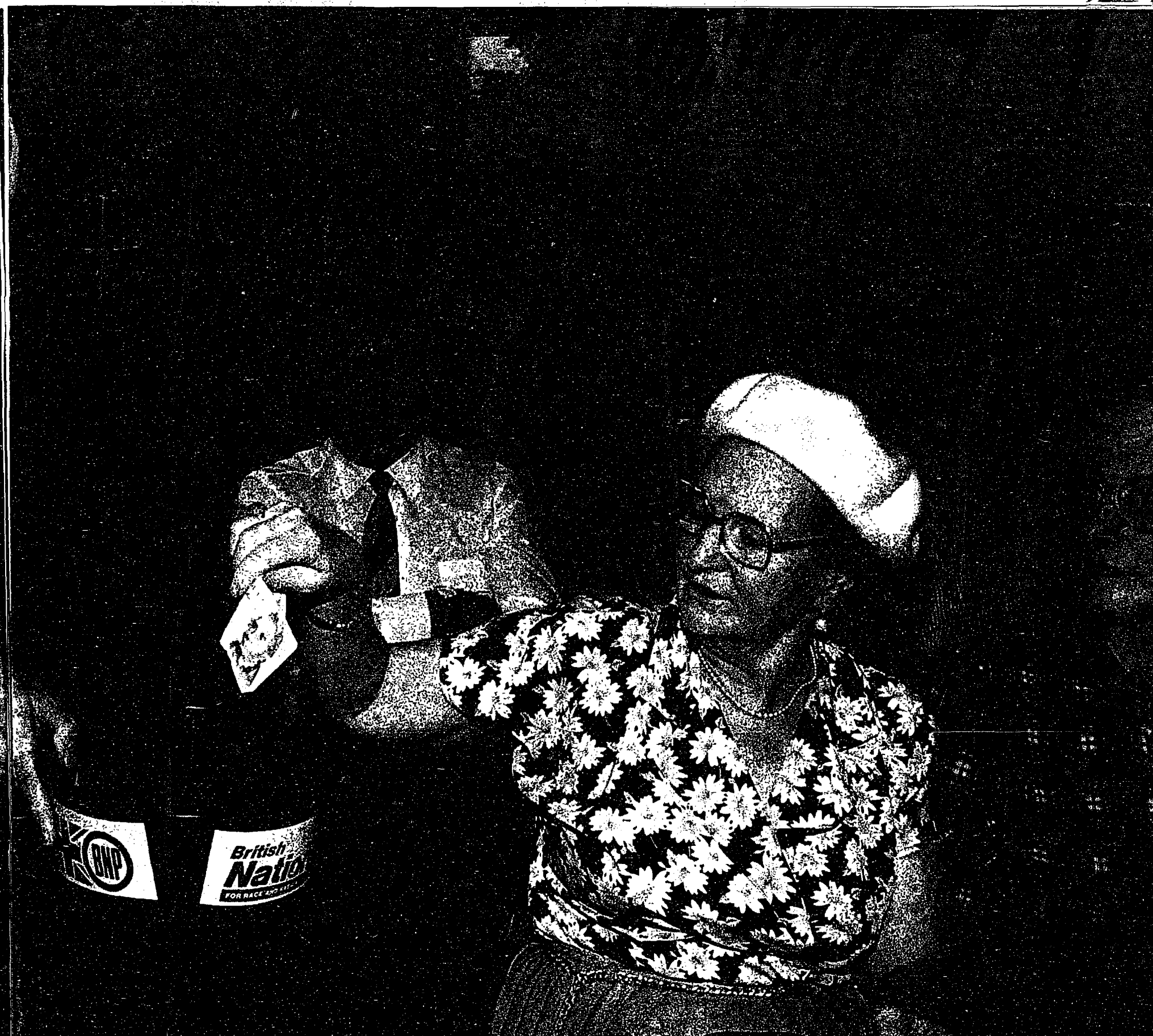
