CAMERAWORK

The National Front march, Lewisham, August 13, 1977. Chris Steele-Perkins

LEWISHAM:

What are you taking pictures for?

SPECIAL ISSUE

No.8 Half Moon Photography Workshop 40p

New Cross Rd. Anti-racists block route of National Front. Paul Trevor

LEWISHAM AUGUST 13, 1977

Racialism is a threat to us all. It is based on ignorance, fear and hatred. We oppose racialism in any form. Parliament, in the name of the Race Relations Acts is supposed to be opposed to racialism. The Press, in the name of freedom and liberty, is supposed to be opposed to racialism. The National Front march at Lewisham, London, showed both these assumptions to be wrong.

The media plays an important part in fighting or nurturing racialist ideas. Photography has a significant role; it can reinforce our attitudes or help to change them.

In previous issues of *Camerawork* we have explored photography in terms of ideology but these examinations have been mostly theoretical. In this special issue our exploration is practical.

On August 13, 1977, the National Front – proud of its racialism – attempted to march from New Cross to Lewisham, an area with many immigrants. Their march was halted in Lewisham High Street which was blocked by anti-racists. In this issue, we give evidence of what happened on that day, much of which has been ignored elsewhere.

Many photographers helped us to produce this issue, freely giving many more photographs than we could use. They work for magazines ranging from *Time* and *The Sunday Telegraph Magazine* to *Socialist Worker* and *Newsline*. We also publish the speech made by John Tyndall, National Front Chairman, to his supporters at Lewisham. This speech, which was not reported fully in the National Press, reflects the racist reasoning of the National Front and shows why they have to be opposed.

Half Moon Photography Workshop

CAMERAWORK

is designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, views and information on photography and other forms of communication. By exploring the application, scope and content of photography, we intend to demystify the process. We see this as part of the struggle to learn, to describe and to share experiences and so contribute to the process by which we grow in capacity and power to control our own lives.

This issue of CAMERAWORK, November, 1977, was produced by the Publishing Project, Half Moon Photography Workshop, 119/121 Roman Road, London E2. 01-980 8798.

The people who worked on this issue were Ed Barber, Jan Clarke, Mike Goldwater, Ann Murphy, Sue Hobbs, Tom Picton, Richard Platt, Shirley Read, Swanee Swanson, Paul Trevor, Wendy Wallace.

If you have any comments to make or articles, letters or prints you would like to contribute we would be glad to hear from you. Please make sure it reaches us as soon as possible.

(ISSN 0308 1676)

Clifton Rise. Police attempt to clear anti-racists before NF March. Chris Schwarz

Achilles St. NF Steward waiting to set off. Peter Marlow

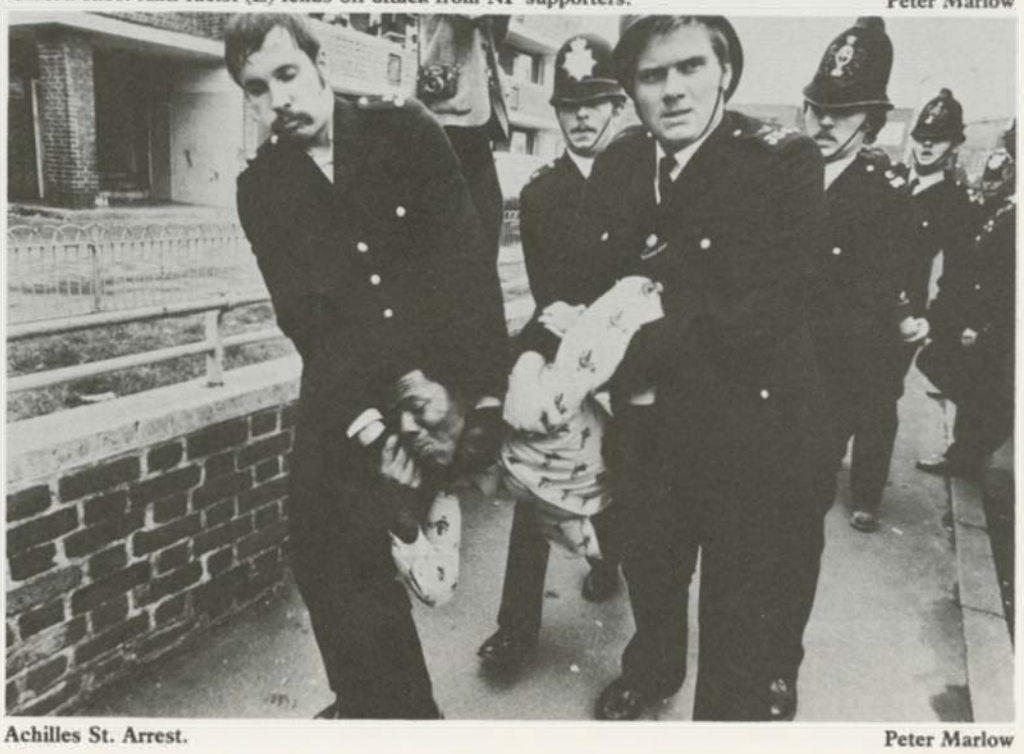
New Cross Rd. National Front lines broken by anti-racists. Peter Marlow

New Cross Road. National Front supporters attack anti-racist demonstrator. Peter Marlow

New Cross Rd. Anti-racist attacks NF supporter. Peter Marlow

Clifton Rise. Anti-racist (L) fends off attack from NF supporters. Peter Marlow

Clifton Rise. Arrest. Peter Marlow



Achilles St. Arrest. Peter Marlow

New Cross Rd. Police charge anti-racists. Mike Abrahams

New Cross Rd. Arrest of anti-racist during NF march. Chris Steele-Perkins

New Cross Rd. NF march broken. Phil McCowen

Lewisham High St. Mike Abrahams

Lewisham High St. Homer Sykes

New Cross Rd. Chris Steele-Perkins

Lewisham High St. Police charge anti-racists. Phil McCowen

John Tyndall's Vision

Address by John Tyndall, Chairman of the National Front, to his supporters. Lewisham August 13th 1977.

'Fellow members, thank you all for coming here this afternoon. Thank you for your courage, your discipline, and, in nearly all cases, your excellent behaviour. I would like to second the vote of thanks that Martin Webster gave to our magnificent police. (Cheers). There's very little in this country today to be proud of but one of the things that we can be proud of is our splendid police force. (Cheers)

I'd like to thank those who came long distances to this meeting. I'm delighted to see the banner of our Edinburgh members who've come 400 miles. (Cheers) I understand that we have a small contingent that has crossed the sea from Northern Ireland. (Cheers) And I'd like to also welcome a small contingent from another organisation but a friendly one, the Fronte Nationale from France. (Cheers) It just shows that nationalism does not preclude friendship between nations. We believe that nationalists of the world can get along much better than internationalists. (Cheers)

Now, I regret, as we all regret this afternoon, the inconvenience and the upset that has been caused to many ordinary people in Lewisham as a result of this week's developments, and as a result of what has gone on today. Now, I think that most of you would agree who have read your newspapers this week, there has been a deliberate attempt by the gutter press (Cheers) to depict the National Front as some kind of threat to the ordinary, law-abiding folk of Lewisham. But in fact we are the people who have come here to protect the ordinary law-abiding British . . . (Cheers).

For years and years the old folk of this Borough have been afraid to go out at night for fear of muggers (Cheers) and what has authority done about it? What has the Government done about it? (Nothing, nothing. Fuck all) What has the Church done about it? (Nothing. Fuck all) They're more interested in the welfare and in the rights of 24 or 25 Black muggers (Cheers) than they are in the rights of the native people of Lewisham to be able to walk the streets after dark. (Well said. Well said.)

Now, there's a man who's got all the publicity over the past week. They call him the Bishop of Southwark. (He's an old woman. Nigger lover. Red scum) No, I find the Bishop of Southwark quite an extraordinary person. He makes a great deal of noise. He's always getting publicity. He's always in the Press. I haven't heard a single word from the Bishop of Southwark in sympathy with the old ladies who are getting mugged . . . (Cheers)

Look at what we've got in this country today. We've got crime on the increase. Immorality on the increase. Illegitimacy. Sodomy. Abortion. Obscenity everywhere. These are the places where the leaders of the Church should be stepping forward and doing something. (Cheers) And yet what has the Bishop of Southwark and all the other fellow Bishops being doing? Absolutely nothing. But the moment that we hear about racialism i.e. the healthy instinct . . .

'It is now the task of National Socialism to replace this human wreckage with a new type of man: the type proclaimed by Adolf Hitler in his memorable speech to the Hitler Youth at Nuremburg in the zenith days of the Third Reich – fleet as a greyhound, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel.'

John Tyndall, 'National Socialist' 1963.

I can only say ladies and gentlemen that when we win in this country, and win we will (Cheers) there are going to be some mighty changes – in the economy, in our political field, in foreign policy, in immigration and so on, there's going to be a lot of changes. (Cheers) I'll tell you where one of the biggest is going to come. There's going to be a good sweep out of the Church. (Cheers, start tomorrow) And we're going to send these political priests, the whole ragbag lot of them, off to Russia where they belong. (Cheers, send 'em back)

We'll put in their place Christian leaders who will do the job that they are paid to do – which is to look after the morality and the spiritual welfare and the cohesion of the British people. (Cheers) And not only that, who'll look after particularly our old folk, who apart from not being able to go out on the streets at night are passing the winter, often without warmth, without fuel, many of them dying from cold, and if our Christian leaders want to do their Christian duty I say they should be concerned to go around and collect money for these people (Cheers) instead of going around collecting money for the Third World. (Cheers) The Third World and the black gangsters who are terrorising our kith and kin in South Africa and Rhodesia. No. (Send the Army there) Ladies and gentlemen, there's going to be a mighty sweep out in this country and the biggest sweep out of all is going to be in the Church. Now as we said earlier, the speeches this afternoon have got to be short but I say this in conclusion. We regret the inconvenience that has been caused to many people in this Borough this afternoon. It was not of our making. We wanted to have a peaceful and orderly march in a part of our capital city. A right which we will always defend. A right that we always . . . (Cheers) The fact that there has not been peace and order this afternoon, the fact that people have had to board up their windows and shut themselves in their homes, the fact that business men have had to close down their shops and lose money, these are all things which we enormously regret but this fact is due entirely to the red terrorists. And if this kind of thing happens again it will be due to the softness and the weakness of the authorities in not taking the necessary measures to put the . . . (Cheers)

As we said before the police did a splendid job. They could have done an even better job had they been allowed to go in with tear gas, with rubber bullets, (Cheers) and the whole of the works of crowd control. And let me make this promise to the police, that when we get in the police are not going to go unarmed into these affrays. (Cheers) We will give the police all the necessary equipment, we'll give them the money they deserve, we'll give them the backing they deserve, and we'll give them the authority to sort the Red mob out (Cheers) (Get the Reds. If they're Red, shoot them dead.)'

