or enduring historical importance. I have nevertheless included it in this thesis because, to me, it highlights the power of racial symbolism and the ease with which people can slip into nationalist ways of thinking that close their mind to alternative interpretations. In the next section, I will turn to some articulations of racial thinking in the context of British nationalism that are conventionally seen as being of greater historical significance.

3.1.2   1945-1979: The issue of Labour's response to migration from the New Commonwealth

Zig Layton-Henry, Caroline Knowles, John Solomos and others have written in some detail about the Labour Party's response to post-World War II migration from the New Commonwealth.[152] Z. Layton-Henry writes that, as early as 1948, the Labour government then in power considered migration from the New Commonwealth a 'worrying development which ought to be discouraged'. In 1951 the Cabinet decided that legislation to control colonial immigration was not justified in view of the small scale of the immigration. 'However, it was clear that it was not in principle opposed to control which it felt might become essential if there were a substantial increase in this immigration'. According to Z. Layton-Henry, between 1951 and 1958, when Labour was in opposition, 'no positive or coherent policy with regard to New Commonwealth immigration' was developed. In response to 'race riots' in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958, however, 'total opposition to immigration controls' became official Labour Party policy 'as any opposition to the open door might be seen as capitulation to the worst excesses of racism'. This was followed by a 'dramatic shift' of Labour's stance between 1962 and 1965, when Labour's policy changed to criticizing the Conservatives for passing inadequate legislation and tightening the controls.[153] For C. Knowles this shift was perhaps not quite as dramatic as indicated by Z. Layton-Henry, since Labour had always constructed 'Commonwealth immigrants' and 'the indigenous population' as mutually exclusive categories. Prominence was given to the political

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[152] See: 1) Knowles, 1992, pp. 90-108. 2) Layton-Henry, 1984, pp. 44-74; 145-165. 3) Layton-Henry, 1992, pp. 154-179. 4) Solomos, John. 1989. *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain.* London: Macmillan. pp. 40-67.

[153] Layton-Henry, 1984, pp. 46-51. Layton-Henry, 1992, p. 154.

demands of indigenous people rather than 'immigrants'. Hence when Labour agreed that immigration controls were necessary, 'it was bowing to a political logic constructed through its own accounts of the significance of immigrants, the meaning of indigenousness, and the political requirements of the indigenous population'.[154]

In the Labour government's White Paper on 'Immigration from the Commonwealth' published in August of 1965, the need for controls was explained with reference to the country's 'capacity to absorb [immigrants]'. There was a limit to that capacity since 'the presence in this country of nearly one million immigrants from the Commonwealth with different social and cultural backgrounds raises a number of problems and creates various social tensions in those areas where they have concentrated'. One of those problems was specified as 'the evil of racial strife'.[155] Clearly, the White Paper divided the social world into different racial groups and presented these groups as culturally distinct. It rationalised popular racism by suggesting 'racial strife' was the inevitable result when people belonging to different racial groups share a social space. It also rationalised institutional racism by suggesting racial strife could only be prevented by limiting the number of black people coming to Britain. According to my definitions, then, the White Paper was racist. It formed yet another element in the long history of racialised social concepts of the British nation, and it hinted at the need to strengthen existing regulations in order to prevent more black people from gaining access to the legal nation. This was promptly put into practice when a Labour government introduced the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The Act contained explicitly racial elements in that it subjected to immigration control any citizen of the United Kingdom or colonies holding a passport issued by the UK Government unless they or at least one parent or grandparent were born, adopted, naturalised or registered as a citizen of the United Kingdom and colonies in the UK.[156]

It can be argued that there was nothing dramatically new about Labour's policies in the late sixties. My various readings suggest to me that significant sections of British society had thought of the British nation in racial terms for centuries. It was only in the period after 1945 that racialised social concepts of the nation were challenged in a very conspicuous way by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of black people who enjoyed easy access to the British legal nation. In line with previous racial thinking, successive British governments made every effort to close the

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[154] Knowles, 1992, p. 97.

[155] Home Office. 1965. *Immigration from the Commonwealth*. London: HMSO. For the quotes, see pp. 2, 10.

door to such people.

Zig Layton-Henry has suggested that Labour's position was a reflex to racial thinking in the electorate rather than the outcome of racial thinking in the Labour Party itself .[157] There is, however, at least one incident which suggests to me that racialised social concepts of the British nation were influential among Labour's leaders, too. It is revealed in a diary entry of 16 December 1970 in the published version of Tony Benn's diaries:

> Executive this morning, where there was a frightful row about the Kenyan Asians resolution, which I had carried through the Home Policy and International Committees in support of Joan Lestor and against Jim Callaghan. Jim was livid so I made a few amendments to meet some of Jim's points and this was carried. When Jim realised that he was up against it he simply said, 'We don't want any more blacks in Britain': it really did reveal at bottom what it is all about.[158]

This was while Labour was in opposition. Six years later, when Labour was in government, Jim Callaghan was one of six candidates for the post of party leader (and by implication Prime Minister) vacated by Harold Wilson.[159] Callaghan's racist ideas about the British nation were known to a number of individuals who, if necessary, could have publicised them. Yet his views did not prevent him from becoming party leader and Prime Minister.

In the seventies, Labour's policies on immigration were and remained to keep the door shut to any sort of migrants other than citizens of the European Community, close relatives and relations of British citizens and limited numbers of refugees. Initially, it is true, there was some criticism of the 1971 Immigration Bill introduced by the Conservatives. In a pamphlet published in 1971, the Conservatives were accused of damaging race relations by introducing the Bill, the effect of which would be to 'discriminate in favour of white Commonwealth citizens'.[160] The authors of Labour's *Opposition Green Paper: Citizenship, Immigration and Integration*, published in 1972, also 'wholeheartedly' rejected the 1971 Immigration Act. Labour's own proposals for future immigration policy should be 'both in theory and in practice, free from race or colour bias. (...) None of us objects in principle to immigration control, but the criteria must be

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[156] See: Solomos, 1989, p. 54.

[157] See for example: Layton-Henry, 1984, pp. 69, 92, 154.

[158] Benn, Tony. 1989. *Office Without Power - Diaries 1968-72.* London: Arrow Books. p. 320.

[159] See: Pelling, Henry. 1993. *A Short History of the Labour Party. Tenth edition.* London: Macmillan. p. 167.

[160] Labour Party. 1971. 'The Immigrants'. *Talking Points,* No. 7, 23/4/1971. pp. 4, 7.

rational and non-racial and must be seen to be so'. However, the authors of the document failed to specify what those criteria should be other than stating that they should be 'clear and publicly known'.[161] When Labour was in government between 1974 and 1979, no action was taken to amend the existing legislation. Furthermore, by 1976 Labour Party literature and publicity emphasized Labour's commitment to firm immigration control. A Labour Party pamphlet entitled 'Labour against Racism' advised its readers as follows:

> All immigrants face problems when they come to a new country. Differences in language and background are very obvious. But with previous groups of newcomers, the children have very quickly blended in. With black or brown immigrants it's not so easy.[162]

Why it should be 'not so easy' for 'black or brown immigrants' to blend in is left to the reader's imagination. Perhaps because Labour thought 'black or brown immigrants' conspicuously disturbed influential racialised social concepts of the nation? Concepts that were shared by the Labour Party? That seems plausible in view of the fact that in the same pamphlet Labour gives full support to a 'tight check' on people coming into the country on the basis of existing legislation, including the 1971 Immigration Act. The authors of the pamphlet note approvingly that

> Free entry to Britain is confined to holders of United Kingdom passports who are ALSO patrials (that is people who have strong connections with Britain by birth, settlement or marriage). Citizens of the Common Market countries have the right to come to Britain to take a job. (...) But all other people need permission to come to Britain.

Nor need people worry about 'illegal immigration' since 'the laws against illegal immigration are tough and toughly enforced'. Labour took a similar stance in a Party Political Broadcast on race relations broadcast on 14 September 1976 in response to 'the increasing signs of racism in the country and also (...) the activities of the National Front and other parties of the extreme right'.[163] The broadcast took the form of statements on race and immigration by Michael Foot MP, Millie

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[161] Labour Party. [undated - 1972?]. *Opposition Green Paper - Citizenship, Immigration and Integration.* London: The Labour Party. See pp. 31, 35.

[162] Labour Party. 1976. *Labour Against Racism.* p. 4. The following quotes are from pp. 5 & 6.

[163] This quote is from a Labour Party letter to constituencies written in August of 1976. All of the material on which this section is based can be found in the Michael Foot papers at the Labour Party archives in Manchester.

Miller MP and Tom Jackson, General Secretary of the Union of Post Office Workers. It included the following passage:

> **Tom Jackson**: (...) The trade union movement was founded on solidarity, unity and international brotherhood. We must not allow anything to divide us, not race, not colour, not creed and certainly not that reckless minority who would destroy our trade union movement and our democracy, by fostering racial hatred.
>
> **Michael Foot**: Alright, you may say, but isn't this island just about full to overflowing? Don't we have to put a stop to <u>any</u> further immigration? Some people don't seem to realise just how strictly immigration to Britain is controlled already under the existing law. Apart from Common Market countries, whose citizens can come here to work as ours can go there, the only people with an absolute right, according to the law, to come here are those with a strong connection with Britain by birth, descent, settlement or marriage. Everyone else - even with a U.K. passport - needs special permission to settle here.

Despite the commitment to 'strict' immigration controls contained in Michael Foot's contribution to the broadcast, the vast majority of letters he received following the broadcast complained that Labour was too friendly towards 'immigrants'. However abusive some of these letters were, they were all answered politely: 'You are of course entitled to your views'. Only one letter of complaint was sent to Michael Foot suggesting Labour's anti-racist words were not matched by anti-racist action. This letter was marked 'ignore'.

Since 1945, social and legal concepts of the nation as developed and perpetuated by the Labour Party have not just been expressed in statements and policies on immigration. They are also an integral part of much wider party discourse on the economy, education, Europe, constitutional matters, party organisation and other issues. Most of the academic literature known to me has, however, concentrated on the issue of New Commonwealth immigration, and this is why much of this section has been taken up by this issue.

3.1.3   1994-1996: The rise of British nationalism in Labour Party rhetoric under Tony Blair

Much of central Labour Party rhetoric and sloganising in the 1980s and 1990s has been of an openly nationalistic nature. The last four election manifestos have been entitled 'The New Hope for Britain' (1983), 'Britain will win' (1987), 'It's time to get Britain working again' (1992),

and 'Britain deserves better' (1997). Recent policy documents have been entitled 'Made in Britain' (1991), 'Opportunity Britain' (1991), 'Winning for Britain' (1994), 'Making Britain's Future' (1993), 'A New Economic Future for Britain' (1995) and 'New Life for Britain' (1996). Some of these documents display the Union Jack on the front cover (see the following two pages). The desire to serve the British national interest is a recurring theme in all of these documents. Frequently, the British nation is portrayed as being in competition with other nations. The aim of government, it seems, must be to enable the nation to outcompete the other nations and come out on top:

> For the last twelve months, Britain has been bottom of the league among industrialised nations - bottom of the league for job growth, for industrial investment and for economic growth. Our industries are producing less than they were a year ago. This is no way to face the competition of the Single Market.[164]

> Britain has a declining manufacturing sector. The relative contribution of manufacturing to our economy has declined faster than most industrial nations and is now the lowest of the major European countries. The absolute output of manufacturing industry has remained virtually static in Britain since 1979, while 18 of the 22 countries in the OECD have achieved faster growth in industrial output.[165]

> Britain is a great country, full of talented people capable of competing with anyone in the world. But our country is more insecure. Our public services are failing. Our people are working harder for less. And we are falling down the world prosperity league. It need not be like this. New Labour offers a new vision and a new direction for our country.[166]

If British nationalism has been a significant ingredient in Labour Party rhetoric for some time, it seems that such rhetoric has intensified since the arrival of Tony Blair as party leader in July of 1994. As a candidate for the leadership, he published a leadership election statement which was entitled 'Change and National Renewal'. The opening sentence immediately makes the nation the focus of his political aspirations: 'I came into politics to change Britain for the better.' Why did he think it needed to be changed for the better? Not because of any social or economic inequalities or injustices either globally or in British society, but because 'we are losing faith in ourselves as

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[164] Labour Party. 1991. *Made in Britain.* pp. 4-5.

[165] Labour Party. 1993. *Making Britain's Future.* p. 3.

[166] Labour Party. 1996. *New Labour, New Life for Britain*. ['Road to the manifesto' document]. p. 1.

Fig. 2

Front page of Labour Party policy document published in 1991

Labour's better way for the 1990s

LABOU

Opportunity Britain

Labour

New markets.
New technology.
New government.

MADE IN BRITAIN
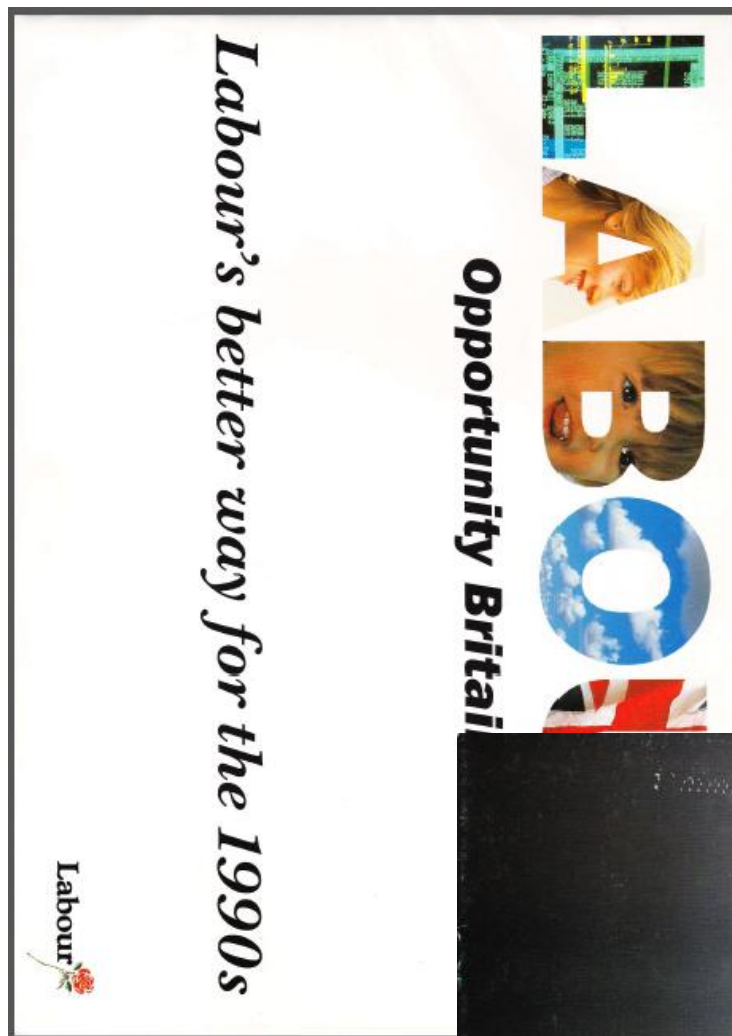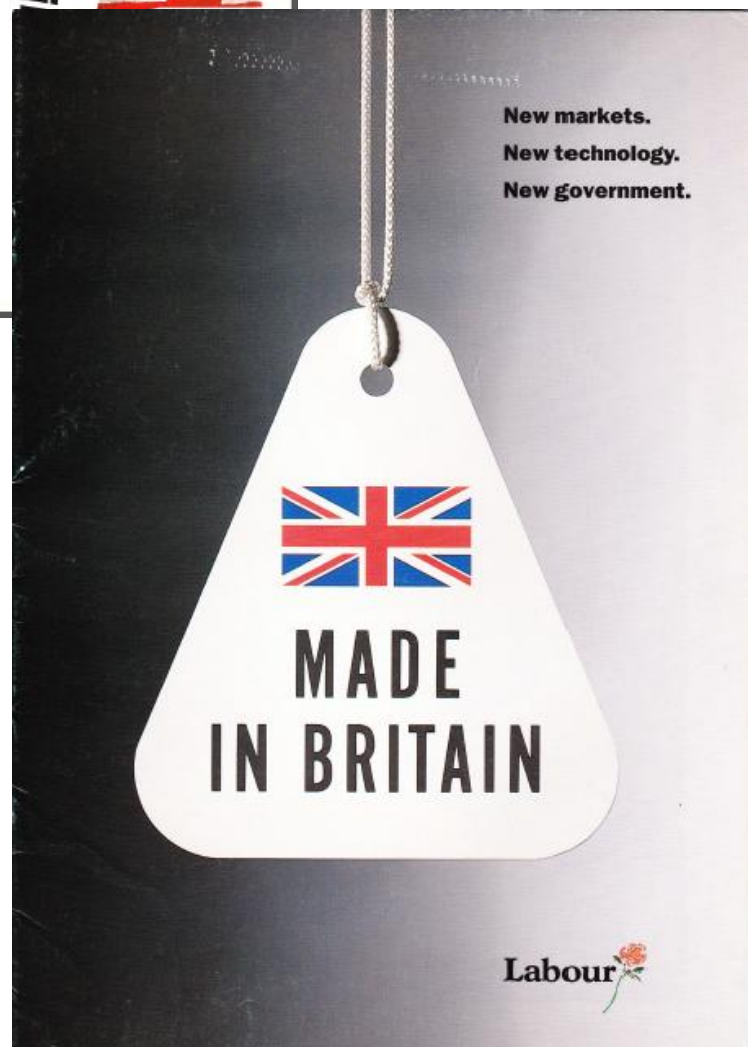
Labour

Fig. 3

Front page of policy document published in 1991

Fig. 4
Front page of Labour Party policy document published in 1994

Winning for Britain

Labour's strategy for industrial success

Labour

Labour's election manifesto

April 1992   £1

It's time to get Britain working again
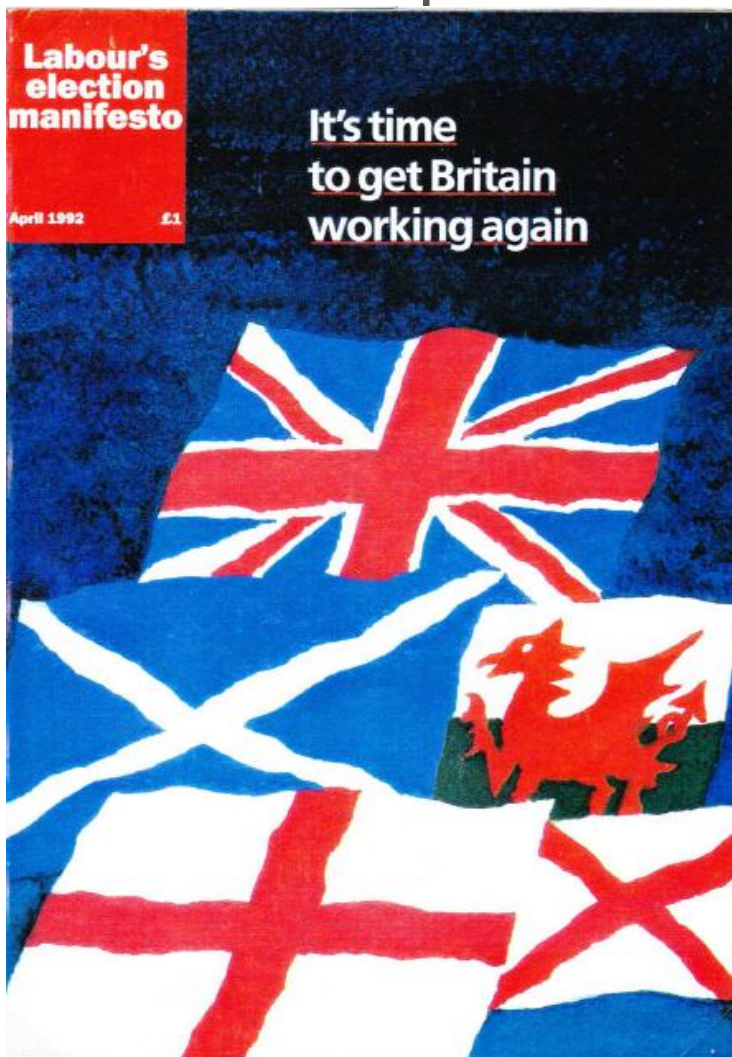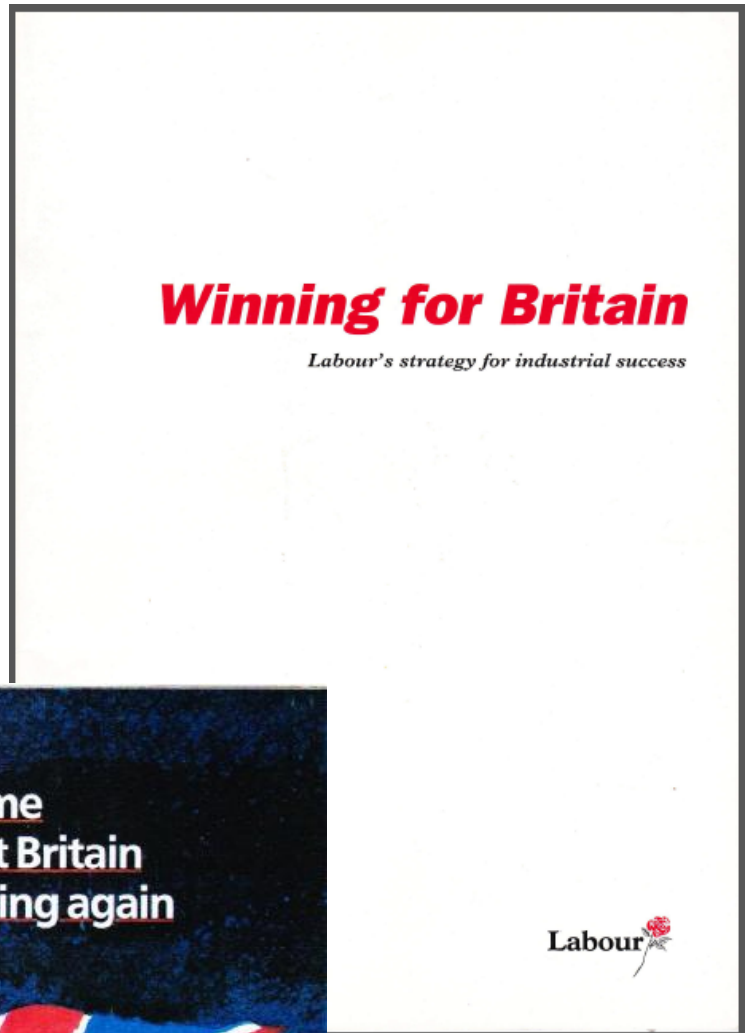
Fig. 5
Front page of Labour's 1992 general election manifesto

a nation (...) It is time to harness the natural strengths and generosity of the British people to rebuild a society of which we can all be proud'.[167] The theme of national renewal was taken up again in his speech of 21 July 1994, accepting the position of leader of the Labour Party:

> I will tell you what our task is. It is not just a programme for government. It is a mission of national renewal: a mission of hope, change and opportunity. It is a mission to lift the spirit of the nation, drawing its people together, to rebuild the bonds of common purpose that are at the heart of any country fit to be called one nation.[168]

In his first conference speech as leader of the party, once again references to the nation and national renewal featured prominently. Here, the nation was also portrayed almost as an insular site providing security against the outside world:

> Ours is a project of national renewal, renewing our commitment as a nation, as a community of people in order to prepare and provide for ourselves in the new world we face. We must build a nation with pride in itself, a thriving community, rich in economic prosperity, secure in social justice, confident in political change, a land in which our children can bring up their children with a future to look forward to.[169]

Furthermore, T. Blair has repeatedly justified policies that appear to be based on internationalism or universal values, such as policies aiming at European integration or social justice, with reference to national interests. In a passage on European integration in his 1994 conference speech, for example, he explained that

> Britain's interests demand that this country be at the forefront of the development of the new Europe. Of course Europe should change; of course we should stand up for British interests, as others stand up for theirs.[170]

This stance was repeated in a speech a few months later in Germany. When T. Blair was asked by journalists whether his comments might not be taken as nationalistic, he replied:

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[167] Blair, Tony. 1994. *Leadership Election Statement.* pp. 2, 3.

[168] Extracts of the speech have been reprinted in: Blair, Tony. 1996. *New Britain - My vision of a young country.* London: Fourth Estate. pp. 29-34. The quote is from p. 29.

[169] Labour Party. *Report of Conference - Annual Conference 1994, Special Conference 1995.* p. 106.

[170] Ibid., p. 98.

Of course Britain will defend its interests and so will Germany. (...) It's important at this time of reflection that we constantly explain to people in our country that we are not asking them to give up national interests for European interests.[171]

Likewise, according to T. Blair 'social justice' is a desirable goal on the grounds that it is in the national interest:

Social justice is about much more than the affluent and the comfortable wishing to help the poor. That is charity. Social justice is in the interests of all of us. It is in the national interest.[172]

Although since becoming leader of the Labour Party Tony Blair's rhetoric has been consistently nationalistic, a high point was reached in his 1995 Labour Party conference speech. Unsurprisingly, it was peppered once again with the now familiar references to the nation's interests and aspirations: '35th in the education league may be good enough for John Major. But I didn't come into politics satisfied for Britain to be 35th best at anything.' 'To be sidelined [in Europe] without influence is not a betrayal of Europe. It is a betrayal of Britain.' But in addition to such championing of the national interest, a central theme of the speech was that Labour is now the truly 'patriotic' party. In explaining what such patriotism might involve, Blair presented the nation once again as an insular unit, existing for itself, untouched by the wider world:

Let us rouse ourselves to a new moral purpose for our nation. (...) A nation for all the people, built by all the people. Old divisions cast out. A new spirit in the nation. Working together. Unity. Solidarity. Partnership. One Britain. That is the patriotism for the future. (...) That is the true patriotism of a nation.

He also aligned himself and the party with people who take pride in the Union Jack, thus claiming the Union Jack for the Labour Party itself:

During the VJ Day celebrations, I was on the platform with Tory ministers. And as we walked down the Mall, there were thousands of people, holding their Union Jacks, and it soon became clear - to the horror of the Tories - that many of them were Labour. They were waving and shouting and urging me to 'get the Tories out'. These are our people. They love this country, just as we do. It is because they love this country that they look to us to change it. So let us

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[171] Quoted in: *The Guardian*, 31/5/1995, p. 11.

[172] Quoted in: *The Guardian,* 6/2/1995, p. 5.

say with pride. We are patriots. This is the patriotic party. Because it is the people's party.[173]

Tony Blair is, of course, not the Labour Party, but his voice is nevertheless of great significance. Many political commentators seem to agree that to a considerable, perhaps to an unprecedented extent, he has succeeded in concentrating power in his person and a small circle of like-minded advisers. Steve Bell's recent cartoon, showing Tony Blair as Louis XIV and Peter Mandelson as T. Blair's sword, reflects both this assessment and Steve Bell's interpretation of T. Blair's view on the matter:[174]

Fig. 6

Images of Tony Blair also feature prominently both in internal party literature and in documents aimed at a wider public (see the following two pages). As a result, his words may and will be taken to represent what the Labour Party as a whole stands for.

It is, of course, not entirely surprising that Labour Party rhetoric should be nationalistic.

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[173] Blair, Tony. 1995. *Speech to 1995 Labour Party Conference.* Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. The above quotes are from pp. 9, 15, 17.

Fig. 7

Images of Tony Blair on the cover of *Labour Party News*

and in publicity material 1995-1996

Fig. 8

Images of Tony Blair on the cover of Labour's 1997 general election manifesto
and in publicity material, 1995-1996

Not just in Britain but globally political power tends to be concentrated, at least nominally, in the governments of nation-states. In parliamentary democracies, national parties striving to gain power must appeal to national electorates in order to get elected. What would be more natural than claiming to 'stand up for the national interest' in order to attract as many votes as possible? There is, however, an alternative. This would be to question the doctrine of pure nationalism and to embrace a political project aimed at the devolution of political power from the nation-state both to more global and more local levels. In such a framework, it might be possible for divisions of humanity along national lines to become less stark both in material and in social terms. In Labour Party discourse, echoes of such a project could be heard as recently as in John Smith's 1993 conference speech. Here, at least at the beginning of his speech J. Smith subordinated the agenda for the nation rhetorically to values with global applicability:

> The Labour Party has a proud history of international action. (...) Now, in a new era, it falls to our generation to provide new leadership and to strive for a new vision of peace, democracy, and economic justice. In this new world of movement and change, our commitment to a strong United Nations must be the foundation stone of our foreign policy. (...) And, having seen the divisions between East and West start to fade into history, it must now be our purpose to end the cruel division between North and South. (...) The values that propel the Labour Party's international ambition - our determined commitment to build a better world - are needed today as never before. And these same values are needed as never before in Britain, too.[175]

Three years on, in its pursuit of national power the British Labour Party's world has shrunk to the nation, its language has become uncompromisingly nationalistic. The kind of nationalism principally promoted by the party is neither European Union nationalism nor regional nationalism but British nationalism. The focus in the remaining sections of this chapter, therefore, is going to be on Labour Party thinking on the boundaries of the British nation.

3.1.4 Conclusion

Racial thinking in the Labour Party since 1945 has been related in various ways to Labour's involvement in different forms of British nationalism. A national British political party can of course hardly avoid being involved in British nationalism to some degree, if only by virtue

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[175] Labour Party. 1993. *Conference report - Ninety-second annual conference of the Labour Party.* pp. 94-95.

of being a national British party. Party political involvement in British nationalism may nevertheless be more or less enthusiastic, and it can take a variety of forms. My impression is that although the Labour Party has long had a generally favourable attitude towards British nationalism, Labour has championed the national interest particularly openly and aggressively since the arrival of Tony Blair as party leader in 1994. This adds pertinence to a question that imposed itself from the moment British nationalism was first conceived: Where, according to the Labour Party, is the British nation to be found? Who belongs to it and who doesn't, who should belong to it and who shouldn't, who should be granted access to it and who shouldn't, either in a legal or in a social sense? Does descent, does race come into the picture at all? How racialised is British nationalism as espoused by the Labour Party?

It may well be impossible to formulate a single and coherent answer to these questions. Within the ever changing totality of Labour Party political rhetoric and practices, references to the social boundaries of the nation are both dispersed and diverse. Nevertheless, I believe that some significant trends and tendencies can be identified. In order to do this, I will first look at the question of how recent Labour Party statements and documents express or promote particular social concepts of the British nation.

3.2   Labour's social concepts of the British nation today

In this section, I would like to identify and analyse social concepts of the British nation as expressed by the Labour Party in recent debates and speeches at Labour Party conferences, in policy documents, and in the writings or speeches of individuals holding prominent positions in the Labour Party. My particular interest will be to determine the extent to which Labour Party documentation expresses or promotes racialised social concepts of the British nation.[176]

3.2.1   The British nation as a community of descent

In Labour Party publicity or speeches by Labour politicians over the last few years, the nation is variously addressed as 'the nation', 'the people (of Britain)', 'British people', 'the British

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[176] Some expressions of social concepts of the British nation in the context of some recent Labour Party campaigns (including the annual conferences of 1995 and 1996, the general election campaign of 1997 and Labour's activities in the House of Commons in the early 1990s) will be discussed separately in subsequent sections (see in particular sections 3.5 and 4.3).

people', 'our people', 'our country', 'British citizens', 'our citizens' or simply 'Britain'. In Labour's new constitutional statement of aims and values, the nation is addressed as 'the British people', 'the nation' and 'the people'.[177] A rough count of the most common expressions to be found in other Labour Party texts, including speeches and policy documents, suggests to me that here 'Britain' is used most frequently, followed by 'the British people', 'our people', 'the nation' and 'our country'. References to 'the people (of Britain)', 'British people' and 'British citizens' or 'our citizens' seem to be used less frequently. On account of both their historical and contemporary use, which is present in people's minds as a result of the continual exposure to such use over time, all of these expressions carry racial connotations to a greater or lesser extent. To my mind, as suggested in my remarks on British nationalism in chapter 2 of this thesis, this is particularly true of expressions such as 'the British people' or 'our people'. References to 'the nation', too, carry racial connotations due to the fact that historically 'nation' and 'race' have at times been used almost interchangeably. But there is also a strong tradition of meaning that equates 'the nation' with 'the community of citizens', the latter concept being virtually synonymous with the nation in a strictly legal sense. The racial content is, of course, even less pronounced where a direct appeal to the concept of 'citizenship' is made.

But even where the reference is to 'citizens', it does not automatically follow that no racial meaning is involved, for the question of who these citizens are or who they are supposed to be remains. As a rule, in party political rhetoric this question is only answered indirectly through particular characterisations of the legal nation. In Tony Blair's speech at the 1995 annual conference, for example, national renewal was referred to by means of a biological metaphor both in the opening statement

> Today I place before you my vision of a new Britain. *A nation reborn.* Prosperous, secure, united. One Britain.

and in the closing statement:

> New Labour. New Britain. The party renewed. *The country reborn.* New Labour. New Britain.[178]

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[177] See: Labour Party. 1996. *Labour Party rule book as approved by the 1995 Annual Labour Party Conference.* p. 4.

[178] Blair, Tony. 1995. *Speech to 1995 Labour Party Conference.* Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. pp. 1, 18 (my emphasis).

In the closing statement of his 1996 conference speech, the nation was once again characterised as a community of descent:

> Let us lead [our nation] to our new Age of Achievement and build *for us, our children, and their children*, a Britain, united, to win in the new Millennium.[179]

In addition to dispersed biological metaphors and references to the principle of descent in order to characterise the nation, I am struck by the frequency of references to a specific 'British national character' in Labour Party discourse. In his 1994 conference speech, for example, Tony Blair stated that

> The British people are a great people. (...) We have an innate sense of fair play. (...) But if we have a fault as a people it is that, unless roused, we tend to let things be. (...) I say it is time we were roused as a nation.[180]

The reference to 'an innate sense of fair play' is a direct reference to the national community as a supposed community of descent. It would be mistaken to believe the passage quoted was an isolated slip of the tongue. Allusions to an innate British national character have also been made by Gordon Brown. In a document on economic policy of 1991, G. Brown is quoted as follows:

> I believe that there is a native inventive genius in Britain. You can see it in inventions from the steam-engine to the television. But far too much now is invented in Britain and made abroad (...) We must have a policy for industry, a policy that brings every part of our country into a huge national effort to make us once again a great industrial economy.[181]

Earlier in the document, the Labour Party announces its belief that 'Britain is at its best when we use our people's inventive genius to make goods and sell them to the world'.[182] In his 1995 conference speech, G. Brown again alluded to a native inventive genius:

> The country which manufactured the first radio, the first TV and the first computer should not be sacking scientists and teachers. Nor should we be cutting investment in manufacturing, but should once again be an innovation

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[179] Blair, Tony. 1996. *Text of speech by Tony Blair at the Labour Party Annual Conference, Tuesday 1st October 1996.* Blackpool: The Labour Party. p. 14 (my emphasis).

[180] Labour Party. 1995. *Report of Conference - Annual Conference 1994, Special Conference 1995.* p. 106.

[181] Quoted in: Labour Party. 1991. *Made in Britain.* p. 19.