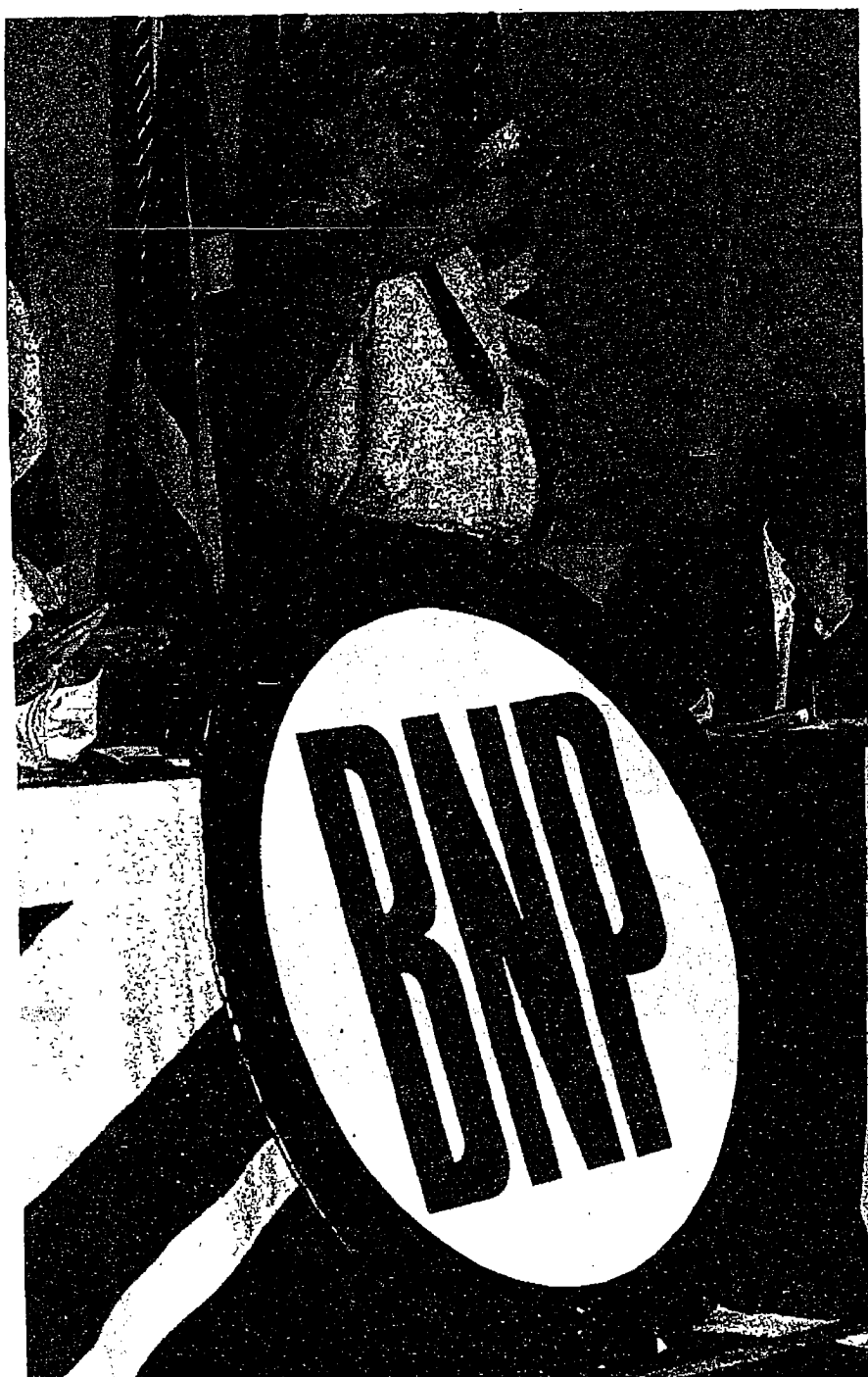