Fascism and the National Front

The National Front has remained singularly dedicated throughout its ten year existence to carrying out the promise of Martin Webster, its national activities organiser, to: 'kick our way into the headlines.'

They certainly carried out their promise at Lewisham when they selected a route that would take them through areas of high sensitivity. For months there had been friction between Black youth and police in the area, accusations of harrassment, and a campaign over the arrest of a number of Blacks. In addition, the Front made no bones over the fact that their march was racist.

Such tactics are typical and have been used many times before. The trick is to make it appear that their opponents are violent and that they are peaceful demonstrators being denied their rights.

What many people viewing the situation fail to understand is that the Front have carried out repeated acts of violence by their inflammatory statements and their very posters and banners echo this. The slogans they shout are, because of their crude and offensive racism, acts of violence to those at whom they are aimed.

Fascism

In recent months the question has been raised whether or not the Front is a fascist organisation or just a militant form of the Monday Club. Whilst it may well be the case that many people become attracted to the National Front for its xenophobia, racism, and opposition to the Common Market, they are, regardless of what they think, joining and supporting a fascist party.

An article in the April, 1976 'Spearhead' could have come straight from the pages of 'Der Sturmer', Julius Streicher's racist journal. Called 'The Reality of Race' by Richard Verrall, it is complete with skull diagrams, depicting the Orang-Utan, the Negro, and the European, each one complete with measurements in order to 'prove' that the European is superior.

'Spearhead', June, 1977, proved no exception to the rule with an article that is brutally frank, though somewhat inconsiderate to those Front stalwarts desperately trying to prove their undying patriotism. This particular article by Thompson turns out to be a 'we fought on the wrong side and Churchill was the real villain' saga. Linked, of course, to the theory of the International Conspiracy of World Jewry with the Bolsheviks.

Patriotism

The following quote from the article shows the real 'patriotism' of the Front: 'The speeches of Churchill in the early thirties are as remarkable as they are alarming. For already he is pointing to the dangers of a revived Germany even before Hitler became Chancellor.

'. . . ruling circles in Britain, especially in the early thirties, looked upon Hitler as the saviour of Germany from Communism, if not indeed the whole world.

'. . . you would think that Churchill would be the first in the pack for the new crusade against the Bolsheviks. Alas, such was not the case, for we must remember that Churchill's career had been largely underwritten by the Zionists. He was the very voice of their aspirations. But the Nazi movement was not only anti-Zionist, it was also anti-Semitic. This cooled any ardour Mr. Churchill might have had for such a solution.

'The French alone tried desperately to back peddle. This is why most of the French General Staff were pro-Nazi. The French are notoriously realistic.'

They have not come very far since Tyndall concluded an article on the 'Principles of National Socialist Ideology' in the journal 'National Socialist', 1963, with the following comment:

'The pitiful heaps of physical degeneration which we see littering our streets today, particularly in the large cities, are the social heritage that democracy has handed down to us. It is now the task of National Socialism to replace this human wreckage with a new type of man: the type proclaimed by Adolf Hitler in his memorable speech to the Hitler Youth at Nuremburg in the zenith days of the Third Reich – fleet as a greyhound, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel.'

International links

Another classic example of Front double talk is the great charade they went through in October, 1975, in order to supposedly proscribe the League of St George, a small but useful umbrella organisation with extensive international links specialising in bringing racist and fascist speakers to Britain and organising secret camps.

Martin Webster denounced the League for its links with the Nazi organisation Column 88 and threatened Front members with immediate expulsion if they were known to have membership. Despite that so called warning the majority of those attending League meetings at Kensington Library have been National Front members. The League international liaison officer is Owen Masters, the National Front parliamentary candidate for Gloucester.

Certainly the question of how one defines the Front holds no problems for L. Gardner, press officer for the Warley NF. In a letter to 'News Telephone,' November 18, 1976, he had this to say: 'The Fascismo was a coalition or amalgam of nationalist parties in Italy to oppose socialism founded around March, 1922. The fascisti were supporters of Fascismo. In the context, we in the National Front accept that we are British neo-Fascists.'

Gardner is of course quite right. They are Fascists. An interesting fact about all the various organisations of the extreme Right that we regard as Fascists is their common background. All, without exception, have an allegiance to National Socialism. The major organisations are the National Front, British Movement, League of St George, and Column 88.

Most of the leading personnel from all these organisations have a common root in the National Socialist movement of the early 1960's which was led by Colin Jordan.

Through a series of splits they have remained constant to their basic aims to build a mass movement under the leadership of dedicated National Socialists.

To date the National Front is the nearest they have come to achieving these ambitions.

Maurice Ludmer

What the papers said

An event like Lewisham is heavily mediated by the press. Its constituent bits are taken apart and re-assembled in a way that suits an existing ideology of brave police impartiality and right/left wing extremism. The National Sundays and Dailies reported that fifty policemen and one policewoman were injured. Both they and the police were anxious that these should be recorded. The real issue of racialism is virtually ignored.

The overall impression given is that our brave policemen stopped extremists from the National Front and the Socialist Workers Party from attacking each other. There are hardly any pictures of violent policemen. When used they are softened by joke captions. There is only one picture of a policeman with a truncheon. Not one picture of an injured demonstrator appears, except that of an old woman sitting down in comical disarray, and she is wrongly captioned as an 'innocent bystander'. Wives are shown in subordinate, supportive roles, holding the hands of their injured, policemen husbands.

No impression is given of either the National Front march or the strength of the counter demonstrators. We are told that a quarter of London's policemen were needed to control the 'vicious' mobs, but nowhere do we either see the mob or its visciousness. We are shown a very limited effect – a few injured policemen without any visible cause. Intentionally or not, this mediation has a clear political end. It denies totally the strength of the opposition to the National Front. By dealing only with the SWP, the press also hides the fact that thousands of other people – black and white – took part in the protests. No paper mentioned that they completely blocked Lewisham High Street.

The forces of 'law and order' are shown as individual policemen, frequently injured. Only the pictures of them with shields show them as an organised body of men. But even then, they are shown as passive, crouching behind the shields, not using them aggressively, as they did in Lewisham High Street. No mention is made of the massive support behind the police; of the complicated communications that controlled their whole operation. For example, the police had four video cameras overlooking Achilles Street with a mixer sending pictures back to the A8 control room at New Scotland Yard.

Only one picture of a police horse appears, although they were an important weapon in the police tactics. Usually they are kept in reserve; this time they were deliberately ridden into the demonstrators. Every effort is made to deny the mass political nature of the event. One of the few exceptions was Peter Marlow's photograph on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* which showed a group of National Front supporters kicking and beating an anti-racist. (This picture was pinched by *Spearhead* – the National Front magazine, with the caption: 'The boot goes in hard. An NF activist defends himself from red thugs as they attack the NF column . . .)

The *Sunday Express* has no doubts about Lewisham. 'LONDON'S SHAME: Riot shields out, 50 police hurt, 200 arrests,' and the picture of PC Colin Trussler being carried off with his bloodied face. 'For the first time in a British city outside Ulster,' the *Sunday Express* begins, 'police yesterday used thick plastic riot shields to protect themselves from missiles. They needed them. Lewisham High Street, in the south-east of London, was turned into a bloody battlefield, fought for by National Front marchers, Left-wing extremists, and hundreds of police . . . Not since the Grosvenor Square riots of the late 1960s has Britain seen such violence in the streets.'

The *Sunday People* is populist and direct. 'Bobbies pay the price of freedom' is headlined above two pictures. One shows a policeman, with bandaged eyes being guided by two ambulance men. The other shows a man's face with a wound above his eye pouring blood. It can be identified as a policeman by his buttons and whistle chain. The captions: 'BLINDED . . . a policeman wounded by an ammonia bomb is guided to safety,' 'BLOOD-STAINED . . . the face of a young constable.'

Under a headline: '111 are hurt in riot of hate' the *Sunday People* write: 'Rival factions were allowed to demonstrate in the name of freedom yesterday – and the police paid the price.''Voice of the People' also gets it say: 'The march was permitted in the name of free speech. Bloody anarchy, more like.' 'Constable Phillip Betts, 29, in hospital with head injuries,' says: "Both sides were equally to blame."'

The *Sunday Mirror* wrings its readers hearts with a picture on the front page of a 'Victim of hate'. An old lady, legs sprawled out, is helped to her feet by two policemen. The caption: 'She was just an innocent bystander, hit by a missile in riot-ravaged Lewisham yesterday.' In fact the *Sunday Mirror* was wrong. The woman was taking part in the National Front march and fell over in the general scrum at the top of Pagnell Street. She later phoned the paper to object about being called an 'innocent bystander': she was proud that she marched with the NF.

On pages 4 and 5 they repeat the old message of the popular press. 'RIOT . . . POLICE COP IT AGAIN' and there's the picture of PC Colin Trussler again being carried off with blood streaming down his face. At the bottom of the page: 'A touch of love for riot victim.' 'Distraught wife Geraldine Betts has a comforting hand for her husband . . . one of the police victims of the Lewisham violence.' None of the Press interviewed a rank-and-file 'extremist'. No attempt was made to find out why they demonstrate.

In a leading article *The Observer* managed to get events in Lewisham and Northern Ireland completely wrong. 'Lewisham yesterday sounded an alarming echo of Londonderry in October 1969. There is no precise parallel between the political situations in Ulster and London, of course, but they do have two factors in common: strong communal antagonism, and extremist political groups which are determined to exploit that antagonism for their own anti-democratic ends.'

The *Sunday Times* repeats the mythology of two extremist groups determined to clash.

'There have been clashes as violent in recent years, especially in Northern Ireland, but it was a frightening and tragic sight to see on a London street one group of extremists, backed by an artillery of bottles, bricks, rocks, staves and tins, advance on their rivals with such vicious intentions,' a statement which of course makes nonsense of the fact that the National Front were led into the middle of the anti-racists by mounted policemen.

PC Colin Trussler, appears on page 3, bandaged with blood streaming down his face.

The *News of the World* was more interested in 'My love for a broke Greek organist by Miss Great Britain' and 'Runaway peer in his vice den' than the battle of Lewisham. In an article called: ' "March of hate" mob besiege police station' their reporter writes: 'One of 70 St John Ambulance Brigade men in the thick of the casualty scene said: "We're just dragging the bodies out one by one. I've never seen anything like it in my life."'

Several of Monday's morning papers used Lewisham as a peg to forecast more violence at Ladywood in Birmingham. Under a picture of National Front supporters kicking and beating an opponent the *Daily Mirror* headline says: 'Why the Union Jack ran red with blood.'

'It was the day the Union Jack,' the *Mirror* tells its readers, 'carried through Lewisham by the Right-wing "patriots" of the Front, became a blood-stained symbol of hate. Scores of people were hurt – fifty-five of them policemen – as rioters ran wild with blinding ammonia, knives and bottles.'