[182] Ibid., p. 16.

and manufacturing capital of the world - doing what Britain has the potential to do best - harnessing our creative talents to modern technology.[183]

He proceeded to hammer home the idea of innate British characteristics in his 1996 conference speech. Seeking to explain Britain's decline in the world, he asked:

> Are we falling behind because the British people lack inventiveness, or creative skills? Britain - with a history of invention and achievement second to none. Is it because we lack the ability to adapt, the qualities needed to cope with fast moving change? Britain - which has adapted time and time again in peace and in war. Is it because we undervalue education or are unwilling to extend opportunities to all? Britain - with its faith in education and self improvement and its innate sense of fair play. No. It is because for years now our creative talents, our willingness to adapt, our belief in education and in opportunity for all - have been shouted down in the name of a hostile dogma. These innate British qualities have been stifled and ground under by a crude free market ideology based on the narrow pursuit of self interest by the few at the expense of the many.[184]

All in all, I find it difficult to avoid the impression that references to an innate British character in Labour Party rhetoric are both deliberate and systematic. Do Labour's leaders in any way believe in this racist nonsense or do they just include it for tactical purposes? I am not sure which of these two possibilities I would find more alarming.

3.2.2   The British nation as a collectivity of white people: Labour's memory of empire

In recent Labour Party rhetoric, the legal nation has been characterised in a number of ways that suggest a racial social concept of the nation not as an undefined community of descent, but specifically as a collectivity of white people. One of the themes underlying these characterisations is once again the theme of national renewal that is so fundamental to T. Blair's rhetoric. The idea of national renewal presupposes that there was a time when things went well for Britain, followed by some sort of decline. In his conference speech of 1994, Tony Blair spoke of 'proud, democratic traditions', alluded to British victory in two world wars and stated in

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[183] Brown, Gordon. 1995. *Speech to 1995 Labour Party Conference.* Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. p. 3.

[184] Brown, Gordon. 1996. *Text of speech by Gordon Brown at the Labour Party Annual Conference, Monday 30th September 1996.* Blackpool: The Labour Party. pp. 3-4.

general terms that 'we [the British people] (...) have a great history and culture'.[185] In his 1995 conference speech, he made it clear that the British Empire, too, formed part of that 'great history and culture':

> We had an Empire and formed a Commonwealth. (...) We are proud of our history but its weight hangs heavy upon us. (...) I want us to be a young country again. (...) Not resting on past glories (...) Not saying: 'this was a great country' But 'Britain can and will be a great country again'.[186]

In his 1996 conference speech, he specified that the nation could be particularly proud of the size of Britain's former empire:

> Consider a thousand years of British history and what it tells us. The first parliament of the world. The industrial revolution ahead of its time. An empire, the largest the world has ever known.[187]

Nostalgia for British world domination is also expressed in policy documents, as in this passage from a document about industrial policy published in 1993:

> Britain has a proud manufacturing history. For a hundred years after the Industrial Revolution we were the largest industrial economy and dominated world trade (...). We invite the participation in building that partnership of everyone who shares our believe [sic] that Britain can once again take its place in the front rank of industrial nations.[188]

And in Labour's 'Road to the Manifesto' document of 1996:

> For Britain, these changes [in international relations over the last 50 years] have been especially acute as we seek, after almost two centuries of world dominance, a new role for ourselves as a leader of nations. (...) We want to feel good about our country, not just about its past, but about its future too.[189]

But *who* had the Empire and dominated the world? People who were supposed to be of British or

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[185] Labour Party. 1995. *Report of Conference - Annual Conference 1994, Special Conference 1995.* p. 106.

[186] Blair, Tony. 1995. *Speech to 1995 Labour Party Conference.* Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. pp. 5-6.

[187] Blair, Tony. 1996. *Text of speech at the Labour Party Annual Conference, Tuesday 1st October 1996.* Blackpool: The Labour Party. p. 12.

[188] Labour Party. 1993. *Making Britain's Future.* p. 14.

[189] Labour Party. 1996. *New Labour, New Life for Britain.* pp. 5-6.

perhaps European descent. Racial thinking was fundamental to the economic and political structures of the British and other European overseas empires, and most people listening to T. Blair's speeches or reading Labour's documents are likely to be conscious of this fact. Consequently, it is a community of supposed British or European descent that is addressed as the nation in these texts. Black people, in fact all non-white people, are symbolically excluded.[190] This exclusion is reinforced by Labour's use of the Union Jack as a national symbol in Labour Party documents and ritual. In his 1995 conference speech, Tony Blair claimed the Union Jack rhetorically by referring to flag waving supporters of Labour as 'our people'. In 1996, the issue of the Union Jack was on the agenda again. It was opened by Robin Cook, Labour's current Shadow Foreign Secretary, in his speech on Europe:

> I'll tell you what the Tory game is. They are going to try to fight the election wrapped in a Union Jack. (...) We are patriots too. Every one of us in this hall. But we don't have to prove our patriotism by waving little Union Jacks stamped "Made in China".[191]

This passage appears to carry a commitment not to use the Union Jack in any ostentatious way as the Tories are alleged to do. But there is some ambivalence here. What Robin Cook disapproves of is the *waving* of the Union Jack, not a quiet commitment to the flag. Does that mean Labour people should carry the Union Jack in their hearts rather than their hands? Furthermore, he does not object to the waving of any Union Jacks but of Union Jacks 'made in China'. Because they are not British enough? Because the fact that they are made in China symbolises the decline of British industry? A few hours after Robin Cook's speech, when Tony Blair had spoken, the Labour Party waved the Union Jack anyway. A sizable image of the Union Jack was projected onto the wall behind the conference platform. In addition, on the final day of conference a not so little Union Jack (stamped "Made in Britain"?) was unfurled and draped from the balcony of the conference hall (see the photo in section 3.5.2). In the context of party political conferences and in the absence of any alternative explanations, such displays of the Union Jack imply pride in Britain's imperial history, since this is one of the connotations the Union Jack carries. Such connotations are beyond the control of the Labour Party and cannot easily be

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[190] A similar analysis in relation to Conservative nationalistic rhetoric can be found in: Miles, Robert. 1993. *Racism after 'race relations'*. London: Routledge. pp. 74-76.

[191] Cook, Robin. 1996. *Text of speech at the Labour Party Annual Conference, Tuesday 1st October 1996*. Blackpool: Labour Party Conference '96 Media Office. p. 2.

obliterated, even if there were any explanations to the contrary. In the event, no such explanations have been forthcoming from the Labour Party. The Labour Party is making no attempt to question pride in the British Empire. Labour's rhetoric and Labour's use of the flag mutually reinforce one another to express a social concept of the nation as a white community.

Inverted colonial imagery has also been used by prominent figures on the left of the Labour Party to define the social nation. Paul Gilroy has quoted an article by Tony Benn, published in 1982, as an example. Here, the British nation is not described as a community ruling over an empire but as a community of subjects ruled by a colonial administration in the form of the Conservative government. Three years later, Tony Benn continued to pursue the same analogy in his contribution to an 'Alliance for Socialism' conference. On this occasion, the *Socialist Action* journal quoted him as follows:

> I agree with what has been said, that Britain is the last colony left in the British empire, and that all the techniques of repression that were tried elsewhere are now being used against our own people. Anyone who saw that recent TV programme, *Brass Tacks*, about the police will know that the colonial policing methods have been applied here.[192]

Paul Gilroy finds T. Benn's analogy inappropriate on the grounds that it 'trivialized the bitter complexities of anti-colonial struggle'.[193] I would add that, for me, this passage evokes an image of the British nation as a white community. The reference to 'our own people' invites a comparison between the fate of 'colonial peoples' and 'our own people'. Both expressions carry strong racial connotations. As a result, I end up reading the passage as inviting a comparison between the liberation struggle of black people in the colonies and the anticipated liberation struggle of white people in Britain.

3.2.3 The British nation as a collectivity of white, Christian people: Labour's position on the British constitution

There remains in Britain today a class of people whose special legal and political status *within* the legal nation derives from their descent. The head of state is one of them, while others

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[192] Quoted in: *Socialist Action*, 22/11/1985, p. 6.

[193] Gilroy, 1987, p. 57.

sit and vote in the Upper House of Parliament. Members of this class perform important constitutional functions, including that of formally representing the British legal nation both in Britain and abroad. Collectively, they are called the British aristocracy. They are not usually considered to form a particular racial group (at least not these days) since their 'geographical origin' is thought to be dispersed throughout Britain and Europe. To the extent, however, that people think in racial terms at all, making for example a distinction between white/'European' and non-white/'non-European' people, they are likely to classify the British aristocracy as belonging to the racial group of white people. They will conclude that in Britain representative constitutional functions including the highest office of state are effectively reserved for people of 'European descent'. As a result, the principle of heredity in the constitution promotes a social concept of the legal nation as a collectivity of white or 'European' people. Those who succeed to the throne are of course also preferably male rather than female and are supposed to be members of the Church of England. Taken together, the principles governing access to the position of head of state in Britain promote a social concept of the legal nation as a collectivity of white men who are also members of the Church of England.

Although in October of 1994 it was reported that '44% of Labour MPs want a republic',[194] the official party line is to unequivocally support the monarchy, including the principle of heredity. Labour's *Charter of Rights*, for example, sets out Labour's plans for 'equal opportunities' in many walks of life but fails to demand equal opportunities for every citizen to become head of state.[195] Whilst the Policy Handbook of 1996 calls it 'absurd that people sitting and voting in the upper house of our Parliament should wield power on the basis of birth not merit or election', it goes on to state that 'reform of the House of Lords will not affect the constitutional position or role of the monarchy, which we have no intention of changing'.[196] This statement also implies that Labour has no plans for changing the arrangement whereby the British head of state doubles as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Nor have I found any indications in Labour Party documentation that would indicate opposition to the exclusive rights enjoyed by representatives of Christianism to occupy seats in the House of Lords.

In the political debate about the monarchy, many arguments for and against have been

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[194] See: *Independent on Sunday*, 23/10/94, p. 1. The *Independent on Sunday* questioned one hundred backbench Labour MPs 'from all wings of the party and from all parts of Britain'.

[195] Labour Party. 1990. *The Charter of Rights - Guaranteeing individual liberty in a free society.* pp. 10-11.

[196] Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook*. p. 4.2.2.

produced over the last few years. I think the idea that the principle of heredity contributes to the racialisation of social concepts of the British legal nation might well merit consideration as an argument against. In Labour Party rhetoric or policy, such an argument is nowhere to be found. I consider that by supporting the current constitutional position and role of the monarchy, the Labour Party is supporting a powerful social representation of the legal nation as a collectivity of white, Christian people.

3.2.4 The British nation as a mix of different racial groups

Not every one of Labour's leading figures promotes similar types of racial thinking about the social boundaries of the nation as Tony Blair or Gordon Brown. The main exception is perhaps Robin Cook. In an article about former Yugoslavia, he wrote:

> Western nationalism of the 19th century aimed to build a common loyalty to the state that conveyed a mutual territory, and therefore offered similar democratic rights of citizenship to multiple ethnic groups. The nationalism now feeding the conflicts of eastern Europe is based not on territory, but on ethnic identity, and is trying to build a polity based on ethnic, not state, citizenship'.[197]

At Labour's 1995 conference, R. Cook spoke about the conflict in former Yugoslavia in the following terms:

> For the first time since the defeat of fascism, European states are being carved out behind borders drawn up by ethnic cleansing. We want for Britain a society built on the principles of ethnic pluralism, religious tolerance and resistance to discrimination. We cannot watch those values being destroyed on the borders of the European Union without weakening those values throughout Europe.[198]

Leaving aside the historical accuracy of R. Cook's characterisation of 19th century nationalism in western Europe, the social concept of the British and other western European nations expressed in the first of these quotes is, in the first instance, that of a community of people resident in a common territory rather than that of a racial community. R. Cook's social concept of western European nations of the 19th century is nevertheless racialised in that he speaks of the nation as

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[197] Cook, Robin. 1994. 'Bosnia: what Labour would do'. In: *The Guardian*, 10/12/1994, p. 26.

[198] Cook, Robin. 1995. *Speech at the Labour Party Conference 1995 on Thursday 5 October 1995.* Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. p. 3.

being composed of a number of 'ethnic groups'. He thus introduces into his social concept of the nation the question of the significance of the nation's 'ethnic composition'. In the second quote, he contrasts the principle of 'ethnic pluralism' with the idea that groups should be expelled from a territory on the grounds of their membership of an ethnic group. He thus speaks out for the acceptance of the composition of the British nation *as currently constituted*, including people from different 'ethnic groups'. What he is less clear about in the passages quoted is whether *any* ethnic composition of the British nation would be as good as any other. As indicated above, Labour Party rhetoric and policies tend to answer this question in the negative in many different ways.

In policy documents, the nation is usually described as 'ethnically diverse' or 'multiracial' only in the context of discussing proposals to combat racial discrimination or racist violence. Another field of Labour Party thinking in which Labour has long perceived the British legal nation as 'ethnically diverse' is in relation to the demand for black sections in the Labour Party and the establishment of a Black Socialist Society. Labour's pronouncements and actions in these fields contribute to the array of social concepts of the British nation that are constructed through diverse elements of Labour Party discourse. Although they contradict racist concepts of the British nation as a (perfect) community of descent, they are not necessarily unproblematic. The significance of Labour Party thinking on the nation as 'racially diverse' in the context of various 'antiracist' initiatives will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4 of this thesis.

3.2.5   Conclusion

Since Labour is a nationalistic party in relation to Britain, it is inevitable that Labour Party pronouncements and documents express and promote particular social concepts of the British nation. Some of these social concepts of the nation are racialised to a greater or lesser extent. Racial imagery permeates the language used by Labour Party politicians when they address the legal nation in their speeches, racial ideas about the nation are in evidence when they talk about Britain's imperial past and Britain's present position in the world, and racial thinking is present in Labour's 'antiracist' policies and their thinking on the issue of Labour's structures and strategies as an organisation. Sometimes Labour Party rhetoric or policies imply or promote social concepts of the British nation as a white community, sometimes all that is suggested is the

importance of the principle of descent in defining the nation. In these cases, what is implied is that all groups of people whose ancestors are thought to have migrated to Britain at some point in the course of what is defined as 'British history' are to be considered as special cases. The result is a social concept of the nation that potentially excludes Jewish people, black people and any people deemed to be the descendants of people of non-British nationality.

Racialised social concepts of the nation may be and are being promoted by the Labour Party in a variety of contexts. They include documents and speeches on a broad range of issues, from the economy to the monarchy. One field of policy that I have deliberately omitted to mention in my discussion of Labour's social concepts of the British nation is that of nationality and immigration. Labour Party thinking on nationality and immigration is not only bound to express and promote particular social concepts of the British nation, but, if put into practice, will also shape the legal boundaries of the nation in ways that may be racialised to a greater or lesser extent. This is why I have devoted a separate section to a consideration of the issue of Labour Party thinking on the boundaries of the British legal nation.

3.3 Labour Party thinking on the constitution of the British legal nation

In Labour's rhetoric and policies on the British legal nation, social concepts of the nation are transformed into policy proposals which may determine who can gain access to the British legal nation and who can't. Labour's policy proposals relating to the constitution of the legal nation may in turn help to promote particular social concepts of the nation in British society. In this section, I would like to identify Labour Party thinking on the British legal nation by analysing Labour's policies on British nationality and on immigration. Taken together, these two sets of policies can be taken to represent current Labour Party thinking on the constitution of the British legal nation.

3.3.1 Labour Party thinking on British nationality law

In 1981, British nationality law was fundamentally reshaped by the British Nationality Act. Labour opposed many aspects of this Act in Parliament and in the parliamentary standing

committee where it was debated in greater detail.[199] In my discussion of Labour's position in relation to this Act, I will restrict myself to the clause ending the automatic acquisition of nationality on the grounds of birth in the United Kingdom and the clause relating to naturalisation.

Labour members on the standing committee proposed that British nationality should continue to be acquired automatically as a result of birth in the territory of the United Kingdom. The main reasons, set out by Roy Hattersley and Alexander W. Lyon, were that this rule provided for a simple way of establishing citizenship and that it was 'fair' to grant citizenship at birth to all rather than just some people born in Britain. In addition, John Tilley asserted that 'we cannot escape (...) from the fact that there is tacit but clear racialism in the clause. Its fundamental aim is to limit future black immigration'. The government's representative on the committee, Timothy Raison, did in fact indicate the government's view that the existing *ius soli* provision resulted in an undesirably large pool of potential future immigrants. This was because, under the *ius soli* rule, once children born in Britain to parents 'who have remained here in breach of conditions of entry' had 'gone home' with their parents, 'their children, born overseas years later, will be British citizens by descent'. Clearly, the government's worry was that such British citizens might then decide to come to Britain to settle there. Timothy Raison also argued that, under the *ius soli* rule, it was impossible to enforce deportation of 'children born here to parents who are here in breach of the immigration law'. Although the government was happy to deport the parents of such children, 'various international courts (...) might find in the course of time that it was wrong to remove the parents of a patrial child'. To preclude this possibility, children of people in breach of the immigration law should not be allowed to become British citizens in the first place.

Labour's 1983 election manifesto included a pledge to restore 'the right to automatic citizenship if born in Britain'.[200] No such commitment was contained in Labour's 1987 election manifesto, whilst the 1992 manifesto reasserted the position that Labour will 'restore the right to British citizenship for every child born in Britain'.[201] Labour's 1996 Road to the Manifesto document *New Labour, New Life for Britain* once again omits any mention of the issue of nationality. Even the more detailed *Policy Handbook* for Labour Party candidates and

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[199] For the following references to the committee debate see: Standing Committee F of the House of Commons. 1981. *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons Official Report.* pp. 8-25, 50, 41-42, 629.

[200] Labour Party. 1983. *The New Hope for Britain. Labour's Manifesto 1983*. p. 29.

[201] Labour Party. 1992. *It's time to get Britain working again. Labour's election manifesto*. p. 24.

campaigners, published in 1996, makes no mention of the issue of nationality.

In the committee debate on the clause relating to naturalisation in the 1981 British Nationality Act, Labour moved an amendment that would have removed the Home Secretary's discretion in granting or refusing naturalisation. A corresponding commitment was contained in the 1983 Election Manifesto: '[Our Nationality Act] will enable other Commonwealth and foreign nationals [i.e. those not born in Britain] to acquire citizenship if they qualify by objective tests, and provide a right of appeal against the refusal of an application for citizenship'.[202] There was, however, no indication of the nature of the objective criteria that would have to be met. Since 1983, no policy statements on naturalisation have been made in any other election manifestos. The policy document *The Charter of Rights*, published in 1990, contains a section on immigration, citizenship and asylum. The document states that 'the present discretionary elements within the law' should be removed 'wherever possible', but fails to specify whether this would apply to applications for naturalisation. Nor does it give any indication of the conditions that would have to be met in order to qualify for naturalisation.[203] No policies on naturalisation are included in Labour's *Policy Handbook* published in 1996.

Labour is conspicuously silent on the issue of nationality not only in its policy statements but also when highly publicised judicial cases would grant them a good opportunity to explain their thinking to a wider public. When the Home Office refused Harrod's chairman Mohamed Al Fayed British citizenship even though he had lived in Britain for thirty years, Mr Fayed went to the High Court. One year later the High Court ruled the Home Secretary had acted lawfully under the 1981 Nationality Act. According to reports in the *Guardian*, the judge explained that 'whether it was right for candidates for citizenship to have their applications refused without knowing the reasons was a matter for Parliament'.[204] For all I know, Labour has failed to use this case (or any others) to put forward their own proposals for changing the law relating to the issue of naturalisation.

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[202] Labour Party. 1983. *The New Hope for Britain. Labour's Manifesto 1983*. p. 29.

[203] Labour Party. 1990. *The Charter of Rights.* p. 12.

[204] *The Guardian*, 27/2/96 p. 2; 4/3/95, p.3.

3.3.2 Labour Party thinking on immigration

Easy access to the British legal nation for people who are not of British descent is of little value if such people are not allowed to enter Britain or settle there in the first place. Hence, what have been Labour's policies on the issue of immigration since 1979? In a nutshell, they have hardly changed at all. As far as Labour is concerned, only European Union citizens, close relatives and relations of British citizens, and limited numbers of refugees should be allowed to settle in Britain.[205]

If Labour's policies haven't changed, how about their rhetoric? In the early eighties, Labour Party rhetoric shifted away from the idea that strict immigration control is necessary for 'good race relations'. The authors of a 1980 Labour Party discussion document on citizenship and immigration conceded that

> we have allowed ourselves to be persuaded that more restrictive immigration measures are in the best interests of good race relations. The opposite is the truth. The sanctioning of racialism in public argument over immigration has added to the virulence of racism.[206]

In 1983, a document published by the Labour Party Research Department stated the idea that 'strict immigration control is the key to good race relations' was

> based on the erroneous assumption that colour prejudice is exacerbated in proportion to the number of black people in the country. But experience of the last 20 years reveals that imposing ever tighter restrictions on black immigration has quite the reverse effect; it increases the extent of racial prejudice and the degree of racial tension.[207]

By 1996, even Roy Hattersley, MP and former deputy leader of the Labour Party, had been converted. In the *Guardian*, he confessed that 'many years ago' he had written in the *Spectator* that 'integration without limitation is impossible and limitation without integration is indefensible'. While the Conservatives had since then moved to accept this idea, 'I have shifted a

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[205] See: Labour Party. 1990. *The Charter of Rights.* p. 12; Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook*, p. 3.13.2.

[206] Labour Party. 1980. *Citizenship and Immigration - A Labour Party Discussion Document.* p. 7.

[207] Labour Party Research Department. 1983. *Research Note 26: "Questions about Race".* p. 1.

little myself. For now I think (...) I was wrong'.[208]

But what is the significance of Labour's change of rhetoric, considering it has not been accompanied by any change of policy? I suspect the change of rhetoric has been made possible by the fact that the threat to racialised social concepts of the nation that was posed by New Commonwealth immigration in the fifties and the sixties has now subsided. The inflow of significant numbers of black people with immediate access to the legal nation has effectively been stopped. No new measures need to be taken. The old rationalisations used to justify ever tighter immigration rules have become redundant. The Conservatives, it is true, are bent on tightening the immigration rules ever more, so it comes as no surprise that they continue to employ the same type of rationalisations to justify similar types of change.[209] Labour is happy with the situation as it is and has therefore been able to discard such rationalisations.

Meanwhile Labour has found a new formula to characterise their immigration policies: 'fair but firm'. Labour's *Campaign Handbook* on *Race, Immigration and the Racialists* of 1978 is the earliest document in which I have found a demand for immigration laws that are 'firm but fair'.[210] By 1992, the first 'key point' in a policy statement on immigration and nationality was that 'Labour is committed to fair but firm immigration control'.[211] Readers of Labour's *Policy Handbook* of 1996 are told that 'we want a fair, firm and efficient immigration and asylum policy'.[212] But what does 'fair, firm and efficient' mean? At the 1995 Labour Party conference, I attended a fringe meeting on immigration and refugee policy in order to find out.

The event was organised by the Institute for Public Policy Research. Among the speakers were Barbara Roche MP, a member of the shadow Home Office team who had been invited to explain 'the official party line', and Lord Alf Dubs, a former Labour Party spokesperson on race relations and immigration. Barbara Roche opened her speech by explaining it was *extremely* important to keep the issues of immigration and refugees separate. Regrettably, the Conservatives had merged these two issues as if they were the same thing. She then described Labour's policy on immigration as 'firm but fair'. When asked what a 'fair' immigration policy was, she said it meant that controls should be properly and efficiently administered, and there should be no

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[208] Hattersley, Roy. 1996. 'How I stopped feeling sorry for Asylum Ann'. In: *The Guardian*, 26/2/1996, p. 10.

[209] See: *The Guardian*, 26/2/1996, p. 10; *The Observer*, 10/12/95, p. 3.

[210] Labour Party. 1978. *Campaign Handbook - Race, Immigration and The Racialists*. p. 2.

[211] Labour Party. 1992. *Labour's policy on immigration and nationality.*

[212] Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook.* p. 3.13.2.

discrimination on the grounds of race. She added that 'Labour has always been in favour of controls'. Alf Dubs opened his speech by claiming the issue of immigration had consistently been seen as a vote loser by the Labour Party. He reiterated that the issues of immigration and asylum needed to be treated differently because asylum was a human rights issue while, as a rule, immigration was not. He argued that there need not be a change of public policy in order to 'do some good'. It might, for example, be possible to allow people who have been in Britain for ten years to stay on an informal basis. He said it was difficult to find the right balance between pursuing the right policies and not losing elections.

The statements made by Barbara Roche and Alf Dubs confirmed my suspicions: 'Firm' means that under Labour only European Union citizens, close relatives and relations of British citizens and refugees would be allowed to migrate to Britain, 'fair' means that nobody else would be allowed to migrate to Britain, and 'efficient' means that the system would be run efficiently. The distinction made between refugees and other migrants is rationalised with reference to the supposedly fundamentally different nature of these two categories. No particular justification is given for keeping out 'ordinary migrants', presumably on the grounds that this policy merely affirms the status quo. To say that 'this has always been our policy' is deemed to be sufficient. But how welcoming is Labour's policy to those people who are in fact allowed to come to Britain under existing regulations?

On refugees, Labour's rhetoric and policy proposals are certainly more welcoming than those of the Conservatives. The latter's policies on refugees have notoriously included the complete withdrawal of benefit from thousands of refugees, a measure that has been described by a High Court judge as 'uncompromisingly draconian', contemplating 'a life so destitute that to my mind no civilised nation can tolerate it'.[213] At Labour's annual conference of 1996, a composite expressing opposition to the withdrawal of benefit and other Tory measures aimed at curbing the number of refugees was passed unanimously. What action Labour would take to reverse restrictions imposed on refugees by the Conservatives is perhaps less certain. In an article in the *Caribbean Times* of 18/7/96, Labours Shadow Social Security Secretary, Chris Smith, is quoted as saying: 'If we can produce the same amount of savings [as produced by the withdrawal of benefit] by speeding up the process [of dealing with requests for asylum] then we will use these

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[213] Quoted in: *The Guardian*, 22/6/96, p. 2.

savings to restore the right to benefit'.[214] There is also some ambivalence in Labour's position on the detention of refugees without charge for indefinite periods of time. A composite at the 1995 Labour Party conference calling on the party to campaign for the closure of all detention centres was remitted at the request of the NEC. Subsequently, no such campaign was initiated by the NEC.[215] At the fringe meeting on immigration mentioned above, Barbara Roche MP explained that Labour had no plans to scrap detention. Rather, 'under Labour, detention will be more efficient'. At the 1996 conference, a composite was passed in which Conference merely 'deplores the great increase in the numbers of refugees detained by the Home office and the length of such detentions'.[216]

Labour's policies on admitting to Britain close relatives and relations of British citizens are once again more welcoming than those of the Conservatives, but perhaps not dramatically so. According to the *Policy Handbook* of 1996, Labour is for example committed to abolishing the primary purpose rule. This rule prevents spouses of British citizens from joining their partners in Britain if immigration officers believe the primary purpose of the marriage was to gain entry to Britain.[217] Labour's opposition to this rule is, however, less than principled:

> Immigration rules introduced by Labour in the 1970s already require couples to demonstrate that a marriage is genuine and will not be a burden on the taxpayer if a spouse is entering the UK from outside the EU. We see no need for the unnecessary duplication created by the "primary purpose" rule.[218]

Labour is also committed to changing current regulations under which visitors' visas for family events are frequently refused. But this does not mean that under Labour visitors would be entitled to attend family events. Rather, those refused entry would have a right of appeal.[219] When the media report on deportations that involve the splitting of families, the national Labour Party generally fails to speak out against such deportations. Nor does it use such cases to highlight what difference their own policies would make. Perhaps because it is deemed they would not make

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[214] Quoted in: *Caribbean Times*, 18/7/1996, p. 6.

[215] See: 1) Labour Party. 1995. *Conference 95 - Conference Arrangements Committee Report*, p. 32. 2) Labour Party, National Executive Committee. *National Executive Committee Report 1996*. p. 40.

[216] Labour Party. 1996. *Conference 96 - Conference Arrangements Committee Report.* p. 33.

[217] See: Grant, Larry. 1995. 'Trapped in the pages of a Catch 22 rule book'. In: *The Guardian*, Society, pp. 2-3.

[218] Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook.* p. 3.13.2.

[219] Ibid.

much of a difference?

Migration from the European Union is perhaps the issue where official Labour Party policy and official Conservative Party policy resemble one another most. Both parties are united in their desire to keep as tight a check as possible on migration from the European Union by maintaining internal border controls. Labour's position is summarised succinctly in their Policy Handbook of 1996:

> **Will Labour join other European countries in abolishing border controls to allow people to travel freely within the EU?** No. Labour believes that immigration border controls are a matter for the UK government and parliament to decide. We have no intention of abolishing our border controls. The experience of other European countries suggests that such a change is usually accompanied by intrusive systems of 'internal control' like compulsory ID cards.[220]

Occasionally, Labour uses the issue of internal border controls to show they are at least as tough on immigration as the Conservatives. According to a report in the *Asian Times*, when Charles Wardle, a junior immigration minister, quit the Tory cabinet alleging European Union moves to abolish internal border controls would lead to 'uncontrolled immigration', Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw made a statement saying Labour's policies would be 'made in London, not Brussels'. Straw reportedly added that Wardle's allegations were

> very serious charges. The Home Secretary must make a statement on Mr Wardle's very specific allegations. Britain needs but has not got a just and robust system of immigration rules and controls. Whatever its sympathy, this country cannot sustain a large influx of economic migrants. So Britain must maintain full control over its immigration rules.[221]

A few days later, on 1 March 1995, I heard an interview on Radio 4 in which John Prescott, deputy leader of the Labour Party, explained his views on the scrapping of border controls inside the EU. John Prescott began by saying that Britain was an island nation. Labour had always said Britain needed border controls. 'Sounds like the Tories', said the interviewer. The difference, said John Prescott, was that Labour was working for the national interest, what is best for Britain, while the Tories were just working for the interests of their own party.

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[220] Ibid., p. 3.13.3.

[221] Quoted in: *Asian Times*, 25/2/95, p. 2.

3.3.3   Conclusion

Labour's policies and rhetoric on the constitution of the legal nation are less stringently racialised than those of the Conservatives. In historical perspective, however, Labour appears to subscribe to the consensus, forged at the beginning of this century if not earlier, that in principle the British nation should be closed to newcomers other than those born in Britain and to British parents. The only people Labour would willingly allow to enter the country are members of certain clearly defined groups. These are, in the main, visitors, relatives and relations of British citizens, and refugees. Citizens of the European Union are also allowed in, but Labour is careful not to make too much noise about this. Even people who are granted entry do not thereby become British nationals or acquire any rights to British nationality. Labour has made some proposals for easing current restrictions relating to people born in Britain or wishing to be naturalised, but there has been no sustained campaign for change. On the contrary, in recent years Labour has become suspiciously quiet about the issue of nationality.

In practical terms, Labour's policies would make a difference for a number of people wishing to enter Britain and/or to acquire British nationality. In terms of images of the social nation projected by Labour Party rhetoric and policies on immigration and nationality, it seems to me that the Labour Party is making little attempt, if any, to disturb social concepts of the nation as a community of descent.

3.4   Labour and other nationalisms

Racial thinking can be articulated in relation to any nationalism relating to any existing or imagined nation-state. Although British nationalism is perhaps the dominant form of nationalism in contemporary Britain, there are other nationalisms that are of some political significance in British society. In this section, I would like to analyse racial thinking in the Labour Party that has been articulated in the context of various non-British nationalisms.

3.4.1   Labour and European Union nationalism

There are two centres of power in the Labour Party that produce rhetoric and policies on issues related to the European Union. One is the European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP) consisting of all Labour members of the European Parliament, the other is the national leadership of the Labour Party. My impression is that rhetoric and policies produced by members of the EPLP tend to be both more nationalistic in relation to the European Union and more inclusive as regards social concepts of the EU legal nation than rhetoric and policies produced by the national Labour Party.

This is not to say that EPLP statements are entirely free of any racial connotations. A document entitled *The New Europe* published by the EPLP following the 1989 elections to the European Parliament ominously begins with a statement about 'the British people':

> The British people - especially young people - increasingly feel themselves to be European too. Britain is our country and we are proud of our identity. But we are Europeans too, and we know that Europe is our future.[222]

Once it comes to characterising the EU legal nation, however, there is a consistent use of terminology that is either less racialised or aims to be racially inclusive. The EPLP demands, for example, a better life for 'the people of the United Kingdom and all of the people of the Community - women as well as men, ethnic minorities as well as the white majority', they speak of 'the individual's right to a better environment', they want Europe to be 'a Community for people, not merely a Market for business', and they express their determination to give 'individuals' equal life-chances. The document is divided into eleven sections, one of which is entitled 'A Residents' Charter'. It highlights the gap between the actual boundaries of the EU legal nation and the more inclusive social concept of the EU nation promoted by the EPLP. To bridge this gap, the EPLP proposes 'a European Residents' Charter, guaranteeing equal rights and equal duties to every European resident':

> The Europe of the 1990s must ensure to all its residents the right to vote, move freely round the community, to work, to marry and to live with one's family. These appear self-evident rights. We will ensure they are realised.

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[222] European Parliamentary Labour Party. [undated -1989?]. *The New Europe. A Statement from the European Parliamentary Labour Party.*

On the whole, *The New Europe* is sympathetic to closer European integration. In the EPLP's view, 'progression towards economic and monetary union (EMU) is a logical outcome of the Europeanisation of production and finance', and on the political level, too, 'the direction is clear - towards greater European integration'.

In a Labour Party policy document on Europe published by the national party in 1995, the phrase that is used most frequently to express Labour's social concept of the EU legal nation is that of 'Europe's peoples'.[223] Labour claims, for example, that the European Union has brought substantial benefits to 'the peoples of Europe'. They also express the view that 'Europe must belong to its peoples', that 'Europe has a crucial role to play in protecting and improving the environment of its peoples', and that European decision-making should be made 'more understandable and accessible to the peoples of Europe'. In a slight change of tone, Labour demands that membership of the European Union should be open to 'all European nations'. Labour's choice of language in this document is at once less sympathetic towards EU nationalism (not individual citizens but 'peoples' or 'nations' are said to be members of the EU) and more racialised ('peoples' carries stronger racial connotations than, say, 'individuals' or 'residents'). It is true that the document contains a passage on 'Racism and the Treaty' which includes a reference to 'persons legally resident in one member state'. The document states that such persons should be 'protected against discrimination and harassment on grounds of race when travelling within the European Union'. This commitment is far less comprehensive than that contained in the EPLP statement and is weakened by the persistent use of more racialised terminology in the rest of the document.

The contrast between the type of discussions going on in the EPLP and the national Labour Party were illustrated at a fringe meeting on Europe at the 1996 Labour Party conference. Present at the meeting were Pauline Green, Labour MEP and leader of the Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists, and Joyce Quin, MP and Labour's Deputy Shadow Foreign Secretary with special responsibility for the European Union. When I asked them what initiatives could be expected from an incoming Labour government to equalise the legal status and political rights of all people living in the European Union, Pauline Green spoke fluently about the need to achieve progress towards such an equalisation of rights, particularly in view of the fact that

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[223] Labour Party. 1995. *The future of the European Union - Report on Labour's position in preparation for the*

nationality was difficult to obtain in some member states. Joyce Quin, on the other hand, merely said these issues were currently being looked at by a working party and she hadn't been involved in the discussions. Asked for her personal views, she conceded that everyone should be able to travel. On further reflection, she modified her position to say that everyone should have equal rights, anything else would be unacceptable. She insisted, however, that internal border controls should stay. Although she was 'normally not nationalistic at all, quite the contrary', she felt that Britain was 'an island nation' and this did make a difference. Asked to specify what the difference was, she said 'we need to think about this more'.