FAR RIGHT STUFF

Racism is on the march again, through Europe and Britain. The British National Party, strong in London's East End, seeks to rehabilitate Hitler. Its members are not only skinheads but university graduates and little old ladies. Robert Crampton reports on party matters. Photographs by Andrew Hamilton Lane



'Have you got a Hang Mandela T-shirt?'

'Yeah, I was a bit worried about the bookstall,' admitted Eddie, who had been present when they booked the room. 'I thought if the management rumbled us the waiters might gob in the prawn cocktail or something.'

The waiters were Vietnamese. If they had known the identity of the proposed after-dinner speaker they might have been tempted to defile the cranberry sauce, the coffee gâteau and the one-bottle-of-complimentary-wine-per-table as well. The guest of honour was to have been Manfred Roeder, not long released from a German prison where he had

served 10 years for his part in an arson attack which left two Vietnamese guest-workers dead. The Home Secretary had spoiled the fun and banned him the weekend before. The 'Sales Force', who had invited Roeder to this £14-a-head Friday night dinner in a quiet Victoria hotel, had to make do with Richard Edmonds, a former south London teacher and deputy boss of the Sales Force, instead.

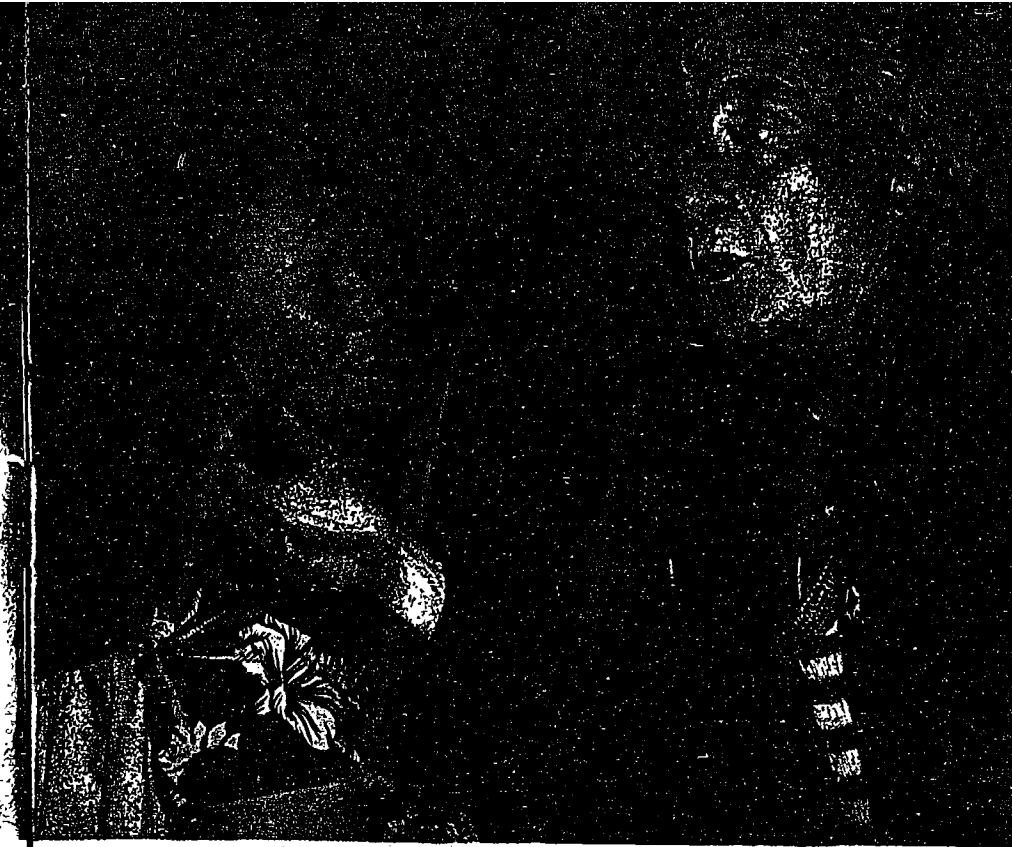
Eddie was right about the bookstall. It was, until Mr Edmonds got up to address the diners, the only clue that the Sales Force might not be the marketing company that the hotel management thought it