Every story implies that it was the SWP alone who opposed that National Front march and caused the violence. None of them will accept that it is itself a violent act to march through an immigrant community, to march through any community, mouthing racist slogans and carrying racist placards, mounted on conveniently stout poles so that they can be used as weapons when the poles have been broken.

On page 5 the *Mirror* headline says: 'The cost of doing his duty' and the photograph shows PC Colin Trussler lying on the ground with a bandage on his head. 'Down: With blood pouring from his head . . .' the caption says. 'And all that on £45 a week' the subhead says next to a picture of Policeman Philip Betts recovering in hospital.

Unlike the demonstrators, the police are given personalities. 'It should have been policeman Philip Betts' day off. But instead he was at the Battle of Lewisham. The young constable was set on by thugs, thrown to the ground, and kicked in the head three times until he passed out. And he suffered all that for a take-home pay of just £45 a week.' PC Betts is given a wife with a baby daughter and 'home' in Plaistow, but in the best tradition of popular journalism he bravely says:"I was frightened in the battle, and I'm not ashamed to admit it. But it's part of the job . . . and it has to be done."

'And all for just £45 a week.'

The *Mirror* forgets to say whether being kicked in the head would become more acceptable if it became more profitable.

On page 7, labelled 'the punch-ups' the *Mirror* shows the 'baddies' being grabbed by the 'good' policemen. 'How the demo boiled over in fury,' the headline says. Four policemen are shown attacking one man, one of the policemen has grabbed his hair. The captions make it into a light-hearted frolic: 'Nabbed,' 'Grabbed,' 'Bagged', they say. '. . . these were the scenes as the battle between the rule of law and the rule of the mob reached chilling new heights at the weekend.' the page begins. 'Once more, the police were the thin blue line trying to hold back the forces of hate.' An 82-year-old woman is quoted:"I have been through two world wars, but I have never been so frightened." Nowhere on the page does the *Mirror* mention that this was a desperate and successful attempt to stop the National Front marching through the streets of Lewisham.

The Guardian was the only paper to show a black face – other than someone being arrested; they show two black children carrying anti-NF posters. In a leading article they repeated the familiar equation of Right and Left extremists. Their leader headed: 'A day that mocked democracy', states: 'The only victors in the violent political game played out in the streets of Lewisham on Saturday were the extremists of Right and Left.'

On page 4 and 5 of the *Sun* – page three obviously cannot be disturbed – a headline says: 'I won't ban the Front marches. Rees backs police chief McNee after battle of Lewisham.' A photograph shows 'PC Burgess in hospital' bravely smiling with a thumbs up. 'Heroes in the middle' the *Sun* calls them."We were the meat in the sandwich," PC Anthony Burgess is quoted as saying.

Again the National Front march and the fight against it is not put into a context. Violence becomes an abstraction, an unknowable peril that can only be halted by the 'heroes in the middle.' A simple political issue can easily be mystified and confused by such techniques.

The *Daily Mail* excelled itself on Monday. Under a headline: 'After the Battle of Lewisham, a question of vital importance NOW WHO WILL DEFEND HIM?' it crams in a whole litany of violent language (see *Camerawork* centre spread). An avuncular policeman, un-named, holds a club and knife. 'The weaponry of hate: A studded club and a carving knife used against the police.'

The *Daily Mail* is also concerned about money although it does not mention the £45 pittance mentioned in the *Mirror*. 'We must back our police. We have to support them. We have to pay these brave men what they're worth.'

'The nation must look to its defences,' the *Mail* sternly demands, 'And that means looking to the police,' sentiments which are, of course, shared by John Tyndall.

Lord Hailsham is brought in to support the *Daily Mail* case.

'Look left, look right . . . at these arrogant thugs destroying our freedom,' Lord Hailsham castigates over a picture showing him pointing a stern finger. Spread over the middle pages we find our old friends. 'After the rioting at Lewisham . . . the story of the men in the middle who ended up hurt.'

'The shields of freedom' spreads over two pictures. PC Christie lies in hospital, 'his damaged eye covered,' holding hands with his wife Geraldine. Again the police are given personalities and wives. Another picture shows a close-up of the police behind their riot shields, looking at PC Christie recovering in bed. 'The riot shields come to England: police, their apprehension showing on their faces, wait for orders while facing a bombardment of missiles.' Below them police hold dustbin lids to fend off missiles thrown at the National Front. 'The pictures on this page make history,' the *Mail* assures its readers, 'sad and shaming history.' 'They mark the day when for the first time police in England were forced to carry riot shields for their own protection.'

'At the height of Saturday's bloody confrontations 111 people, half of them police, were hurt,' the *Telegraph* tells its readers. 'Bottles of caustic soda and ammonia were hurled at constables, and 214 people were arrested.'

Mr Whitelaw, Conservative deputy leader, is quoted as saying:"There seems to be a growing band of hooligans and disrupters who are becoming addicts of the punch-up and the street brawl. These people seem to get an extra pleasure out of hurting police officers."

In a leading article *The Daily Telegraph* compares Lewisham with Northern Ireland. Neatly distorting history, it says: 'Northern Ireland, when the agitation for "civil rights" began in 1968, shows the folly of allowing disorder to grow by degrees. By some sleight of logic, occasional excesses of the forces of law and order were held to render them illegitimate, while the regular violence and illegality of "civil rights" crowds were deemed to be evidence of the necessity of making concessions to them. Nemesis duly followed.' Even the *Telegraph* must have struggled to rewrite history in such terms.

In a second leader they talk about the law. 'It is no argument to say that the NF is anti-democrat. For one thing, the law is silent on this; secondly, should we not then have to ban marches by the Socialist Workers Party, Communist Party and several sections of the Labour movement? Nor can native-born Englishmen properly be denied the right to march through a part of their capital city merely because it is settled by immigrants.'

Avuncular PC Alfred Franklin pops up again on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* holding a carving knife and a 'lead bar fitted with coach bolts – two of the weapons used by rioters in Lewisham.'

Police Constable Alfred Franklin appears yet again on the front page of *The Times*, this time 'displaying a piece of metal piping incorporating steel bolts, confiscated at Lewisham.'

In a leader headed 'Spoiling for blood', the *Evening Standard* makes its ideological points: 'Where political factions turn to violence, democrats must turn to the police. And they, patiently, often heroically, must do their difficult job.'

The *Daily Express* makes no attempt to be 'objective'. It repeats the old message of 'Left-wing extremism'. 'The police were on our side at Lewisham', George Gale assures us, 'fighting for us against those who wish to destroy our way of life and bring chaos to this country. They were also on our side at Grunwick'.

The paper even has a good word for the National Front. 'We have no time or sympathy for the Front', Express Opinion tells its readers, 'and there is not doubt that it is provocative. All the same, the Front does not go in for attacks on the police or on authority'.

Its front page is almost identical to the *Daily Mail*. Again a large picture of 'some of the chilling weapons of political extremism . . . They are the tools of Left-wing fanatics who claim they will use any means available in a war of attrition against the far-Right National Front'. Next to the picture – in huge letters – 'THUG LAW'.

On its centre pages the *Daily Express* is the only paper to show police horses, as the background to a photograph of a man throwing a missile. 'Police with new shields, protect riot victim'. PC David Allen, his eyes bandaged, is guided by 'brave St John's Ambulance men'. A large picture of a Black man being arrested dominates the page. His knife is circled. 'Police grab a demonstrator – critics of tough tactics should look at the youth's knife'. Reporter Richardson, already featured in the *Sunday Express*, his head cut with a missile, reappears: "I must admit I was terrified." P.C. Burgess sits up in hospital: "I saw a mate being kicked, then I was attacked from behind." P.C. Trussler, 'blood-spattered', is rushed across another page, 'fighting for us against the destroyers'.

'It seems that everyone, the police included, were surprised at the determination of the Socialist Workers Party to "be provoked" on Saturday,' thus neatly perpetuating the convenient myth that opposition to the National Front came only from a small and ultra-Left group – the SWP. Opposition to neo-Fascism is shown to be extremist.

Overall, the pictures, the captions, the headlines, and the stories, give an impression of energetic coverage by the Fleet Street Press. It is only when you begin to analyse what pictures actually appear or – even more important – what pictures do not appear, that you realise how inadequate the reports are.

The misrepresentation would not appear so deliberate if other pictures were not available. It is difficult enough to photograph such a battle. But the many photographs in this issue of *Camerawork* make clear that missing pictures were available. Many of them were published overseas. Most of them were taken by photographers whose other pictures *were* used in the Nationals.

Anyone seriously wanting to know what happened in Lewisham on August 13, 1977 would not find out by reading these papers.

Tom Picton

Derek Boshier 1977

What are you taking pictures for?

When mounted police moved into clear the top of Clifton Rise before the National Front had tried to march from New Cross, one of the demonstrators shouted to a photographer: 'What are you taking pictures for?' It is a question worth answering.

With persistence we could have asked every photographer who went to Lewisham that same question. We chose not to. We did not speak to any photographer employed by a National Daily, although several of the people we spoke to had their photographs published in the following days' Fleet Street papers. We selected independent – mainly young – photographers because we thought their answers would also tell us something about what is happening to photography. Some of them work for French agencies. Others are putting together long term projects partly supported by foundation money. Others have already received Arts Council grants for very different work. One of them was on assignment for a Sunday supplement.

Their answers revealed an unexpected political toughness. None of the photographers wanted to hide behind their cameras. They had all thought seriously about the issues that unleashed the fury onto the streets of New Cross and Lewisham.

Conflict always asks unavoidable political questions. You have to be either for or against the National Front; racist or actively anti-racist. Photographers have had to come out from behind their view-finders. Like other people confronted by the rise of neo-Fascism, they are being politicised.

Mike Abrahams

Why did you go to Lewisham?
Well, I went along because I was very concerned about the National Front and what was actually going to happen there. I've started work on a set of pictures on racism, the growth of racism and the causes of it.

I was also interested not only in what the NF was doing on the streets and in the counter demonstration but also in the role of the police.

Is the work on racism a personal project?
It's a project I really want to get involved in. I'm really just at the beginning and I haven't found a writer I want to work with on the project. Until I've found a writer I can't specifically identify what lines I'm going to follow. This was a very major event in what's happening at the moment and I was anxious to be there and record what happened as a basis to starting the project. So I wasn't there specifically working on the project though it was like the beginning of it.

Did it give you guidelines?
Yes, it worked as a catalyst – giving me aspects that I hadn't thought about and that I can develop.

What was your idea to do a project on racism? How do you see it being used?
I'm not sure. Hopefully the pictures will be used in a politically educative capacity. However, they were used I would want them to reach a very large audience. The pictures will be part of a complete statement which I'm not in a position to make yet.

I phoned *Time Out* because I was going and said would you be interested in using any and they said yes. Which they did, they used them which paid my day's expenses.