3.4.2   Labour and British regional nationalisms

In chapter 2, I identified Welsh, Irish, Scottish and English nationalism as the main forms of British regional nationalism. All of these nationalisms would merit some consideration in this thesis, but for reasons of time and space, I will limit my discussion to some articulations of Labour Party racial thinking in the context of English and Scottish nationalism.

English nationalism was the subject of a recent special issue of the journal *New Statesman & Society*. One of the contributors to the journal was Labour's shadow home secretary, Jack Straw.[224] In his article, J. Straw repeatedly identifies himself as English and invites other people to do so, too. He also explicitly identifies the English as a nation. By asserting that 'we should stop apologising for being English', he calls on people to adopt a positive attitude towards their potential membership of an English nation. In some passages, he speaks as if an English nation-state was already established, for example by calling the Union Jack 'our national flag' and by calling on people to

> complain about what the Conservatives have done to our country - about inequality, run-down public services, blighted communities and lowered horizons. The job of the left is to build a better future for England.

Since Jack Straw wrote this in his capacity as a senior spokesperson of a national, even a nationalistic, British party, I read these passages as really referring to Britain, projecting a social concept of the British nation as a collectivity of English people. But who, according to Jack

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Intergovernmental Conference 1996. The following quotes are from pp. 2, 3, 5, 5, 9, 16.

[224] Straw, Jack. 'Reclaiming the flag'. In: *New Statesman & Society*. 24 February 1995, p. 34.

Straw, are the English people? What are the boundaries of Straw's social concept of the English British nation? J. Straw gives some indications of these boundaries, firstly, by providing a list of people the English nation 'has given to the world': Hazlitt, Milton, Chaucer, Blake, Tawney and John Maynard Keynes. Since it would be difficult to identify these people as 'English' in the sense of any English legal nationality, the suspicion must be strong that J. Straw's list makes an appeal to the popular idea of the English as a community of descent. This idea is, however, contradicted a few lines later:

> We need a modern sense of shared identity, one hat is based as much on place as
> on past, and that celebrates the reality, not the myth, of modern England. That
> reality is urban, multicultural and multi-ethnic.

In summary, it can be said that Jack Straw's piece appears to be sympathetic towards people affirming their membership of some indeterminate 'English' collectivity. But such sympathy is not combined with any political demands for the creation of an English nation-state. As a result, I understand J. Straw's references to an English nation as the expression of a social concept of the British nation as a collectivity of English people. As for the boundaries of his social concept of this English British nation, Jack Straw's comments are contradictory. The claim that English identity should be based on the 'past' is counterbalanced by a claim that it should also be based on 'place'.

Whilst different individuals in the Labour Party may adhere to social concepts of the British nation as a collectivity of English people, the Labour Party does not pursue any political project of creating an independent English nation-state. In this sense, describing either Jack Straw's piece discussed above or the Labour Party's attitude as a whole as sympathetic towards English nationalism would be misguided. Likewise, although there are some voices in the Labour Party promoting the cause of regional, in particular Scottish nationalism, it is perhaps questionable whether Labour's national policies on regions such as Wales or Scotland merit a characterisation as regionally nationalistic. The division between those promoting outright Scottish nationalism and the official party line came out clearly in 1983 in a debate on devolution at Labour's annual conference. Here, an NEC statement entitled *Scotland and Devolution* and a composite on devolution were to be discussed and voted on.[225] The NEC statement explains the party's position on devolution in as many as perhaps 2500 words, but studiously avoids any

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[225] Labour Party. 1983. *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, *1983*. pp. 22-28; 301-304.

reference to a 'Scottish nation', 'the Scottish people', 'Scottish people', 'Scots', 'the people of Scotland' or similar expressions denoting a collectivity of people deemed to be 'Scottish' in some way. Devolution is said to be about the devolution of political power to 'regions' such as 'Scotland', 'England', 'Wales' and 'English regions'. This is to take place 'within the framework of the United Kingdom'. Devolution is needed in Scotland and elsewhere not to give sovereignty to any collectivity of people but to give people 'greater control over many of the affairs which shape their own future'. To this effect, a 'Scottish Assembly' should be established, but Parliament should retain the right 'to decide upon the legality and validity of assembly legislation'. Devolution is not meant to question the sovereignty or the boundaries of the British legal nation. Rather, it is to be understood as a response to the general need for local decision making where local issues are at stake. In the words of the NEC representative speaking in the debate:

> We must recognise that when we talk of devolution we are talking, in fact, of the extension of democracy. (...) We are talking, are we not, of how we would wish to introduce more democratic structures, and more accountability into the hospital service, the health service, into schools, into workplaces, into industrial democracy, into the neighbourhood and the community, into the region and into the party itself.

So much for the official position. The composite to be voted on and much of the discussion on the composite were phrased and conducted in terms rather different to those apparently favoured by the NEC. To start with, both the composite and the debate were peppered with references to 'the Scottish people': 'We, the Scottish people, can show a lead to the labour movement at large'; 'It is about time [all Scottish Labour MPs] got off their backsides and fought for the Scottish people'; 'George Younger and his gang in Edinburgh are carrying out some of the most vicious policies against the Scottish people that they have ever experienced'; '[What is at issue is] the injustice of an administration in Scotland over which the Scottish people have no political control'. These references are at once more nationalistic and more racialised than the statement issued by the NEC. One speaker from the floor used not only terms carrying racial connotations but explicitly endorsed a racial form of Scottish nationalism:

> Scotland is slightly different [to any regions in England and Wales]. We are a nation. We are a nation, but, above all, we kept our own identity. We [have never been con?]quered. We voluntarily joined the treaty of union in 1707. (...) We are Scots, We are proud to be Scots. We know we are different, and long

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may the difference continue - because your blood and our blood is what has made the British labour movement, but we made it from different points of view.

Significantly, this speaker promoted not only a racial form of Scottish nationalism but also a racialised social concept of the British legal nation as a collectivity of people of 'your blood and our blood'. According to the conference report, her contribution to the debate was followed by 'applause'.

Thirteen years on, Labour's official policies on devolution appear to have changed little in substance, while the official rhetoric has perhaps become slightly more racialised. In a speech at Labour's annual conference of 1996, George Robertson MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, variously referred to 'the Scottish people', 'the people of Scotland' and 'Scots' to denote a collectivity of people deemed to be Scottish. Apart from the fact that racial connotations are inherent in all of these expressions (especially in 'the Scottish people'), he also referred to 'the fundamental principles which have shaped the Scottish character for a thousand years' in order to explain why a new Scottish society would be based on compassion and solidarity.[226] Labour's *Policy Handbook* of 1996 also variously refers to 'Scotland', 'the people of Scotland', 'Scots' and 'the Scottish people' to denote a collectivity of people deemed to be Scottish.[227] In the Road to the Manifesto document, on the other hand, Labour's language essentially mirrors that used in the NEC document of 1983 discussed above. Thus Labour's plans are presented as aiming at

a reform of the structure of government in the UK, retaining the essential links between Scotland, Wales and the rest of the UK. The aim is to strengthen our system of government and to reject narrow nationalism. The Westminster Parliament remains sovereign but will pass power to the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly as part of our drive for a wider democracy.[228]

Overall, it seems to me that in the national Labour Party racial thinking in the context of regional nationalism is not nearly as prominent as racial thinking in the context of British nationalism. This is not least because Labour is far more prominently nationalistic in relation to Britain than it is nationalistic in relation to any British regions. Nevertheless, occasionally particular regional collectivities of people are characterised in terms that carry racial connotations, and very

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[226] Robertson, George. 1996. *Text of speech at the Labour Party annual Conference 1996.* Blackpool: Labour Party Conference '96 Media Office.

[227] Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook.* p. 6.1.

[228] Labour Party. 1996. *New Labour, New Life for Britain.* p. 30.

occasionally they are characterised in terms that are out and out racist.

3.4.3   Labour and ANC nationalism

In 1909, four British colonies were unified to form the single state of South Africa. According to T.O. Lloyd, the new constitution confirmed the existing franchise regulations: All colonies apart from the Cape confined the right to vote strictly to white men. For T. O. Lloyd, 'in South African terms this was a sound and natural compromise but in London the left-wing Liberal and the Labour MPs who took an interest in imperial affairs opposed it as an attack on the position of the Africans and called on the government to refuse to pass the British legislation needed to give legal effect to the union of South Africa'.[229] T. O. Lloyd does not provide any more details on the nature or extent of this opposition. Between 1910 and 1948, whites in South Africa pursued a policy of racial segregation, followed by the policy of apartheid. According to Partha Sarathi Gupta, the South African Labour Party fully supported legislation against black workers and Asian immigrants in the nineteen-twenties. The British Labour Party failed to protest against these policies since it 'did not wish to offend the South African Labour Party'.[230]

Ronald Hyam has written about the response of the Labour governments of 1945-51 to the introduction of apartheid in South Africa in 1948. Although, according to R. Hyam, 'Griffiths [Secretary of State for Colonies 1950-51] spoke for all his colleagues when he described apartheid as "totally repugnant",' the Labour government nevertheless decided 'that co-operation with South Africa was to remain a prime object of British policy'.[231] Good relations with South Africa were thought to be important because of South Africa's strategic location, Britain's need of South African gold, an obligation to protect the High Commission Territories (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland), and a desire to preserve the Commonwealth. R. Hyam writes that 'for many ministers' concern over a possible break-up of the Commonwealth was 'the determining factor'.

On 21 March 1995, Queen Elizabeth II visited South Africa and bestowed the Order of Merit on Nelson Mandela, the first South African president to be elected in post-apartheid South

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[229] Lloyd, 1985, p. 265.

[230] Gupta, 1975, p. 120.

[231] For Ronald Hyam's account and the quotes taken from it, see: Hyam, Ronald. 1988. 'Africa and the Labour Government, 1945-1951'. In: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History.* May 1988, Vol. XVI, no. 3. In particular pp. 164, 165, 167.

Africa.[232] This is how the *Guardian*'s cartoonist Steve Bell viewed the situation:[233]

Fig. 9

I interpret this cartoon as celebrating the liberation of South Africa from white imperialism while at the same time mocking Britain's failure to break with its imperialist past. In the cartoon, the Queen is shown to have no moral authority to bestow the Order of Merit on Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela can't stoop low enough to enable the Queen to attach the medal to his jacket. The reason why the Queen lacks moral authority for her action is also revealed. She is still riding the lion of British imperialism. That lion is now toothless, old and tired, but still the Queen is clinging on to it. There is no break with Britain's imperialist past. There is no repudiation of the past. Up to date British society has failed to repudiate the very forces that brought about the system of apartheid now swept away by the movement represented by Mandela.

How does Labour relate to its own past in relation to South Africa? A detailed consideration of this question is beyond the scope of this thesis. My readings on Labour Party responses to apartheid in South Africa suggest to me that some critical self-reflexion would not

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[232] See: *The Guardian*, 21/3/1995, p. 2.

[233] *The Guardian*, 21/3/1995, p. 21.

be out of place when it comes to Labour's historical record. Such critical self-reflexion was missing when Robin Cook, shadow foreign secretary, replied to a speech by Thabo Mbeki, deputy president of post-apartheid South Africa, who was a guest speaker at Labour's 1995 annual conference. Following Thabo Mbeki's address to the conference, Robin Cook said:

> Conference has just heard the voice of a free non-racist South Africa. Labour will always remember the courage of the ANC in their long struggle to overthrow apartheid. And we will never forget the shameful role of the Conservative Government in shoring it up. The chief apologist for the Tory failure to support sanctions in those years of struggle is now their Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, who told parliament "it is not simply a matter of good and evil". Thabo, you know and this conference is proud that Labour never wavered in our belief that apartheid was evil.[234]

From the remarks earlier in this section, it is clear that Labour thought apartheid was evil as soon as it was introduced in 1948. But those remarks also indicate that the then Labour government regarded apartheid *not simply as a matter of good and evil*. Rather, it was felt that questions of national economic and strategic interest should also be taken into account. In the event, it seems that these latter considerations prevailed. It must be said, then, that Cook's comments leave unanswered the question of whether Labour in government in the 1980s would not only have regarded apartheid as evil but would have made this the overriding consideration in determining their policies in relation to South Africa.

3.4.4   Labour and Zionism

In the 1980s and the early 1990s, different sections of the Labour Party were divided over the issue of Zionism. On one side of the divide was, for example, Poale Zion, an organisation affiliated to the Labour Party and aiming to be a voice for socialism and Zionism in the British labour movement.[235] The origins of Poale Zion in Britain reach back to the beginning of this century. Since 1920, Poale Zion has been affiliated to the Labour Party. A Poale Zion leaflet that I obtained from the organisation states that in the 1920s and the 1930s 'Zionism aroused much support from the Left'. By the 1980s, however, sections of the left had become anti-Zionist. This

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[234] Cook, Robin. 1995. *Speech by Robin Cook MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary, on Thursday, 5 October 1995. Labour Party Conference 1995*. Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. p. 1.

[235] I have been told that the literal translation of 'Poale Zion' is 'Workers of Israel'.

trend was accompanied by accusations that some left-wing campaigns in the name of anti-Zionism were antisemitic.[236]

As I leafed through various issues of the weekly newspaper *Socialist Challenger*, later to become *Socialist Action*, I felt that I was gaining a clearer picture of some of the forms left anti-Zionism tended to take in Britain in the eighties. Originally, my motivation for looking at this paper was that *Socialist Action* is sometimes quoted as one of the main forces behind the Anti-Racist Alliance. I then discovered that the *Socialist Action* paper had served as an important forum for the Labour left in the eighties. In 1984, Tony Benn noted in his diary that '*Socialist Action* (...) is a good paper and is highly analytical in its approach to society, but sympathetic to the Labour Party'.[237] In a number of articles that appeared in this paper in the 1980s, Zionism is described as 'racist', and in some cases Zionism or Israeli nationalism are referred to in terms that link them to Nazism and the Holocaust. The banner headline of one article published in 1982, for example, screams 'Lebanon Final Solution' to refer to Israel's military intervention in Lebanon.[238] In a book review published in the following year, a book about 'Zionist collaboration with anti-semites, Nazis included' is described as a 'thoughtful, well-researched and invaluable book'. Elsewhere, the same book has been sharply criticised for its alleged factual flaws as well as for being 'virulently antisemitic'.[239] *Socialist Action*'s hostility towards Zionism contrasts sharply with sympathy towards pan-German nationalism as expressed in an article published in 1984. Here, the author notes with regret that 'the German people are not yet ready to immediately struggle for a reunified socialist Germany'.[240] Zionism is also the subject of a series of articles and readers' letters published in the course of 1986.[241] Some of these articles strike a more defensive note and are clearly written partially in response to the accusation that some forms of anti-Zionism might be motivated by antisemitism. In all but one contribution (a reader's letter) this accusation is rejected, Zionism is once again called racist, and the whole history of the Zionist movement is said to consist of Zionists collaborating with antisemites, including the

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[236] See for example: Cohen, 1984, pp. 38-56.

[237] Benn, Tony. 1994. *The End of An Era - Diaries 1980-90*. London: Arrow Books. p. 345.

[238] *Socialist Challenger*, 24/6/1982, p. 66.

[239] *Socialist Action*, 20/5/1983, p. 11. For the charge of antisemitism, see: Seidel, Gill, 1986. *The Holocaust Denial. Antisemitism, Racism & the New Right*. Leeds: Beyond the Pale Collective. pp. 85-91. See also: Cesarani, David. 'The Perdition Affair'. In: Wistrich, Robert S. (ed.). 1990. *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*. Houndmills: Macmillan.

[240] *Socialist Action*, 13/4/1984, pp. 8-9.

[241] See: *Socialist Action*, 27/6/1986, p. 8. *Socialist Action*, 4/6/1986, p. 10. *Socialist Action*, 29/8/1986, p. 10. *Socialist Action*, 7/11/1986, p. 8. *Socialist Action*, 21/11/1986, p. 10.

Nazis. After this flurry of articles and readers' letters, the issue appears to have died down, apart from one blip in 1988. In an article published in that year, much of what went before is repeated, including an emphasis on the similarities between Zionism and Nazism: 'Along with their agreement on the racial questions, Zionists found themselves arguing, like the Nazis, for jews [sic] to leave Germany. (...) There is an unbroken continuity from the earliest Zionist writings through Zionism's criminal response to the threat of Nazism, to its present day policies towards the Palestinian people'.[242]

None of the articles referred to above were written by prominent Labour Party politicians. Geoffrey Alderman has, however, described anti-Zionist tendencies in the work of Ken Livingstone as leader of the Greater London Council and editor of the *Labour Herald* in the early eighties.[243] G. Alderman quotes two cases dating from the early eighties in which articles and cartoons in the *Labour Herald* linked Zionism to Nazism. G. Alderman also writes that K. Livingstone himself 'was reported as having referred to Israel as a country based on "racism and the murder of Arabs"'. By 1985, however, Ken Livingstone appeared to have changed his mind, declaring it 'a fundamental mistake' to equate Zionism with racism and identifying it as a form of nationalism.

My readings suggest to me that since the early nineties, anti-Zionism has become less prominent a feature of political rhetoric or activism either on the Labour left or on the British left more generally. Nevertheless, anti-Zionist sentiment still flickers through the pages of journals associated with the Labour left. Of three recent issues of *Labour Briefing* I happened to come across while working on this project, one contains an article entitled 'Out of the death camps'.[244] The article presents itself as an analysis of the significance of the Holocaust fifty years after the end of World War II. It soon introduces its basic premise: 'One of the most important historic consequences of the death camps was that it gave a great impulse to Zionism'. Zionism is basically described as an attempt to eliminate antisemitism by escaping it. According to the article, this attempt has failed since 'Israel can still only exist as an armed fortress. Its treatment of Palestinians provides fuel for all those who want to stoke anti-semitic fires'. The author

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[242] See: *Socialist Action*, 22/1/1988, p. 8.

[243] Alderman, Geoffrey. 1989. *London Jewry and London Politics 1889- 1986*. London: Routledge. pp. 132-137. The quotes are from p. 133. See also ibid., fn. 101 on p. 178.

[244] *Labour Briefing*, February 1995, p. 23. According to *The Guardian*, *Labour Briefing*, recently relaunched as *Labour Left Briefing*, contains 'a range of opinion spreading from the hardest left to Peter Hain and Mark Seddon, the Tribune editor'. The *Guardian* article also states that 'the chasm between Briefing's core politics and that of the party leadership is difficult to

concludes by predicting that 'Zionism will continue to provide the main focus for Jewish aspirations. This is part of the tragedy of our age, part of the retreat into barbarism which is the characteristic of this epoch'. Although by some roundabout ways, in the end the article once again arrives at the assertion of some sort of moral equivalence between Zionism and Nazism.

This insistence on a moral link between Zionism and the Holocaust is in fact one of the hallmarks of many of the articulations of anti-Zionism referred to in this section. To my mind, any suggestions of a moral equivalence between Zionism or contemporary Israeli nationalism and Nazism are misguided. It is true, of course, that Holocaust and anti-Nazi rhetoric are powerful means of making a political point. As I mentioned earlier, the mere mention of the word 'racism' carries an indelible reference to the Holocaust, and to this extent I find myself making use of 'Holocaust rhetoric' myself when talking about particular aspects of, for example, British or German nationalism. Nevertheless, I think there is a distinction, firstly, between the type of Holocaust rhetoric used in this thesis and the type of Holocaust rhetoric I have encountered in some articulations of left-wing anti-Zionism; secondly, in the type of situations such rhetoric is applied to in this thesis and the type of situations it has been applied to in some articulations of left-wing anti-Zionism. As I perceive it, Holocaust rhetoric in the context of left-wing anti-Zionism is often too sweeping (condemning, for example, Zionism as such as racist) or too extreme ('Lebanon Final Solution'). To my mind, such generalised and exaggerated use of Holocaust rhetoric to denounce Zionism fails to acknowledge sufficiently the possibility that support for Zionism may be inspired not by racism but by the perceived threat of antisemitism in the modern world - a threat of which the Holocaust is itself a powerful symbol.

3.4.5   Conclusion

While the national Labour Party is a thoroughly nationalistic party in relation to Britain, it is only sections of the party that tend to fervently support or oppose any non-British nationalisms. Those sections of the party that tend to promote EU nationalism tend to do so in ways that are less racialised than the ways in which the national party promotes British nationalism. Those who tend to promote British regional nationalisms, on the other hand, do employ language and imagery that carries strong racial connotations and can be racist.

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exaggerate'. (*The Guardian*, 29/9/1995, p. 4).

ANC nationalism has been and continues to be committed to the transformation of a racially structured South African imperial state into a non-racial South African nation-state. Labour is linked to ANC nationalism on the one hand in the framework of a global solidarity campaign, to which it has given broad support. On the other hand, Labour's history is linked to that of the British state, whose activities in South Africa or in relation to South Africa have probably helped bring about and sustain the imperial state the ANC has been struggling to overcome. My argument in relation to ANC nationalism would be that Labour has failed to face up critically to this history, even while rightly congratulating the ANC to their success in overcoming the apartheid regime.

Zionism has been a more controversial issue in the Labour Party than ANC nationalism, especially in the 1980s. In my analysis of Labour Party thinking on Zionism, I have concentrated on anti-Zionist tendencies in newspapers or journals associated with the left of the party. What I find most problematic about these tendencies is their insistence on some kind of moral equivalence between Zionism and Nazism. According to my readings, such abuse of anti-Nazi or 'antiracist' rhetoric has, however, been confined to publications close to the left of the party and has become less prominent in the 1990s.

3.5   Racial thinking in the context of some recent Labour Party campaigns

One of the most interesting experiences I have had in the course of my research project was my attendance at the Labour Party Annual Conferences of 1995 and 1996. I was as astonished by the ritualistic nature of many of the proceedings in the conference hall as I was surprised by the liveliness and intensity of debate at many of the fringe meetings I attended. At both conferences, as the conference week wore on I began to feel that some of the conference proceedings and arrangements resonated with certain strands of the history of racial thinking in British and European society. In what follows, I will set out what these proceedings and arrangements were, and how I made sense of them. I will also give an account of racial thinking in the context of Labour's general election campaign of 1997. Here, I will focus on the racial connotations of some of the images that have marked Labour's campaign.

3.5.1   Racial thinking at Labour's 1995 annual conference

One idea that implies a racialised social concept of the nation is the notion that Britain is being taken over or is being run by foreigners or their descendants rather than 'native people'. This is a theme that has permeated social concepts of the nation from the moment an English nation was first conceived. At that time, as suggested earlier in this essay, many nationalists considered the rulers of England and Wales to be 'Normans' or their descendants, oppressing a 'nation' of 'Anglo-Saxon' people or their descendants. As hinted at in chapter 1, in later centuries some people claimed Jewish people were not truly part of the British nation and accused them of controlling the British government. More recently still, in October of 1995 articles in several British newspapers reported widespread condemnation of two members of the Tory cabinet. Their actions were said to be all the more inexcusable in view of the fact that these people were not British in a racial sense. One of the accused was described as 'half-foreign' on the grounds that his father was 'of Spanish nationality', while the other accused was variously described as 'the son of a Jewish immigrant', 'a recent descendant of refugee immigrants' and 'a third-generation immigrant with a Romanian grandfather on his father's side and Russian forebears on his mother's'.[245]

The issue that brought out all of this racial thinking on the nation was Defence Secretary Michael Portillo's scorn for the project of European integration, and Home Secretary Michael Howard's proposals for measures to curb migration to Britain, in particular his proposals for employers to check on the immigration status of employees.[246] The first time I encountered an example of a prominent Labour Party figure referring to Michael Howard's descent in connection with these proposals was on 10 September 1995 in the *Observer*. Here, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw was quoted as follows:

> Howard is intending quite cynically to play the race card and we will engage him on that. I say this as someone who's come from a Jewish background themselves. I'm a third-generation Jewish immigrant, and Howard is the son of a first-generation Jewish immigrant. He needs to bear in mind that it was a more tolerant atmosphere that allowed his father into this country.[247]

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[245] See: *The Guardian*, Pt. 2, 10/10/1995, p. 8-9; *The Guardian*, 19/7/95, p. 14; *Asian Times*, 7/10/95, p. 3.

[246] See for example: *The Guardian*, 5/10/1995, p. 1; 11/10/95, p. 1.

This passage might be read as a personal appeal to Michael Howard to change his policy on the grounds that, had the policy been applied to his father, the latter wouldn't have been able to come to Britain. Of course, there could be no guarantee that Michael Howard would be susceptible to such a personal appeal, which it might moreover be more appropriate to make in private rather than in public. Michael Howard might, for example, be doubtful about the historical assumptions underlying it and might in any case not wish to be guided by the effect a similar policy might have had on his father. But the passage might also be read in a rather different way as deriving the rights and wrongs of Michael Howard's actions from the fact of his descent from a Jewish immigrant. Read in this way, the passage becomes objectionable. M. Howard's intentions are made neither better nor worse as a result of his descent. Yet this is precisely the way in which Jack Straw's remarks were recycled many times over a few weeks later at the 1995 Labour Party conference. On Monday 2 October, the first day of the conference, I attended a fringe meeting on refugee policy. Here, Labour's spokesperson for legal affairs, Paul Boateng, having asserted that Michael Howard ought to know from his own family history what it means to be a refugee, added that 'his role is therefore all the more ignominious'. No signs of disagreement either in the audience or on the platform. At the same meeting, Barbara Roche, a member of Labour's Home Office team, suggested Michael Howard should not play the race card 'as somebody whose parents came in as refugees'. A few hours later, at a fringe meeting on Labour's immigration policy, a speaker from the floor gave a different twist to the significance of Michael Howard's descent: 'The only reason why he is not being labelled an immigrant is because he isn't black', she burst out, her voice tense with aggression. People on the platform and in the audience seemed in general agreement with this proposition. I perceived it as an expression of racial hatred directed at Michael Howard. I began to contemplate an intervention in the debate expressing my unease. But not many members of the audience get a chance to speak at these fringe meetings. I let mine slip. If ever Michael Howard's descent should be brought up again at this conference, surely I would speak out. Next day, sure enough, at a fringe meeting organised by the National Assembly Against Racism, one of the speakers expressed his disbelief that Michael Howard, 'a Jewish person', a member of 'a people who suffered in the second World War', should promote racism in the way he did. The issue was beginning to dominate my experience of the conference. However, I kept my mouth shut. The inflection in this speaker's voice was different from that of the

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[247] Quoted in: *The Observer*, 10/9/1995, p. 11.

previous speakers on the matter. He expressed regret rather than outrage, resignation rather than hatred. Criticising him seemed inappropriate to me. Maybe matters were more complicated than I had thought. Could it be right to refer to Michael Howard's descent as long as this was just to explain the intensity of one's surprise, regret and even pain caused by his actions? Might such surprise, regret and pain not flow from a belief and hope that groups oppressed by racism should be united in their opposition to racism? Was this not an anti-racist stance? I suppose it can be. But as soon as disappointment caused by a perceived lack of racial solidarity is turned against the people who are alleged to have destroyed that solidarity, the anti-racist stance becomes flawed and may even turn racist. Applying different standards to the behaviour of people on the grounds of the supposed descent of those people must be racist. Consider Jack Straw's formulations in his conference speech on the following day, 5 October 1995:

> Many of us here are the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of immigrants. I'm one. You, Michael Howard, are another. That's why it is so disgraceful of you, and the Tory party to play the race card.[248]

Once again, although the passage is open to different readings, there is a strong suggestion here that what Michael Howard did was made worse by the fact that he is the descendant of immigrants. But surely Michael Howard's descent doesn't make his actions any more or any less disgraceful. Not just Labour Party people are guilty of such bizarre thinking. As early as 19 July 1995, a leading article in the *Guardian* had informed *Guardian* readers that 'Mr Howard is a third-generation immigrant'. The article then stated that 'people who play politics with race deserve only contempt. They deserve even more contempt if their own background should have made them aware of the political perils'. The same line was repeated in a leading article on 25 October 1995: '[Michael Howard] is playing the race card and as a recent descendant of refugee immigrants he ought to be ashamed of himself'. This latter leading article was accompanied by a cartoon which epitomises my misgivings about the campaign directed against Michael Howard. In the cartoon, the cartoonist appears to assemble round John Major cabinet ministers of suspected non-British ancestry and shows them as they are implementing the policies promoted by Michael Howard:[249]

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[248] Straw, Jack. *Speech at Labour Party Conference 1995*. Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. pp. 5-6.

[249] *The Guardian*, 25/10/1995, p. 16.

Fig. 10

To me, one potential message of this cartoon is that British policy on immigration is all the more disgraceful for being devised and implemented by Jewish people and other racial misfits. A racial, I would say a racist cartoon. This was the end result of a racialised witch hunt against Michael Howard not necessarily instigated but nevertheless condoned and encouraged by prominent Labour Party politicians.

3.5.2 Racial thinking at Labour's 1996 annual conference

In this section, I would like to talk about some of the visual symbolism of Labour's annual conference of 1996 and how this fitted into the major speeches that were made. My tour of some of the more interesting sights of the conference begins at the conference accreditation and general enquiry kiosk. Access to the main conference site, the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, was only granted to conference passport holders. Visitors who needed passports were directed to the accreditation and general enquiry kiosk. To my surprise, this kiosk was accommodated in a church:
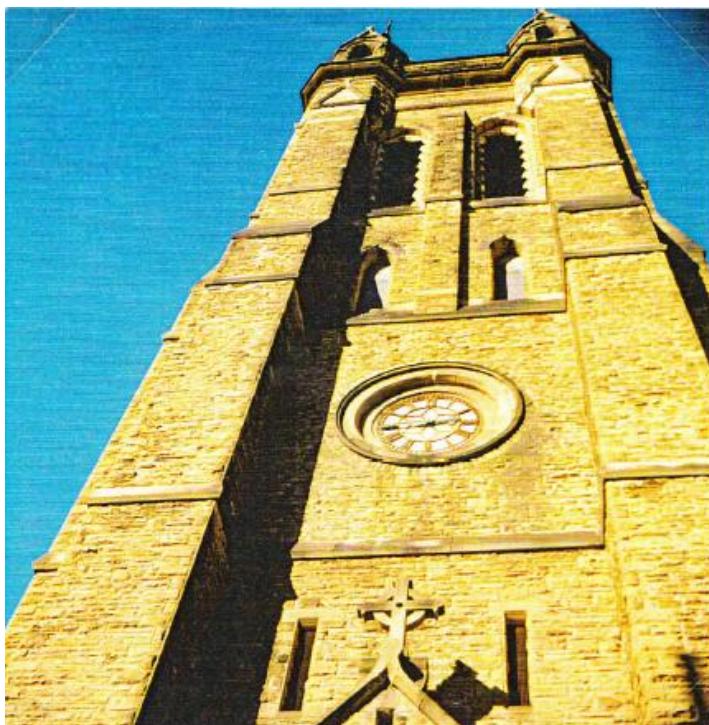
Fig. 11
View of the accreditation and general enquiry kiosk, Labour Party annual conference, 1996.

Was this the Labour Party trying to prove their Christian credentials? Moving on to the Winter Gardens, I found a world dominated by banners coloured in red and white (see next page). Red banners containing the slogan 'new Labour, new life for Britain' were draped from every wall. Where there were no walls, plastic structures that were stood on the floor and were of similar shape and design took their place. In combination with the millenarian rhetoric that permeated some of the speeches, I could not help but be reminded of Nazi symbolism as I knew it from my various readings and as it is used in popular culture (for example recently in the film *Richard III*[250]) when allusions to Nazi Germany are made. Reviewing press reports after the conference, I found that I was not the only one to have associated the visual arrangements and some of the rhetoric at Labour's conference with Nazism. One reader's letter to the *Guardian*, for example, contains the following observations:

> Twelve-foot-high images of Tony Blair, red banners cascading round the conference-hall balcony, a "new social order", an "iron chancellor", and talk of preparing for "a thousand years". I know Labour has moved to the right, but this is ridiculous.[251]

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[250] *Richard III* (1995), directed by Richard Loncraine.

[251] *The Guardian*, 3/10/1996, p. 16

Fig. 12

View of the entrance hall in the Winter Gardens complex, Labour Party annual conference of 1996.

Fig. 13

View of the area in the Winter Gardens complex where conference speeches were shown on a large video screen.

Identifying a few isolated points of vague resemblance between Nazi symbolism and Labour Party symbolism at Labour's annual conference of 1996 is one thing, determining the

significance, if any, of such points of resemblance is quite another. Personally, I would be inclined to draw two conclusions. Firstly, I think that the conference organisers at Labour's annual conference of 1996 exhibited either a lack of historical awareness of or a lack of sensitivity to the visual and rhetorical symbolism associated with Nazism. In a wide sense, this can be interpreted as a lack of awareness of or sensitivity to the history of racism, in which Nazi Germany's ideology and policies take a prominent place. Secondly, I think that there is perhaps a degree of resemblance between the sense of an urgent national mission New Labour is trying to project and the sense of an urgent national mission the Nazis were trying to project. I would speculate that this resemblance may subconsciously have led the conference organisers and speech writers to adopt and adapt some of the visual arrangements and some of the rhetoric associated with Nazism. It is true, of course, that projecting a sense of an urgent national mission does not need to be a racialised or racist activity. But it can easily turn into one if it is combined with political rhetoric that presents the nation as a community of descent. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, there are numerous instances in Labour Party rhetoric where this is done.

The articulations of British nationalism present at Labour's annual conference of 1996 were given additional force through the use of the Union Jack in the main conference hall.

Fig. 14

Conference hall, Winter Gardens, Blackpool, after the final speech by John Prescott at Labour's annual conference of 1996.

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Following the last speech of conference by John Prescott, a Union Jack was unfurled and draped from the conference balcony. On the conference floor below, delegates danced and chanted, fêting their party leaders. Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the Union Jack carried connotations of British imperialism. As a result, any ostentatious use of the Union Jack connotes an affirmative attitude towards British imperialism - unless, that is, the wider context contradicts such an interpretation. In Blackpool, indications were that the wider context did not contradict such an interpretation. As far as I was concerned, this impression was reinforced not only when I listened to some of the speeches that were made in the conference hall, but also when I discovered the main conference hotel:

Fig. 15

'The Imperial' - Main conference hotel at Labour's annual conference of 1996 in Blackpool

Needless to say, I am not suggesting that the Labour Party chose this hotel *because of* its name - what I am less sure about is whether they chose it *in spite of* its name.

3.5.3 Racial symbolism in Labour's 1997 general election campaign

In this section I would like to discuss some features of Labour's 1997 general election campaign from my personal perspective during that campaign, that is to say from the perspective

of an interested citizen reading two or three newspapers and some core Labour Party publicity material as well as watching a range of news programmes and party political broadcasts on TV. In my analysis, I will concentrate on the imagery in two documents that have been central to Labour's campaign and on some of the visual messages of Labour's campaign transmitted via news broadcasts and party political broadcasts on national television.