was. The arriving guests (mostly young men in tight collars and dark suits - the suits a little old-fashioned, perhaps, for genuine marketing men, and the ties bearing too many insignia to have come off the rack at Next) were plausible enough. There were middle managers too, with their wives or business partners. Then there was a table of older people, some in their seventies, making awkward conversation under the fake chandeliers as claret-jacketed waiters served the indifferent food. A very British party - a party no doubt being duplicated 1,000 times throughout Britain that Friday night, by

angling clubs and horticultural societies and local history enthusiasts and who knows what.

But the bookstall had some history of its own on offer. Behind it stood a neatly bearded chap called John Morse, wearing a three-piece suit and spectacles, who carries a prison conviction for incitement to racial hatred. Mr Morse edits a newspaper called *British Nationalist*. It was there, jostling for space with *The Book that Made the Jews So Mad They Had to Invent the Movie 'Holocaust'*. *The Protocols of the Meeting of the Learned Elders of Zion*, acknowledged forgery that it is, was

Left: activist Steve Cartwright speaking and saluting at a BNP rally, Essex. To his left, Stephen Smith, BNP candidate for Bow and Poplar. Above: passing round the bucket for the Cause also on show. Surprisingly, *The Snides of March*, a recent pamphlet reviving the medieval 'Blood Libel' - that Jews kidnap Christian babies for ritual slaughter - didn't seem to be there, although its distributor, Lady Jane Birdwood, was present, complete with hornrims and blue rinse. A far more famous German book called *My Struggle*, with a familiar face on the cover, was not selling very well. >



'The general public are not taught Hitler's achievements'

But then, a hard-working activist in the British National Party, aka the Sales Force, aka the Chesterton Society, would have a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* on his bookshelf already.

The most revealing title on the stall was *Did Six Million Really Die?*—The question refers to the number of Jews murdered by the Nazis and their proxies during the 'Final Solution'. The British National Party answer is an unequivocal 'No'. The BNP, through its surrogate, the Historical Review Press, functions as the UK arm of an international movement of historical revisionism which is gaining ground, if not respectability, all over Europe and North America.

The claim made by historical revisionists is that the Holocaust—exhibit A in the world's case against Hitler's Germany—never actually took place. Instead, they allege, it is a giant lie, invented by the Jews as an excuse after they had tricked Britain and America into fighting the Germans in the first place. Revisionists say there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau—that the chimneys, the crematoria and those concrete blocks with no windows were innocuous features of an industrial complex. They claim that those bulldozed bodies at Belsen were not the victims of genocide but of an outbreak of typhus in insanitary conditions. Their conclusion is that while there may have been occasional atrocities committed by zealots, there was no systematic attempt to murder European Jewry.

This may sound like a hopeless project to file under 'Führer fanatics only'. In this country, that is still the case, but elsewhere in the world the rewriters of history have scored some successes in a field where raising a shadow of doubt counts as a victory. A French academic, Robert Faurisson, has laboured tirelessly and sacrificed his career to 'prove' that *The Diary of*

Anne Frank is a fake. An American engineer, Fred Leuchter, has carried out a forensic examination of Auschwitz and pronounced that 'no one was gassed at Auschwitz, and no one could have been gassed at Auschwitz'. His findings have been accepted as evidence in a trial in Canada. Leuchter's report in turn convinced British historian David Irving that the Holocaust was a myth, so he sent it to every British MP. Irving has already alleged that Hitler neither ordered nor knew about the gassing of the Jews. Here is the nub of the issue. Rewriting history may be the method, but the goal is to rehabilitate the Third Reich.