How were your pictures used?
They were used in *Time Out* and in Manchester in a display – to do with the NF march that was planned for Manchester. I'm not exactly sure how they were used.

Did you anticipate what happened at Lewisham?
I knew there was going to be some area of conflict. I had no idea that it was going to be on the scale that it was. That was something that affected me a lot afterwards. When I photographed at Grunwicks last Monday I didn't take a single photograph because I'd become accustomed to a level of street violence and action so that when I was there I wasn't concentrating on the fact that it was a huge picket and I wasn't looking for the information. I was waiting for the drama. Which I felt very badly about because I was actually supposed to take some pictures and didn't.

Do you feel that the media's recording of the events at Lewisham was damaging to the Left?
I felt that it was totally unjustified. I mean the acts of violence that took place I didn't agree with. I was actually caught in the middle of a lot of them. It was very, very unpleasant. I certainly understood what was happening and felt there was too much publicity put on the rocks that were thrown and other things which happened. There wasn't actually enough analysis of the whole problem. It was the symptoms of the problem which were discussed and not the causes. That really annoyed me.

What actually happened to you at Lewisham?
I went straight to Clifton Rise when I arrived at about 1.00. I didn't follow the ALCARAF march, I got there too late. I was hanging about Clifton Rise. The first thing that happened was the Defence Committee HQ of the Lewisham 20 was raided and everybody arrested. I forget the exact details. It was a matter of waiting around. There were problems between the police and the counter demonstrators, just tensions at that moment.

Lewisham Way. Ray Rising

Clifton Rise. Peter Marlow

At what point did the police bring their shields out?
The police brought their shields out later in the afternoon when as far as I can remember the NF march was pretty well over. The march had pretty well gone through. The shields came out after some bricks were thrown at the police. Around the clocktower windows and buses were smashed. Once they'd got them out they felt they should do something with them so they ran up the streets and charged. It didn't seem necessary.

Did you see a lot of violence?
There were a lot of bricks and bottles flying. There was a lot of very, very aggressive behaviour by the police. There was violence because it was a very tense issue. It was a complex issue, it wasn't just a matter of demonstrations, there were so many factors.

Do you think that were was a specific attack on the police?
I think that the police provoked a very specific attack by being extremely aggressive in the way they handled things. The 'Lewisham against Racism' march was peaceful because the NF and the march were kept separate. Later it was almost like the police brought the National Front straight into the counter demonstrators which was a very provocative move. And the police were very aggressive towards the counter demonstrators.

Did the police just dive into the crowd and grab people?
At periods during the afternoon that obviously happened. It's difficult to say definitely that that happened because you don't know what someone had done and if there hadn't been a reason. But it certainly looked that way and from people I've spoken to since, people were arrested for the most ludicrous reasons, and on no grounds whatsoever.

Would you take a picture which would incriminate someone and might be used as evidence agains them?
If you're in a situation like this and you actually have a point of view that you're working about obviously you're biased in what you're going to take. I think you work in one of a couple of ways, you're either working on an idea and you've got a point you want to make and you follow that point or you've been commissioned by an editor who says, 'I want this sort of picture' and you go for that sort of picture. It's quite clear that a lot of newspaper editors want pictures of police being hurt. Police being hurt seems to attract Fleet Street photographers whereas demonstrators being hurt don't seem to attract that many. One thing's for sure, you very rarely see demonstrators being hurt in the pages of a newspaper with some sort of feeling of sympathy for them. If you do get a picture of a demonstrator being hurt the thing that goes over with it is that he bloody well deserved it because he shouldn't have been there and that the police are just trying to do their job. The police are always shown as the innocent keepers of calm.

Did you feel you were there as part of the counter demonstration or did you feel separate?
I felt as though I was there as a photographer. There's a certain point of involvement. I just couldn't bring myself to get too close to the National Front. I couldn't bring myself to go down there and walk amongst them and photograph them, which I should have done. I just didn't want to be anywhere near them. I felt horrified by the sight of them. One NF supporter actually threatened me. He wanted to know who I was for – whether I was for the National Front or against them. I said I was an independent member of the press and he said, "You take any bloody pictures of the National Front and I'll do you over."

Do you think Lewisham has changed things? That photographers will be less welcome because there were so many left-wing photographers there?
I think that police are hostile to photographers anyway. Unless you're a member of the right-wing press, the Fleet St press. I think it's fair to say that the 'left' press are identifiable as the 'left' press just because of the way they look, and they are subject to slightly more harassment. Say the police have cordoned off one little area, if you're the BBC you just walk through, if you're anybody else of course you don't. If you show a press pass which shows you're a recognised member of the press, very often they still won't let you through – even though they may let someone else through who shows exactly the same press pass.

Were you pleased with the way your pictures were used?
They were OK pictures. I might have chosen other ones. Pictures aren't used journalistically. Most of the time they're used to fill up a bit of space on the page, they may set the scene or give some point of view. I don't think they're actually used to convey information.

Do you feel the NF is a very real threat?
Yes. Because the economic and employment climate at the minute is just right for something like that to grow. And unless people take a stand against it, it will just gain strength.

Do you think your photographs help that stand?
It depends how they're used.

Chris Steele-Perkins

How did you get on at Lewisham?
Well, I mean, in terms of treatment I only had a minor incident where I was man-handled by the police. I can't say that I was subject to any attack by anybody. I got on O.K.

Who were you taking pictures for?
I was basically taking pictures as a freelance. I mean two things. I was partly doing it for 'Exit', the project we're working on, and the other was freelance.

Lewisham High St. Policeman throws a missile. **Mike Abrahams**

How were your pictures used?
Well, I sent them over to 'Viva' and they were used in *Paris Match*, and something called *Le Nouvel Observateur*.

Do you think they made good use of the pictures in Paris Match?
I think so, yes. Not having read the article fully, you know, I'm not too sure what line they actually took on it.

But they tied it in with violence in Northern Ireland?
They had an IRA picture. It basically corresponded with feelings I had about what's happening.

What are they?
They're about the escalation and ritualisation of violence . . . It just seems to be part of a bigger thing – ritualised street violence.

Did you stay with it all the time? Where did you start off?
I was there about twelve o'clock, I think. I followed the march itself through to Lewisham. Then I followed the fighting down Lewisham High Street.

Why did you go and take pictures?
Well largely because of what I was saying. I think the phenomena of street violence in this country now is something of particular interest. It's related to the 'Exit' project which is on the urban crisis. It's tied in very much with that. And at the other level it's a blatantly obvious news story.

Were you pleased with your photographs? Did you get what you expected?
I was reasonably pleased with it. One was basically photographing incidents. For me, it was one of the first times that I've attempted to cover that type of event. What one gets is a series of photographs. It's very difficult to actually put over a point of view. Very difficult. One point of view I tried to put in the captions to 'Viva' is that I thought that police were picking on Blacks during the whole incident at either end, at New Cross and Lewisham, rather more frequently than they merited by their proportion there, by what they were doing. This was something that was happening. Maybe I photographed that slightly more than other things. There were a lot of photographs that I didn't get that I saw. I saw for example Mike Abrahams getting punched in the face. I didn't get a photograph of it. I wish I had, from his point of view.

Who was he being punched in the face by?
A cop, during a charge . . . I mean just from a practical point of view I learnt a lot about how to photograph that kind of event which I didn't know before.

Such as?
Positioning. There seems to be obvious strategical positions that you take up when the police are charging around. If you haven't sussed that our beforehand, thinking ahead, you tend to get swept in the run from the police which I think happened to me. I seemed to spend a lot of time running away, running away from them. I don't think this would have happened if I'd planned where I was going to be. Things like the type of clothing one's going to wear. See that you don't have a lot of things hanging off you to get caught.

Peter Marlow

How did you get on at Lewisham?
I had the usual sort of trouble you get from the police when you're taking pictures and they're hitting people, and trouble from the demonstrators.

What were they objecting to, taking pictures?
The police in England never seem to object to you taking pictures unless they're really kicking hell out of somebody. I always find it quite amusing the way the two sides can tolerate each other in such close proximity. I mean it's almost like a play, with the photographer as the audience.

Apart from Grosvenor Square it was the first time in England that I'd seen rioting on such a major scale. There seemed to have been quite a major shift, which I personally found very scary. I'd come back from Belfast that morning after a week doing the streets during the Queen's visit. On the Wednesday when the Provos marched down the Falls the army stopped them at the entrance to the city in Castle Street. They held up some sort of sign and over a hailer said, "You are participating in an illegal demonstration, and if you don't disperse we will take measures to move you". At Lewisham the demonstrators were blocking the way for the Front and the police made a similar announcement: ". . . We're now going to drive horses through you if you don't move" I can't remember exactly the words but the two things just seemed so similar it really made me shudder associating the two.

What happened? We presume you were in front of the horses when they came through. How do you operate as a photographer under those conditions?
Well, I don't think it's very easy to say how you operate in that situation. Much of what you do is intuitive. I don't think I get over excited, but there is so much happening at once and so much to look at . . . Purely technically I try to get a long shot to isolate particular action from the rest of the confusion, and then go in close on both sides. Depends on the situation. But if somebody's throwing something, it's probably better to be behind him with a 100mm lens, so you see where he's throwing it and flick him out of focus a bit to make it more dramatic, or otherwise do a picture straight at him, get the expression on his face. I like to get as close as I can within reason, because I think there is much more drama if you can get close, see peoples' expressions. There's a sort of danger in that – if you start using 21mm you can get too much in the picture to make it very interesting. It takes quite a bit of discipline, just to hang back there and really think about what you're doing. The idea is to try to have a picture which will explain to somebody what happened. I mean that's very naive and simplistic, at Lewisham you needed to have a picture of the two sides in the confrontation. And that was quite difficult. It was easy to get the confrontation between Blacks and the police, and SWP and the police, but the two sides only got very close for a short time; for the photographer that was a critical moment.

I agree with you. And who were you taking pictures for?
I have a contract with Sygma, so inevitably I guess for them. But I also gave pictures to the *Sunday Mirror* and it was passed on to the *Daily Mirror*.

And who processed your film?
The *Mirror*.

So they took what they wanted, and presumably you got the stuff back to ship to Paris?
Yes. As far as Sygma goes it was interesting because this thing had been building up for months and months.

Would you have gone if the Mirror *didn't assign you, one of these "if you've got something, we'd like to see them" situations?*
Definitely – because it's something I've spent a lot of time doing, covering the NF. It was a toss up between Lewisham and the Apprentice Boys in Londonderry and I decided to come back.

Where were your pictures used that you took of Lewisham?
They were used – the *Sunday Mirror* took a couple of pictures, the *Mirror* front page on the Monday, I know *Time* used a picture and *Paris Match* used four pictures. As far as the other places go, I imagine Germany would have wanted a story, Italy and Spain would have been interested. To be specific is difficult as Sygma has distribution in about twenty countries. I just don't know until two months later when I see a sales report. That's when working for agencies really breaks down – you don't have the direct contact with magazines, and you feel a bit castrated because of that – you've no idea how the stuff's being used. It can become very frustrating – if I send unprocessed film you can imagine it's even worse – you don't even see what you're doing until later.