The first document I would like to look at is the 'Road to the Manifesto' document *New Labour - New Life for Britain* that was launched in a blaze of publicity on 4 July 1996. A number of newspaper reports alleged that there was a bias towards showing white people in this document. Catherine Bennett, writing in the *Guardian*, found that 'to look at the document resembles nothing so much as the glossy, promotional brochures produced by banks and building societies. Here, too, everyone is young, healthy and white of skin'.[252] Under the headline 'Blair's all White, thank you', the weekly newspaper *The Voice* observed that the document 'makes sure that few Black faces are featured and nothing is said about issues that affect Black communities'.[253] Surveying the images of people in the document myself, I would identify perhaps 8 people pictured in the document as black (or non-white) and perhaps 131 as white.[254] That translates into percentages of between 5 and 6% black people and between 94 and 95% white people. These figures correspond rather well with the proportion of 'ethnic minorities' (5.5%) and 'whites' (94.5%) in the population of Great Britain, according to the results of the 1991 census question on ethnicity.[255] Although the largest images of people in the document are indeed reserved for white people, there are proportionately far more medium-sized images of black people than there are of white people. So, did the newspaper commentators get it wrong? In one sense, perhaps, they didn't. Although the number of black people shown is hardly so low that the document can be said to promote or reinforce racist social concepts of the British nation, neither is it so high that it can be said to challenge or undermine racist concepts of the British nation.

There is another striking aspect concerning the images of people in this document which I have failed to find being mentioned in the newspapers I have consulted. This is that a clear majority of people pictured are shown wearing uniforms of one kind or another. These include

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[252] *The Guardian*, 5/7/1996, p. 2.

[253] *The Voice*, 16/7/1996, p. 11.

[254] This figure includes all Labour Party politicians shown in the document, but excludes any blurred images of people in crowds.

[255] See: Mason, 1995, p. 35.

police uniforms (2), students' graduation uniforms (3), surgeons' uniforms (5), industrial workers' uniforms (6), military uniforms (12), school uniforms (25) and men's suit and tie uniforms (36). All but one of the black people represented in the document are shown wearing uniforms. This uniformisation of society is carried through to striking effect on the final page of the document, which assembles some of the photos shown elsewhere in the document and adds some more:
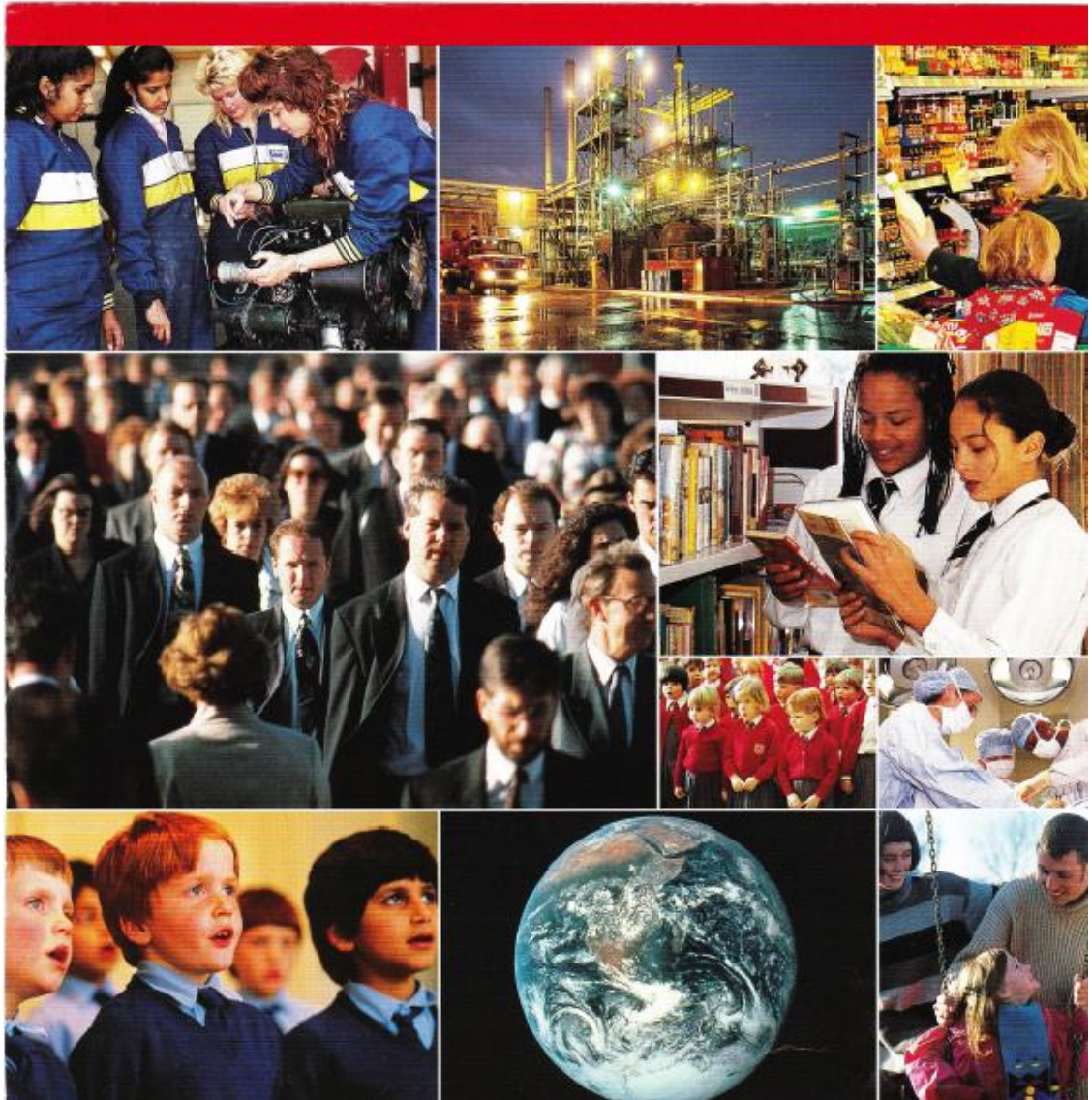
Fig. 16

Only two small photos showing white adults with white small children, presumably intended to

represent family life, are exempt from the uniform picture of society presented here. The uniforms people wear in these photos signal their membership of the worlds of education as well as training and employment. This reflects Labour's campaign emphasis on education, training and employment. The picture of the industrial site is perhaps intended to underline Labour's commitment to the industrial sector of the economy; the globe may have been included as a symbol of environmentalism. The overall effect is to paint a picture of society in which conformity to collective standards that are imposed by the state or by employers is valued highly, while individual or collective self-expression is only valued to a limited degree in the framework of the (white?) nuclear family. To the extent that both black people and white people are subjected to uniformisation in these images, the pictures cannot be said to convey or promote racist ways of thinking. To the extent, however, that black people are subjected to uniformisation to a greater degree than white people, I nevertheless detect a possible expression of racist ways of thinking in these pictures. The emphasis on the uniformisation of black people as opposed to white people may reflect the view that black people pose a cultural threat to British society that is in particularly urgent need of containment. The pictures may thus have been designed to placate (rather than to challenge) the racist preoccupations of those who are disturbed even by the relatively small proportion of black British citizens resident in Britain today.

The images in Labour's actual manifesto, published after the election was called in March 1997, follow a broadly similar pattern, with some of the photos from the Road to the Manifesto document being reused. Once again, there are no large pictures of black people, with the exception of a photo showing Tony Blair (wearing suit and tie) and Nelson Mandela (not wearing suit and tie), whom few would be likely to mistake for a British citizen. The main difference to the previous document is perhaps that there are now proportionately fewer medium or large sized photos showing black people than there are medium or large sized photos showing white people. In addition, the degree of uniformisation of white people shown is now lower than in the Road to the Manifesto document while the degree of uniformisation of black people shown is still as high as before.

I would now like to turn to some of the images of Labour's election campaign that flashed over my TV screen in the course of the general election campaign. Early on in the campaign, I realised that Labour was to continue using the Union Jack and the red and white vertical banners that had featured at Labour's 1996 annual conference. In news bulletin after news bulletin, Labour

Party politicians appeared against a backdrop of the Union Jack and/or those ominous banners (see below). Darcus Howe, writing in the *New Statesman*, criticized Labour for their extensive use of the British national flag. For Tony Blair to embrace the Union Jack, he argued, would only serve to encourage exclusivist forms of black nationalism and was tantamount to inflicting 'old, painful and divisive symbols on his nation's new population - whose roots are deeply international'.[256]

Fig. 17   Fig. 18

TV images of the Union Jack and red and white vertical banners
at Labour Party events during the general election campaign

Most critical antiracist commentary in journals and newspapers was, however, reserved for Labour's use of a bulldog in their party political broadcast shown on 15 April 1997. In the opening scene of the broadcast, a tired bulldog representing 'Britain', led by a Tory master, slumps down and apparently falls asleep. The next few scenes show shots of a dynamic Tony Blair on the move, being driven around in a Jaguar, charging through crowds, riding on a train. The Bulldog scene is shot in an outdoor, nighttime setting under a cold, blueish light. The Tony Blair scenes are shot in colourful daylight settings. For most of the broadcast, Tony Blair is then shown sitting in a warmly lit living room, talking to an invisible interviewer about Labour's and his own political beliefs and programme. As his speech progresses, there are brief shots of the bulldog apparently responding to Tony Blair's discourse by first moving one of his ears, then opening an eye, lifting

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[256] *New Statesman*, Special Edition, May 1997, p. 105.

his head, getting up, straining at the leash, breaking free from his Tory master, and finally trotting off into the sunrise (see Fig. 19 on the following page). The bulldog's cues include the following:

Tony Blair: (...) But Britain can be better. We can make this country better than it is.

Bulldog: [Moves one ear]

Tony Blair: (...) We are not going to raise the basic or top rate of income tax.

Bulldog: [Opens an eye]

Tony Blair: (...) As a start, we will spend 100 million pounds by cutting that [NHS] bureaucracy and putting it into cutting waiting lists.

Bulldog: [Lifts his head]

Tony Blair: (...) Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime.

Bulldog: [Gets up]

Tony Blair: I'm a British patriot. And I want the best out of Europe for Britain. (...) A divided Conservative Party, with weak leadership, fighting itself, cannot fight for Britain.

Bulldog: [Strains at the leash]

Tony Blair: (...) If we don't give our kids the right education, if they don't succeed, Britain doesn't succeed. (...) We can make a start by reducing class sizes for all 5, 6 and 7 year olds in primary schools to 30 or under - that we will do in the first 5 years of a Labour government.

Bulldog: [Strains at the leash]

Tony Blair: [Moves through crowds again, is shown with kids in a nursery. The commentator reiterates that 'Britain can be better']

Bulldog: [Breaks free and trots off into the sunrise]

On the day of the broadcast, the *Times* reminded their readers that from the 18th century cartoonists had frequently coupled the bulldog with John Bull, 'a

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representative of English stock (...). The pair had their heyday in the jingoism of Victorian England, when Englishmen were white supremacists par excellence'.[257] In another article in the same newspaper, Peter Mandelson MP, one of the organisers of Labour's election campaign, was quoted explaining Labour's use of the bulldog in the following terms:

> The Labour Party is the patriotic party. New Labour is the party of one nation and the bulldog is one way of saying this. It is an animal with a strong sense of history and tradition.[258]

On the same day, the *Guardian* confirmed that the bulldog had served 'for generations of political cartoonists (...) as a potent symbol of Britain's strength and imperialism'. The same article quotes a 'Labour Party spokesman', who once again appeared to situate Labour's use of the bulldog in precisely that tradition:

> Our view is that the bulldog is a metaphor for the state of Britain because it starts off tired and listless and eventually breaks free thanks to the leadership of Tony Blair. We are using the bulldog to show how Britain can be strong once again.[259]

Following the broadcast, the *New Statesman* professed they were 'a little worried' about the bulldog:

> It goes without saying that it [the bulldog] is another Labour attempt to appropriate a symbol normally associated with the right. No matter that it was once the symbol of the National Front (...). [Tony Blair] has clearly taken a tactical decision that this is the way to maximise the party's returns in former Tory seats. (...) But Labour's campaign is now so loaded with borrowed symbols and stolen soundbites that the medium appears finally to have become the message.[260]

My own view is that Labour's choice of language, images and symbols in their political campaigns invariably merits attention regardless of whether it represents a tactical ploy or expresses deeply felt convictions. In either case, it shapes and transforms public debates in particular ways. By using the bulldog to represent the British nation, Labour has once again

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[257] *The Times*, 15/4/1997, p. 7.

[258] Quoted in: *The Times*, 15/4/1997, p. 1.

[259] Quoted in: *The Guardian*, 15/4/1997, p.1.

[260] *New Statesman* editorial, 18/4/1997, p. 5.

alluded to the idea of imperial glory in a way that symbolically excludes black people from the British nation and offers comfort to those who think in racial ways in order to make sense of British society and Britain's position in the world.

The Union Jack featured on at least two further occasions in Labour's election campaign. In another party political broadcast, voters were warned not to vote Tory because the Tories had run the country down. In the background, the tune of 'Land of Hope and Glory' played throughout the broadcast. Tories at the Tory Party Conference were shown waving Union Jacks. The way I understand the broadcast is as an attempt to ridicule Conservative pretensions at claiming 'Land of Hope and Glory' and the Union Jack as their own when they have destroyed British hopes and British glory. The final sequence of the broadcast shows a sand castle on the beach opposite the Brighton Conference Centre (the 1996 Conservative Party Conference venue), adorned with a Union Jack. A wave destroys the castle and the Union Jack is flushed into the sea (Fig. 20):

This sequence seems designed to reinforce the message that the Tories have made Britain weak and have failed to protect British interests with sufficient vigour. They do not deserve to wave the Union Jack or sing 'Land of Hope and Glory' with pride. The implication is that, under Labour, people would be able to wave the flag and sing 'Land of Hope and Glory' with pride once again.

This is precisely what people appeared to be doing just after Labour had won a landslide victory in the general election. On 2 May 1997, one day after the election, Tony Blair triumphantly entered Downing Street to be greeted by a sea of supporters waving little Union Jacks (see Fig. 21, next page). The absence of Union Jacks outside Downing Street in the photo suggests, however, that people inside Downing Street were not engaging in some spontaneous waving of Union Jacks that they had brought along in order to mark the occasion. Rather, they had been provided with Union Jacks by the Labour Party in an apparent bid to entrench Labour's appropriation of the national flag.[261]

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[261] According to the *Guardian*, 'Millbank Tower, headed up by control freaks like Mr Brown and Mr Mandelson, planned the campaign down to the most extraordinary details, from sending out taped messages to every candidate for broadcast from loudspeakers for each of the last five days, through to the distribution of Union flags in Downing Street for Mr Blair's arrival yesterday lunchtime'. (*The Guardian*, 3/5/1996, Election Special, p. 2)

Fig. 21: Tony Blair entering Downing Street after Labour's victory in the 1997 general election.

This, then, was the final act of flag waving in an election campaign in which Labour consciously and deliberately outflagged every other major British political party many times over.

3.5.4   Conclusion

My observations on racial thinking at Labour's annual conferences of 1995 and 1996 as well as during the general election campaign of 1997 might strike some readers as highly subjective. Are people not bound to read the remarks and visual arrangements and symbols that I have discussed in this section in many different ways? Is it not just my imagination that reads racial thinking into a bit of flag waving to celebrate the arrival of a new Prime Minister, let alone into the installation of vertical red banners at Labour Party events or into the use of a church as an accreditation and general enquiry kiosk at Labour's annual conference of 1996? I think that such an interpretation of my response to Labour Party imagery and symbolism is entirely justified. My reading of Labour Party rhetoric and imagery depends on my particular reading of the history of racial thinking and on my particular position as a research student. Had I been in Downing Street on 2 May, who knows, I might have waved that flag with all the others. Had I been a delegate at Labour's annual conference of 1996, I might not have given a moment's thought to the red banners cascading round the conference hall. As it is, I am a research student in a particular personal situation, including a personal interest in the history of racial thinking and Labour's place within that history. Having studied what I believe to be some of the principal strands of racial thinking in European society and beyond, I have interpreted the words and images and symbols used by Labour by relating them to that history.

Although my response to Labour Party symbolism is subjective in the sense described above, it is not therefore groundless. According to my understanding of the history of Christianism as outlined in chapter two, Christianism has been an important context for the development of racial thinking. As a result, Christianist monuments and symbols such as churches, crucifixes, crosses and the bible refer to a long history of racial thinking. In British society today, Christianism continues to occupy a privileged position in the British constitution and continues to construct the category of 'Christian' as different from various other religious categories such as 'Jewish' and 'Muslim'. Yet in British society both of the latter categories can be used as racial categories, sometimes in the context of antisemitism or antimuslimism. There is

thus a potential for Labour's use of a church at their annual conference of 1996 to express racialised social concepts of the nation that exclude for example Jewish and Muslim people where 'Jewish' and 'Muslim' are viewed as racial categories. As for the Union Jack, it has historically and to the present day been used pervasively to express affirmative attitudes towards British imperialism, and the history of British imperialism has been permeated by racial and racist ways of thinking that have assigned inferior economic and political conditions to non-white people. As a result, I concluded that Labour's enthusiastic use of the Union Jack at their annual conference of 1996 as well as during the general election campaign of 1997 expressed racialised social concepts of the nation that excluded non-white people. Finally, the arrangements of red and white vertical banners used at Labour's annual conference of 1996 and during Labour's general election campaign of 1997 really do bear a degree of resemblance to similar arrangements of banners used by the Nazi Party in Nazi Germany. This certainly means that there is a potential for the use of these banners to express racial thinking. In my judgment, the kind of racial thinking principally expressed is a lack of historical awareness of or sensitivity to the history of racism, in which Nazi Germany's ideology and policies take a prominent place.

3.6   Some concluding remarks on Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the era of nationalism

The British Labour Party is strongly nationalistic in relation to the British nation-state. Although I suspect that this has always been the case, it appears to me that there has been an upsurge of nationalistic rhetoric since Tony Blair became leader of the party in July of 1994. Nationalism is not necessarily racialised, let alone racist. It can be racist, however, if it endorses or promotes racialised social or legal concepts of the nation. There are plenty of instances in Labour Party documentation where Labour Party rhetoric or policies or symbolism appear to endorse or promote racialised social and legal concepts of the British nation. The racial collectivities that tend to be excluded from full membership of or access to the British nation in Labour Party thinking include black people and Jewish people, that is to say the same groups of people that have been targeted by racists in the context of European Christianism and imperialism. In this way, racial thinking from the eras of Christianism and imperialism retains a presence in Labour Party thinking on the nation today.

In some cases, as indicated at various points in this chapter, I would go as far as characterising articulations of British nationalism in the Labour Party as racist. The clearest examples of racist ways of thinking in prominent places in the Labour Party in relation to the British nation can perhaps be found in Tony Blair's and Gordon Brown's assertions of an 'innate' British character. The racial classification that is being used here in order to make sense of the world has not been inherited from Christianism or imperialism. Rather, it is a product of nationalism itself. It is the classification of people as 'British' where 'Britishness' is perceived as a quality that is transmitted by descent.

Racial thinking is also in evidence in Labour Party thinking on nationalisms other than British nationalism. The emphatic promotion of or opposition to non-British nationalisms has, however, in the main been the preserve of particular factions within the party rather than the party leadership. In particular, my readings suggest to me that those who promote European Union nationalism tend to do so in non-racist ways, whilst there have been articulations of British regionalism in the Labour Party that I would describe as racist.

The fact that Labour Party thinking in the era of nationalism is strongly racialised does not mean that racial thinking in the Labour Party is in any way out of the ordinary relative to dominant modes of thinking in British society as a whole. As I suggest at a few points in this chapter, I believe the Conservatives are worse. I perceive their racial thinking as implemented in government policies, for example in the field of immigration, as particularly stringent. But equally, I cannot see that a Labour government would make a dramatic difference. There are certain continuities of racial thinking in mainstream British and perhaps in mainstream European society which Labour is essentially part of. It seems to me that challenging those continuities effectively and elaborating genuine alternatives can only be a long term task. There are certainly many people in the Labour Party who are working towards this end. I would not be surprised if the majority of people active in the anti-racist movement in Britain today were also Labour Party supporters, members or activists. It may well be that if there is hope, it lies in the Labour Party. But what does the work done by the national party or by leading Labour Party figures in the name of antiracism add up to? What theories of racism can be found within the Labour Party, and what proposals have been made over the last fifteen years or so to translate these theories into antiracist practice? These are some of the questions I would like to look at in the next chapter on Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the name of antiracism.

Chapter 4:

Labour's entanglement in racial thinking
in the name of antiracism

What do I mean by 'racial thinking in the name of antiracism'? Any racial thinking that takes a moral stance by declaring its opposition to 'racism'. In European languages, the expression 'racism' only came up in the thirties of this century in connection with the rise of Nazism in Germany. Today it carries indelible references to forms of racial thinking and racial policies that were implemented in Nazi Germany in relation to Jewish people and other racial collectivities. What I would identify as 'racial thinking in the name of antiracism' is therefore restricted to racial thinking post-1945 that in one way or another declares its opposition to 'racism'.

In this chapter, I would like to look at different forms of racial thinking in the name of antiracism as expressed through Labour Party rhetoric or activities in the last few decades, with particular emphasis on the last few years. In section 4.1, I will analyse Labour's theories of the causes of racism as articulated in policy documents or other statements made by national party spokespeople. Owing to the fact that the national Labour Party is a relatively powerful political organisation with privileged access to the media as well as local political structures nationwide, Labour Party pronouncements on the causes of racism are capable of influencing, and perhaps in some circumstances shaping, many people's thinking. In section 4.2, I will discuss documents or statements that explain Labour's antiracist policies. These are of dual significance. Firstly, they inevitably imply a particular analysis or theory of racism in British society. Secondly, they may serve as an indication of the kinds of antiracist action Labour might take in government. But even opposition parties are capable of taking antiracist action. This can take the form of parliamentary or extraparliamentary activities. Labour Party politicians are relatively powerful players in the British Parliament (as members of the Parliamentary Labour Party), in the European Parliament (as members of the European Parliamentary Labour Party) and in the wider British or European antiracist movement (where their status as MPs or MEPs means that they are in high demand as celebrity speakers or spokespeople). In sections 4.3 to 4.5 of this chapter, I will discuss a selection of Labour Party antiracist activities both inside and outside the British and European

Parliaments.

4.1 Labour's theories of the causes of racism

Any theory or practice of antiracism implies a theory of racism, which may or may not be formulated explicitly. Minimally, antiracist theory or practice relies on some notion of what racism is, combined perhaps with some ideas about the origins or the causes of racism. Although theories of racism may be developed in an attempt to develop a theory and practice of antiracism, they may equally be developed to further other ends, including the justification or promotion of racism. This may for example be the case when racism is claimed to be an inevitable ingredient of human nature. In this section, I will look at various explicit theories of the causes of racism as articulated in Labour Party documentation since the 1950s. Although all of these theories declare themselves in one way or another to be opposed to racism, there is a possibility that they are used for purposes other than fighting racism. For this reason, my interest in analysing Labour's theories of the causes of racism is to identify not just their plausibility but also their political origins and purposes as I perceive them.

4.1.1 Racism as caused by too much or too little immigration control

In the British Labour Party, explanations of racism have been closely linked to the debate about immigration since at least the 1950s. In Labour's statement on racial discrimination published in 1958, racial 'tensions' are portrayed, in part, as the inevitable result of newly arriving racial groups sharing one and the same social space with other racial collectivities:

> [Although nationally every year more people leave this country than enter it], difficulties inevitably arise when a large number of immigrants settle in one place. Housing shortage, periodic unemployment, and differing social customs may combine with natural strangeness to exaggerate community tensions. These can become particularly acute where the physical differences of the immigrants are visible as in the case of coloured people.[262]

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[262] Labour Party. 1958. *Racial Discrimination - Statement by the Labour Party*. p. 3.

This position was reiterated in 1965 in the Labour government's White Paper on *Immigration from the Commonwealth*, where it was used to justify the introduction of additional immigration controls.[263] The stance of the White Paper was restated in 1976, when Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary of the Labour Government then in power, introduced the Race Relations Bill in Parliament. One of four principles underlying the Government's policy on race relations set out by Roy Jenkins was that

> there is a clear limit to the amount of immigration which this country can absorb, and that it is in the interests of the racial minorities themselves to maintain a strict control over immigration.[264]

Both of the preceding quotes are rather cryptic in that there is no clear explanation of how precisely the mere presence of different racial collectivities may cause tensions. The statement of 1958 alludes to 'natural strangeness' between different racial groups, which might be read as an endorsement of the potentially racist belief that racism is part of human nature. This is, however, immediately contradicted when the pamphlet goes on to state that 'all these problems can be overcome by positive effort based on goodwill'.

At least since the early seventies, the theory that immigration causes racism has been questioned in a number of Labour Party documents, often in conjunction with the assertion that, on the contrary, tight immigration controls are responsible for exacerbating racial tensions. An early example of this stance can be found in Labour's *Green Paper* on *Citizenship, Immigration and Integration*, probably published in 1972. This document states that

> a discriminatory immigration policy makes increasingly difficult the integration of coloured citizens and embitters relations between the races; (...) the notion that increasingly severe restrictions on coloured immigration would play a major part in reducing hostility towards the newcomers has proved false, since each move towards stricter control has led to a demand for even narrower exclusiveness, or for a complete ban on coloured immigration.[265]

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[263] Home Office, 1965, p. 10.

[264] *Hansard*. Vol. 906. Session 1975-76. London: HMSO. Column 1548.

[265] Labour Party, [undated - 1972?], p. 7.

Similar assertions are made in Labour Party documents published in 1978, 1980 and 1983.[266] The theory that immigration controls cause racism is, however, in the main reserved for immigration policies as pursued by the Conservative Party, which tend to be described as excessive, as opposed to Labour's own plans, which are portrayed as firm but non-racist. The idea that more moderate levels of immigration control than advocated by the Tories are needed in order to ensure racial harmony can thus exist side by side with a condemnation of Tory policies as racist. Such a dual theory of racism as being aggravated both by too little immigration control and too much immigration control is expressed, for example, in a statement on immigration by the National Executive Committee, published in 1978. The view taken in this document is, on the one hand,

> that further restrictions to control the entry of immigrants into this country are unnecessary and that they would be harmful to the development of good race relations.

On the other hand, the same document supports the existing level of controls and endorses the theory that immigration controls may help ensure 'racial harmony', though they should not be excessively severe:

> More controls are in any case unnecessary since large scale immigration to this country is ending. (...) The price of racial harmony would be too high if we did not allow an English wife to live with her foreign husband or a family to look after their old, lonely parents.[267]

In more recent years, the idea that immigration must be controlled to ensure good 'race relations' appears to have become even less prominent in Labour Party rhetoric, whilst there have been some outspoken attacks on Tory immigration policies as 'racist'. In an article in the *Asian Times* of 7 October 1995, for example, Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw is quoted as follows:

> You need immigration controls in this country because it's a relatively small country and a lot of people would like to come here. But the truth is that at the moment the way the controls operate exacerbates race relations because - and I generalise, but not too much - if you are a white person living in this country and you want your relatives to visit you it's pretty easy to get them in. If you happen to be an Asian or black Briton and live here as a British citizen, it can be quite

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[266] See: 1) Labour Party. 1978. *Labour Party Campaign Handbook - Race, Immigration and The Racialists.* pp. 54-55. 2) Labour Party. [undated - 1980?]. *Citizenship & Immigration - A Labour Party Discussion Document.* p. 7. 3) Labour Party, Research Department. 1983. *Research Note 26: "Questions about Race".* p. 1.

[267] Quoted in: Labour Party, 1978, pp. 54-55.

difficult and quite often the relatives are the subject of the most capricious decisions. Now that simply underlines people's sense of bitterness against the system and makes race relations worse.[268]

Two days before, in his speech to the 1995 Labour Party conference, he had made the following statement:

> There can be no compromise with racism. Every country needs proper immigration control. But the rules must be fair, and applied with decency and justice. We shall oppose Mr Howard's promised Bill on Asylum and Immigration.[269]

In an interview broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 26 October 1995, he reiterated that concern about illegal immigration was

> a manufactured issue to enable the Tories to play the race card. (...) We are having no truck with racialist legislation, which is what Michael Howard is proposing, let me make that absolutely clear. We are not just going to go through the motions of fighting Michael Howard's proposals on the floor of the House. We won't have any truck with such proposals in government.

Even whilst attacking Tory policies as racist, however, Jack Straw's comments fall only just short of endorsing the belief that some degree of immigration control is necessary in order to contain racism. It is only 'at the moment' and because of 'the way controls operate' that 'race relations' are exacerbated. In general, Jack Straw believes that 'robust' immigration controls are necessary because 'this country cannot sustain a large influx of economic migrants'.[270] I have failed to find any statement by Jack Straw in which he spells out what exactly he thinks would happen if such an influx of migrants was allowed. Answers to this question have, however, been given by the Labour Party in the past, as for example in their statement on racial discrimination published in 1958. In the absence of any alternative explanations, Labour's support for tight immigration control can only be interpreted as resulting from theories that have been expressed in Labour Party documents of the past, including the theory that uncontrolled immigration causes racism.

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[268] *Asian Times*, 7/10/1995, p. 3.

[269] Straw, Jack. 1995. *Speech by Jack Straw MP, Labour Party Conference 1995*. Brighton: Labour Party Conference Media Office. p. 6.

[270] *Asian Times*, 25/2/1995, p. 2.

4.1.2 Racism as caused by social deprivation

The underlying or 'root' cause of racism as identified by the Labour Party is neither the severity nor the lack of immigration controls. Rather, Labour Party rhetoric on the causes of racism grants pride of place to the theory that racism is caused by social deprivation. 'Housing shortage' and 'periodic unemployment' were named as contributing factors to 'community tensions' as early as in Labour's statement on racial discrimination published in 1958. This theory was elaborated on in a number of statements published in the 1970s in response to popular support for the racist policies of the National Front. In a 'Race Special' issue of *Labour Weekly*, published by the Labour Party in the mid-seventies, Joan Lestor, Member of Parliament and 'Chairman of the Labour Party', wrote an article under the banner headline 'Our task is to destroy the roots of racialism - NEW JOBS AND HOMES ARE THE TOOLS TO USE'. This article contains one of the most detailed explanations of the social deprivation theory of racism I have found either in Labour Party documentation or elsewhere. The relevant passage in the article reads as follows:

> Our society faces serious problems. Inflation has been frightening. Unemployment is at a catastrophic level. Far too many people live in utterly inadequate housing. Our National Health Service and our schools need more resources.
> *All of these problems nourish the seeds of racialism, for racialism provides apparently easy answers*.
> In stating that we need to tackle these problems we are, of course, stating the obvious. But it is more than that.
> For to only attack racialism without tackling the problems of unemployment and inadequate social resources is as empty as racialist scapegoating.
> Exposing the racialist and attacking his "philosophy" is a vital part of the task of the socialist movement.
> But this must be married to an equally sustained attack on social problems confronting working class people.
> Then the words of racialism will fall on barren ground.[271]

A few years later, the National Executive Committee published a statement on the National Front. The introduction contains a list of types of action which 'any determined offensive against

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[271] Lestor, Joan. [undated - 1976?]. 'New jobs and homes are the tools to use'. In: *Labour Weekly - Race Special*. p. 2.

racialism' must involve. In addition to action to prevent the incitement of racial hatred and racist propaganda, the document calls on the Labour Party 'to eradicate the problems such as high unemployment and declining living standards which racialists use to stimulate racial prejudice'.[272] In other documents, the Labour Party has detailed how the racialists go about stimulating prejudice: 'Racialist propaganda claims that coloured families are taking all the council housing available (...) take white workers' jobs (...) hold up classes' etc.[273] These statements complement those made by Joan Lestor to yield a complete theory of the causes of (white) racism, which I would summarise as follows: When (white) people are socially deprived, they look for and are prepared to accept any easy answers as to how their situation can be improved. Racialists offer such an answer by saying that black people take away resources that would otherwise be available to white people.

To my mind, this theory is flawed in that it takes too much for granted. For why should people consider a practice as manifestly arbitrary as the exclusion of particular racial collectivities as an acceptable solution to social and economic problems? My own answer to this question would be to point to the high level of acceptability in mainstream British society of racist texts that have informed and reflected mainstream social, economic and political developments in European states and empires and beyond for hundreds of years. At all levels of society, racist ways of thinking continue to be recycled not just through many historical texts that are still available or in circulation, but also through contemporary texts that endorse racism as a result of the way in which they relate to the histories of European Christianism or imperialism or nationalism. If this answer is deemed plausible, then any antiracist theory of racism would have to take a critical look not just at the fringes of contemporary British society, but at mainstream traditions, cultures and texts. By relying on the social deprivation theory of racism, the Labour Party has been able to avoid such an examination, which would also necessitate a critical look at Labour's own history and contemporary political language and practices.

Although the quotes illustrating Labour's social deprivation theory of racism have been taken from the seventies, Labour continues to subscribe to this theory in the 1990s. In July of 1993, for example, the Labour Party published a document on racial attacks, written by Shadow Home Affairs Minister Joan Ruddock. In this document, readers learn that 'fuelled by the

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[272] Labour Party. 1978. *Statement by the National Executive Committee. Response to the National Front.*

[273] Labour Party. 1976. *Labour Against Racism.*

recession and the breakdown of old barriers, racial violence has found a foothold amongst the new insecurities'.[274] Two months later, Joan Ruddock responded to the victory of a BNP candidate in local elections in Millwall, London, as follows:

> Tory ministers' expressions of dismay over the election of a BNP councillor are nothing but hypocrisy. They have forced people into greater and greater competition for fewer jobs, scarce housing and school places. We must tackle the root causes of racism.[275]

A few weeks later, Emergency Resolution 12 was approved at Labour's annual conference. It carried the following preamble:

> The victory by the openly racist and fascist British National Party in the Millwall by-election on 16 September 1993 is a warning to the whole of the labour movement and all people of decency and goodwill.
> The election of the BNP councillor, coming as it does amidst a mounting epidemic of racist violence in East London and other parts of the country, calls for a united response from everyone committed to democracy and tolerance. History shows all too clearly that the price for ignoring this menace is too high.
> The BNP election victory and the rise in racial violence is a reflection of the social and economic deprivation that is all too familiar in Britain today. Even if the election result had been any different, racism would still persist. It is the social and economic conditions which breed racism that need to be targeted.
> The entire labour movement pledges itself to do everything in its power to root out racism in all its forms and to campaign against the deplorable social conditions, including mass unemployment and the chronic housing shortage, which provide fertile soil for fascist and racist politics.[276]

Not all of those who supported the resolution agreed with the analysis of the causes of racism it contained. Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers Union, for example, whilst speaking in favour of the resolution, nevertheless appeared to question the analysis it offered:

> We must recognise that racism is deep-seated within our political culture. Yes, of course, there is economic deprivation. But economic deprivation does not cause racism, it exploits it. I was brought up in Handsworth, one of the poorest areas of Birmingham, but I did not go around kicking white people. I did not go around saying that white people have no place in our society.[277]

[274] Labour Party. 1993. *Racial attacks - time to act*. p. 3.

[275] Quoted in: *The Guardian*, 20/9/1993, p. 1.

[276] Labour Party. 1993. *Conference Report. Ninety-second annual conference of the Labour Party. Decisions taken.* p. 27.

[277] Labour Party. 1993. *Conference Report. Ninety-second annual conference of the Labour Party*. p. 204.