If the waiters didn't get a clear look at all that reading matter, Mr Edmonds's speech, much of it delivered with a copy of Hitler's manifesto in his hand, should have enlightened them. It was a good speech, containing an accurate survey of the current state of racism and anti-semitism around the world. Edmonds delighted in former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke's near miss in the Louisiana senatorial primary.

He was heartened by the growth of Pamyat in Russia, praising the 'really hard, tough-looking bloke' who had been shown on television that morning, shouting in a Soviet court as he received a two-year prison sentence for 'making the most anti-semitic remarks you could make'. He noted the upsurge of nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and finished with a tribute to the absent Manfred Roeder, revealing that the German had attempted to defy the ban but, referring to Hitler's planned invasion of Britain in 1940, 'Operation Sea Lion Mark II unfortunately failed, and he spent last night in an English police station in Jersey'.

Thirty-six hours later, Mr Edmonds himself was looking at the inside of a



Above: Richard Edmonds, editor of *Holocaust News*. Top left: Vic Clarke, East London BNP, with his wife. Top right: Judy and Andy, Liverpool

British cell, this one on the Bethnal Green Road. He had been arrested during a British National Party clash with Anti-Fascist Action on Brick Lane in east London. If Friday night dealt in the maligned past and the soon-to-be-glorious future, Sunday morning was the pathetic present-day reality of British 'racial nationalism'. Historical revisionism is tasteless enough in after-dinner speeches, but the main course is street racism.

Apparently, AFA had broken the unofficial truce which dictates that the BNP newspaper sellers stand on one side of the entrance to the busy market and the 'Reds' stand on the other, while the shoppers and Bengali stall-holders ignore both sides and go down the middle. This Sunday, AFA had occupied the BNP's pitch. When the nationalists arrived to reclaim their territory there was a brief fight. Mr

Edmonds, two other BNP activists and four anti-fascists were arrested. They have all been charged with affray. John Morse put a sinister interpretation on events: 'The Reds and Scotland Yard had an effective collaboration. The Establishment is bankrupt. Hostilities have started. They're playing their last card against us.'

Andy Lunt, Liverpool organiser of the BNP, agrees: 'The Establishment knows we're the threat. The Reds are not the threat. We're the threat because we're the people.' The last bit is hardly true, since the BNP have only 12 candidates planned for the general election and no serious financial backing. But in some areas racism as an organised force is now making a modest comeback. The BNP, founded by former National Front chairman John Tyndall in 1982, took 12 per cent of the poll in a council by-election in the East End of London in August 1990, beating the Tories and the Greens out of sight. That followed on from 9 per cent in another Tower Hamlets by-election in July and 8 per cent in one ward in the May elections of that year.

A recent edition of the *British East-ender* claims that 'the BNP is now firmly entrenched as the third largest party in east London'. That looks as though it is becoming true. In Scotland too, as the European Parliament reported last summer, the BNP is flourishing. In other towns, notably Leeds and Birmingham, the National Front is still strong.

'Racial nationalists', as they readily admit, had a poor time in the Eighties after the heady days of the previous decade. Back in the Seventies, the NF regularly gained up to a quarter of the votes in some local elections, and many schoolchildren in south Hackney thought NF chairman John Tyndall was the prime minister. Then along came Mrs Thatcher with her talk of 'alien culture', cutting the

ground from under the 'hard racists' but satisfying the Powellites who had flocked to the NF.

They have never forgiven Mrs Thatcher's 'race treachery', despite the draconian 1980 Immigration Act. Her penalty, according to Andy Lunt, will be the usual one for treason. 'We're honest. When we come to power, if Thatcher's alive, if Hurd's alive, we're going to hang them.' They won't get their chance, but they will have the satisfaction of seeing the Thatcherites go down as they go up—for in Britain as in France, when the respectable Right is weak, the racist Right is strengthened.