Did you shoot in black and white, or colour also?
Colour as well – not much, I was more interested in the black and white. But it's always the same – you always say "I wish I'd shot more colour" after you get it processed. I suppose it's the immediacy of black and white, it's turned over so fast once you've shot it.

When you were photographing at Lewisham were you after single pictures, I mean Time *used obviously the one picture,* Paris Match *used four pictures – are you after the one great picture?*
Definitely not – I think you have to go for a series of pictures which explain what was happening with something like Lewisham. There was a lot going on there. I never go on stories thinking I need to get just one picture, like UPI, go home after they've got it. I think it's much better discipline to try to do more than that. Also magazines don't just buy one picture, they buy the set. So the better the set is, the more chance the picture editor will want the pictures. As far as being in the business, I guess whatever you say I'm in the business. In working for an agency you really have to get a set of pictures, depending on the circumstances. Sygma never send a story out with less than 10 pix. For something like Lewisham I guess it

What are you taking pictures for?

would be about 30.

But when you say you've spent a lot of time photographing the NF, do you hope to eventually put a bigger set together or are you photographing them just because you think –
Well I was trying to – I did a story starting last year some time, on the phenomenon of the NF, and going into what Webster and Tyndall had been up to in the sixties and this sort of thing which a set was made of about 30 pictures and distributed by Sygma.

And would you write for that as well?
Yes I wrote a text for that. I always try to when its something important. I didn't just do pictures of the NF, I tried to incorporate other aspects to give an idea of where this racial xenophobia comes from; dole queues, unemployment, bad housing . . .

One of the questions you've answered already but I'll ask it again – why were you taking pictures?
I don't know – obviously my sympathies lie with the anti-fascists – I'm quite aware of how I feel about it, what the NF is, but I think in that situation you're . . . it's an old question, the photographer on the outside and not getting involved. Superficially it may look like that, you're just there with a bunch of cameras and I can quite understand how a demonstrator can see you just as a parasite. I take the attitude that these are *my* pictures, and you can think what you like. For me, I felt there was no conflict in photographing what happened, I'm convinced of that. With an event like Lewisham peoples' perception of it are conditioned totally by the pictures they see. They don't remember what happened they remember the pictures. It's *what* you take and *how* you use it that's important. As an example; I had a picture of a black guy with a knife, I didn't feel that it was representative, but one thing for sure, it would have gone down a treat with the *Mail* on the following Monday. That is the time when you are forced to think about it, that is the time when you join the demo if you like.

The Mail *did in fact I think use somebody's pictures of it – but you're saying that although you had the picture you wouldn't release them.*
I don't know, because I wasn't tested. I would hope that I wouldn't. To me, that's when the politics start.

Could you say something about the equipment you used?
Well, for something like that, always four cameras. Two colour, two B/W, and a motor drive which I find really essential. I would use two if I had two. In this particular case for B/W I had a 24 and a 80-200 zoom, for colour a 28 and a 105.

So if you went along just to photograph whether in black and white or colour alone, you'd just have the two cameras?
Yes, I think I would.

One of the problems of photojournalism is how do you deal with a situation photographically.
By thinking about it and spending a long time working on it. It took me a long time to get inside the NF headquarters but I eventually did it. Really, the picture I wanted to get was John Tyndall at home with his mother. But as far as the organisation goes, I travelled to a lot of demonstrations all over the country, I did some photographs of one of their "cabinet" meetings in a hotel at Euston. Homer Sykes was also there, we sort of got it together, he was doing quite a similar thing to me, although his reasons for being there may have been different from mine. But I just went to a lot of demonstrations, photographed them, in different kinds of situations, photographed the people in the headquarters. At National directorate meetings, John Tyndall introduced them as, "you're looking at England's future government." And I did some pictures of John Tyndall by himself.

I find him particularly obnoxious – he's like a cardboard cut out, or a waxwork. It's a pity I didn't bring them along because I managed to get him fairly well, looking so awful. So like Napoleon, just so pleased with himself.

You were talking about the frustration of sending undeveloped film not knowing whether your stuff is actually used. But you've obviously got a very clear idea of the overall story on the NF. How much control would you like to have over the way magazines use your pictures?
The way *Paris Match* or those kind of magazines would like to use it would be very emotionally, very dramatic; Nazis on the streets of 'Londres', which is not an approach I feel is very constructive. Obviously you can be manipulated, it's happened to me before and will again, but I'm lucky in that the Paris office tends to select from the contacts roughly the same that I would have done. If you want good fast and efficient distribution you have to make some compromises. With my set on the NF I think it would have been quite hard to miss the message I had in mind.

Do you want to go back and photograph the NF? I mean if your attitude is apparent in the magazines in publishing, and if the NF see that I would assume they'd be after you.
Yes, that's when it becomes a bit difficult because you know, I've got these very compromising pictures of John Tyndall. I suppose *if* these pictures were used I would have problems. I mean, they know me. I've got to be sensible. As it happens I already do have problems photographing them any more, I really had a big bust up with Martin Webster quite a while ago, he got very violent, when I tried to do a picture of him reading *Socialist Worker* at this meeting, he just flipped out completely.

One thing I was going to ask you – to a certain extent you were accepted by the NF, the extent of which you were let into their meetings . . . ?
Well I was for a short time – now I'm not accepted whatsoever.

Sometimes I find that people will accept you if they think that the publicity that they will get out of it . . . did they accept you as a personal thing or did they accept you because you were working for an agency?
Well the first time I met Tyndall he said "Well what fee were you thinking of?" It took me a couple of months to persuade them that there was to be no fee. I think part of the acceptance comes from the fact that they don't see where the stuff is used. As it happens now, I'm personna non grata. Yes, I do think to an extent that any publicity for them is good publicity, it gives them reassurance.

People get onto ego trips, don't they?
Oh, Tyndall definitely. He walks around like the queen.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about particularly Lewisham?
Just that I felt that the attitude the SWP have taken is a very negative one. To me they seem real adventurists after a few cheap headlines, they have certainly found a good way of achieving that.

I mean, okay, you have a punch up on the streets but what does it achieve? At Lewisham it achieved the dubious advantage of having a police force equipped with riot shields, the beginnings of a force along the lines of the French CRS, these things have a way of escalating. Anything which gives the police an excuse for extra powers of control must be counter productive in the end.

Obviously there comes a point where you have to do something, but after seeing so often the kind of rejects, the failures, the losers, the political cripples who make up this small band of fascists, I don't think they even deserve that kind of opposition.

When you sweep them off the streets you do it in a way which avoids street battles with the police where the NF are perceived as the underdogs, too many people love underdogs.

Have you started doing a story on SWP?
It hadn't occurred to me actually. I was more interested in doing a story on the Communist Party, and their lack of support compared with France.

Illegal NF banner Tom Picton

Incitement to Racial Hatred

Incitement to racial hatred is a criminal offence. A person commits the offence if he publishes or distributes threatening, abusive, or insulting written matter, or uses such words at a public meeting or in a public place, provided that:

(1) He does so with intent to stir up hatred against any section of the public in Great Britain distinguished by colour, race, or ethnic or national origins, and

(2) The material or the words are likely to stir up hatred against a section of the public on the grounds of colour, race, or ethnic or national origins. Hence, an offence may be committed either because of the words used in a speech or because of placards displayed or leaflets distributed. However, the material must be published or distributed to the public at large before an offence is committed. A member of an organization who distributes racialist literature to other members of the same organization is not breaking the law.

No prosecution may be brought without the consent of the Attorney General. Penalties range from £200 and/or 6 months' imprisonment to 2 years and/or £1,000 fine. In practice, the law has failed to halt the continuous flow of racialist literature and speeches directed against the black community. Banners and speeches calling for repatriation of black people have been tolerated without prosecution. On the other hand the Act has been used on more than one occasion to imprison and fine black 'militants' who have complained of white oppression.

It is also an offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour at any public place or meeting, which is likely or intended to provoke a breach of the peace (Public Order Act 1936 as amended by the Race Relations Act 1965).

Civil Liberty: The NCCL Guide by Anna Coote and Lawrence Grant, Penguin Special 1972.

Phil McCowen

How did you get on at Lewisham?
I had no trouble. The police seemed to respect somebody with two cameras around their neck. They didn't worry me. I didn't take any pictures of anybody committing any offences so I didn't get troubled by demonstrators.

Was that a conscious decision, or didn't you see anybody committing any offences?
No. I saw lots of people throwing stones at the police. I couldn't take a picture that might be used in evidence against them.

When you're actually taking pictures, do you deliberately make the choice then? When you're in the middle of something, is it not difficult to make such a choice?
I try to point my camera at the police rather than at the people who are up against them. I try to take a demonstrator's eye view of what the police are doing, or what's happening. Rather than being an observer from the outside I see myself as a demonstrator.

What if you see a policeman doing what is an offence?
I'll take his picture.

Aren't you then going to be thumped by the police?
Well, that's a risk you have to take. Yes, they do sometimes give you a hard time. The whole thing is, photographers are usually respected because nine out of ten they come from the bourgeois and the bourgeois press says what a marvellous job the police do. So in general, they leave photographers alone.

Who were you taking pictures for?
Principally *Socialist Worker* and *Flame* and a whole number of other publications that have used our work since. From *Engineers Charter* to *Rank and File Teacher* to some Left papers. We send pictures to ten Left papers abroad.

So you got quite a wide usage, in fact? I saw the Socialist Worker *the following week. Were most of them your pictures?*
Most of them. I think of 12 of them, nine of them were mine.

What did you think of the way the pictures were used?
They were used in a logical sequence which showed a sequence of events rather than show one particular photograph, except for the front page. Justice wasn't done to the individual pictures by the size they were used. They were too small. But as a sequence of events it worked out very well.

Why were you taking photographs? You said that you go as a demonstrator. Why not just go as a demonstrator, not as a photographer?
Because I feel my photographs can be useful to the struggle against the Nazis.

You also said that you concentrate on photographing the police?
The police protected the Nazis at Lewisham. The violence that erupted was as much against the protectors of the National Front, the police, as it was against the Nazis themselves.

Would it not also make sense to take pictures of the Nazis?
Oh yes, but they were so far behind the police cordon it was very difficult to get at them.

Did you just have the one photographer there?
No. Sid Shelton was there, and we used some pictures from Red Saunders.

Did you split it up? Did you say before: 'One of us concentrates on this one, another concentrates on that'?
No. We didn't know what was going to be happening. What the police were going to do, what the National Front were going to be doing. We tried not to stand next to one another but it was so chaotic, running about different streets and so on it was impossible to really co-ordinate it.