Although I find Labour's social deprivation theory of racism as implausible as does apparently Bill Morris, I have some ideas as to why the Labour Party might have come to subscribe to it so tenaciously. Firstly, the theory easily lends itself to incorporation into traditional Labour Party rhetoric on social deprivation and associated attacks on Tory social or economic policies. This is illustrated not just by Joan Ruddock's statement made in September of 1993 following the election of a BNP candidate, but also by earlier documents, such as a pamphlet on 'Tories and Race Relations' published in 1978:

> The Labour Government has done its best to ease the tensions that incite racial hatred. Inner city problems, such as bad housing, poor schools, lack of jobs and leisure facilities, are being tackled with vigour. (...) The Conservative Party, by contrast, have done nothing to contribute to good race relations. Indeed their policies and utterances argue most strongly that they would worsen race relations in this country. Look at their policies. The Conservatives want to cut public spending - except on defence - which means less help to our cities; fewer decent schools and homes, less jobs.[278]

Secondly, it is noticeable that the social deprivation theory of racism is frequently expressed in the context of attacks on fascist parties such as the National Front or the BNP. In what follows I would like to investigate to what extent Labour's social deprivation theory of racism may be informed by a parallel social deprivation theory of fascism, coupled with the idea that people get duped into racism as the result of fascist propaganda.

4.1.3 Racism as caused by fascist propaganda

In Labour Party documentation, the issue of racism is frequently invoked in connection with attacks on far right political organisations such as the National Front and the British National Party. Thus in the late 1970s there was a flurry of Labour Party texts dealing with the 'racist politics' of the National Front, and in the early 1990s similar attacks, if on a lesser scale, were launched against the British National Party. One recurring theme in these attacks is that fascist parties dupe perfectly 'decent people' into voting for them by making false promises. People buy into the racist propaganda spread by fascist organisations not because they are ready to accept or

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[278] Labour Party. 1978. *Speakers' Notes. Tories and Race Relations.*

embrace racism but simply because the fascists offer (false) promises of a better future. This line of reasoning is particularly explicit in the front page article by Ian Mikardo in the 'Race Special' edition of *Labour Weekly* mentioned above:

> The National Front is not a political party. It is an anti-social conspiracy, masquerading as a political party. Its pretended political policies are just a bunch of flowers to hide the foul racist weed which is embedded in the middle of the bunch. (...)
> Fortunately, there are not many of them. But unfortunately they are followed into the polling booths by a lot of decent people who are not racists at all, but who are looking desperately for some new outlet, some fresh escape hatch, for their disappointments and their difficulties and their frustrations.[279]

Once again, I suppose that electoral considerations might have caused Ian Mikardo, and the Labour Party more generally, to shrink from accusing people who vote for fascist parties of racism. Labour might for example fear that if they did so, those people might become even more alienated from Labour than they already are. There is, however, a drawback to Labour's failure to attack the views of people who vote for fascist parties. This is that such people may feel confirmed in their racial ways of thinking - ways of thinking that made them or at least allowed them to vote for parties that openly endorse racism.

As indicated earlier in this report, Labour's idea that racism is something fascists do, and that fascism thrives in difficult social or economic conditions, is shared by other sections of the British left as well as a number of antiracist organisations. Some Labour Party documents as well as antiracist documents more generally that I have studied over the last few years have persuaded me that this kind of thinking tends to be informed by a particular interpretation of the rise of racism in Germany in the 1920s and the 1930s. According to this interpretation, racism as espoused by the Nazi Party became influential in Germany on the back of massive unemployment and other forms of social deprivation. Labour's reliance on this theory is hinted at in one Labour Party document on the National Front published in 1978:

> The deep-rooted problems which inflame racial tensions are high unemployment, falling living standards, shortage of homes, poverty and squalor in the inner cities. In these conditions the germs of racial tension breed. This has been seen in Germany and elsewhere.[280]

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[279] Mikardo, Ian. [undated - 1976?]. 'Unite Against Nazis!'. In: *Labour Weekly - Race Special*. p. 1.

[280] Labour Party. 1978. *Speakers' Notes. Response to the National Front*. p. 5.

The understanding of racism which I see at work in this passage is, firstly, that support for Nazism in Germany was a measure of racism in German society, and secondly, that support for Nazism was related to poor social or economic conditions. I would not reject either of these suggestions out of hand. Social degradation, or the fear of social degradation, may plausibly have led some people to look for alternatives to the political agendas of the mainstream or ruling parties. What I cannot persuasively explain to myself with reference to social or economic conditions alone, however, is why so many people should have plummeted for a party as openly racist as the Nazi Party. The only way in which I can make sense of this phenomenon is with reference to the high degree of acceptability of racist ways of thinking in German political culture more generally at that time. Thus in my view the theory that German history demonstrates that support for racist politics is the result of poor social conditions rests on a misinterpretation of the history of racism in pre-Nazi Germany. This misinterpretation, whilst perhaps convenient for the labour movement, is dangerous for any antiracist movement that deserves its name since it deflects attention from racism in the wider political culture, including the labour movement itself.

The association of racism with Nazism in the antiracist imagination is also reflected in some of the images used in antiracist literature produced by the Labour Party and other sections of the antiracist movement. The most conspicuous instance of this is the pervasive use of swastikas in order to symbolise racism, especially racism as espoused by fascist groups such as the National Front or the BNP. The use of the swastika enables antiracist groups to mobilise opposition to racist/fascist organisations by appealing to British national pride in victory against Nazi Germany in World War II. Such an appeal is evident, for example, in the front page illustration of an antiracist leaflet published jointly by the Labour Party and the TUC (see next page).[281]

The message conveyed by this image is that if the National Front were allowed to have their way, the British nation, represented by the Union Jack, would be usurped by Nazism.

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[281] The leaflet is undated, but was probably published in 1976. Following 'a string of good results' obtained by the National Front in local elections in May 1976, 'the NEC decided to launch a campaign against racialism in September jointly with the TUC'. (Layton-Henry, 1984, p. 99).

Fig. 22: Front page of TUC/Labour Party antiracist leaflet,

probably published in 1976

'Racialism' would have won. In one respect I agree with the analysis that is implicit in this

message. The policies and rhetoric of the National Front, and in more recent years of the BNP, really do mirror racist Nazi policies and rhetoric to such a degree that I think it is right to label these organisations Nazi organisations and to associate them with the symbol of the swastika. Where I disagree with the analysis implicit in the image is that, once again, it appears to locate the problem of racism exclusively on the Nazi inspired fringe of politics. In the image, racism is associated with the Union Jack being broken up and usurped by Nazism. The Union Jack thus functions as a symbol of antiracism (or at least nonracism). But the Union Jack represents all of the history of the British empire and nation-state from the time when it came into being in 1707. As a result, it is a symbol of racism as much as antiracism. Or does this assessment just reflect my own, subjective attitude towards the Union Jack? I suppose people's individual attitudes towards the Union Jack invariably rest upon their individual understanding of British history, and the relative importance they attach to different elements of that history. Thus for some, victory over Nazi Germany in World War II may be an element of that history that is of overriding importance, resulting in a favourable attitude towards the Union Jack. For others, pride in the history of British imperialism may be a particularly significant factor in determining how they see the Union Jack. For these people, the Union Jack may be cherished as a symbol of racism rather than antiracism. Others again may despise the Union Jack precisely because they, too, see it as a symbol of racism. Different individual attitudes towards the Union Jack thus reflect different interpretations of and responses to the history of the British state. What interpretation of British history is expressed when the Union Jack is waved in the face of National Front 'racialism'? I think that such a use of the Union Jack expresses pride in the antiracist track record of the British state. Any suspicion that there was anything wrong with the modes of racial thinking that were prevalent, and perhaps continue to be prevalent, in the history of British imperialism and British nationalism is thus suppressed. Mainstream racism in British society is left unchallenged.

4.1.4   Conclusion

Over the last forty years or so, the British Labour Party has developed two theories of the causes of racism which it continues to subscribe to today. These are, firstly, that racism may be the result of too much or too little immigration control. The idea that racism is caused by too little immigration control has become less prominent in recent years, while there have been a number

of attacks on Tory policies introducing ever tighter immigration controls as 'racist'. These attacks are based on the belief that sufficiently tight checks on immigration into Britain were introduced in the sixties and seventies. According to the Labour Party, all that is required now is ensuring that these controls are made to work in 'non-racial' ways by applying them equally to black and white people. Although Labour's theory that racism may be the result of too much immigration control is different from Tory Party philosophy, it is far from radical. It fails to question the tendency of British nationalism over at least the last one hundred years or so to control immigration in order to preserve social concepts of the British nation as a community of descent. As a result, it fails to challenge the idea that the British nation is essentially a racial collectivity that must be protected from too great an influx of any type of migrants, regardless of whether they are black or white.

Secondly, the Labour Party believes that racism is caused by social deprivation. The Tories are blamed for creating social deprivation, and fascist organisations are blamed for exploiting social deprivation in order to stir up racial hatred. Once again, Labour's social deprivation theory of racism offers a useful line of attack against political opponents. As a theory of the causes of racism, however, it is flawed. Racism as defined in this thesis is, in the first instance, a particular way of thinking. The historical analysis in chapter 2 has indicated that racist ways of thinking have arisen in quite diverse historical situations. They have been perpetuated through countless racist texts and images. Regardless of any historical causes, there is a substantial body of racist texts available today, which moreover keeps being added to. This body of texts offers one way of understanding people and societies, both past and present, which anybody may find difficult to resist unless they make a conscious effort to do so. The core beliefs that are perpetuated through this body of texts are that it makes sense to classify people racially; to give them different names (in the form of racial categories) in order to identify them as racially different; to group them together in racial collectivities; and to ascribe different social or cultural characteristics to people who are deemed to belong to different racial collectivities. The best way of opposing racism, then, may lie in attacking any such beliefs or any practices that flow from them wherever and in whatever form they have occurred or continue to occur today, whether as written or spoken texts, as institutional procedures, or as social acts. Such opposition to racism is not promoted by Labour's social deprivation theory of racism. On the contrary, the social deprivation theory of racism takes the existence of racial classifications, racial categories and

racial collectivities for granted. It makes out that it is plausible for people who are socially deprived to discriminate on racial grounds. It ignores the wealth of mainstream racist texts which have made racist ways of thinking appear acceptable to many. It fails to attack racist ways of thinking in the mainstream of British society.

But the search for the causes of racism is only one aspect of antiracist theory and practice. Whether or not Labour's antiracist policies or antiracist activities inside and outside Parliament are inspired by their theories of the causes of racism remains to be seen. One Labour Party report published in 1967 on the implications of extending the Race Relations Act certainly played down the significance of comprehending the causes of racism for the development of antiracist policies: 'Whatever the origins of incidence of such prejudice [colour prejudice and racial discrimination] - and they are by no means simple - it is clear that we as socialists must show our abhorrence of it and try to remove it from our society'.[282] This statement was made in the context of elaborating proposals for anti-discrimination legislation. Over the last few decades, a whole range of antiracist policies have been developed by the Labour Party. It is this field of antiracist activity to which I shall now turn.

4.2   Labour's antiracist policies

On mentioning that I would like to identify and analyse antiracism in the British Labour Party, people active in the antiracist movement have repeatedly assured me that the Labour Party 'has no antiracist policies' and that my research report would be a story of 'silences' and 'omissions'. My own observations have persuaded me that, whilst the Labour Party is not particularly vocal about their antiracist proposals, a range of antiracist policies nevertheless exist. In Labour Party documents and rhetoric, they come under the headings of racial discrimination, racial disadvantage, law and order, education, and immigration and nationality. In this section, I will analyse Labour's antiracist policies in each of these fields.

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[282] Labour Party. 1967. *Report of the Labour Party Working Party on Race Relations*. p. 6.

4.2.1 Racial discrimination

For the last forty years, the Labour Party has shown a lasting concern with 'racial discrimination' in British society. This concern is reflected in numerous policy statements and has led to the passing of three Race Relations Acts. The earliest Labour Party policy statement known to me that is dedicated to the problem of racial discrimination in British society was published in 1958.[283] It was written in response to 'instances [of racial discrimination] which have recently occurred in this country'. These were directed against 'coloured immigrants' from the Commonwealth, 'the greatest multi-racial association the world has ever known'. Throughout the document, discussion of racial discrimination remains related to the migration of 'coloured people' from the Commonwealth. There is detailed information on their numbers and countries of origin. Proposals for 'action against racialism' include maintaining 'regular consultation on this issue with the rest of the Commonwealth' and 'a sustained campaign to increase knowledge and understanding of Commonwealth peoples'. But opposition to racial discrimination is also expressed in universal terms. The opening statement combines opposition to 'racial prejudice' in general with a reference to the events that occasioned the writing of the document:

> The Labour Party utterly abhors every manifestation of racial prejudice, and particularly condemns those instances which have recently occurred in this country.

There are also policy pledges of a general nature, including the establishment of citizens' committees charged with the responsibility of 'combating every form of discrimination', the introduction of 'legislation which will outlaw discrimination in public places', and the use of 'the full weight of Government influence against every form of discrimination'.

Rather than charting the full course of Labour Party thinking on racial discrimination since 1958, I will now leap to the year 1991. In the meantime, three Race Relations Acts have been passed under Labour governments in 1965, 1968 and 1976 respectively. Since then, Labour has lost three consecutive general elections. Following the defeat of 1987, many of Labour's policies, including those on racial discrimination, were reviewed. The results of the review of policies on discrimination are summarised in the document *Opportunities for all*, published in

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[283] Labour Party. 1958. *Racial Discrimination - Statement by the Labour Party.*

1991.[284] According to this document, 'racial discrimination remains widespread throughout our society. It is deeply embedded into most of our major institutions'. The text specifically lists 'black, Asian and ethnic minorities' as groups that tend to be targeted by racial discrimination. 'Ethnic minorities' are repeatedly contrasted with 'the white population'. The notion that what is at issue is discrimination against non-white people is reinforced by the image on the title page, showing a collection of people most of whom are likely to be classified by British readers as non-white:
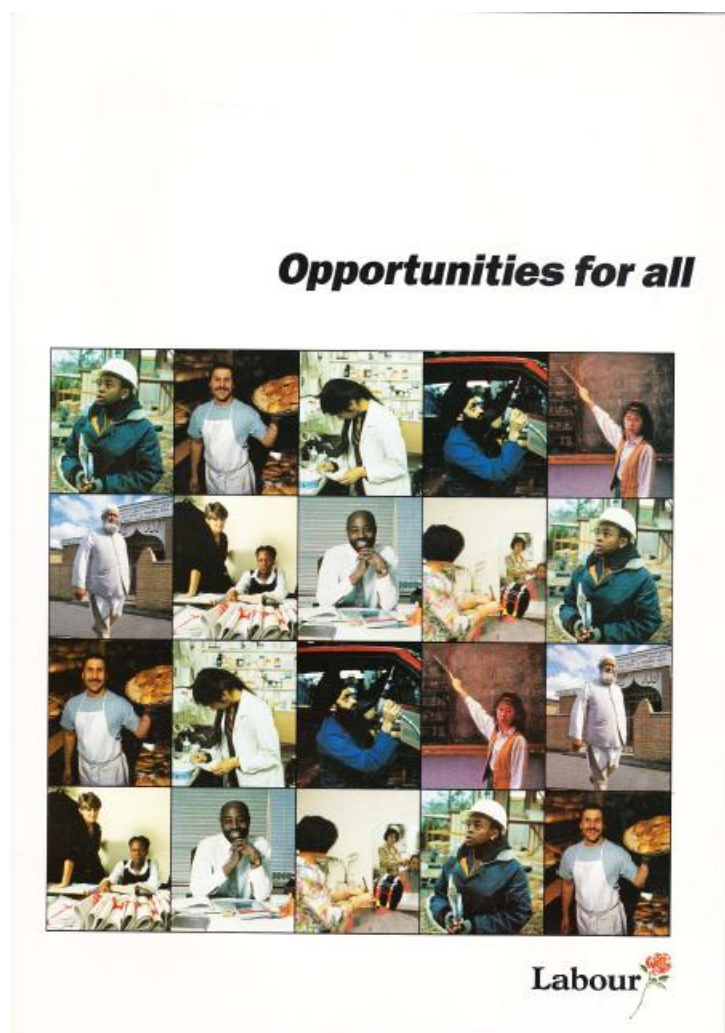
Fig. 23

Front page of Labour Party policy document published in 1991

The document contains a number of proposals for tackling racial discrimination that go beyond existing legislation. These include a 'new strengthened Race Equality Act', requiring employers and training providers 'to take positive measures to promote equal treatment and equal access to jobs and training'. The new Race

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[284] Labour Party. 1991. *Opportunities for all.*

Equality Act would also extend protection against discrimination 'to cover the police, prisons and immigration'. Every organisation receiving government contracts or public money 'will have to show that they are implementing the new Race Equality Act fully'. Local authorities, too, would be given 'more specific duties to eliminate discrimination and promote equality - not only as employers, but also as service providers'. Labour would also 'ensure that our anti-discrimination legislation is extended to make discrimination on religious grounds unlawful'. In more recent publications, however, proposals for fighting racial discrimination have disappeared from the agenda. Neither Labour's *Policy Handbook* of 1996 nor Labour's 1997 general election manifesto contain any commitments whatsoever in this field. There is no mention in these documents of any plans for a new Race Equality Act.

An original contribution to the debate about racial discrimination in the wider labour movement is contained in one of the 'issue papers' published by the Commission on Social Justice in 1994. The Commission on Social Justice was set up in 1992 at the instigation of John Smith, then leader of the Labour Party, and was based at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). Although publications by the Commission on Social Justice do not necessarily represent Labour Party thinking, it appears to be generally accepted that they are intended to provide the Labour Party with ideas which they might well pick up on and incorporate into their thinking. The issue paper in question is a pamphlet written by Tariq Modood, entitled *Racial Equality - Colour, Culture and Justice*.[285] In addition to the traditional view of racial discrimination as an expression of 'colour-racism', this document advances the view that racial discrimination can also be the result of 'cultural racism'. According to Tariq Modood,

> 'cultural racism' (in contrast to colour-racism) (...) is targeted at groups perceived to be assertively 'different' and not trying to 'fit in'. It is racism which uses cultural difference to vilify or marginalise or demand cultural assimilation from groups who also suffer colour-racism. Racial groups which have distinctive cultural identities or community life will suffer this additional dimension of discrimination and prejudice.

The problem I see with these formulations is that, in effect, they promote the very confusion between 'race' and 'culture' which is a common characteristic of racist ways of thinking. It is true, of course, that racism in the form of attacks against people who are classified as members of

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[285] Modood, Tariq. 1994. *Racial Equality - Colour, Culture and Justice*. London: IPPR (Commission on Social Justice). The quote that follows is from p. 6.

various black collectivities (and other racial collectivities, too) is often rationalised with reference to the alleged cultural characteristics of those under attack. What makes such attacks racist is that they single out for attack particular racial, not cultural collectivities. What makes the rationalisations of such attacks racist is that they rely on the idea that cultural characteristics can be derived from alleged descent. If racism is to be challenged, then this idea must be challenged. Tariq Modood, however, appears to accept it. By collapsing the notions of 'racial groups' and groups 'which have distinctive cultural identities or community life' into one, Tariq Modood appears to accept what has always been one of the fundamental premises of racist ways of thinking.

4.2.2 Racial disadvantage

In the Labour Party, concern about racial discrimination has long gone hand in hand with concern about 'racial disadvantage' or 'racial deprivation'. In Labour's statement on racial discrimination of 1958, such disadvantage is seen in terms of the relationship between Britain on the one hand and the countries of origin of 'coloured immigrants' on the other:

> It should be realised that the immigrants also have their difficulties. They often come from countries which have been ruled by Britain for centuries, frequently to the benefit of the British people. Poor housing, unemployment, low standards of living, are common to many of these countries, and are at least partially the responsibility of the British people.[286]

By the seventies, the focus had shifted from racial disadvantage in the wider world of the Empire to racial disadvantage within the British nation-state. The Labour government's 1975 White Paper on racial discrimination, for example, does not mention global inequalities, or Britain's responsibilities in relation to them, but it does contain an acknowledgment of racial disadvantage within British society:

> The Government recognises that what is here proposed for a further attack on discrimination will need to be supplemented by a more comprehensive strategy for dealing with the related and at least equally important problem of disadvantage.[287]

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[286] Labour Party. 1958. p. 3.

Two years later, Labour's Home Policy Committee wrote a confidential report delineating 'a strategy for racial deprivation'. Under the heading 'The Nature of the Problem', the document identifies 'two aspects of racial deprivation':

> The first arises from the heavy concentration of blacks in the poorer areas of our inner cities where they share the same kinds of deprivation as whites. The second arises out of the newness of most blacks in our society with the consequent cultural difficulties in a period of transition.[288]

In relation to the first of these aspects, nowhere in the document is the connection between 'race' and 'disadvantage' explained. Black people, the document suggests, just happen to be concentrated in deprived inner cities, where they share the same problems as whites. Since they share the same problems as whites, a specific programme for blacks 'would be politically unacceptable and morally unjustifiable'. Urban deprivation policies should therefore work across the board, including 'all urban areas experiencing these needs'. In relation to the second of these aspects, the document constantly plays with the theory that racial difference determines cultural difference. Statements such as the following are typical:

> It is not possible to generalise about differences for all minority groups (...). For instance many Gujeratis are vegetarians which makes them more prone to rickets and tuberculosis though the incidence is widely overrated. Meat eating Hindus do not have this difficulty.

> The West Indian family. Mainly as a result of slave conditions a tradition of close family unity on the English or Asian pattern is rare.

The document thus takes care to avoid absolute judgments: *rarely* is there a tradition of close family unity in the West Indian family; *many* Gujeratis are vegetarians and hence (supposedly) more prone to rickets and tuberculosis. Nevertheless, by linking membership of racial groups to cultural characteristics, the document appears to be influenced by, and in turn promotes, racist ways of thinking. However variable or indirect the link between race and culture is made out to be, the end result is that racial groups are thought to have 'special needs' on the grounds that they exhibit special cultural characteristics.

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[287] Home Office. 1975. *Racial Discrimination.* London: HMSO. p. 6.

[288] Labour Party, Home Policy Committee. 1977. *A Strategy for Racial Deprivation*. p. 3. The following quotes are from p. 6.

In the 1990s, the language of racial disadvantage is still present in Labour Party documents, but perhaps in more muted forms than in the 1970s. In the document *Opportunities for all*, published in 1991, although there is no direct reference to 'racial disadvantage', there is an acknowledgment of the existence of 'the disadvantage and inequalities that arise from racism and from other forms of discrimination'. There is, however, no indication that racially specific measures should be taken in order to compensate for disadvantages of this kind. Rather, as in the 1970s, Labour's proposals for dealing with such disadvantage tend to be non-specific in racial terms. By tackling unemployment in general, for example, Labour proposes to cut unemployment of black people, too. The same line is taken in the document *The best for everyone*, published in 1992.[289] Likewise, Labour's *Policy Handbook* of 1996 promises to 'address the unacceptably high levels of unemployment among young people from ethnic minorities' by means of employment schemes open to all young people.

In recent Labour Party documentation, I have failed to find any crass speculation about the special cultural characteristics or needs of different racial collectivities along the lines of Labour's 1977 document on racial deprivation. Nevertheless, there are still a few unexplained references to the 'specific needs' of 'ethnic minorities', for example in relation to services provided by the Department of Social Security or social services.[290] Special needs thinking of this kind may be given added impetus by the analysis contained in Tariq Modood's *Racial Equality: Colour, Culture & Justice*, published by the Commission on Social Justice.[291] In this document, racial groups are described as culturally distinct, with their own 'norms, group solidarities and patterns of behaviour which are not merely the products of majority exclusion'. As a result, Tariq Modood recommends that equal opportunities policies should not just treat people as individuals but should take account of the 'cultural background' associated with membership of particular 'minority groups'.[292]

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[289] Labour Party. 1992. *The best for everyone - What Labour's policies will mean for ethnic minority communities.*

[290] See for example: Labour Party. 1991. *Opportunities for all.* pp. 14, 16.

[291] Modood, 1994. For the potential link between this document and Labour Party thinking, see the previous section. The following quote is from p. 12.

[292] In the relevant section, Tariq Modood talks about 'minority groups', avoiding any direct reference to race. The context of the passage makes it clear, however, that the minority groups he has in mind are defined in terms of 'ethnicity' and 'race'.

4.2.3   Law and order

A number of specific policy issues that might be classified as belonging to the field of racial discrimination and racial disadvantage in a wide sense have at times become important issues in their own right in Labour Party rhetoric and documentation. Throughout the 1990s, for example, there has been concern in the Labour Party about the level of 'racial harassment' and 'racial attacks' in British society and beyond. This concern is reflected in a series of speeches and composites at Labour Party annual conferences as well as in a number of policy documents. One document of 1990 that covers a broad sweep of Labour Party policies proposes government action to 'ensure that the police give greater priority to the growing number of racial attacks'.[293] A document of similar scope published one year later promises 'greater help to identify those responsible [for racial harassment and attacks] and bring them to court, and to protect those most vulnerable to attack'.[294] Whilst these proposals are somewhat vague and do not necessarily call for changes to the law, in 1993 Labour published a document entitled *Racial attacks - time to act* that contained more detail and more far-reaching proposals.[295]

The document begins by indicating the scope of the problem: a sharp rise in the number of racial incidents recorded by police forces in England and Wales from 4,383 to 7,793 between 1988 and 1992, plus estimates that only between one in ten and one in twenty of such incidents may be reported. The document proceeds to make a distinction between 'racial attacks' and 'day to day racial harassment', in the form of, for example, verbal abuse, spitting, bullying at school or intimidation in the street. It notes that those affected by racial harassment 'often do not even bother to report the incident. (...) Yet, left unchallenged, abuse, taunting, graffiti etc. create not only immediate misery but instill fear and resentment in whole communities'. On the basis of this analysis, the document calls for racial violence to be made a specific criminal offence. Such a move would be 'as important for its symbolic value as for its actual use in prosecutions'. The proposal to create a new law criminalising racial attacks was later refined to overcome the objection that prosecutions would become more difficult because of the burden of proof required.[296]

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[293] Labour Party. 1990. *Looking to the Future - A Dynamic Economy, A Decent Society, Strong in Europe*. p. 42.

[294] Labour Party. 1991. *Opportunity Britain - Labour's better way for the 1990s*. p. 48.

[295] Labour Party. 1993. *Racial attacks - time to act*. (Written by: Joan Ruddock, Shadow Home Affairs Minister).

[296] This is explained in a briefing paper from Joan Ruddock, MP, published in March 1994.

In addition to demanding new legislation, the document calls for greater use to be made of existing civil and criminal law by police and local authorities; demands that Chief Constables should be required to publish annual statistics of racial incidents; supports the proposal contained in the 1989 report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Racial Attacks and Harassment that the Home Office commissions a survey to examine the occurrence of racial attacks and harassment; advocates the fostering of a multi-agency approach to combatting racism locally; demands that the Home Office should investigate possible links between the activities of extremist organisations and the incidence of racially motivated violence; calls for additional or continued funding for local antiracist or victim support projects; demands that section 11 funding be restored; and expresses Labour's agreement with proposals aimed at empowering judges to request multiethnic juries in certain circumstances.

Over the last few years, Labour has increasingly incorporated proposals to counter racial attacks and racial harassment into a wider policy emphasis on law and order that has been sold to the public under the slogan 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. In a document entitled *Safer Communities, safer Britain - Labour's proposals for tough action on crime*, published in 1995, the Labour Party claimed that 'we are now the party of law and order'. This document contains a short section on 'action against harassment and racial violence'. New laws on racial violence ensuring 'strong and rigorous punishment of offenders' are here described as 'essential', but no further details are provided. A longer section on 'racial harassment' is contained in a document entitled *Protecting our communities - Labour's plans for tackling criminal, anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods*, published in 1996. Having set out a range of evidence indicating the scale of the problem of racial harassment, the document states that 'Labour is committed to getting tough on those who commit racist crime. We will create two new criminal offences - of racial harassment and racially motivated violence'.

Labour's growing concern about racial terrorism in the 1990s is also reflected in increasingly detailed policy proposals in resolutions and composites passed at successive Labour Party annual conferences. An emergency resolution carried in 1992, having registered alarm at 'the massive increase in racism' in Europe, merely calls on the government 'to make clear its unequivocal commitment to combating racism and fascism in all its forms'.[297] One year later, a composite prefaced by the expression of 'sympathy to the victims of racist attacks and their

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[297] Labour Party. 1992. *Record of Decisions, Ninety-first annual conference of the Labour Party.* p. 22.

relatives' and 'deepest concern' calls for 'the urgent introduction of a Racial Harassment Bill to make racially motivated violence and harassment a specific criminal offence' and instructs the National Executive Committee 'to establish a Commission to produce a report on all aspects of institutionalised racism in our society'.[298] These demands were widened in a composite that was carried unanimously at the annual conference of 1996. Here, conference calls upon the future Labour government to strengthen the existing legislation on racial incitement and incitement to racial hatred as well as 'to make it a criminal offence to publish, broadcast, distribute or display any material for the purpose of denying the Holocaust'.[299] Early in 1997, Tony Blair signalled his personal support for the latter demand, saying that 'there is a very strong case that denial of the Holocaust should be a specific offence'. He added that 'we are giving active consideration to how this should be achieved'.[300]

Different sections of the antiracist movement have responded differently to Labour's policy proposals on racial attacks, racial harassment and Holocaust denial. An article in the October/November 1995 issue of the journal *CARF* (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism) voices the belief that a Racial Harassment Bill 'would be a weak and ineffectual tool in the fight against racism'. The same article criticizes Labour's recent law and order policies as an attack on civil liberties and describes the party's attempt to enlist anti-racist and feminist support for their proposals as 'particularly sickening'.[301] In a letter to the leaders of Britain's major political parties, published in its April 1997 issue, *Searchlight* expresses the view that there is no need for new legislation to deal with racial violence or Holocaust denial.[302] The *Anti-Racist Charter*, published by the National Assembly Against Racism in 1996, on the other hand, includes in its list of demands 'the creation of a new criminal offence of racial violence and harassment'.

Whatever the views of different sections of the antiracist movement, I think it cannot be denied that the Labour Party is taking the problems of racial terrorism and Holocaust denial seriously, and is trying to formulate policies designed to deal with them. In this field of policy, at least, I find that the Labour Party has in recent years played an active, perhaps a leading part in the wider antiracist movement. Although some of Labour's policies on law and order may be

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[298] Labour Party. 1993. *Record of decisions. Ninety-second annual conference of the Labour Party.* p. 27.

[299] See: Labour Party. 1996. *Conference 96 - Conference Arrangements Committee Report.* pp. 32-33.

[300] Quoted in: *The Guardian*, 30/1/1997, p. 8.

[301] See the article 'New Labour or New Right' in: *CARF*. October/November 1995. pp. 7-10.

[302] See: *Searchlight*, April 1997. No. 262. p. 2.

open to criticism on the grounds of infringing civil liberties, I fail to see how the proposals relating to racial terrorism can be faulted on the grounds of a specifically antiracist analysis. As regards the effectiveness of legislation creating a specific offence of racial violence, I think Labour is right to highlight the symbolic significance of any such measure.

4.2.4   Education

In 1977, Labour's National Executive Committee wrote a confidential document that outlines proposals for a 'policy on race' in the field of education.[303] The document notes that 'a generation of black people has already gone through a school system that has made almost no adaptation to their presence'. Yet there are 'specific and identifiable needs in multi-racial schools' which the Government has so far failed to address. Quoting the Government's 1975 White Paper on Racial Discrimination, the document highlights the need to address disadvantages that result from 'the factor of racial discrimination'. It then deals separately with four areas of 'special needs in multi-racial schools'. These are 'Language', 'Cultural Pluralism', 'Race', and 'Parents'.

Under the heading of 'language', the documents calls for greater efforts to be made to teach English to 'non-English-speaking children' in order to enable them to 'do well at school'. The section on 'cultural pluralism' argues that the confrontation with 'a common set of values and a common culture mainly based on the values and attitudes of the middle-class' is difficult for the working class child and 'even more difficult for a child from a background which has completely different values, a different history, and may even have been at the receiving end of some of the less admirable events in British history (e.g. the Slave Trade)'. The document recommends changes to the curriculum to give each child 'a sense of individual worth and pride in his heritage'. This may involve offering a choice between 'Gujerati, Punjabi or French as the second language taught'. Under the heading of 'race', the documents contends that 'the expectation of racial discrimination in employment influences the motivation of young black people and the teaching force contains its share of racially prejudiced people'. The short section on 'parents' asserts that due to language problems and cultural barriers, 'West Indian and Asian parents find the British educational system difficult to understand (as do many indigenous parents)'.

In a separate section, entitled 'Education for the whole community', all schools and

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[303] Labour Party, National Executive Committee. 1977. *Race and Education.*

colleges 'in racially mixed areas and in all-white areas' are called upon to educate the next generation 'to live and work in a multiracial society'. To this end, theories of European superiority in textbooks should be eliminated, and the issue of 'race relations' should be incorporated into the curriculum in all schools.

The document contains many of the elements of what in later years came to be known amongst educators as well as academics as the multicultural and antiracist models of education. On the one hand, in line with the multicultural education model, the document accepts the belief that different 'races' exist and are culturally distinct. Schools are called upon to adapt to this cultural diversity by recognising the 'special needs' of pupils and parents who belong to particular racial groups. On the other hand, in line with the antiracist model of education, racism (here referred to as 'racial prejudice') is identified as a problem that needs to be tackled in schools. Teachers and books are named as potential sources of racism. Teaching all children about 'race relations' is seen as conducive to the functioning of a 'multiracial society'. Just like the Swann Report of 1985, then, Labour's 1977 document on 'race and education' paradoxically combines support for the belief that cultural affiliations can be derived from membership of racial groups with an attack on racial prejudice and a demand for antiracist education.

In 1989, Labour's multicultural and antiracist education policy went public.[304] The policies put forward in the document *Multi-cultural education - Labour's policy for schools* hardly differ from those set out in 1977. 'Race' and 'culture' are routinely confused in the document, as in the following passage that sets out to explain the need for multicultural education:

> Britain is manifestly a multi-racial society. We believe that any education system, working within this plurality of cultures, must set itself two objectives. First, it must ensure that all children in our schools develop an understanding of, and a sensitivity towards this plurality of cultures and traditions; it must guarantee that all cultures are accorded legitimacy and respect. It is from that respect that self-respect and self-confidence will grow amongst Afro-Caribbean and Asian children. Secondly, it must ensure that all pupils of all races achieve their full potential.

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[304] See: Labour Party. 1989. *Multi-cultural education - Labour's policy for schools.*

If there is a difference to the document of 1977, it is that the dimension of multiculturalism has gained in importance, whilst any antiracist perspective is more difficult to discern. Teaching all children that racial difference goes hand in hand with cultural difference can hardly be considered as an exemplary antiracist education strategy. Nor does the document pretend that it is. Although by 1989 different antiracist education models had widely been discussed by academics, educators and the wider public, Labour's document makes no mention of antiracist teaching.

There is perhaps a slightly greater emphasis on the need to combat racial discrimination in the education section of the Labour Party document *Opportunities for all*, published in 1991. Once again, however, antiracist teaching is only envisaged within the framework of the multicultural education model: 'Every child should have the opportunity to develop an understanding of our different cultures and traditions. This is an essential element of combatting discrimination'.[305]

According to Barry Troyna's and Richard Hatcher's analysis of Labour's policies on racial equality in education, published in 1991, two other Labour Party documents on education published in 1989 are written 'as if the experiences of the last ten years of anti-racist education had never happened'.[306] The 'overwhelmingly dominant theme' of Labour's document *Good Education for All* is described as 'education's economic role, to which its social role is subordinate and ancillary'. Once again, 'there is no mention of antiracist teaching'. In relation to the more detailed document *Children First*, they find that 'the token and marginal status of the issue of "race" in education is confirmed'.

In more recent years, it appears that the emphasis on education as a means of producing a competitive workforce has increased even further. A wide-ranging policy document on education, published in 1994, omits any mention of either multicultural or antiracist education.[307] The only reference to 'race' in the document is in Labour's proposals for the curriculum, which should 'offer opportunities to all and be a right for all, with no exclusion on grounds of class, race, sex, disability, or special need'. The idea that education might have a role to play in fostering antiracist ways of thinking is not alluded to anywhere in the document. The role of education in

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[305] Labour Party. 1991. *Opportunities for all.* The quote that follows is from p. 22. A similar emphasis can be found in: Labour Party. 1992. *The best for everyone - What Labour's policies will mean for ethnic minority communities.*

[306] Troyna, Barry; Hatcher, Richard. 1991. '"British Schools for British Citizens"?'. In: *Oxford Review of Education*. Vol. 17. No. 3. pp. 287-299. All quotes taken from this article are from p. 294.

[307] Labour Party. 1994. *Opening doors to a learning society - A policy statement on education*. The quotes from this document are from pp. 3, 15, 31.

ensuring international competitiveness and national prosperity, on the other hand, is highlighted both in the introduction:

> Britain's international competitors have long recognised that, in the knowledge-based economies of the modern world, education forms the basis of national wealth in much the same way that physical resources did in the past.

and in the conclusion:

> National prosperity depends on our ability to nurture and develop the talents and skills of all our people. That is why education - truly comprehensive and lifelong - will be at the forefront of Labour's project of national renewal.

Similar priorities are expressed in a document on curriculum reform, published in 1996, and in Labour's *Policy Handbook*, also published in 1996.[308]

Although Labour's statements on multicultural education of 1989 and 1991 voice opposition to racial discrimination in the field of education, they fail to promote antiracist ways of teaching. On the contrary, Labour's demand for 'multicultural education' is backed up by an analysis that confounds 'race' and 'culture' and is thus in danger of perpetuating and promoting racist ways of thinking. Since in more recent documents the issue of multicultural or antiracist education has failed to be addressed, I take it that Labour's statements of 1989 and 1991 continue to represent Labour Party thinking. There is, however, an indication of a change of emphasis in one of the education composites passed at Labour's 1996 annual conference. In one passage, conference urges an incoming Labour government

> to take all necessary steps to ensure that the contents and process of the national curriculum reflects the multiracial and multicultural make-up of Britain and should broaden the horizons of all students so that they can understand and contribute to a pluralist anti-racist society.[309]

Although the juxtaposition of 'multiracial' with 'multicultural' and 'pluralist' with 'antiracist' in this composite is still suggestive of an assumed link between 'race' and 'culture', the two concepts are not here used interchangeably. In addition, the composite calls for ways of teaching that enable

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[308] See: 1) Labour Party. 1996. *Aiming Higher - Labour's plans for reform of the 14-19+ curriculum.* 2) Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook.* Section 2.4.

[309] Labour Party. 1996. *Conference 96 - Conference Arrangements Committee Report.* p. 23.

students to contribute to an 'antiracist society', a demand that is absent from the documents on multicultural education published in 1989 and 1991.

4.2.5 Immigration and nationality

Having criticized in chapter three some aspects of Labour Party thinking on the boundaries of the British nation as racist, or at least as failing to consistently challenge racist ideas about those boundaries, it might seem odd for me to list 'immigration and nationality' as a field of Labour Party activities in which they have put forward antiracist policies. Yet it is true that, from Labour Party pamphlets in the early seventies to more recent statements by the party leadership at Labour Party conferences, the Labour Party has repeatedly denounced the Tories' policies on immigration and nationality as 'racist'. And I believe they have been justified in doing so. The Tories have introduced measures, such as most recently the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act, that have clearly been designed to tighten the borders of the British nation ever more both in a physical and a symbolic sense, thus promoting social concepts of the British nation as a racial collectivity. In some instances at least, the Labour Party has emphatically opposed such policies.

In relation to the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act, for example, the Labour Party is pledged to repealing, if not the Act in its entirety, then at least those sections of it that establish a White List of countries which are considered as safe for the purposes of granting asylum to refugees, and those sections that have withdrawn benefit entitlements to refugees in certain circumstances. Not only have these policies been made clear in Labour Party publications, they have also been disseminated through the media.[310] On 20 April 1996, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw even attended an antiracist demonstration plus rally in London, where he denounced the Bill and set out Labour's own plans. True, he did not promise that a Labour government would repeal the Act in its entirety. True, he was heckled and shouted down by many in the audience who were unsatisfied with what he offered. But it is also true that the turnout at this crucial rally was extremely low. My estimate would be of hundreds of people attending the final rally rather than those hundreds of thousands that the Bill deserved. Considering this abysmal showing by the antiracist movement, I suppose Jack Straw would have been justified in

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[310] See: 1) Labour Party. 1996. *Policy Handbook*. Section 3.13. 2) Interview with Jack Straw, *Today* programme, BBC Radio 4,

thinking that he was in the vanguard of the antiracist movement.

As outlined in chapter 3, in the 1980s and into the early 1990s the Labour Party was committed to recasting British nationality law along lines that would 'not discriminate on grounds of sex or race'. Their proposals included restoring the right to British citizenship to children born in Britain and removing 'wherever possible, the discretionary elements within the law'.[311] Such commitments have, however, not been repeated in more recent policy statements. It remains to be seen whether they will reappear on the agenda once Labour is in government, or whether they have been discarded for good.

4.2.6   Conclusion

Labour's antiracist policies exhibit one element of racial thinking that is also present in Labour's theories of the causes of racism. In policy statements on racial discrimination, racial disadvantage, law and order, education, and immigration and nationality, the existence of racial categories and racial collectivities is usually taken for granted. Some statements of policy go further than that and ascribe social or cultural significance to racial classifications. This is particularly evident in some of the texts discussed above relating to racial discrimination, racial disadvantage and multicultural education. As a result, in Labour Party policy statements that are written in the name of antiracism, racist ways of thinking fail to be opposed as unremittingly as they might be.

Another parallel between racial thinking as expressed through Labour's antiracist policies and racial thinking as expressed through Labour's theories of the causes of racism consists in a relative lack of interest in the history of racism. In the case of Labour's theories of the causes of racism, such interest only just reaches back to Nazi Germany, which serves as a questionable historical model for deriving the social deprivation theory of racism. In the case of Labour's antiracist policies, the overwhelming emphasis is on devising ways and means by which racial discrimination and racial terrorism can be prevented in the present. This is undoubtedly an important issue. Yet the exclusive focus on how best to repress racism in the present is at the possible expense of two other potential issues: how best to reform racist ways of thinking (for

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26/10/1995.

[311] These quotes have been taken from: Labour Party. 1990. *The Charter of Rights - Guaranteeing individual liberty in a free society*. p. 12.

example through public and/or formal education), and how best to repair the damage that's been done by racism of the past.

Nevertheless, in relation to repressing racial discrimination and racial terrorism, the Labour Party has a long history of policy development that has continued into the 1990s. In these fields, at least, their proposals do not lag far behind many of the demands made by the extraparliamentary antiracist movement, and in some cases they surpass them.

In the field of policies on immigration and nationality, Labour Party thinking appears to remain cast in the mould of racial thinking on the boundaries of the nation that has been prevalent in British society since at least the beginning of this century. Still, whilst Tory thinking has become obsessed with attempting to seal off the real and symbolic boundaries of the nation ever more, the Labour Party has at least signalled more welcoming policies in relation to visitors, relatives and refugees, and, at least up until the early 1990s, has held out the promise of widening the avenues by means of which British citizenship can be acquired.

4.3   Labour's antiracist activities in Parliament

Labour Party MPs and MEPs are relatively powerful players in the British Parliament and the European Parliament respectively. By their actions in these Parliaments, they are capable of eliciting information that is useful for the antiracist movement; influencing the general terms of political debate in British and European society; opposing or supporting racist or antiracist Bills or Orders; and introducing Bills of their own. In order to investigate the scope and nature of Labour's antiracist activities in Parliament, I have studied a selection of House of Commons and European parliamentary records as well as a number of related documents, such as texts of laws passed or reports approved by the respective Parliaments.

4.3.1   The British Parliamentary Labour Party

For my study of Labour's antiracist activities in the British Parliament, I have concentrated on parliamentary proceedings in the House of Commons in the early nineties as recorded in *Hansard*. Surveying the index of *Hansard* covering the period from 7 November 1990 to 7 November 1996, I identified six categories of entries that appeared to be of particular

interest:

1)	entries involving a reference to 'antisemitism'
2)	entries involving a reference to 'asylum'

3)	entries involving a reference to 'British citizenship' or 'British nationality'
4)	entries involving a reference to 'ethnicity' ('ethnic minorities', 'ethnic monitoring', etc.)
5)	entries involving a reference to 'immigrants' or 'immigration' ('immigrant detainees', 'immigration applications', 'immigration controls' etc.)
6)	entries involving a reference to 'race' ('race relations', 'racial attacks', etc.)

It appeared to me that the entries under these six categories would provide me with a wide ranging list of references to parliamentary interventions of a potentially antiracist character. The list is, however, not complete. Parliamentary proceedings in the period under consideration include, for example, the House of Commons debates on the *War Crimes Bill 1990/1991*, which is not referred to in the *Hansard* index under any of the six categories listed above.[312] A War Crimes Bill had been on the parliamentary agenda since 1989, following the publication of the Report of the War Crimes Inquiry. The Bill that was finally passed received Royal Assent on 9 May 1991. Its main objective was to allow the prosecution of people resident in Britain today for serious crimes committed in Germany or German occupied territories during World War II. Debates about the War Crimes Bill and subsequently about the War Crimes Act thus directly touch on the issue of how British society has responded and/or should respond to racist crimes committed in Nazi Germany and elsewhere.[313]

Although in concentrating on the six categories listed above I may be excluding some relevant House of Commons debates, like those on the War Crimes Bill, I will now turn to my findings in relation to the entries under those six categories. On analysing these entries more closely, I found that four types of entries could be distinguished. Firstly, entries referring to parliamentary questions; secondly, entries referring to parliamentary debates of a general nature; thirdly, entries referring to parliamentary debates on Orders and Regulations issued by the government; fourthly, entries referring to parliamentary debates on Bills introduced either by the government or by individual MPs.

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[312] *Hansard*, Vol. 188, 18/3/1991, columns 23-118.

[313] See: 1) Hetherington, Thomas; Chalmers, William. 1989. *War Crimes - Report of the War Crimes Inquiry*. London: HMSO. 2) *War Crimes Act 1991*. In: *The Public General Acts*. 1993. Part I, pp. 83-90. London: HMSO.

The vast majority of entries, approximately 2800 in total, were references to parliamentary questions. The chart shown below indicates how they break down according to the six categories of entries listed above. As can be seen in the chart, more than half of the questions were concerned with 'immigrants' or 'immigration', approximately one quarter involved references to 'ethnicity'. Entries under 'asylum' were related to Asylum Bills or Regulations, while the issue of 'political refugees' more generally was subsumed under the category of 'immigration'. I have not analysed parliamentary questions of a potentially antiracist (or racist) character in any greater detail, but their breakdown provides a first indication of the relative interest the issue of 'immigration' has retained in the House of Commons in the 1990s.

Breakdown of parliamentary questions on selected issues, 1990 - 1996
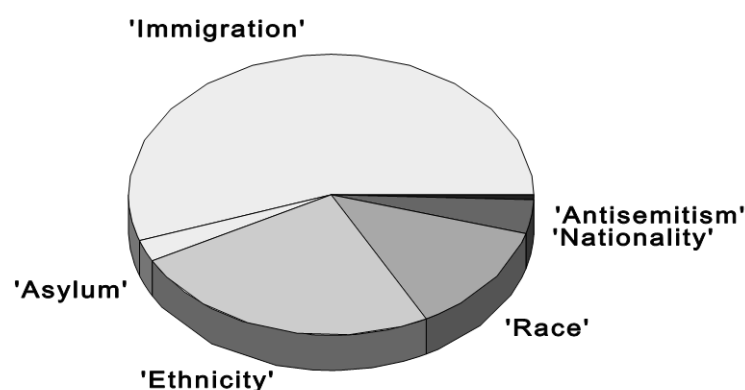
The preponderance of the issue of immigration is also reflected in the breakdown of parliamentary time spent debating issues that are referenced in the Hansard index under the six categories listed above. Out of a total of about 69 hours of debate on these issues, approximately 46 hours were taken up by debates relating to three Asylum and Immigration Bills brought in by the government between 1991 and 1995. The overall breakdown of the 69 hours of debate in the House of Commons on the issues of 'asylum and immigration', 'ethnicity', 'race', 'British citizenship/nationality' and 'antisemitism' is shown in the chart below.

I will now look at some of the contributions Labour Party politicians have made to these debates. The first Bill relating to asylum and immigration that was debated in the House of

Commons in the nineties was in fact brought in by Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn. His *Asylum Seekers and Refugees Bill 1990/1991* was designed to speed up asylum procedures and 'make them much fairer'.[314] The present system, Jeremy Corbyn explained, was unfair 'in that it has a presumption against rather than in favour of the applicant'. The Bill proposed to create a 'refugee protection agency, which would have the job of deciding requests for refugee status', a 'refugee review board, which would hear all appeals before anybody could be removed from this country', and 'a charter of rights for asylum seekers and refugees'. It was intended, in part, to act as a corrective to the government's inadequate response to the rise of 'racism and xenophobia' in Europe. The vote on the motion to bring in this Bill was won by 116 votes to 73, but subsequently the Bill failed to make any further progress.

Breakdown of parliamentary time spent debating selected issues, 1990 - 1996
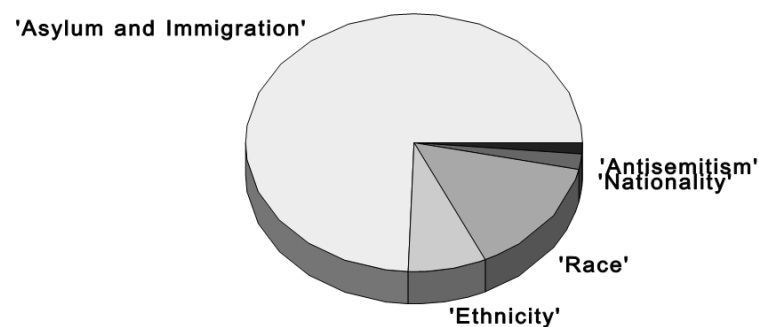
The next debate on asylum took place on 13/11/1991, when the Conservative government introduced their *Asylum Bill 1991/1992*.[315] Speaking for the government, Home Secretary Kenneth Baker made it clear that the Bill was designed to curb the rising numbers of people seeking asylum in Britain by weeding out 'bogus applicants'. This goal was 'not in any way racialist. This is not about discriminating against non-white applicants. Eastern Europe remains a major cause for concern'. What Kenneth Baker did not say was that categoric opposition to white 'Eastern Europeans' migrating to Britain can be interpreted as an element of racial British

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[314] See: *Hansard*, Vol. 190, 8/5/1991, columns 745-747.

[315] *Hansard*, Vol. 198, 1/11/1991, columns 1082-1182.

nationalism just as much as opposition to non-white 'Africans' or 'Asians' migrating to Britain. Labour Party MPs failed to pick him up on this issue in the debate. This is perhaps not surprising since the language of 'race' and 'ethnicity' is strongly associated with references to 'blackness' or 'non-whiteness' in Labour Party rhetoric and documentation, too. Labour's frontbench also appeared to accept Kenneth Baker's proposition that the number of 'bogus applicants' for asylum posed a problem. Nevertheless, they opposed the Bill on the grounds that it would result in the exclusion of 'genuine refugees'. Labour's motion, introduced by Roy Hattersley, demanded that

> this House, whilst reaffirming its determination to prevent bogus asylum seekers from entering the United Kingdom, declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, because of the arbitrary criteria against which asylum applications are measured and the inadequacy of the appeal system for those who are initially rejected, will result in the exclusion of men and women who have well-founded fear of persecution and death and is therefore in breach of this country's obligations under the United Nations Convention of 1951.

In his speech, Roy Hattersley concentrated on technical flaws in the Bill. But he also claimed that the Home Secretary, Kenneth Baker, had stoked up fears of immigration needlessly when he presented plans for the Bill to the Conservative party conference, and that he had defended tabloid representations of the Bill that were intended to be prejudicial 'to the millions of black and Asian Britons who live in this country'. When backbench MPs entered the debate, the language used became less restrained. In particular, accusations of racism were bandied about on both sides. In each case the Speaker requested that the remarks be withdrawn, regardless of the merits of the case. Conservative MP David Evans, for example, began his contribution by calling Roy Hattersley's speech 'that of a racist'. Asked by the Speaker to withdraw the remark, he insisted that Roy Hattersley had 'uttered pompous remarks'. It was clear, then, that David Evans used the expression 'racist' merely as a general term of abuse. Later in the debate, Labour MP Bernie Grant, having claimed there were 'many well-known racists present on the Conservative Benches', was equally asked by the Speaker to withdraw his remark. The subsequent exchange indicates the power of the Speaker to influence the terms of debate in the House of Commons:

> **Mr. Grant:** I'm not prepared to withdraw that remark. *[Interruption.]*
> **Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am asking the hon. Gentleman whether, in the best interests of the debate, he will rethink his claim and withdraw the accusation that he has just made.
> **Mr. Grant:** A number of Conservative members have played the racist

card in several immigration debates. I am prepared to say that after your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker. One of the major reasons why the Bill-

      Hon. Members: Withdraw.

      Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman has withdrawn his accusation? That is what I am asking him to do, in the best interests of the debate and of the House.

      Mr. Grant: I have substituted the words that I have- *[Interruption.]*

      Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair will deal with this matter. I am asking the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the accusation that he has made. I understand that he is now going to make his speech, but I need a clear withdrawal of the statement that he made.

      Mr. Grant: I am not prepared to withdraw.

      Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case-

      Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On three occasions, the hon Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) admitted to use of the word "racist" as it applied to himself.

      Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been listening extremely carefully to this debate. Passions have been raised, understandably, very high. I am asking the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) in good faith to withdraw the statement that he made. I wish to hear his speech - the House wishes to hear his speech. He has a contribution to make, but we cannot and I will not allow such accusations to be made.

      Mr. Grant: On the basis of your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will withdraw my remark.[316]

Bernie Grant then insisted that the Bill was racist, or was at least meant to play on racism, since 'the majority of asylum seekers are people of colour'. Bernie Grant thus appeared to support the Home Secretary's view that 'racism' only concerns discrimination against 'people of colour'.

The *Asylum Bill 1991/1992* failed to reach the statute book because the 1992 general election intervened. However, the new Conservative government swiftly introduced another Bill of similar scope, the *Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill 1992/1993*. Once again, according to Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke, the Bill was intended to 'strengthen our system of controlling entry and excluding people not entitled to be here'.[317] The Bill extended the right of appeal for some categories of entrants, including applicants for asylum, but abolished it for others, including visitors and certain categories of students. The debates in the House of Commons on this Bill followed a broadly similar pattern to the debates on the *Asylum Bill 1991/1992*, with Tony Blair now taking Roy Hattersley's place as Shadow Home Secretary. His criticisms concentrated on the

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[316] *Hansard*, Vol. 198, 13/11/1991, columns 1135-1136.

[317] *Hansard*, Vol . 213, 2/11/1992, column 21.

limited nature of the right of appeal for applicants for asylum, and particularly the removal of the right of appeal from visitors and students. Numerous backbench Labour MPs, including Roy Hattersley, also argued emphatically against the letter and the spirit of the Bill. Jeremy Corbyn claimed that there was 'a racist tide in Europe and a racist agenda, and I believe the Bill to be part of them'. Diane Abbott, too, thought that 'the motivation behind the Bill and the way that it is presented to the public is part of that rising tide of racism and anti-semitism [in Europe]'.[318] Although concern about aspects of the Bill was also expressed in the House of Lords, the *Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill 1992/1993* was voted through in the House of Commons virtually unamended and received Royal Assent in July 1993.[319]

Two and a half years later, the new Conservative Home Secretary, Michael Howard, introduced yet another Bill dealing with asylum and immigration, the *Asylum and Immigration Bill 1995/1996*. This Bill was designed 'first, to strengthen our asylum procedures so that bogus claims and appeals can be dealt with more quickly; secondly, to combat immigration racketeering through stronger powers, new offences and higher penalties; and, thirdly, to reduce economic incentives, which attract people to come to this country in breach of our immigration laws'.[320] Once again, Labour opposed the Bill in the House of Commons. Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw asked for the Bill to be considered by a Special Standing Committee. He was especially concerned about the proposals relating to fast-track asylum procedures for applicants from a specified 'white list' of countries, employers' checks on the immigration status of their employees, and the potential withdrawal of child benefit from people who have been given leave to remain in the United Kingdom. He said the Bill was inconsistent with Britain's obligations under international law, it would damage race relations, and it would be neither firm in its effect nor fair in its intent. Labour backbenchers were, once again, less restrained in their choice of language. Gerald Kaufman called the Bill 'vicious', Roy Hattersley thought it was 'squalid'. The latter also reacted strongly to the government's suggestion that the Bill was good for 'race relations':

> I grow sick of hearing people say that repressive legislation is necessary for good race relations in this country. The constant reiteration of the idea that every immigrant is a problem or a threat is bad for race relations. That is what

[318] See: *Hansard*, Vol . 213, 2/11/1992, columns 65, 102.

[319] See the account in: *Statutes Annotated*. 1993. Volume One. London: Sweet & Maxwell. pp. 23.1-23.4

[320] *Hansard*, Vol. 268, 11/12/1995, column 699.

Bills such as this pretend and that is the impression that they create.[321]

Other Labour MPs speaking in the debate included once again Bernie Grant, Diane Abbott and Jeremy Corbyn. Following further debates in the House of Commons in February 1996, the Bill received Royal Assent on 24 July 1996.

In addition to government legislation, a number of Private Members Bills concerned with 'immigration' and 'race' were introduced in the House of Commons in the 1990s. They included the following: Jeremy Corbyn's *Asylum Seekers and Refugees Bill 1990/91* mentioned above; the *Immigration (Dependent Children) Bill 1990/1991*, introduced by Labour MP John Hughes to facilitate the immigration of 'dependent children of parents settled in the United Kingdom'; the *Racial Violence Bill 1992/1993*, introduced by Labour MP David Winnock 'to make racial violence a specific criminal offence'; the *Race Relations (Remedies) Bill 1993/1994*, introduced by Labour MP Keith Vaz to remove the upper limit on the amount of compensation that can be awarded by an Industrial Tribunal in cases of racial discrimination; and the *Racial Hatred and Violence Bill 1993/1994*, introduced by Conservative MP Hartley Booth. The only Bill to reach the statute book was the *Race Relations (Remedies) Bill 1993/1994*. It was supported by the government, following a ruling of the European Court of Justice that had declared the ceiling on the amount of compensation in sex discrimination cases unlawful.[322]

Between 1990 and 1996, Labour Party spokespeople in the House of Commons also opposed a number of Government Orders and Regulations concerning the issues of 'asylum', 'immigration' and 'nationality'.[323] In addition, a number of Labour Party MPs succeeded in securing debates on issues related to 'asylum' and 'race'. Jeremy Corbyn, for example, spoke on 'the treatment of asylum seekers when they arrive in the United Kingdom' in November 1990; Diane Abbott addressed the issues of 'the position of black people in the armed services' and 'racial violence' in March 1991 and May 1993 respectively; and Neil Gerrard raised the question of 'family reunion for asylum seekers' in March 1995.[324]

The one major debate on the issues of 'immigration', 'asylum', 'ethnicity', 'race',

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[321] *Hansard*, Vol. 268, 11/12/1995, column 728.

[322] See: House of Commons (Parliamentary Briefing). *Race Relations (Remedies) Act 1994 - An Act of Parliament introduced by Keith Vaz MP*.

[323] See in particular: *Hansard*, Vol. 194, 2/7/1991, columns 165-178; Vol. 229, 20/7/1993, columns 299-321; Vol. 243, 9/5/1994, columns 65-74; Vol. 282, 15/10/1996, columns 691-718.

[324] See: *Hansard*, Vol. 181, 26/11/1990, columns 716-724; Vol. 187, 14/3/1991, columns 1260-1274; Vol. 225, 21/5/1993, columns 541-552; Vol. 256, 17/3/1995, columns 675-682.

'nationality' or 'antisemitism' that was initiated by the Labour Party in the period under consideration was an 'opposition day' debate on 'ethnic minorities' in June 1992.[325] Roy Hattersley opened the debate. His speech was divided between a first part in which he addressed the issue of racial discrimination and disadvantage within British society, and a second part in which he addressed the issue of immigration policy. His comments reinforce my view that Labour Party thinking on these issues has not changed in any fundamental way since at least the 1960s. In the first part of his speech, the emphasis was on the need to combat 'discrimination' rather than 'disadvantage'. The main demands were for 'ethnic monitoring' and the provision of 'equal opportunities' rather than preferential treatment for ethnic minorities. The main part of his speech was, however, taken up by the issue of immigration. Perhaps in clearer terms than I have found anywhere else in Labour Party documentation, Roy Hattersley endorsed the current British political consensus that Britain is not a country of immigration; that is to say that the only people who may be admitted are refugees or visitors or relatives and relations of British citizens:

> These days when we speak of immigration we mean a process that is directly relevant to the lives of British citizens living in Britain. Primary immigration, whether or not it was right in the dying days of the empire, is now over for ever. The argument about immigration now involves British citizens living in Britain - the right of wives to be reunited with their husbands and the right of British citizens to be visited by their friends and relations - a right which is still too often denied to the black and Asian British.

I find this passage problematic on at least two counts. Firstly, primary immigration is of course not over at all, since hundreds of millions of citizens of the European Union face relatively little difficulty if they wish to settle in Britain. Why is it that Roy Hattersley chose to ignore this fact? It appears that, even in 1992, Roy Hattersley subscribed to a racialised notion of 'primary immigration'. What he was opposed to was not any primary immigration, but only, it appears, primary immigration of non-white people. Secondly, the idea that primary immigration 'is now over for ever' has a chilling ring to me. As just established, Roy Hattersley could only mean primary immigration from outside the European Union. To say that this type of migration is now over for ever is to project a utopia in which the European Union is physically and symbolically closed off from the rest of the world, a utopia in which access to citizenship of the European Union is primarily granted on the grounds of descent. It is to say that the racial theorists of the

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[325] *Hansard*, Vol. 209, 9/6/1992, columns 149-202. The following quote from Roy Hattersley's speech is from column 154.

late nineteenth century, who first clamoured for immigration control to ensure the racial purity of European 'peoples', got it right in principle, the only difference being that what they demanded for the national level will now be realised on the level of Europe as a whole. This utopia contrasts sharply with my own utopia in which racial thinking that demands the separation of racial groups has been overcome and people are free to migrate and mingle as they wish.

Among other contributions by Labour MPs to this debate, a speech by Bernie Grant stood out in terms of being wider in scope than some other contributions. Rather than remaining restricted to the position of 'British citizens', Bernie Grant talked at length about the situation in other countries of the European Union and demanded antiracist measures on the level of the European Union. He did, however, not call into question Roy Hattersley's idea that primary immigration was 'over for ever', whether in relation to Britain or in relation to the European Union.

4.3.2   The European Parliamentary Labour Party

The position of the European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP) is rather different from that of the Parliamentary Labour Party in London in at least two respects. Firstly, the European Parliament does not possess legislative powers comparable to those of the British Parliament. As a result, major legislative texts comparable to the Asylum and Immigration Bills introduced by the Conservative government in London have not been debated in the European Parliament. Secondly, members of the European Parliament come from a greater variety of political parties than members of the British Parliament. Some of these parties are on the extreme right of the political spectrum and openly embrace racism. They have posed a challenge to other parties represented in the European Parliament that has no direct equivalent in the British House of Commons. Their breakthrough came in the second elections to the European Parliament in 1984, when they had sufficient members to form their own parliamentary group, the Group of the European Right. The Socialist Group in the European Parliament, which includes the EPLP, responded to 'this event' and 'evidence of growing racist tendencies in many European countries' by proposing a parliamentary inquiry into the rise of racism in fascism in Europe.[326]   The

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[326] See the introduction, written by Alf Lomas, Leader of the Labour Group of MEPs, and Rudi Arndt, Chairman of the Socialist Group of the European Parliament, to a pamphlet written by Andrew Bell on behalf of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament: Bell, Andrew. 1986. *Against Racism and Fascism in Europe*. Brussels: Socialist Group, European Parliament.

inquiry soon got under way under the chairpersonship of Labour MEP Glyn Ford. Its report was drawn up by Dimitrios Evrigenis, a Christian Democrat from Greece, and was published in 1985. A further Committee of Inquiry into Racism and Xenophobia was instituted in 1989. Its report was drawn up by Glyn Ford and was published in 1990. Glyn Ford was also one of the two observers sent by the European Parliament to participate in the deliberations of the Consultative Committee on Racism and Xenophobia that was set up by the European Council in June 1994.[327]

In addition to participating in antiracist initiatives taken by the Socialist Group, the European Parliament and other institutions of the European Union, the EPLP have instituted a Working Group Against Racism of their own. According to Mike Elliott MEP, the group was founded by himself in 1985. It is presently an open working group with a participation rate of around one third of Labour MEPs and has no equivalent in the national Labour Party.[328] A factsheet published by the EPLP informs me that the Working Group 'is there to ensure that issues of importance to Britain's ethnic minority communities get a fair hearing at European level'. The same factsheet also claims that 'there is now an annual debate in the European Parliament on issues of race and xenophobia, following pressure from the EPLP Working Group Against Racism'.

A demand for annual parliamentary debates on 'the situation with regard to xenophobia and racism in the Community' was in fact one of the 77 recommendations contained in the Ford Report. The Ford Report recommendations were directed at the institutions of the European Union and at Member States. In October of 1995, Glyn Ford considered that only two of the recommendations had been implemented. Firstly, the setting up of a Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs in the European Parliament; secondly, the annual parliamentary debates on racism and xenophobia in the Community.[329] In the 1980s, there had already been a number of parliamentary debates on racism and xenophobia, but they took place at irregular intervals and mostly in response to specific reports or declarations. Overall, in the period from 1985 to 1995, thirteen debates in the European Parliament were dedicated to the issue of 'racism and xenophobia':

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[327] See: *Searchlight*, Nov. 1994, p. 22; Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia. 1995. *Final Report*. Brussels: European Union - The Council. p. 2.

[328] I gleaned this information in an informal conversation with Mike Elliott in March 1997.

[329] See: *Debates of the European Parliament*, 25/10/1995, No. 4-469, p. 95.

Debates in the European Parliament on racism and xenophobia, 1985-1995	Labour Party MEPs speaking in these debates
10/12/1985 (on the Evrigenis Report)	Glyn Ford
15/1/1986 (question with debate to the Commission, on the rise of fascism and racism in Europe)	Glyn Ford
11/6/1986 (on the Joint Declaration against racism and xenophobia)	Glyn Ford
8/2/1988 (question with debate to the Commission, on the revival of racism and fascism in Europe)	Glyn Ford
13/2/1989 (on the Joint Declaration & a Commission proposal for a Council resolution concerning the fight against racism and xenophobia)	Glyn Ford
13/6/1990 (on the Council resolution on racism and xenophobia)	Glyn Ford
9/10/1990 (on the Ford Report)	Glyn Ford, Michael Elliott
9/10/1991 (questions with debate to the Commission and the Council, on Community action against racism and xenophobia)	Glyn Ford, Michael Elliott
28/10/1992 (questions with debate to the Commission, the Council and European Political Cooperation, on racism and xenophobia)	-
21/4/1993 (on the Committee on Civil Liberties report on the resurgence of racism and xenophobia in Europe)	Christine Crowley
26/10/94 (questions with debate to the Council and the Commission, on racism and xenophobia)	Michael Elliott, Simon Murphy, Glyn Ford
25/4/1995 (questions with debate to the Council and the Commission, on the Consultative Committee on Racism and Xenophobia)	Glyn Ford, Richard Howitt
25/10/1995 (questions with debate to the Council and the Commission, on racism and xenophobia)	Glyn Ford, Michael Elliott

I will now conclude this section on the EPLP by looking at some of the contributions Labour Party MEPs have made to these debates. As the table above indicates, Glyn Ford has been the most prominent Labour Party speaker on these issues in the European Parliament, followed by Michael Elliott and a few others. For this reason, the following account will focus on the contributions made by Glyn Ford.

In Glyn Ford's parliamentary speeches on racism and xenophobia, the emphasis tends to be on a demand for action rather than an attempt to theorise racism or the causes of racism.

There, is, however, some theory, too. In several of his early speeches, Glyn Ford distinguished between 'institutional', 'administrative' and 'everyday' racism. He stressed that racism was a European problem, even though the victims tended to be different in different places. In a speech in 1985, he likened racism to a 'virus' that cannot be eliminated but should be 'put into quarantine'. This could be achieved most effectively 'by taking action to provide full employment, to underpin social peace and to remedy many of the injustices that the migrant groups in our Community face'.[330] The idea is perhaps that 'everyday racism' can best be contained by providing full employment, while 'institutional' or 'administrative' racism can only be remedied by removing it. This partial endorsement of the social deprivation theory of racism is, however, not necessarily typical of Glyn Ford's thinking. His main interest as expressed in his speeches appears to be in suppressing and containing racism wherever it resides rather than speculating about how it got there. In June 1986, for example, there was no mention of social deprivation when he contended that '[racial] inequalities are caused by the administrative, institutional, everyday racism of Europe and are also the product of those mean-minded warped individuals who see strangers as the cause of all our problems'. In the same speech he likened the migrant workers of the European Community to a thirteenth Member State:

> In Europe we have a submerged thirteenth, another nation whose rights, standard of living and job prospects are all markedly inferior to those of the rest of Europe, namely the 13 million migrant workers in the Community, the hidden thirteenth, the thirteenth Member State of the Community.[331]

Glyn Ford has since repeated this theme many times over in his speeches in Parliament and elsewhere. In 1993, the *Guardian* asked their readers to make original suggestions as to which state should become the thirteenth Member State of the European Union. Glyn Ford suggested that 'the non-EC nationals living within the community should, together, make the 13th state - a move which would remove their second-class status and prevent them from being exploited' - and won a prize for originality.[332] I consider that the idea of migrant workers forming an additional state in the European Union is a good example of an inclusive, antiracist social concept of the nation (in this case in relation to the legal nation that is made up of the citizens of the European

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[330] *Debates of the European Parliament*, 10/12/1985, No. 2-333, p. 93.

[331] *Debates of the European Parliament*, 11/6/1986, No. 2-340, p. 107.

[332] *The Guardian*, 23/1/1993, p. 37.