Did you start out at Clifton Rise? What time did you start photographing during the day?
I started about half past twelve. Just after the police smashed up the eviction – just smashed up the occupation of the headquarters of the Lewisham 21, I arrived just as that was over. Then the build up to the whole thing, two marches were assembling. Right from the beginning, really.

How long did you stay with it?
Till about six o'clock, before it dispersed.

So you went down to Lewisham High Street?
Yes.

To me Lewisham is not so much about photography, much more about beating the National Front. People have talked about the weapons that were used. People have talked about the violence that was used. They seem to forget, in the whole aftermath of the thing, that the violence is actually on a very small scale compared with what would actually happen if the National Front ever came to power, against black people, in particular. When people talk about ammonia and knives, it's like the thing is a total provocation. If you waved a swastika in the face of a Jew you wouldn't be surprised if he used any means to defend himself. There's no way we can condemn the use of knives or anything that comes to hand.

Obviously you think that photography can be used as a weapon against the National Front?
Yes.

How do you think it can be used? How do you think it should be used?
The war against the National Front has got a lot to do with propaganda, publicity, before and after an event, and during, to a certain extent. Photography has a role to play within that process.

When you say that you were photographing from the point-of-view of a demonstrator, does that mean you would place yourself in the front line of demonstrators or would you, like a lot of photographers, photograph from behind the police lines or from the sides. Where did you physically

stand to take your pictures?
I tried to place myself between the police and the demonstrators. I like to get in close with a wide angle.

Didn't that get a bit unhealthy sometimes?
Very unhealthy, yes. But the pictures prove it was worth while.

You didn't get hit by the police, and you didn't get hit by any bricks?
I narrowly missed being hit from both sides, yes. It was a dangerous place to be, I agree. I think the pictures make it worth while.

Chris Schwarz

When did you get to Lewisham?
About half ten. I eventually left Lewisham sometime around six o'clock having heard that the National Front were getting into coaches around Waterloo Station. I went over there, just in case there were any developments, which in fact there weren't.

Did you have any trouble? Did you get anything thrown at you?
Well, not at me personally. When I was close physically to the National Front a lot of stuff was being thrown. It was being thrown at the Front and because I happened to be there I was in the way.

Did anybody try to stop you taking photographs?
Nobody.

Who were you taking photographs for?
I was taking them on spec, basically. They will be used by the Open University, they've already been used by the London Borough of Lewisham. *Time Out* used one as well.

How's the Open University using them?
They're going to use them in their sociology courses for their printed material. They'll use them quite well. They've used other stuff very well.

How is the Borough of Lewisham going to use them?
They've already used two in the Lewisham newspaper that's handed free round the Borough, in an article saying 'Why?' and then a description of what happened. They said it was unnecessary and that they had warned the police there was going to be an undue amount of aggro. They used them to back up the article.

Do you think there was an unusual amount of aggro?
Yes. Predictable, but – a very high degree of it – yes.

Were you happy the way your pictures were used?
Yes, I was actually. I've no complaints at all. I would like to have seen somebody elses, or mine, or anybody's used in the established media a lot better, but for the actual publications that mine will appear in, I'm quite pleased.

When you go to a thing like that, do you set off with particular tactics? Did you concentrate on the demonstrators, or the police or on the National Front?
I concentrated on the National Front.

Why was that?
I think they're more interesting. I think that any photograph, if it's well used, will show them to be the sort of people they are. By that I mean – the photograph used in *Time Out* was a portrait, if you like, of an NF person. I would call it a very anti-NF photograph and I was certainly pleased about that. They were the basic cause of the aggro as far as I was concerned and they were the people who were there to be documented, really.

Why were you taking photographs?
It never occured to me not to. Because it's just so important, what's going on as far as the Front and the Left are concerned at the moment that I feel it's the job of the photographer to document what happens, to comment on what happens.

Do you think photographs help politically?
They can do. I think that it depends totally on how they're used. Some of the photographs, for instance, that I saw in some of the tabloid press were definitely used in support of law and order and giving more powers to the police. They were used very much against the forces of progress and the people who are trying to stop racism. I think that a lot of people, looking at those photographs, will unfortunately see the National Front as innocent victims and, even more so, the police as innocent victims. It may actually be an aid to the Front. That is a danger.

Do you think in that way photography can be self defeating?
Yes I do. I still think it important for photographers who are sympathetic to the Left, or at least prepared to look with critical objectivity at the way the police handled the day, to turn up.

Were there some other things that you wanted to say?
Yes, I think one of the things that hopefully is going to come out of the exercise that you're doing is a really good questioning of what really did happen that day. I don't mean: 'Who threw what?' necessarily, but I'm still fairly firmly convinced that the tactics of the police on that particular day was either stupidity, which I'm not prepared to believe, or they were steering the Front into confrontation. For instance, by their very insistence on having total control of the streets they perpetuated quite a lot of aggro. At the Clock Tower, when the Front were disappearing up the alley towards the station and along to Waterloo they never, to my knowledge told the Left that the Front had gone and never encouraged dispersal at that point. Instead they were perpetuating aggravation. I really think that either they got carried away or it was a very deliberate policy to let the situation get out of hand for one reason or another.

I'm not particularly interested, politically anyway, in the odd policeman or odd member of the Left or of the Right even, who gets carried away and puts the boot in with a bit too much vigour. That, in a way, is inherent within any situation like that. I'm much, much more interested in where the decision to play those games comes from. How high it comes from. Does it come from New Scotland Yard? Or does it come from across the way in Whitehall? I think that's the real question. That's the question that was really not mentioned in any of the newspapers who reported the physical sort of violence, the aggression, etc, in their varying ways. None of them looked at the motivation of either the Left or the Right for that matter, as to why they felt it important either to march or to stop the march. The news was done in a political vacuum.

I assume you thought it was important to stop the march?
Yes, I think it was. Because, other than the obvious question that I don't think the National Front should be allowed to march in this country anywhere – if they do march, it should be around the more usual routes finishing up in one of the traditional rally points in central London. It's a complete provocation to march through a highly populated immigrant area where community workers and various groups have been trying to do an awful lot of work promoting racial harmony. A march which goes against that, and basically goes against the spirit of the Race Relations Acts, should not be allowed.

Homer Sykes

How did you get on at Lewisham? What did you do?
Got there about two or three hours before it started. About 10.30 I guess. I hung around and photographed all the doors being blocked up and bits of wood going over the windows of various shops in the area. Then I went down to what in effect was the end of the Lewisham ALCARAF (All Lewisham Committee Against Racism and Fascism), then wandered back up again to the start of the National Front march. I took some photographs of everybody who had assembled and then photographed the police moving in with horses, the arrests, the smoke bombs that were thrown etc. etc. before the NF started to march. I then went back down to the beginning of their march and followed it right to the end where they assembled and had a meeting. I then discovered that I missed the best part in terms of violence, and the rest of it was blown out as far as photography was concerned.

I saw you running up and down Lewisham High Street.
Yeah, that was trying desperately to find something to photograph. Because you know I'd missed all the Lewisham High Street violence which I guess was a shame.

You talk about the 'best parts' of the violence. Why do you talk of it in those terms?
Because in terms of selling photographs, in terms of the fact that riot shields had never been used in England before, one certainly should have been there while they were being used if one wanted to have a full and complete coverage of the day's events. And I missed out on it because I was in effect trapped and couldn't get out. There was a police cordon at the end of the road which wouldn't have allowed me or anybody else to have gone through it.


New Cross Rd. Anti-racists capture NF Union Jack. Peter Marlow


New Cross Rd. Anti-racists. Peter Marlow

Who were you taking pictures for?
Myself.

Were any of your pictures used?
Yes, quite extensively in fact. I got a small guarantee with Chris Steele-Perkins, through 'Viva' from *Paris Match*. He made the space, but I didn't make any. The pictures were used in a French newspaper called *Liberation*. And more pictures were used in *Rouge*. And then I had a double page spread and the cover of a Swedish newspaper, and something was used in the *New York Times*. And I got a spread in a French magazine called *Press Reporter* apparently. And also some pictures have been used in *The Sunday Telegraph* magazine. And I think they've been used in Italy and in Spain.

Can you say what you feel about the National Front?
It's very, very complex to say what one feels about the NF. I couldn't put it very easily to you, let me just say my pictures speak for themselves.

Do you think that the pictures that were used represented what you'd taken?
I was actually very happy with what had been used. Something specific about the *Telegraph* – it's a shame they didn't use a few more that really said what one felt. I mean they used four good pictures, from the march, and they looked quite good except that they were pretty small.

Were you shooting black and white or colour?
Black and white, and some colour.

Why did you take pictures?
Obviously it's an important occasion in terms of what's happening in British politics. Everybody knew there was going to be a lot of violence, it was inevitable. I mean it just happens to be quite nice to be in a situation where there's a lot of things going on the whole time around you, it's quite good photographically, it's nice to have been there and to have recorded that situation – that's why one is a photographer. It was also part of a longer thing I am doing on the National Front. And so it was a very important occasion to go to.

I know you've done a lot of stuff with the National Front, photographed Cabinet meetings and things like that. How did you manage that?
Just by asking them. It's very, very simple. You just ask and you go, but you have to be very polite and tell them what you're doing and all the rest of it. You just have to go through the normal procedure that you'd have to go through if you went to photograph the Conservative Party or the Labour Party or any other party. Although they tend to be much more wary of you than the well established parties. They're suspicious of people if they wear combat jackets and have long red hair and a beard, they tend to think automatically that he's going to be a 'red'.

Have you had any comeback from them since your stuff has been published?
None of it's come out yet except in fairly obscure newspapers abroad which I doubt they've seen.

Do you expect any comeback?
No, not really. The stuff in the *Telegraph* – they're good pictures – they say quite a lot about the National Front. I suspect they might even be quite pleased.

To put it charitably, the Telegraph *is fairly ambiguous in its attitude to the National Front.*
Yes. Absolutely totally. Right. That's why it's disappointing from my point of view that they weren't used larger. The obvious impact of a good situation hasn't come over. They've been used very small and there's an awful lot of text.

What do you hope to do with these same pictures in the long run?
I hope they'll sell and sell and sell.

You don't plan to put them together in a book, or anything like that?
One doesn't make any decisions until one's conscious of what you want to do. It would be very nice if they wanted me to do a book on the National Front. I've got some great stuff. I can definitely say that. They're available to be used. That's what we take pictures for. I hope they sell. I'm sure they will. And I hope they'll be used in the right context.