Union) - not as a serious proposal, but as a way of highlighting the discrepancy between the ideal of a non-racial European citizenship and the reality of the racialisation of European citizenship via the principle of descent as implemented in the Member States. In addition to the image of the 13th state, Glyn Ford has consistently used the category of 'residency' to set out an inclusive social concept of a European nation, as in the following speech given in June 1990:

> What we have inside the European Community is a 13th State of 12 to 14 million immigrants and we have to make sure that they have the same rights and the same duties as everybody else. (...) We have to make sure that the creation of the single internal market does not cover merely the interests of big business but also the interests of all Europe's residents.[333]

Whilst these statements are inclusive in relation to people who are already resident in the European Union, they are silent in relation to the issue of controlling entry to the European Union. Policing the EU's external borders is, however, a powerful way of limiting the number of people who are able to take up residency in the European Union in the first place. If such policing is designed to discourage or prevent people who are deemed to be non-European in a racial sense from migrating to the European Union, then any amount of inclusiveness in relation to existing EU residents would not be sufficient to construct non-racial social or legal concepts of a European nation. Strangely, the issue of migration control is almost entirely absent from most of the debates on racism and xenophobia in the European Parliament that I have studied, including the contributions of Glyn Ford and other Labour Party MEPs. There are, however, a few exceptions. In one instance, Glyn Ford appeared to appeal to his listeners to take into account the potential benefits of allowing some migrants to enter the European Union:

> Victims of racial hatred offer Europe far more than they could ever possibly take: enterprise, art, culture, science and many other things. Look around Europe. Look at what we have gained from those who have come here in the past and imagine what we could gain in the future.[334]

In the same debate, Michael Elliott took a similar line:

> History teaches us that countries which welcome reasonable levels of immigration develop and prosper, whereas countries which have built walls

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[333] *Debates of the European Parliament,* 13/6/1990, No. 3-391, p. 164.

[334] *Debates of the European Parliament*, 9/10/1991, No. 3-409, p. 114.

around themselves to keep out foreigners, such as seventeenth century China and Japan, stagnate and decline.[335]

Although these remarks call for borders round the European Union to be open to at least some migrants, they do so on the grounds of economic and cultural expediency rather than antiracism. As a result they offer less than principled resistance to racists who equally invoke economic and cultural expediency in order to demand closed borders and zero immigration.

4.3.3 Conclusion

My perception of Labour's track record in the British House of Commons and the European Parliament is that in relation to antiracism the EPLP has been both more active and more radical than the PLP. Labour Party MEPs have taken leading positions in antiracist initiatives taken by the Socialist Group, the European Parliament, and other institutions of the European Union; they have created their own institutional structures to coordinate antiracist work; they have promoted antiracist social concepts of a European nation; and they have advocated immigration policies that would allow at least a degree of primary migration into the European Union. Labour Party MPs, on the other hand, have not coordinated their antiracist work in any systematic manner, and they have declared in the House of Commons, in the name of antiracism, that primary migration to Britain is 'over for ever'. How can these differences be explained?

One factor seems to have been the presence of openly racist right wing parties in the European Parliament. Many antiracist initiatives taken by the European Parliament and other institutions of the European Union appear to have been motivated, at least in part, by the growing electoral success of such parties in local, national and European elections in the European Union in the 1980s and the 1990s. More moderate groups in the European Parliament have, to a degree, been united in their opposition to these parties. This has created opportunities for antiracist initiatives, which members of the EPLP have done their best to exploit to the full.

More speculatively, the fact that the European Union is a nation-state in the making rather than one with a long history has perhaps created opportunities for debate that would have to be worked for much harder in the British House of Commons. There, the idea that 'the British

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[335] *Debates of the European Parliament*, 9/10/1991, No. 3-409, p. 123.

people' is a community of descent is entrenched to such an extent that the very words 'the British people' carry racial connotations. At least for several decades there has been a near political consensus that, in principle, Britain's borders should be closed to 'non-British' or at least to 'non-European' people. In Europe, on the other hand, the very idea of a 'people of the European Union' and the very notion of the 'borders of the European Union' are only beginning to take shape and to be translated into practical policies. Certainly, the dominant tendency in this debate appears to be to model social as well as legal concepts of a 'European nation' on racialised social concepts of the nation that exist in the Union's Member States. Nevertheless, members of the European Parliament debating the future of the European Union have perhaps felt less inhibited by longstanding racialised political cultures and public expectations than members of the House of Commons debating the future of the United Kingdom. Members of the EPLP have made good use of this opportunity by promoting a social concept of the European Union that is based on residence rather than descent.

4.4 The antiracist activities of two societies affiliated to the Labour Party

Although parliamentary events and proceedings often take centre stage in the national media coverage of party politics, there is ample scope for Labour Party activists or politicians to get involved in or promote antiracist activities at the national level outside the British Parliament. One of the arenas where Labour Party activists and politicians have been active in the name of antiracism is in societies affiliated to the Labour Party. At the time of writing, at least two organisations that are affiliated to the Labour Party list antiracism as one of their main aims and objectives. These are Poale Zion and the Black Socialist Society.

4.4.1 The Black Socialist Society

The Black Socialist Society was founded in July 1991. According to the society's founding constitution, one of their 'objects' is to 'fight to eliminate racism both institutional and personal and to support African, Caribbean and Asian peoples in their struggle against racism both in Britain and worldwide'. Another is 'to influence the Labour Party at all levels in promoting the representation of more members of the African, Caribbean and Asian community

on all bodies of the Party and among the Party's candidates for elected office'. The majority of the BSS's objects are, however, concerned with the interests of the Labour Party as an organisation rather than the interests of black people in the Labour Party or the interests of antiracism. They include the objects of securing support for the principles and policies of the Labour Party among black people, propagating the cause of the Labour Party amongst black people, recruiting black members into the Labour Party, and winning the votes of black electors for the Labour Party.[336]

The origins of the dual nature of the Black Socialist Society's aims and objectives became clearer to me when I looked at some of the documents that chart the history of this society. From these documents, I perceive that the Black Socialist Society has been the outcome of a confluence of two developments. On the one hand, a grassroots movement demanding the official recognition of a 'Black Section' in the Labour Party; on the other hand, concern in the leadership regarding the recruitment of black people to the cause of the Labour Party. The former development first surfaced at a Labour Party conference in 1983, in the form of a composite demanding 'positive discrimination'. The latter development, however, was in evidence as early as February 1980, in the NEC statement *Advice Note No. 1 - Labour and the Black Electorate*.[337] The opening statement of the document reads as follows:

> A major objective for socialists is the removal of injustice and privilege based on class division: and black people, just as much as white, have to live and deal with the problems which stem from capitalism and class division - such as bad housing, unemployment and poverty. But black people also face additional difficulties related to their colour. It is up to us to seek ways to eliminate these problems associated with race as well as class.

The statement then acknowledges that the Labour Party has 'so far failed to convince black people that we deserve their active support'. This was due to lack of action in the fields of immigration and race relations when in government, complacency on racial issues and 'tokenism' in relation to the representation of black people in the party. Racial issues should be addressed by the whole of the party rather than being assigned to black activists. Conversely, 'we must also beware of assuming that black people are only interested in racial issues'. The changes required to address these problems were summarized as follows:

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[336] Labour Party. 1991. *NEC Report - Conference 91*. p. 29.

[337] Labour Party, National Executive Committee. 1980. *Advice Note No. 1 - Labour and the Black Electorate. Note of advice to Labour Groups and Constituency Labour Parties.*

If the Labour Party is to make a really positive contribution to the development of better race relations in Britain, if we are to attract support from the black community and become a truly multi-racial Party, then as a matter of some urgency, we must become far more responsive, at every level, to the needs of ethnic minorities. At the same time vigorous efforts must be made to eliminate the racial prejudice which still exists inside the Party - and, indeed, rid the Party of those elements of institutionalised racism which exist and form a very real barrier to change.

The document goes on to specify that black people possess 'special needs' across the range of Labour Party policies, but particularly in the areas of housing, education, employment, social services and immigration and citizenship. Recommended action in order to make the party more attractive to black people includes the establishment of links with ethnic minority organisations, the translation of party literature into different languages and the development of Labour Party broadcasts, literature and posters that 'reflect the multi-racial society in which we live'. To ensure these recommendations are carried out, it is hoped 'that a Black Liaison Officer will be appointed at Head Office when Party finances allow'. The document concludes as follows:

Only if we are seen to be working in the interests of Britain's ethnic minorities - and especially in those parts of the country where the Party is in power - can increased membership from the ethnic minorities follow. There is no panacea: only the proof of commitment to the creation of racial equality will be enough. Out [sic] task now is to use the next couple of years to prove that the development of better race relations in this country is one of Labour's principal aims.

In *The Black Electorate* the NEC formulates two distinct and fundamentally different aims. One of these is formulated at the outset and then repeated several times throughout the document. It can be described as a political aim: establishing a better society, free of 'institutionalised racism' targeted at black people and free of 'racial disadvantage' either in the Labour Party or anywhere else. The other one is introduced early on in the text and is most emphatically stated at the end. It can be described as an organisational aim: attracting support for the party from the black community, either as potential voters or as potential members. Implicit in the first aim is the idea of black people as potential targets of racism. Thus, whilst the first aim does involve racial thinking, such thinking is of an antiracist nature. In the course of discussing how the second aim can be achieved, however, black people are characterised not just as

potential targets of racism. Rather, they are also seen as a potential constituency with specific organisational and cultural needs and characteristics. Ironically, then, the document itself *targets black people* on the grounds of their supposed organisational and cultural characteristics. The sense of black people being targeted on the grounds of their supposed special characteristics is reinforced by the proposal to employ a 'Black Liaison Officer' at Labour's head office. The discussion of the second aim in *The Black Electorate*, then, can be seen as potentially racist in that it is apt to reinforce ways of thinking that ascribe social and cultural characteristics to people simply on the grounds of their supposed descent.

The follow up to the document discussed above has been turbulent. In particular, *The Black Electorate* became an important reference point in the debate on black sections in the Labour Party. Although I have been told that the beginnings of the black sections debate go back to the mid-seventies, it was only in the early eighties that the party as a whole was forced to consider the issue. At Labour's annual conference of 1983, a composite on 'positive discrimination' called for a working party to be set up to look at ways of creating equality of opportunity for 'disadvantaged groups' in the Labour Party. The working party should recognise 'in particular the right of black members of the party to organise together in the same way as Women's Sections and Young Socialist branches'.[338] The NEC expressed sympathy with the composite but asked for it to be remitted (i.e. not to be voted on) so as not to tie the NEC's hand too specifically. The working party that was finally set up began their work by circulating a consultative document, *Black people and the Labour Party*, setting out the case for and against black sections. Here once again two fundamentally different types of arguments were advanced in favour of black sections. Firstly, black sections would counteract the effects of 'conscious and unconscious racism in the party', secondly, 'black sections could help build party membership among black people by making the party appear more relevant'.[339]

Following the consultation process, the working party presented their report, entitled *Positive Discrimination - Black people and the Labour Party*, to the 1985 Labour Party Conference. In this report, some of the themes of *The Black Electorate* were taken up again. In addition, the report included a discussion of various options for the establishment of black sections in the Labour Party. A majority of the members of the working party recommended the

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[338] Labour Party. *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1983.* p. 260.

[339] Labour Party. 1984. *Black people and the Labour Party*. p. 3.

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establishment or, where appropriate, recognition of black sections in local parties and the establishment of a national ruling body. These recommendations were rejected in a statement issued by the NEC. In the NEC statement, accepted by conference, the aim of tackling racism had completely disappeared from the agenda. What was left was the aim of attracting more black people to the Labour Party. Thus, the NEC statement favoured the establishment of a 'Black and Asian Advisory Committee' and 'the appointment of an appropriate officer'. The responsibility of the Advisory Committee would be 'to improve the participation in the party of Black and Asian peoples at all levels'.[340]

In 1986, an ethnic minorities officer was in fact appointed, and this post was still in place in 1995. By then, the name of the post had changed to 'Development Officer (ethnic minorities)', but, as I was told in a conversation in July of 1995 with the officer then holding the post, the fundamental task of the development officer continued to be to attract black people to the party and to ensure their active involvement. In 1990, the annual conference decided to replace the 'Black and Asian Advisory Committee' by a 'Black Socialist Society'. As described above, the aims of this society are once again of a dual nature. A leaflet distributed at the 1995 Labour Party conference neatly reflects the different roots of the Black Socialist Society. One of the aims it lists is 'to secure the support of African, Caribbean and Asian people for principles and policies of the Labour Party', another is 'to fight to eliminate racism' in the party, in British society and worldwide. No explanation is given as to why it should be necessary or beneficial to target black people separately from white people when it comes to securing support for the principles and policies of the Labour Party.

How successful has the Black Socialist Society been in promoting the cause of antiracism either in the Labour Party or elsewhere? My readings and observations over the last five years have suggested to me that the Black Socialist Society has been active in the name of antiracism both inside and outside the Labour Party. Inside the Labour Party, the BSS moved one of two antiracist composites at Labour's annual conference of 1995, demanding, among other things, a campaign for the closure of all detention centres for refugees and a campaign for the removal of all internal borders in the European Union.[341] These two aspects were opposed by the NEC, who requested that the composite be remitted. Although the constituency delegate who had seconded

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[340] See: Labour Party. 1985. *Positive Discrimination - Black people and the Labour Party*. p. 4.

[341] See: Labour Party. 1995. *Conference 95 - Conference Arrangements Committee Report*. pp. 31-32.

this composite insisted it should be voted on, the BSS delegate accepted remission following a promise by the leadership that they would be willing to 'talk about' the issues raised. The stance adopted by the BSS on this occasion suggested to me that the leadership had little difficulty in marginalising the BSS's agenda. My sense of the weakness of the BSS's position in the party was reinforced the following year, when I attended a BSS fringe meeting at Labour's annual conference. During the meeting, attended by perhaps twenty-odd people, it emerged that there had been no Annual General Meeting in that year and repeated attempts by one local branch at contacting the executive had failed. Gloria Mills, chairperson of the BSS, explained that her commitments elsewhere had left her as well as other members of the national committee with little time to devote to the BSS.

Outside the Labour Party, the BSS society has given unstinting support to the Anti-Racist Alliance even after the walkout of a group of prominent ARA members in November of 1994 and after the establishment of the National Assembly Against Racism.[342] Their continued support and affiliation can perhaps be explained with reference to ARA's history. According to ARA publicity material, the Anti-Racist Alliance 'was launched in November 1991 by the major Black national organisations in Britain [...] to create the widest possible alliance between Black and minority organisations and all other anti-racists to combat the rise of racist attacks and the extreme right'. In *Red Pepper*, on the other hand, I have read that it was 'Marc Wadsworth, who, with Labour Party black sections, founded the ARA'.[343] I have not investigated any further which of these two versions is closer to the truth. What is clear, however, is that a large number of prominent members of the BSS have also occupied prominent positions in the ARA. Five out of seven members of the BSS's national committee elected in 1995 had, for example, previously been members of ARA's national executive.[344] The issue of the involvement of sections of the Labour Party in the ARA will be taken up again below when I discuss the activities of Labour Party politicians in the antiracist movement.

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[342] Continued support for the ARA was expressed in a letter to all Labour Party Affiliates dated 23 November 1994 and was reaffirmed at the BSS's Annual General Meeting in May 1995. See: *Asian Times*, 27/5/1995.

[343] *Red Pepper*, 2/95, p. 10

[344] It should be noted that ARA's national executive comprised 34 members. As a result it might be more accurate to say that the BSS was dominated by ARA supporters rather than the other way round. See: 1) Anti-Racist Alliance. *Annual Report 1995*. p. 11. 2) Asian Times, 27/5/1995, p. 4.

4.4.2 Poale Zion

I have far less documentation on the recent history of Poale Zion than I have on that of the BSS. This is perhaps unsurprising since the BSS was founded only recently, following a lengthy controversy within the Labour Party and the wider antiracist movement. Poale Zion was founded early in the twentieth century and has been affiliated to the Labour Party since 1920. A leaflet which I obtained from the organisation in 1996 lists the 'need to fight anti-semitism and racism and all forms of prejudice and discrimination' as one of their six 'basic principles'.[345] As in the case of the BSS, however, the majority of aims and objectives is concerned with somewhat more specific issues, including the unity of the Jewish people, the centrality of the state of Israel, the importance of Jewish and Zionist education and culture, the need for peace in the Middle East, and the rights of Jews. Although it might be possible to argue that these objectives are of an antiracist nature, too, they are not put forward in the name of antiracism in this leaflet.

In recent years, Poale Zion has been active in the name of antiracism both inside and outside the Labour Party.[346] Outside the Labour Party, Poale Zion has been affiliated to the ARA, and Poale Zion's chairperson, Lawrie Nerva, has been a member of ARA's national executive. By the time I spoke to him in November of 1996, he had declared his support for the National Assembly Against Racism and appeared to have little enthusiasm left for the ARA. He thought, however, that Poale Zion continued to be formally affiliated to the ARA. Inside the Labour Party, Poale Zion has been active in promoting antiracism, too. At Labour's annual conference of 1996, for example, Poale Zion moved a composite calling upon a future Labour government to widen the existing legislation on racial incitement and to make Holocaust denial a criminal offence. Following pre-conference consultation with the party leadership, this composite was passed unanimously. It appears, however, that Poale Zion's composite was introduced without any prior contact, consultation or co-operation with the Black Socialist Society. Indeed, Lawrie Nerva told me that there had been no official contact whatsoever between the two societies ever since the Black Socialist Society had come into existence - neither side had contacted the other. Such lack of co-operation may in part be due to the fact that both Poale Zion and the Black Socialist Society

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[345] Quoted from: *Poale Zion - Labour Zionists* [undated leaflet which I obtained from Poale Zion in 1996].

[346] The following account is based on my conversation with Lawrie Nerva in November of 1996 and additional information from the following sources: 1) Labour Party. 1996. *Conference Arrangements Committee Report.* pp. 32-33. 2) Anti-Racist Alliance. *Annual Report 1995*. p. 11. 3) National Assembly Against Racism. [undated - 1996] *An Anti-Racist Charter for the New Millennium*.

were founded with quite different agendas in mind. Although antiracism is included in both of their respective lists of aims and objectives, neither Poale Zion nor the Black Socialist Society consider racism as the overriding issue.

4.4.3 Conclusion

Although there is no 'antiracist society' affiliated to the Labour party, there are at last two societies, the BSS and Poale Zion, that list antiracism as one of their prime objectives. In recent years, they have each engaged in a range of activities in the name of antiracism both inside and outside the Labour Party. Surprisingly, however, there has been no contact between these two societies with a view to co-ordinating their antiracist strategy. It appears to me that this must weaken the authority with which they can speak on racial issues in the Labour Party.

Outside the Labour Party, both societies have been involved in the Anti-Racist Alliance. It appears, however, that the BSS has been more intimately connected to the Anti-Racist Alliance than Poale Zion in terms of shared leadership, long-term commitment and perhaps shared principles - both the BSS and the ARA are constitutionally based on the principle of black self-organisation while Poale Zion is not. In the course of my research project, I was interested to discover the high profile involvement of Labour Party society activists in the Anti-Racist Alliance. This discovery appeared to bear out my suspicion, as a local ARA member five years ago, that the ARA was dominated by people who were also active in the Labour Party, and that the ARA's agenda was perhaps dominated by agendas that were associated with particular factions within the Labour Party. Five years ago, my suspicion was fuelled by the high standing Labour Party MPs and MEPs appeared to enjoy in the national ARA. This issue will be addressed in greater detail in the following account of my investigations into the activities in the name of antiracism of some individual Labour Party MPs and MEPs, both in the antiracist movement and elsewhere.

4.5 The extraparliamentary antiracist activities of some Labour Party MPs and MEPs

In this section, I would like to consider the ways in which individual Labour Party politicians have been active outside Parliament in the name of antiracism. Following a review of

their representation in leading national antiracist organisations, I will consider individually the cases of some Labour Party MPs and MEPs who have been particularly active in the name of antiracism. In my investigations, I have concentrated on the antiracist activities of Peter Hain MP, Glyn Ford MEP, Bernie Grant MP, Ken Livingstone MP and Diane Abbott MP. My research in this field has consisted in the perusal of various newspaper files on these politicians that are held in different archives and research libraries, the study of any of their writings (books, articles, press releases etc.) that I have come across, and my attendance at a number of antiracist conventions, assemblies, meetings or workshops that some of these politicians have addressed in recent years.

4.5.1   Labour Party MPs and MEPs in the Anti-Racist Alliance, the Anti-Nazi League and the National Assembly Against Racism

Labour Party MPs and MEPs have been active in all three major national antiracist organisations that have been launched, or re-launched, since 1991. In the Anti-Racist Alliance, the post of chairperson has been occupied both by Ken Livingstone MP and Diane Abbott MP. From observing meetings at ARA's Manchester branch and going to ARA's national convention in July of 1992 as well as from my subsequent readings, I have concluded that Labour Party politicians have been strongly represented in the ARA both in terms of acting as presentable figureheads and in terms of delivering keynote speeches. In addition to Ken Livingstone's and Diane Abbott's chairpersonship of the national ARA, Eddy Newman MEP has been honorary president of the Greater Manchester ARA,[347] and Ken Livingstone MP, Diane Abbott MP, and Michael Elliott MEP were prominent speakers at ARA's national convention in June 1992.

In *Searchlight* I have read that 'on 12 December [of 1991] the SWP telephoned *Searchlight* and stated openly that it was relaunching the Anti-Nazi League'. Several of the people I have spoken to in the course of my research project have also described the ANL as the antiracist/antifascist wing of the Socialist Workers Party. Nevertheless, it is evident from ANL publicity material that Labour Party politicians, including Peter Hain MP, Glyn Ford MEP and Bernie Grant MP, have taken up key positions or have given public support to the Anti-Nazi

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[347] Eddy Newman is listed as 'Honorary President of the Greater Manchester Anti Racist Alliance' in the EPLP's members' directories published in 1995 and in 1996, although by May 1995 the Greater Manchester ARA branch had disaffiliated from the national ARA and had been renamed 'Greater Manchester Coalition Against Racism'.

League. My interpretation of this fact is that there are at least two different antiracist traditions in the Labour Party that are represented in different national antiracist organisations. Generalising from the literature produced by the ARA and the ANL that I have consulted, ARA thinking emphasizes the need for 'black leadership' in antiracist work and the need to combat white racism. ANL thinking, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for 'Black and White' to 'unite and fight' and the need to combat organised fascism.

Over the last few years, the ARA has severely criticized the re-launch of the ANL as 'a move to split the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Britain'. Rather than corresponding to any need of the antiracist struggle, it was designed simply to further the interests of the Socialist Workers Party. According to the ARA, 'there is not one single activity the ANL could undertake which the ARA could not do better as it is broader and much more firmly based in the Black and minority communities'.[348] The hostility between ARA and ANL has resulted in an apparent lack of co-operation or even co-ordination. This was most conspicuous on 16 October 1993 when the ARA and the ANL called competing national demonstrations at different locations in London. The ANL's march, which was aimed at the BNP's headquarters, was given additional impetus as a result of the election of a BNP candidate in local elections one month earlier. It was far better attended than the rival demonstration organised by the ARA, which, according to press reports, was backed by the Labour Party and the TUC.[349] Persistent unwillingness on the part of the ARA to co-ordinate their activities with other antiracist groups appears to have been one of the factors that led to a split within ARA's executive. The divisions came to a head in November 1994 when leading ARA members, among them national secretary Kumar Murshid, chairperson Diane Abbott MP and former chairperson Ken Livingstone MP, decided to leave the organisation.[350]

In the wake of the walkout from the ARA, Ken Livingstone was quoted as saying that 'a move would be made to set up a separate anti-racist body after the dust had settled'.[351] In February 1995, a National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR) was called, followed by further

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[348] These quotes are from publicity material which I obtained from the ARA in 1995, but which had apparently been in circulation for some time, perhaps since 1992. The history of hostility between the ARA and the ANL as well as other antiracist groups is charted in greater detail than is possible in this research report in three articles published in the *New Statesman & Society*: 1) Platt, Steve. 1992. 'Race wars'. 28/2/1992, pp. 12-13. 2) Anderson, Paul. 1993. 'Anti-racists at odds', 15/10/1993, pp. 18-19. 3) Mann, Nyta. 1994. 'Black and white disunite and fight', 2/9/1994, pp. 16-17.

[349] See: *The Guardian*, 15/10/1993, p. 5.

[350] My interpretation of the main source of the divisions in the executive is based on a conversation I had with Kumar Murshid in February 1996.

[351] *The Guardian*, 5/11/94, p. 4

assemblies in March 1996 and March 1997. The NAAR is now established as a separate organisation. According to Kumar Murshid, however, it would be wrong to think that the NAAR was set up simply in response to the split in the ARA. Rather, the idea for a National Assembly Against Racism and an Anti-Racist Charter had arisen from local antiracist initiatives in Tower Hamlets and local co-operation with the TUC, resulting in the TUC march against racism in East London on 19 March 1994.[352] Like the ARA, the NAAR endorses the principle of black leadership, but is keen to co-operate with potential allies to the antiracist cause, including the ANL.[353] The involvement of Labour Party politicians in the NAAR appears to be restricted to the appearance of Labour Party MPs or MEP as invited speakers at NAAR's annual national assemblies and other NAAR events. My impression is that, as a result, NAAR thinking and activities may be less directly influenced by any one political faction or grouping than is the case either in the ARA or in the ANL.

4.5.2   Peter Hain

Peter Hain's track record as an antiracist campaigner reaches back to the 1960s.[354] In 1966, he and his parents were forced to leave South Africa to settle in Britain on account of their opposition to the system of apartheid. From 1969 to the mid-seventies, he was a leading campaigner against South African apartheid, promoting boycotts of sports events involving South African teams or players. In the early 1970s, he became chairperson of the Young Liberals, co-founded the Action Committee Against Racialism and was appointed political vice-chairman of the Indian Association of the United Kingdom. Explaining why he had accepted the latter appointment, he said that he intended to mount a 'full scale attack on race relations in the public sector. I want free immigration (...) and I want to attempt to get the whole debate on immigration pulled back from its present racialist limbo'.[355] By 1973, when he was 23, the *Daily Mirror* judged that he had made himself 'the nation's conscience'. Two years later their tone changed

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[352] He explained this to me in a conversation in February 1996. See also: Murshid, Kumar. 1995. 'National assembly against racism - why now?'. In: *Asian Times*, 4/2/1995, p. 2.

[353] This emerged from my conversation with Kumar Murshid in February of 1996. See also: *Red Pepper*, 2/1995, p. 11; Murshid, 1995.

[354] The following account of events between 1966 and 1991 is mainly based on press reports. See in particular: *Morning Star*, 25/7/1970; *The Daily Telegraph*, 22/8/1972; *The Guardian*, 28/2/1973; *The Guardian*, 11/11/1977; *The Times*, 28/9/1994.

[355] Quoted in: *The Guardian*, 28/2/1973.

slightly when they dubbed him the 'self-appointed guardian of the British conscience on racial matters' and then the 'self-appointed censor of British sport'.[356] In 1977 he became Press Officer of the Anti-Nazi League that had been formed to counter the National Front. In the same year, he joined the Labour Party. He has been a Labour MP since 1991.

In January of 1992, Paul Holborow, Peter Hain MP and Ernie Roberts signed as the founder members of the newly launched ANL. In a separate statement, Peter Hain listed three main reasons for the ANL's re-launch: the British National Party's revival; the rise of Nazi and right wing extremist activity in Europe; and the increase in racial attacks in Britain. Aware that the ARA had just been founded, apparently in response to the same developments, he made a point of distinguishing the ANL's agenda from that of the ARA and urged co-operation:

> We will encourage our supporters to work closely with other anti-racist groups, such as the Anti-Racist Alliance of which I am also a founder sponsor. Unlike groups such as the ARA, the ANL is not a long term organisation. We are a campaign with a more limited objective of destroying the Nazis. We also respect the principle of black self-organisation which is stronger today than in the late 1970s.[357]

Peter Hain's readiness to join fellow ANL veterans to relaunch the organisation is perhaps understandable in view of his prominent involvement in the ANL in the 1970s. He faced criticism, however, from fellow Labour MP and ARA co-chair Ken Livingstone, who denounced the ANL as a Socialist Workers Party front and called upon ANL sponsors to withdraw their support. Peter Hain commented that he could not forgive 'this ruthlessly sectarian response. It makes me feel like walking away from anti-racist politics'.[358]

In addition to his involvement in the antiracist movement, Peter Hain has also devoted two pages in his recent book *Ayes to the Left* to the issue of 'racial equality'.[359] In his analysis of racism, he focuses on class inequality. The issues of immigration or nationality are not mentioned here. He claims that support for racist or Nazi parties is 'usually concentrated amongst white working class groups experiencing unemployment and hopelessness'. Although this statement does not amount to an outright endorsement of the social deprivation theory of racism, I think it

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[356] See: *The Daily Mirror*, 6/4/1973; *The Daily Mirror*, 28/4/1975; *The Daily Mirror*, 27/5/1975

[357] The statement was apparently issued in January 1992. I obtained a copy from Peter Hain's House of Commons office in 1997.

[358] I read about Ken Livingstone's criticism and Peter Hain's response in: Platt, Steve. 1992. 'Race Wars'. In: *New Statesman & Society*. pp. 12-13.

[359] See: Hain, Peter. 1995. *Ayes to the Left - A Future for Socialism*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. pp. 113-115.

at least suggests some kind of link between racism and social deprivation. By warning Labour that they would 'neglect their core vote at their peril', Peter Hain ends up recommending improved living conditions for white people as a remedy for racism. He is, however, quick to add that 'for their part, far too many black people experience the daily grind of low pay, poverty and poor housing'. Having reduced racism to a class problem affecting whites and blacks, he is able to conclude that 'eradicating racism is consequently dependent upon socialist policies'. He adds, however, that there are also other forms of racism, including for example racial violence and attacks and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. In order to halt such outrages, he calls on Labour to 'work with local Racial Equality councils, pressure groups like the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Racist Alliance, trade unions and local community organisations to confront racism locally'.

4.5.3 Glyn Ford and Bernie Grant

According to ANL publicity material, both Glyn Ford and Bernie Grant have endorsed the relaunch of the ANL, and in the *Guardian* I have found two ANL letters signed by Glyn Ford, Bernie Grant and others. Once again, these letters claim that there is some sort of link between racism or fascism and social deprivation. One letter comments that 'if the new government [in France] fails to help the increasing number of poor, homeless and unemployed, this will cause the bitterness and disillusionment that can serve to swell the support for the Front National'. In conditions of political uncertainty and economic crisis, the letter continues, 'racist attacks in France will continue to increase'.[360] A second letter takes greater care to qualify the social deprivation theory of racism: 'High unemployment and social decay represent potentially fertile soil in which their ideas [those of the Nazis in Britain] can flourish unless exposed and opposed on every occasion'.[361] Neither Glyn Ford nor Bernie Grant have, however, been associated with the ANL as conspicuously as Peter Hain. At the same time, both Glyn Ford and Bernie Grant have been involved in numerous other campaigns of a broadly antiracist nature.

Glyn Ford was elected to the European Parliament in 1984. In addition to his involvement in antiracist activities in European institutions, he is a frequent speaker at antiracist conferences,

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[360] *The Guardian*, 31/3/1993, p. 19.

[361] *The Guardian*, 17/6/1994, p. 25.

workshops or rallies and a regular contributor to the antifascist journal *Searchlight*. His main theme on these occasions tends to be racism and fascism in the European Union and how these can best be tackled. As in his speeches in the European Parliament, he often invokes the image of a thirteenth, or now sixteenth, Member State of the European Union made up of migrants and their descendants who, in many cases, do not enjoy the full rights of citizenship. Glyn Ford is also a tireless advocate of 'unity' in the antiracist movement. His commitment to unity is underlined by his appearance at rallies and meetings organised by a broad range of groups, including groups hostile to the ANL such as the ARA. At Labour's annual conference of 1995, for example, he spoke at a fringe meeting organised by the ARA, making a point of saying that he was 'delighted to be here'.

Bernie Grant was born in Guyana, then British Guiana, and came to Britain at the age of 19. Having joined the Labour Party in 1977, he became a member of Parliament in 1987.[362] In the 1990s, he has been involved in numerous antiracist campaigns. The range of issues he has addressed in newspaper articles, interviews or through organisations founded with his assistance often relate to international concerns or link issues within British society to the wider world. According to my press file, he was the driving force behind the Standing Conference on Racial Equality in Europe (SCORE), which was founded in 1990 with the aim of 'work[ing] for equality of conditions for all European Community residents regardless of colour, race, nationality, or religion'.[363] In speeches, interviews and writings, he has repeatedly placed the issue of anti-black racism in a European context:

> The way in which our black brothers and sisters are being treated in Europe makes us shudder. And when we hear that British ministers are sitting down with their European counterparts to discuss "common approaches" to dealing with "migrants" and the like, we have real cause for alarm.[364]

In order to minimize discrimination, he has advocated 'freedom of movement' and 'open borders' in the European Union.[365] In October of 1993, he caused a storm in the antiracist movement and in the national media when he called for black people to be given the option of returning to their

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[362] See: *London Daily News*, 'The moulding of Bernie Grant', 29/4/1987, p. 7.

[363] This quote is from a leaflet which I obtained from SCORE. See also the interview with Bernie Grant in: *Asian Times*, 4 November 1995, pp. 8-9.

[364] Grant, Bernie. 1993. 'Reparation, not repatriation'. In: *New Statesman & Society*, 15 October 1993, p. 15.

[365] For example at the ARA fringe meeting at Labour's annual conference in Brighton in October 1995.

'countries of origin' with financial assistance provided by the state. Critics of this suggestion, including Paul Boateng MP, Diane Abbott MP, *Searchlight*, the ARA and the BSS, have focussed on the apparent similarities between Bernie Grant's plans and racist demands for forcible or voluntary 'repatriation' made by the extreme right.[366] Bernie Grant has since defended his proposals on a number of occasions. He has stressed that they should be seen as an element of a much wider campaign for reparations for Africa:

> My own vision of the future for us as black people is connected with the campaign for reparations for Africa. (...) We need to understand that racism against black people grew up as a way of justifying the exploitation of Africa in centuries past. If black people could be stereotyped as sub-human and worthless, then there was no reason why their land and raw materials could not be stolen from them through colonisation, why they could not be murdered in large numbers, and why they could not become the slaves of the white man. (...) The reparations movement demands that the debts of black countries be cancelled and that substantial sums be repaid to them to invest in their future. (...) In this context, there are many black people who, if they were given the positive prospect of participating in the redevelopment and re-emergence of black countries, would wish to do so (...). This is a far cry from any idea of running away from our current situation, or of repatriation.[367]

Bernie Grant's commitment to the cause of African reparations is reflected in his involvement in the Africa Reparations Movement (ARM) (UK), which he chairs. ARM (UK) was founded in 1993 following an international conference on reparations held in Nigeria in December of 1990. ARM (UK) aims, among other things, 'to use all lawful means to obtain Reparations for the enslavement and colonisation of African people in Africa and in the African Diaspora'.[368]

Bernie Grant's internationalist outlook and his insistence on the dimension of 'reparations' for racial exploitation of the past as part of any meaningful antiracist agenda distinguish his antiracist approach from that of other Labour MPs or MEPs. History also provides him with a rationale for 'positive action' to tackle racial inequality in British society in that he explains racial inequality in the present, at least in part, as the result of racist discriminations of the past.[369] This

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[366] See: 1) *The Guardian*, 6/10/1993, p. 2. 2) *Searchlight*, 'Bernie's blunder', No. 221, 9/1993, p. 8. 3) *Caribbean Times*, 'Bernie Grant accused of giving comfort to extreme right', 11/11/1996, p. 2.

[367] Grant, 1993.

[368] See: ARM (UK) website *www.arc.co.uk/arm/home.htmlm*, which I visited in April 1997.

[369] This is the line he took in the *Moral Maze* programme on 'positive discrimination', broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 23 March 1995.

is in contrast to Labour Party policy documents on racial discrimination and inequality, where the historical sources of racial inequality tend to remain obscure. Consequently 'reparations', whether in the form of positive action within British society or in the form of greater assistance to developing countries globally, do not form part of Labour's official antiracist agenda. Where Bernie Grant is in agreement with the official party line, however, is in being concerned mostly about anti-black racism. There are a few instances where I think this may have led him to ignore other aspects of the history of racism in too facile a manner. In the article quoted above, for example, he suggests that 'the enslavement of African people must be the biggest crime in the whole of history'. In making this statement, he appears to play down the significance of other crimes that stand out in the history of racism, such as the Holocaust, simply for rhetorical effect. In his writings or speeches about racism in Europe, there is little sense that racism on the continent, or in Britain, may also be directed at non-black people.

4.5.4   Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbott

Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbott have both been members of the House of Commons since 1987. In the 1980s, both were supporters of black sections in the Labour Party.[370] From 1991, they have taken a common trajectory through the antiracist movement, moving from the ARA to the NAAR. They were both among the initial sponsors of the ARA, spoke at the ARA's national convention in June 1992 and have chaired it at different times. Only weeks after Diane Abbott had replaced Ken Livingstone as chair of the ARA in November of 1994, they appeared to switch their allegiance to the NAAR. Following the French presidential elections in April of 1995, they both signed a letter to the *Guardian* in the name of the NAAR in which social deprivation and insecurity are blamed for the rise of racism in France. The letter also warns that if Labour proves unable to 'halt and reverse' the destruction of the welfare state and job security as well as high levels of unemployment in Britain, then 'the racist poison of the extreme right will begin to gain ground'. Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbott have since appeared as speakers at three antiracist assemblies that were organised by the NAAR in 1995, 1996 and 1997

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[370] For Ken Livingstone's position on black sections in the 1980s, see for example: Livingstone, Ken. 1989. *Livingstone's Labour - A Programme for the Nineties*. London: Unwin Hyman. pp. 112-124. My press file on black sections shows that Diane Abbott was an active campaigner for black sections in the Labour Party in the 1980s. In the mid-1980s, she was a member of the National Black Sections Steering Committee of the Labour Party. See for example: 'Black Sections: Radical Demand or Distraction - A round table discussion'. In: *Marxism Today*, September 1985, pp. 31-36.

respectively. Despite these commonalities, the content of their speeches at antiracist conventions, assemblies and meetings that I have attended in recent years indicates a different set of interests and preoccupations, as well as a slightly different status in the antiracist movement.

I first became aware of Ken Livingstone's celebrity status in the antiracist movement at ARA's national convention in June 1992. I was puzzled when he secured the most resounding round of applause of all speakers present (with the possible exception of American academic Manning Marable), for his antiracist analysis seemed deeply flawed to me. Was it all due to his skills as an orator? In his speech, he relied casually on the social deprivation theory of racism when he warned that in conditions of rising unemployment, supposedly an inevitable consequence of the Maastricht Treaty, people would turn against black people and Jewish people. As if that was some kind of law of nature. He did not reflect that his anti-European integration stance might itself help fuel nationalistic ways of thinking that could easily incorporate racist social concepts of the nation. Overall, I felt that Ken Livingstone was pursuing an anti-Maastricht agenda in the name of antiracism when that agenda was really nothing to do with antiracism properly understood.

Since that national convention, I have also witnessed a different Ken Livingstone, delivering incisive critiques of Labour Party racism on a number of occasions. Thus he publicly criticized Labour Party election literature in the Littleborough and Saddleworth byelection in 1995 as 'implicitly racist' on the grounds that it opposed a free advisory service for immigrants proposed by the Liberal Democrats as a 'bureaucratic nightmare'.[371] He spoke on the subject of Labour Party racism at a NAAR fringe meeting at Labour's annual conference of 1996 that I attended, and again at the NAAR conference in April 1997. He has also been chair of the Campaign Against Labour Party Suspensions (CALPS). This campaign arose following concern about the high level of suspensions of Labour Party members. In February 1996, nearly 7,000 'mostly Asian' party members were reportedly suspended, causing Ken Livingstone to speak of 'a whiff of racism around the Labour Party'.[372]

There is, however, another tendency in Ken Livingstone's racial thinking in the name of antiracism that I see more critically. This is his apparent desire to rhetorically augment the significance of anti-black racism by playing down the significance of racial antisemitism. On at

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[371] See: *The Guardian*, 2/8/1995, p. 6.

[372] See: *Asian Times*, 10/2/1996. pp. 1-2. According to this article, the total number of suspensions corresponds to 2% of all party members, while the number of black and Asian suspensions corresponds to 20% of the black and Asian membership.

least two occasions, he has claimed that the former is far more important than the latter, not just in the present but also historically. In June 1992, the *Independent on Sunday* published an interview with Ken Livingstone. Here, he is quoted as saying that what makes him angriest of all is

> the fact that our way of life here is built on the slaughter of 15 million people in the third world every year. (...) Hitler's war cost 30 million lives over six years, but he IMF, the World Bank and the Western banking system do that every two years. Our financial institutions have become the greatest instruments for the slaughter of humans ever devised. They make Genghis Kahn and Adolf Hitler look like amateurs.[373]

The interviewer thought it unlikely that Ken Livingstone really believed in what he had said, preferring to think 'that he just picks up pieces of other people's rhetoric, other people's passion, and tries them on for size. When they don't go down too well - like this one - he mentally files them under WPB'. Four years later, however, at the NAAR national conference on 8 March 1996, Ken Livingstone was back on the subject. In his speech, his first reference to the Holocaust was in his attack on Conservative Home Secretary Michael Howard, who he said had 'appealed to every racist instinct' even though 'his own father was a Jewish refugee from Romania'. If Michael Howard's proposed law had been in force then, his father's fate and that of himself would have been to end up as 'specks of dust in a concentration camp'. Was I the only one in the audience to think that such crass and speculative use of Holocaust rhetoric was an inappropriate way of attacking Michael Howard's legislative proposals? Later in his speech, Ken Livingstone referred to the recent celebrations of the 'discovery of America' in 1492. That discovery, Ken Livingstone proposed, was followed by 'a vast scale of genocide that dwarfs anything done by Hitler'. As for the present situation, a black and Asian alliance was needed 'to get rid of this financial empire that exploits the Third World'. He added that 'the international financial system kills every year more people than were killed by Hitler in World War II'.[374] His speech was followed by the customary adulation from a faithful audience. In my view, Ken Livingstone had just suggested that the Holocaust was hardly more than a detail of history when compared to the various atrocities committed against black people.

Diane Abbott's prime concern in her speeches and writings in the name of antiracism as

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[373] *The Independent on Sunday*, 21/6/1992, p. 5.

[374] These quotes are from notes taken during Ken Livingstone's speech.

far as they are known to me is the issue of anti-black racism, both nationally and internationally, and how it can best be overcome. Black empowerment, black self-organisation and black representation, including in the Labour Party, are presented as important means by which anti-black racism can be addressed. Her speech to the NAAR conference on 8 March 1996 was typical in this respect. The self-declared focus of her speech was 'on some of the issues that face us as black and Asian people'. She identified three levels of concern: the international level, the level of institutions, and the level of people and individuals. On the international level, she highlighted the problem of instability and poverty in many parts of the world, which she alleged was caused by the policies of Europe and America. On the institutional level, she maintained that 'in all organisations in this country, including the Labour Party, there is racism'. It was easy for people to 'make the right noises about equal opportunities', but 'giving up power and control, this is where the real struggle lies. (...) Making the right noises does not mean giving black people power'. On the personal level, she made a plea for discipline and solidarity among black and Asian organisations, which she said she had seen fall apart for personal reasons. Having described herself as the daughter of economic Jamaican immigrants, who came to this country in 1951, she said people owed it to earlier immigrants to show some of their courage and determination.

In addition to the focus on black empowerment, Diane Abbott has also campaigned on a range of other issues affecting black people, including police harassment, immigration controls and high unemployment in certain areas. In 1996/97, she was chair of the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB), which was launched by the NAAR in June 1996. At the NAAR conference in March 1996, she said that if after 12-18 months in office the situation for black people in Tower Hamlets and elsewhere was the same, 'then the Labour Party will have failed'.

There was one instance in 1996 when an article by Diane Abbott on the issue of unemployment published in her local newspaper, the *Hackney Gazette*, came in for severe criticism from a number of quarters.[375] In the article, Diane Abbott criticizes Homerton hospital in Hackney for employing 'blonde, blue-eyed girls from Finland, instead of nurses from the Caribbean who know the language and understand British culture and institutions'. She also

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[375] For the following information and quotes, see: 1) *Hackney Gazette*, 14/11/1996, p. 10. 2) *Hackney Gazette*, 5/12/1996, p. 7. 3) *The Guardian*, 28/11/196, p. 1. 4) *The Daily Mail*, 6/12/1996, p. 2. See also the column by Darcus Howe on this affair in: *New Statesman*, 6/12/1996, p. 16.

questions whether 'Finnish girls, who may never have met a black person before let alone touched one' were 'best suited to nurse in multi-cultural Hackney'. Having provoked accusations of racism by one of the Finnish nurses concerned and criticism from the hospital's executive as well as the Finnish embassy, Diane Abbott reaffirmed her position in an interview published in the *Hackney Gazette* three weeks later. According to the *Hackney Gazette*, she said she was not apologising and stood by the original article. This was not a race issue for her but was about mass unemployment in Hackney and local people getting jobs. Unfortunately, it is clear from the wording in the original article that it was a race issue for her in that article. It does seem to me that in that article Diane Abbott's desire to advance the interests of black people led her to express racist views about the relations between different racial groups. This is, however, untypical of her thinking as expressed in speeches at conferences or meetings that I have attended, in Parliamentary interventions that I have studied, or in other columns for the *Hackney Gazette* that I have perused.

4.5.5 Others

There are many more Labour MPs and MEPs who have been active in the name of antiracism outside Parliament in recent years. Five Labour MEPs out of sixty-two list 'ethnic minority issues' (Michael Elliott and Pauline Green), 'racism' (Glyn Ford) or 'anti racism' (Eddy Newman and Sue Waddington) as one of their 'special interests' in the EPLP's members directory of July 1996. Of these, I have repeatedly seen Michael Elliott speak at antiracist conferences or workshops organised by the ARA and the NAAR. In his speeches, he has concentrated on the danger of a white Fortress Europe being built, the desirability of equal rights for all residents of the European Union and the need for European anti-discrimination legislation. When he spoke at the workshop on 'White Fortress Europe' at NAAR's conference on 1 March 1997, he used the opportunity to give those present an update on developments in the field of antiracism on the level of the EU. On this occasion, he was also called upon to give his opinion on 'the causes of racism'. His answer was cautious. He said the causes of racism were many and varied. People would have their own ideas on what they were. He would say, however, that in his opinion high unemployment and social disadvantage were 'breeding grounds' of racism. He added that this was not the sole cause, as evidenced by the case of Le Pen of the Front National in France.

Nevertheless, he concluded by stating that 'undoubtedly racism grows and prospers in societies riven by unemployment'.

Among Labour MPs who have been active in the name of antiracism, my files contain a fair amount of material on Harry Cohen MP, who has spoken repeatedly at events organised by the ARA and the NAAR, Greville Janner (MP until May 1997), who is President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Antisemitism and chair of the Holocaust Educational Trust, and Roy Hattersley (MP until May 1997), who spoke at the launch of NAAR's antiracist charter in May 1995 and has repeatedly addressed the issue of racism in his weekly column in the *Guardian*. In one of these columns he attempted to refute Harriet Harman's claim that 'racism and sexism is not a class issue'.[376] His main argument here is slightly different from the social deprivation theory of racism that is often deployed in order to assert the existence of a link between racism and class:

> The society which arranges its citizens in hierarchies of wealth and power, which provides different levels of privilege, will not stop there. It will apply its belief in relative superiority to every aspect of life - including race and gender. It is worth repeating that every problem that faces this nation is a class issue (...).

Once again, however, I think this theory takes too much for granted. 'Race' is described as an 'aspect of life'. Why people make racial classifications in the first place, and why they often use racial categories rather than any other categories when they explain the social world to themselves, remains unexplained.

In the same article, in order to underline the importance of class in everybody's life, Roy Hattersley invited his readers to imagine what would have become of Harriet Harman 'if she had been snatched from her Harley Street cradle by malign gypsies and exchanged for a baby from Gladstone Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham'. It seems ironic to me that Roy Hattersley should have included what one *Guardian* reader called an 'unthinking racial slur' in an article about the connection between racism and class inequality. But was it an 'unthinking' slur? A few weeks later, in another *Guardian* column, Roy Hattersley let it be known that the statement in question had been well considered. Most of this column was devoted to attacking two academic critics of the passage, who he accused of lacking in humour, attaching a 'preposterous importance' to what

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[376] For the quotes that follow, see: 1) *The Guardian*, 10/3/1997, p. 14. 2) *The Guardian*, 12/3/1997, p. 14. 3) *The Guardian*, 14/4/1997, p. 20.

was a mere 'aside', and exhibiting 'colossal ignorance' with regard to the positive nature of some of the representations of gypsies in Western culture.

4.5.6 Conclusion

In the 1990s, Labour Party MPs and MEPs have played an important role in antiracist work outside Parliament. They have chaired a variety of organisations that can be described as pursuing antiracist objectives in a wide sense; they have shared their expertise and their thinking in the field of antiracist work by writing articles in newspapers or journals; they have taken prominent positions in the national antiracist movement; and they have appeared as celebrity speakers at a number of antiracist conferences or workshops. In some respects the modes of thinking that they have carried into the wider antiracist movement resemble the official line taken by the Labour Party. The social deprivation theory of racism, for example, appears to enjoy widespread currency among Labour Party MPs and MEPs who are involved in antiracist work. Some Labour politicians have, however, privately pursued antiracist projects that transcend the antiracist agenda of the official Labour Party. This applies in particular to Bernie Grant, whose campaign for 'reparations' for racist practices of the past appears as yet to find little resonance either in the Labour Party or in the wider antiracist movement.

Labour Party MPs and MEPs have been a strong but far from coherent influence in the antiracist movement. Splits in the antiracist movement have been mirrored and perhaps reinforced by divisions and disagreements between some Labour Party MPs, even though others have tried to bridge political and personal divides. Moreover, at different times different Labour Party politicians have pursued quite different agendas in the name of antiracism. This is perhaps unsurprising in view of the diversity of their personal and political biographies. In most cases, I would agree that the activities pursued by Labour Party politicians in the name of antiracism can justly be described as furthering the cause of antiracism. In some cases, however, as when Ken Livingstone opposed the Maastricht Treaty at ARA's national convention in June of 1992, antiracism merely seems to function as a convenient label to reinforce campaigns that are quite unrelated to any truly antiracist agenda.

In this section, I have criticized some instances of racial thinking as expressed by some Labour MPs in their speeches and writings, notably Ken Livingstone's use of Holocaust rhetoric,

Diane Abbott's statements about Finnish nurses, and Roy Hattersley's remark about 'malign gypsies'. I do not wish to overemphasize the importance of these instances, especially the 'racial slurs' by Diane Abbott and Roy Hattersley. The fact that these two politicians, who are generally credited with being committed to the antiracist cause, have made these remarks may simply show how entrenched racial ways of thinking are, and how easily they can slip into racist ways of thinking. As I said in chapter two of this thesis, it is perhaps difficult for anyone who has internalised schemes of racial classification to prevent themselves at all times from slipping involuntarily into racist ways of thinking. Unless constantly checked, such involuntary thoughts may easily surface in modes of behaviour, speech or writings. What I do find disappointing is that neither Diane Abbott nor Roy Hattersley felt able or willing to acknowledge that they had made a mistake once it had been pointed out to them.

4.6   Some concluding remarks on Labour's entanglement in racial thinking in the name of antiracism

Antiracism has been an important ingredient in Labour Party thinking on the national and the European level. This is true of national policy making; parliamentary activities; the activities of some societies affiliated to the party; and the activities of some individual Labour Party MPs and MEPs outside their respective Parliaments. At least in some respects, Labour Party thinking that declares itself as antiracist has not just been antiracist in name but also according to my own idea of antiracism. There has at times been a recognition that stringent anti-immigration policies can help cement social and legal concepts of the nation that are racist in that they construct the British nation as a community of descent. Racist practices in the form of racial harassment and attacks have been identified as a serious issue, and efforts have been made to devise policies that might help overcome or at least contain this problem. In the House of Commons, some of the attempts by the Conservative government to tighten the symbolic and legal boundaries of the British nation ever more have been denounced as racist and opposed. In the European Parliament, Labour Party MEPs have promoted non-racial social and legal concepts of European citizenship. They have also taken leading roles in antiracist initiatives taken by the Socialist Group of the European Parliament and other European institutions. Societies affiliated to the Labour Party as well as individual MPs and MEPs have promoted the cause of antiracism both inside the Labour

Party and in the wider antiracist movement.

Over the last few decades, Labour Party thinking in the name of antiracism has, however, been biased towards explanations of racism that appear to derive at least in part from party political expediency rather than simply the desire to overcome racism. Labour's persistent adherence to the social deprivation and fascist propaganda theories of racism, for example, appears to spring from an attempt to incorporate antiracism into an attack against party political opponents. Unfortunately, this narrow focus has the effect, perhaps unintended, of playing down the extent to which racist ways of thinking may be entrenched in mainstream society, including the Labour Party.

Labour Party thinking in the name of antiracism has also been limited in its practical proposals; selective in emphasis; and in some cases potentially counterproductive. Labour's policies on nationality and immigration in the name of antiracism, for example, have been limited to attacks on Conservative extremism. They are not based on a critical examination of Labour's own track record. Overall, Labour's analysis of racial nationalism falls far short of a root-and-branch reappraisal of the racialisation of social and legal concepts of the British nation that has taken place over the last few centuries or so. Labour's policies are also selective in emphasis in that they have focused on repressing racist activities through anti-discrimination initiatives and law and order policies. The idea that mainstream racist texts and ways of thinking need to be reformed by way of, for example, public and/or formal education is not very prominent in Labour Party thinking. Nor is the idea that some form of reparations for racist activities of the past may be due to racial collectivities who have been at the receiving end of racism for centuries, although at least one Labour Party MP has campaigned on this issue. Finally, Labour Party thinking in the name of antiracism has at times included ideas that might be counterproductive in the fight against racism. Prominent among these is the idea, endorsed by some policy documents, that racial collectivities coincide with cultural collectivities. I have also found individual Labour Party MPs who are particularly active in the name of antiracism to entertain ideas that might be counterproductive from an antiracist point of view. Labour Party MPs and MEPs have, for example, carried Labour's dubious social deprivation theory of racism into the antiracist movement. Furthermore, Ken Livingstone's attempts to play off anti-black racism against racial antisemitism run counter to the need to prop up whatever fragile unity in the antiracist movement there may be at present. Roy Hattersley and Diane Abbott have each let slip, perhaps

unthinkingly, a racial slur in their respective newspaper columns in the *Guardian* and the *Hackney Gazette*, and have failed to acknowledge their mistake. These slips are, however, perhaps more than outweighed by many constructive contributions from these MPs as well as other Labour Party politicians to the cause of antiracism both inside and outside their respective Parliaments.

Chapter 5:
Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I would like to re-examine my ideas about racial thinking in British society and beyond. I will begin by outlining how my perception of racial thinking in the Labour Party has changed in the course of doing this research project. I will then consider to what extent doing this project has helped me clarify my own thinking in relation to the issue of racial thinking. I will conclude by revealing some of my doubts and desires in writing this thesis about racial thinking in the Labour Party.

5.1   On racial thinking in the Labour Party

In the course of my research project, my perception of racial thinking in the Labour Party has changed in two important respects. Firstly, I have found that Labour is more nationalistic, and that their nationalism is more racialised, than I had anticipated at the beginning of this project. Secondly, I have concluded that Labour's contribution to the antiracist movement in British society is greater, and more valuable, than I had imagined at the beginning of this project.

Even before embarking on this research project, I vaguely felt that Labour was a nationalistic party. I was not prepared, however, for the extent of nationalistic sloganeering and flag-waving that I found when I looked more closely. From the beginning of this project, I was keen to avoid any facile assumption that there was a link between nationalism and racism. Although I had a feeling that there might be a connection, I wasn't sure what exactly it was. In the course of this project, I have come to the conclusion that distinguishing strictly between nationalism and racism is of paramount importance. As explained in more detail in chapter two, nationalism can be conceived of as a political project that may or may not be racialised. The question in relation to the Labour Party then became to what extent Labour Party nationalism was racialised. Studying this question, I was surprised to note that the idea of the British nation forming a community of descent was invoked quite regularly by the party leadership in a rather direct, I would say in a racist manner, for example by assuming that there was such a thing as an

innate British character. There were also indirect ways in which I felt the Labour Party appealed to racialised notions of the British nation as a community of white people. Before the project, I had a feeling that the Labour Party was perhaps not eager enough to be seen to distance themselves from the history of British imperialism. When I studied Labour Party rhetoric and documentation more closely, I was surprised to realise that, according to the Labour Party, the history of British imperialism is something British people can be positively proud of. The crescendo of nationalistic propaganda that marked Labour's recent general election campaign, including the pervasive use of the Union Jack and the appearance of a bulldog in a party political broadcast, appeared to me to underline this message. It is true, of course, that the meaning of such symbolism is in the eyes of the beholder. Some people may have a positive attitude towards the British national flag for reasons other than the glorious British Empire. Regardless of individual attitudes and their specific origins, however, people will generally be aware that the Union Jack is a symbol of British imperialism. Therefore, when a British political party waves the Union Jack, nostalgia for the British Empire is one of the meanings the Union Jack inevitably carries.

Studying Labour's proposals for the legal boundaries of the British nation provided me with little reassurance. Although in the 1980s the Labour Party proposed to re-establish the principle of *ius soli* in nationality law, in recent years no effort has been made to popularise this principle, let alone extend it to the idea that nationality should be based on people's place of residence. More importantly, perhaps, even if such changes were made, Labour's philosophy of zero primary immigration means that relatively few people would be able to take advantage of them. The message sent out by this philosophy, then, is that the boundaries around the British nation should be and should remain impermeable. Labour's heavy emphasis on the need for tight immigration controls is thus not just of legal significance. It also reinforces the idea that essentially the British nation is a community of descent.

In relation to the issues of immigration and nationality as well as nationalism more generally, it has been suggested to me that I should not be too hard on the British Labour Party. The British Labour Party, so the argument goes, would really love to be more liberal but is afraid of a backlash from the nationalistic and/or racist British public. By adopting a middle of the road position, the Labour Party merely avoids driving the electorate into the arms of the Conservatives or, worse, the fascists. Having studied Labour Party rhetoric and documentation for three years, I am not convinced of the accuracy of this account. The idea that all of Labour's racial thinking on

the British nation should be a giant con trick designed to fool the racist British public strikes me as highly implausible. My first impulse, rather, is to think that Labour's leaders are saying what they are saying because this is what they believe. It is true that in the course of my studies I have come across two statements by Labour Party politicians that might suggest otherwise. One is contained in Richard Crossman's published diaries and dates from August 1965:

> This afternoon we had the Statement on immigration and the publication of the White Paper. This has been one of the most difficult and unpleasant jobs the Government has had to do. We have become illiberal and lowered the [immigration] quotas at a time when we have an acute shortage of labour. No wonder all the weekend liberal papers have been bitterly attacking us. Nevertheless, I am convinced that if we hadn't done all this we would have been faced with certain electoral defeat in the West Midlands and the South-East.[377]

The other one is a passage in a speech given by Alf Dubs at a fringe meeting at Labour's 1995 annual conference in Brighton. Alf Dubs's statement was to the effect that in devising policies on immigration Labour politicians always had to balance their liberal inclinations against electoral considerations. But are the views of Richard Crossman and Alf Dubs representative? Other diary entries and statements made at other fringe meetings have suggested to me that some of their colleagues might not have shared or might not share their qualms.[378] Even if liberal sentiments on immigration were relatively widespread in the Labour Party, the precise scope of a hypothetically more liberal Labour Party policy remains unclear. If leading Labour Party politicians were genuinely interested in a thorough review of the constitution of the boundaries of the British nation, then I think this would be reflected, if not in their immediate policy proposals, then at least in their rhetoric. It is not, and therefore I conclude that they are not.

Part of my motivation for doing a research project on racial thinking in the Labour Party was that I felt Labour Party politicians were doing more damage than good in the antiracist movement. Labour Party MPs whose commitment to the antiracist cause I doubted appeared at antiracist conferences and imposed their flawed theories of racism on a credulous audience.

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[377] Crossman, Richard. 1975. *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Volume One. Minister of Housing 1964-66.* London: Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan Cape. p. 299.

[378] As mentioned earlier in this thesis, in December of 1970 Jim Callaghan apparently stated at a party meeting that 'we don't want any more blacks in Britain'. (Quoted in: Benn, Tony. 1989. *Office Without Power - Diaries 1968-72.* London: Arrow. p. 320). At a fringe meeting at Labour's 1995 annual conference, Bernie Grant told his audience that he had asked Jack Straw why he was opposed to open borders within the European Union. According to Bernie Grant, Jack Straw answered that if border controls were abolished, Britain would be invaded by Eastern Europeans.

Similar theories were also propagated by official Labour Party spokespeople. Wouldn't it be better if the Labour Party stopped meddling in the antiracist movement? Four years later, I have changed my mind. I now doubt whether there would be any British antiracist movement to speak of if it wasn't for the input of Labour Party activists and politicians. Certainly, the social deprivation theory of racism, which I consider at best to be incomplete, enjoys widespread currency in the Labour Party. Nevertheless, adherence to this theory has not prevented either the Labour Party as a whole or individual Labour Party MPs or MEPs from carrying out valuable work in the antiracist cause. The idea that racism in the form of racist attacks and harassment needs to be repressed by any means that are at the British state's disposal is, for example, reflected in Labour Party debates and policy documents. Labour Party MPs have been outspoken critics of Conservative policies on immigration in the House of Commons. Labour Party MEPs have been at the forefront of bringing antiracism onto the agenda of the European Union. Societies affiliated to the Labour Party have been active in the name of antiracism both inside and outside the Labour Party. Finally, I now believe that on many occasions Labour Party MPs and MEPs have played a valuable role in the antiracist movement in recent years. It appears to me that they have been the driving force behind a number of organisations that might otherwise never have got off the ground in the first place. At antiracist conferences, they have been able to provide valuable information on their work in their respective parliaments and parliamentary groups.

Nonetheless, I still feel ambivalent about some of the contributions to the antiracist movement Labour Party MPs and MEPs have made over the last few years. Firstly, I feel that some Labour Party MPs and MEPs who wield influence in the antiracist movement, in particular Peter Hain and Ken Livingstone, have at times relied too readily on the social deprivation theory of racism in their speeches or their writings. Secondly, I have come across a few instances where I felt Labour Party MPs, in particular Ken Livingstone and Bernie Grant, were trying to rhetorically augment the significance of anti-black racism by playing it off against other forms of racism. Thirdly, the ARA has shown a degree of hostility to the ANL which I find difficult to explain with sole reference to differences in racial thinking (for example ideological differences relating to the question of 'black leadership'). My suspicion is that party political antagonism of a more general nature between the Labour Party and the SWP has also been a factor. It seems to me that Ken Livingstone came close to admitting as much when he called on ANL sponsors to

withdraw their support on the grounds that the ANL was a Socialist Workers Party front.

Some aspects of Labour Party thinking in the name of antiracism only came to my attention in the course of doing this project. Among these, one that I consider to be potentially counterproductive is the idea, expressed in some policy documents, that racial collectivities coincide with cultural collectivities. There is little sense in Labour Party rhetoric or documentation that deriving people's cultural characteristics from their presumed membership of racial collectivities is and always has been a cornerstone of racist ways of thinking. Indeed, nowhere in Labour Party documentation have I found any discussion of what the defining characteristics of racism actually are. In practice, the Labour Party tends to use the term in order to refer to beliefs or practices that discriminate against or are hostile to black people. The narrow focus on anti-black racism strikes me as unhistorical and potentially divisive. It also deflects attention from the racist implications of Labour's construction of the British nation as a community of descent. This construction excludes not just black people but also white people, both symbolically and physically, from full access to the British nation. Other weaknesses in Labour's approach to antiracism result from the narrow scope of Labour's antiracist policies. There is little discussion of the need for antiracist education or the desirability of reparations for racism of the past, though Labour MPs Greville Janner and Bernie Grant respectively have been involved in campaigns that touch on these issues.

The overall weakness of Labour's approach to racial thinking is perhaps their lack of historical memory, whether in the field of nationalism or in the field of antiracism. Without a sufficiently deep historical perspective, Labour appears to be unable to detach themselves from ways of racial thinking that are entrenched in contemporary British society. Greater historical vision might lead Labour to realise that neither does nationalism have to be racialised, nor does it have to be the final stage of global political development; it might make them question their tendency to accept racial classifications for the purposes of understanding people or societies; it might sensitise them to the racial meanings of some of the nationalistic rhetoric and symbolism which they seem so keen on using; it might lead them to consider the idea of 'repairing' global inequalities with greater urgency.

5.2   On racial thinking in general

In the introduction, I wrote that I would like to make a contribution primarily to the existing literature on racial thinking and only incidentally to the existing literature on the Labour Party. The time has now come to review how my own ideas on racial thinking in general have changed in the course of doing this research project.

When I began my research project, I was aware that in my private life, in the British media, and in academic publications internationally, there was a lot of uncertainty as to the precise meaning of the word 'racism'. People were often worried and unsure whether what they thought or did, or what other people thought or did, might be racist. I was sometimes worried and unsure, too. In this situation, I decided to reconstruct the meaning of racial and related terminology without taking any racial concepts for granted. I began by searching for the common denominator in what is involved when texts refer to the idea of 'race' or 'racism' or related concepts. That denominator, I felt, was the process of classifying people according to their perceived descent from real or imagined ancestral collectivities. Whenever I saw the vocabulary of 'race' or for that matter 'ethnicity' being used, this process, which I termed the process of 'racial classification', appeared to be involved. I then felt that it would be useful for me to give a name to the field of human thought that in one way or another relates to or involves racial classifications. This is how I came up with the concept of 'racial thinking'.

In principle, racial classifications are analogous to other types of human classification, and the field of racial thinking is analogous to other fields of thinking that involve or relate to those classifications. People may, for example, classify others or themselves according to their presumed class membership, their age, their sex, their height etc. Correspondingly, it would be possible to speak of 'class thinking', 'age thinking', 'sex thinking', 'height thinking' etc. In all of the cases quoted, there is a specific array of names or categories available that may be given to people in accordance with how they are classified. Thus there are class categories such as 'working class', 'middle class', 'aristocracy' and many others; age categories such as 'young', 'old', '12 years old', '40 years old', and many others; sex categories such as 'male', 'female' and perhaps a few others; height categories such as 'small', 'tall', '1.50 m', '1.90 m' and many others; and racial categories such as 'white', 'black', 'Asian', 'English' and many others.

All of the classifications mentioned above may take on great significance in particular

contexts. But some of them may be of more generalised importance in society than others. Racial thinking, class thinking, age thinking and sex thinking are, for example, all of such generalised importance in British society that it would appear to make sense to study racial, class, age or sex thinking in, say, the British Labour Party, but not height thinking. The reason is that people and institutions often judge others differently and/or treat them differently when they classify them differently racially, class-wise, age-wise or sex-wise, but not generally when they classify them differently height-wise.

Using a particular type of classification as a key to judging people, or as a cue to treating them differently, is sometimes deemed acceptable, and sometimes it isn't. Of the cases quoted, the use of racial, age and sex classifications for the purposes of judging people or treating them differently has come in for particular criticism. There are even names - racism, ageism and sexism respectively - for racial, age and sex thinking that people consider unacceptable. But what precisely are the ways in which various classifications should or should not be used? This matter is subject to debate and will be answered differently by different people. In view of the murderous history of racial thinking in Western societies, I certainly think that the debate about what precisely constitutes 'racism' is a particularly important one. Essentially, this is a moral and political debate. After much thinking on the matter, I have come to the conclusion that what I tend to find unacceptable is any ways of thinking that use racial classifications as a key to judging or understanding people or societies. Therefore, it is these ways of thinking which I have labelled 'racist' in this thesis. As regards texts or practices, I would think that all texts or practices that express or promote racist ways of thinking should themselves be called racist. This means that, from my point of view, not all practices that involve the use of racial classifications are necessarily racist. Using racial classifications in order to identify somebody in a group of people standing in a distance need not in my view be racist. Using racial classifications in order to organise and strengthen antiracist campaigns or cultures need not be racist. In many cases, however, I would have to rely on subjective interpretation or even speculation if I was called upon to decide whether any particular activity 'expressed' or 'promoted' racist ways of thinking. Often no clear-cut judgment may be possible.

There may also be disagreement about the seriousness of different instances of racism. Obviously, the more aggression or even violence is involved in racist texts or acts, the more serious they are on account of that particular ingredient. In addition to this dimension, I believe

that much depends on how different instances of racism relate to the history of racial thinking. Many words and phrases in European languages, and many symbols associated with European history, are inscribed with racist texts and acts of the most serious nature. This is why I have insisted so much in this thesis on investigating Labour's use of symbols such as the Union Jack, and their use of words such as 'the British people' or 'the British Empire'. At the end of this project even more than at the beginning, I am convinced that any careless use of words and symbols such as these runs the risk of promoting racist ways of thinking, regardless of whether or not such an effect is intended.

At the beginning of this project, I was not certain whether there was sufficient historical rather than just moral and political coherence to the phenomenon of racial thinking in British society to warrant the study of 'racial thinking in the British Labour Party'. A cursory glance at the history of racial thinking in British society shows that it is composed of different strands that appear to have evolved quite independently of each other. The development of anti-black racism, for example, is apparently linked to the history of European imperialism and colonial slavery; the development of anti-Jewish racism is linked the history of Christianism; the development of anti-French racism is linked to the history of French and British nationalism, etc. Does it make sense to bracket together all of these diverse histories under one label? Would it not be preferable to analyse them separately? Would it not be easier to identify the *origin* of various forms of racism by looking at their specific histories? I would certainly agree that no single origin of the phenomenon of racial thinking in British society today can be identified. In this thesis, I have identified four broad historical and political contexts within which racial ways of thinking have developed. Although these historical and political contexts can be considered as relatively distinct, I have concluded that much racial thinking appears to have crossed over from one context to the next quite easily. To my mind, therefore, the phenomenon of racial thinking in British society possesses not just moral and political significance, but also a degree of historical coherence.

5.3   On writing about racial thinking in the Labour Party

In writing a PhD thesis about racial thinking in the Labour Party, I have pursued a number of personal and political desires. Throughout this project, I have entertained some doubts, too. On

a personal level, I hope this text will secure me an academic qualification that gives me status (at least in the eyes of some) and that may open doors to some careers. I would also be pleased if this project has developed my thinking and my social skills in ways that will enable me to oppose racism more effectively. On a political level, I fear this text may be taken seriously by some, and perhaps rejected by others, simply on account of its academic status. Meanwhile I hope that some people will find that this text makes for interesting reading. If only a few people inside or outside academia who may read this report find that it offers them new perspectives and/or helps them clarify the issue of racial thinking in their own mind, then I will have achieved all I can hope for.

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