Some people we have spoken to have said they were there because they were opposed to the National Front, and wanted pictures to be used as weapons against the National Front.
I want my pictures to record the event as I saw it. I want my pictures to be used. To show people what I saw. To make their own mind's up. I don't go in there with the feeling that I loathe these people. In fact, I don't, because if you talk to odd members of the National Front they're really quite nice as individual people. They've always been extremely polite and courteous to me after they understood what I was doing and all the rest of it. That doesn't mean that I agree with them for one moment. There's no point, to my way of thinking, in going into a situation saying: 'I don't like somebody so I'm going to photograph them to show that I don't like them.' I just went to photograph what I saw. I personally think that. I think, for want of a better word, the extreme Left were rather silly and are being rather silly in making the National Front much more popular. Putting them in the news much more than is necessary or should be necessary. The National Front are enjoying the fact that the march in Hyde is going to be banned and that there's going to be a big police escort for Martin Webster if he does do the walk and there's going to be a lot of trouble because the National Front are saying: 'Look, we're the good guys. We've got Union Jacks. We sing "Rule Britannia". Look at the Red idiots over there.' The Left are making it better for the National Front, in my opinion. If they didn't go and demonstrate with such force and such violence the National Front wouldn't have so much propaganda.

As a photographer, is there anything you can say about how you go about covering a thing like this? How do you organise yourself? How do you survive in this sort of situation? There were bricks being thrown around, police charging back and forth . . . ?
You hope that you don't get hit. You just move a bit quicker than other people. And, obviously, bricks are not being thrown at you so you actually don't come under fire and that helps a bit. You use your natural instinct to get out of the way when something looks as though it might be coming towards you, whether it be a person or a missile. Not much planning was done in my mind apart from a few obvious things like you need to get pictures of Tyndall and Webster, you get your overall pictures, you need to get in and get pictures of the Left attacking the Right. You expect to get pictures of the Right looking ridiculous, which they do a lot. You need to get pictures of all the details that were taking place within the thing. You need to get a good overall picture that sums up the whole thing in one photograph.

Do you think you got that?
Oh yes I think I did.

I know you've been doing the National Front story for some time. Did it start off as an assignment from the Telegraph*?*
No. I decided to do it because I thought it would be an interesting thing to do. I thought that when there is an election it will be an asset if you had made contact with the National Front, who are obviously going to go places, whether you like it or not. They may not move forward very much, but . . . it's an ongoing situation, right. So, it's good to have got in there and made contact and to have photographed the people. There's something that's very interesting that's happening so I thought I'd start doing something.

Paul Trevor

How did you get on at Lewisham?
How did I get on? In what way?

Did you run into any trouble?
Yes, I had a spot of trouble. I went there with Nick (Battye) and Chris (Steele-Perkins). We arranged to go there for the Exit project which is about inner city areas, obviously racism is an issue we have to deal with. That's why we were there.

The major incident that happened to me is that before the National Front march actually took place I was photographing the meeting of the anti-racists at the top of Clifton Rise. They were being addressed by various people from the top of the men's bogs – at that junction of Clifton Rise and New Cross. I was standing on top of the bogs with the speakers and it was a fairly peaceful meeting. The road had been closed and there must have been about two thousand people listening to the various speakers and then the police arrived and it was clear that they had been given orders to break up that meeting, disperse everybody. The situation changed very dramatically. The next 15 minutes were very chaotic. There was quite a lot of resistance to the police and there was a lot of violence, there were a lot of arrests and generally a lot of confusion. All of us on top of the bogs were very busy photographing. I remember that the police had made two efforts to get rid of us, to clear us off the top of the bogs. The first time they tried to clear us off, they didn't really succeed and we just carried on photographing what was happening. I remember, particularly, as things got really desperate, there was a woman below us shouted at me: 'What are you taking pictures for? Come down and give us a hand', something like that. I said something like: 'Don't you understand what we're doing?' I was just very pissed off at that sort of attitude. It's very easy in those sort of situations for you as a photographer to be made to feel a shit, that you're standing back and not involving yourself in what's going on, just playing a very vicarious role to the whole thing. I remember that very vividly.

How would you answer that lady?
I remember saying that: 'Don't you understand what we are doing?' We're also playing an important role in this. Obviously you've got no time to elaborate that in those situations. It's important I think that people do realise that photographers do also risk themselves and risk a lot in things they believe in. Taking photographs about issues that are important to be photographed in other ways than just the way the straight Press deal with it.

What do you think the role of the photographer in such a situation is?
There's no definition of what the role of the photographer is, because all photographers are very different. This particular occasion with the National Front attempting to march and being confronted by anti-racists and the police involvement in all that is very much something that we felt we had to document.

How were your pictures used?
My pictures will hopefully find a way into the Exit project. I didn't take them for any other purpose. They haven't been used by anybody – yet.

I believe you had problems?
The problems that I did have is that – we stayed – the photographers and others stayed on top of the bogs for as long as possible and then the police attempted to clear us off a second time, because we were almost the last people there and this time they wasted no sort of pleasantries on us. It was quite chaotic . . .

When you say they were trying to clear you off. How were they doing it?
They were basically jumping up, grabbing us, pushing, and all the rest of it. Although we were standing on top of the bogs, I should say it was a metal cage on top of the bogs. Not very safe! I was perched right at the very edge, every time they came up I was getting the first of it. And I mean, what happened was that I slipped the second attempt to clear us off and I got my leg, my right leg, caught in the grill, in this cage, and I just couldn't move. One cop came up and said: 'Come on, get out of it'. Obviously I couldn't move. Impatient, he grabbed one of my cameras, he pulled the film out, and he threw the camera to the ground. At that time I was still much more worried about my leg. I remember I was screaming out: 'I can't move. I can't move, my leg's stuck. I can't move.' I was pretty terrified that it was just going to be cracked. If anyone had pushed me from either side, it would have. Fortunately, another cop showed up, an older one, he said: 'OK,' reassured me. He said: 'OK son, take your time,' and helped me out. So I managed to get my foot out. Then, the other cop turned round – well that's what happened. I got out. So I lost the film from that camera but fortunately I'd got some stuff in the other camera.

Were the police telling you to stop photographing, or anything like that?
No. No request at all to stop photographing.

Were any photographers arrested?
I didn't see any photographers being arrested.

Were any warnings given by the police before? You know anything about: 'You've got to stop this meeting'?
I can't say that I remember any notice given by the police, any address made or announcement by the police that the meeting had to be dispersed.

I've talked to other people and they've said about going there as a demonstrator rather than a photographer, although they were taking pictures. You've said why you were taking pictures, which was really for Exit. That presupposes that you think that photographs of such occasions have some value. Can you explain why you think this?
I think in a lot of people's minds, the photograph that the Press were going to be using the next day, the usual stereotype image, was predictably fulfilled by the media. It was the same old angle of our poor, gallant cops getting done over. But I did not feel, looking at the way the national Press dealt with it, that the wider public actually had a fair understanding of what happened that day. I feel I've got a certain responsibility to work very hard to get pictures that show clearly what the public are not generally going to see. Hopefully – this Exit project is going to be an outlet actually to deal with it, in a context. It's not just about cops getting done over. It's not just about violence. But racism is treated in a much wider social context. Why the National Front have emerged now in the late seventies. What the parallels are between the National Front and the Nazis in the thirties. Why it is that Blacks are being used as scapegoats now, and so on. The project that I'm involved in deals with a much closer examination of the whole social structure of Britain and this is a very important and dramatic manifestation of some of the things that are going on.

Ray Rising

Why were you at Lewisham?
The reason for being there was that *Newsline* covers any aspect of political activity. We were there because we know what the feeling of the local population is towards the NF – especially the large number of black people who live in New Cross, and workers' organisations and their opposition to it.

So we were at Lewisham in the morning, and after the morning march was finished we went along to Clifton Rise to see how that had developed. We work together as two photographers, we work out positions where we're not going to get the same picture, or should things happen spontaneously we at least have a good chance of being near the scene of the action.

We are aware that the police do use the opportunity of the Front marches for working in working class areas where they can test out their methods. They know that conflict is coming, that the economic and political crisis means that there is not going to be a peaceful resolution to this conflict, and as part of the State the police know that they're in the forefront. They're gearing up to these eventualities.

We take the preparations of the police very seriously, it's not something we just stand by and watch. Because it means for the working class and the Labour Movement a severe test of knowing what to do and how to reply to State violence. That the Front are used as a means of trying out State violence is becoming more and more clear.

The police are much more conscious of this usefulness of the Front and of various adventurous groups who help to bring this about. Most people don't want a hard time, they don't want violence on the streets. So the natural development of all this is that the police become more geared up, not just for supposedly fanatical left-wingers but for the men, women, children and old people who don't want any conflict at all but are faced with the fait accompli of weaponry. Ulster's an example – rubber bullets are there – innocent people get killed week after week. They can create a large amount of confusion which results in people from the Labour Movement being held responsible for the conflict in the first place. In fact the Lie Machine – the Fleet Street press, TV, etc, portray the events as wanton brutality, and the courts uphold this.

You see the Front – and there are a lot of policemen who are Front members – find in the police and law and order a perfect means by which they can use their racist and reactionary policies on the street, intimidating and frightening perfectly law abiding immigrant people.

Of course you demonstrate, of course you don't tolerate fascists and racists. But they are isolated. It's the people who put them on a pedestal, that raise them as a single issue and make them the sole claim to their political aspirations. You say what about the people who are unemployed, who haven't got jobs today, what if the Front was smashed off the streets? Who's doing anything about unemployment and about hospitals closing down? It's not the Front that are closing hospitals down. It's not the Front that are putting people out of work. It's not the Front that are making prices rise. I'm trying to get it into perspective – we understand the ideology of the groups who help to alienate large numbers of people from political action because of their tactics, their ways of approaching it. People want to see a resolution to their everyday problems – like prices, housing, schools. You can't blame the masses of people for wanting that.

A comparison now: the methods employed by the police in the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in Grosvenor Square in 1968, now they've got riot shields etc. – they've much more thought out tactics now.

I don't know when decisions are made on particular things, like riot shields and so on. There was a lot of discussion about what was going to happen at the Carnival, and this is the atmosphere in which it was all being done. The idea that people in West London actually controlled their own streets, there might even be a no go area in Notting Hill. The police abhor the idea – they're not going to have free Derrys in London. They're going to make sure the State rules. They mean it.

What happened to you at Lewisham?
Various things happened, the horses were brought in to clear the demonstration after making one futile attempt to move it. They wanted the press to see that horses weren't good enough. I don't think the horsemen like the idea that horses aren't good enough, they probably like horses. They made a half hearted attempt to go into the crowd, illogical anyway, the crowd was much too dense so the horses couldn't go through, you can't disperse anyone if there's nowhere for them to disperse.

50 or 60 people managed to get through in front of the NF on Lewisham Way. They tried to link arms across the road to stop the Front who were some quarter mile back at the time being led by a massive cordon of police, all SPG, Special Patrol Group.

Then this police car came belting up the road, I don't know how fast, straight towards this very small cordon across Lewisham Way. It pulled up inches from them, someone from the crowd ran up to the police car, a Rover car. He smashed at the bonnet with a piece of wood, it might have made a small dent, but it made a very loud noise. Immediately the police car reversed some 50 yards, 100 yards back at very high speed. He made a gesture or said something over his little microphone and suddenly the SPG, helmets and all, with truncheons out came darting up the road. The co-driver immediately reached for his truncheon and as the SPG came, he came running out.

At this point I was very frightened because I thought everybody who was in front of them – who wasn't a policeman, or special branch bloke was going to get it. I jumped over the railings, people were being thrown across the railings, out of the road.

They were just clearing the road completely, anyone who stopped momentarily was pushed so you had to keep on the move. The picture I got was an incident about 50 yards from the road when 2 or 3 blokes were chosen and they got a bit of a hammering. But because things were moving I don't know if they got arrested or what.

Then what happened at Lewisham Clock Tower? Well, the police managed to let the Front march to where they wanted to finish. Gave them cover till they got their trains and coaches or whatever they did. And then decided that the control of Lewisham was going to be theirs.

They were very very angry that on 11 July, the big Grunwicks demonstration, masses of workers more or less controlled the streets around there. They found that it was a very sad thing for a policeman not to be able to control the streets. They were determined to make an object lesson at Lewisham, I felt anyway. A number of people did throw bricks from the crowd and that was used as an excuse for doing it. The shields came out and there we were, all the war photographers were suddenly beside me.

Your pictures were used in Newsline. *Were they used anywhere else, do you know?*
No. They'll be used in various pamphlets and leaflets.

So they have a further use?
Oh yes.

Were you happy with the way Newsline *used your pics?*
Yes. We have a good way of working because we work in co-ordination with the picture editor. He doesn't just say we'll use these. We remember the circumstances in which the pictures were taken and we are very much in line with the way they're used. Knowing the significance of the pics. Nothing's over sensationalised. We were glad we came away unharmed, unscathed. I was limping for the next couple of days, I did injure my knee. I didn't know about it really, you know when the adrenalin is going. The evening afterwards I was absolutely shattered, just couldn't do a thing. ■

A personal view

Any photographers who go to a demonstration like Lewisham have to ask themselves several questions. Have they the right to go there as observers, rather than as participants? Can they go there, as some argue, in both capacities?

It is possible to take the easy picture. Stand behind the police lines and photograph people being arrested or injured policemen being carried away; endlessly repeated in the National Press on the following Sunday and Monday. How well do such photographs show what happened? What responsibilities do the photographers have to themselves, their public and to history?

Their pictures will *become* the event. Without their photographs the event would not exist in people's imagination.

Having said there was no great picture taken at Lewisham, one asks: 'Does such an event need great photographs?' Which is truer? One great photograph stamped into your mind or humdrum pictures that portray the event with skill, conviction, and – frequently – great courage.

Both the establishment media and the police knew how they wanted Lewisham remembered. Before the battles began a senior detective said to a photographer working for a National daily: 'The best pictures you can do for us are of our people being clobbered.' The picture of the policeman being carried with blood streaming down his face exactly fitted that request.

It is too simple to think that this is the only way the media operates. A community video team recorded a policeman throwing a brick and have since been beseiged by the National Press. All are willing to pursue such a lead, but whether they would publish such a photograph is another matter. We do, because it was part of Lewisham but certainly not all of that event.

My attitude to Lewisham is uncomplicated. The National Front is a threat to our society. But more serious is the tacit support it gets from many other, more respectable, sources.

The racism among some members of the Press, for example, is terrifying. The legislation which both parties support, and which is clearly racist, is frightening. The logic-chopping, the deals, the deceits that the Labour Party, for example, is prepared to make to protect their support in immigrant areas is disgraceful.

Politically, one hopes that immigrants will become such a large constituency that their views and interests will also have to be protected. Only when immigrants control the inner city boroughs will the attitudes of Governments change. It happened to the Irish; it happened to the Jews; both now have such political strength that neither could now be attacked with immunity. I think that the West Indian and Asian communities make a valuable contribution to our society. Until they have sufficient political power they must be protected. I also believe that if we allow them to be attacked physically, verbally, politically, or in any other way, we will have opened the gates to barbarism.

Achilles St. National Front set off. Homer Sykes

When I was 12 a photographer showed me pictures he had just taken at Belsen. He needed to share his shock. The war was nearly over and adults did not want to look; he could only show them to a child. They were pictures of bodies pushed into a trench by a bulldozer before being covered with lime and buried to stop an epidemic. They were truly pornographic. Their technical excellence made them more horrendous. Without seeing them, no one could have known such things were possible. Even now, people are beginning to write books saying that the concentration camps did not exist. But as long as those photographs and films remain we will know the truth.

The Nazis belief in Aryan superiority led with a ruthless logic to the 'final solution'. It is an obscenity that Martin Webster – who wrote 'Why I am a Nazi' for the 'National Socialist' in 1963 – should walk the streets of Manchester followed by 6,000 police. The police were, in fact, marching for the National Front.

Guarding Webster has nothing to do with freedom of speech. It does not protect 'law and order'. It is done because the Government is afraid of racism, afraid that it will infect too many of its own supporters. Why was the Public Order Act used in Manchester to protect the National Front? Why are they not prosecuted under the Race Relations Act? Such an attitude insults the Labour and Trade Union movements which *had* a proud record of protecting civil liberties and supporting racial equality and dignity.

Some people who we spoke to argued that any weapon is justified against the National Front. Such thinking led to Hiroshima, American atrocities in Vietnam, and the Gulag Archipelago. Force must be used with discrimination.

Others said that some members of the National Front were quite nice as individuals. Such information is irrelevant. You are fighting a disease, not individual microbes. It is true that many members of the National Front are pathetic rather than frightening. They are jammed between the working and middle classes. They feel themselves abandoned by both Labour and Conservative Parties. They know they are expendable.

Their semi-skills and crafts have been taken from them, not by Blacks, but by automation. London's Dockland is dying not because Surrey Commercial and King George V docks are swarming with Pakistanis, but because container ships now dock at Tilbury. People are sacked because labour is expensive and machines are cheap, not because there is an immigrant waiting to do the job for less. The 'Daily Telegraph' has reported that almost every big industrial company intends to cut its work force by 15 to 25 per cent over the next five years. They will not be replaced by West Indians or Asians.

An old fury loped on the streets of Lewisham in which sacrifice is confused with progress. A brick thrown or breaking your skull may answer an ancient call for warrior gods and scapegoats, but provides no political solution. It brings only grief and further violence.

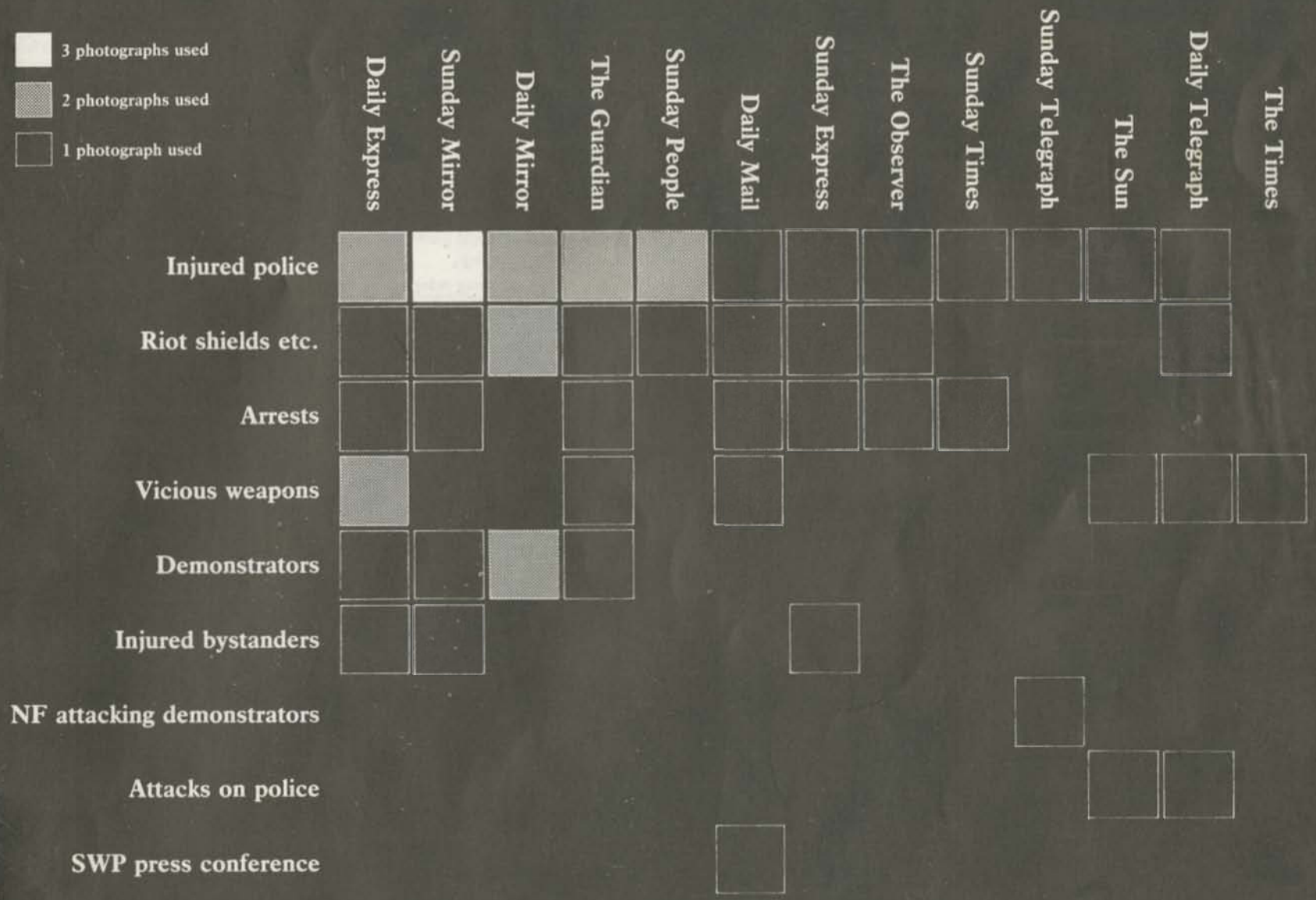
To have the streets of Lewisham filled with worker fighting worker or, as in Manchester, to have Left verbally assault Left, is a tragedy. It mocks the slogan shouted at Lewisham: 'The workers united, will never be defeated'. The enemy is profit and social democratic complicity which protects capitalism.

Photographers cannot change the world. Artists can imagine the future; in Derek Boshier's phrase they provide 'models for imitation'. Intellectuals, at their best, can find order amid the confusion; they can manufacture the real world. Photographers have a small but significant role at such events as Lewisham. Like those pictures of Belsen, they can show us things which otherwise we could not have thought possible. They can show us things that we must remember.

Tom Picton

New Cross Rd. Anti-racists meeting before NF march. Paul Trevor

Fleet Street's picture of Lewisham



Source: Photographs in National Press, August 14, 15 1977