So who are the resurgent racists? Well, they are not skinhead bootboys. There are some young men attached to the BNP who are looking for a fight, and doubtless some of them are responsible for the growth in racial assaults, but the dominant subculture encourages self-discipline and conventional dress.

The majority of BNP members no more roam the streets kicking blacks with size 12 Doc Martens than members of Militant attack the chairmen of international companies. They are far more likely to fight with their political rather than their racial enemies.

The average BNP organiser is an upper working-class man in his twenties, probably self-employed or in a clerical job, intelligent, interested in history and fiercely attached to his ideology of race and nation.

Eddie Butler, mentioned earlier, is the east London organiser of the BNP. He is a graduate in politics and history from Queen Mary College, London University. Richard Edmonds has a First in engineering from Southampton University. Andy Lunt, the Liverpoolian, is an articulate 24-year-old with a 'well-paid job and a company car, but if it came to it, that would go

by the wayside, because I believe in what I believe'.

What he believes in is primarily some mumbo-jumbo about the supremacy of the white race. So long a term of the utmost abuse in almost any political company, it is still mildly shocking, even after six months' research, to hear someone calmly and proudly describe themselves as a racist. Especially when that person is not a tattooed, shaven-headed 19-year-old with a grudge but a mild-mannered woman in her mid-thirties like Christine Yianni, who is complaining that her shoes hurt in the same breath as she is castigating Katharine Hepburn for not having any children. 'Mind you,' she adds, 'is she Jewish? If she is, then one doesn't mind her not reproducing.'

Christine offered this in the back of the BNP minibus as we crossed London on that Saturday afternoon on our way to the annual rally. John Morse and party leader John Tyndall were wedged in the front seat. Richard Edmonds drove. The troika at the head of British racism periodically stopped and hunched over an A-Z to argue about the route. We were heading for Essex. Christine and I were in the back, along with the mobile paraphernalia of racial nationalism—flagpoles and leaflets and last night's stall.

The day had started at the Quaker Friends Meeting House on the Euston Road, where the 'Chesterton Society'—the name presumably a homage to Britain's leading nationalist before Mosley and Tyndall—had booked a room. When 300 BNP members began massing outside the building, the Quaker wardens Peggy and Antony Lewis doughtily denied them access and proceeded to call the police.

Mr Edmonds then diverted the faithful via the Central Line to Hainault, Essex, just outside the Metropolitan Police area,

where a community hall had been booked as a back-up venue.

The van-borne corps arrived to find the infantry slogging the last few hundred yards of their trek from the Tube. The older ones joined us gratefully in the back of the van. 'I used to love marching,' said Jim, nostalgically. 'Inside the hall, the marchers milled around the stalls. 'Have you got a "Hang Mandela" T-shirt?' one asked a skinhead who had set up his wares. He had. The T-shirts sold well. Well enough, in fact, for the skinhead and his mates to leave early in a taxi which had been ordered jauntily for Herr Hess. They avoided the collection—£3,212—and missed super-patriot John Tyndall denouncing British schools, the Anglican Church, British Rail, British democracy, British involvement in the Gulf and the Battle of Britain as a 'criminally tragic loss



Above: the blue-rinsed Lady Jane Birdwood, prominent anti-semitic. Top left: Liz Wells and friend, East London BNP. Top right: activist Gabrielle Ryan

of life' where 'one fair-skinned young man' shot down another and 'the best of Europe died—and for what?'

Some British nationalists surely feel uneasy with the BNP leadership's continued obsession with the 'Brothers' War'. Tony Payne from Catford, embarrassed at the after-dinner rendition of 'Deutschland Uber Alles', sounded a Ridley-esque note: 'I don't know why we're all talking in German—I'm interested in this society, now.' But he added, 'I believe very strongly in National Socialism. The general public aren't taught Hitler's achievements. He made Germany the most successful nation on this earth. He then got involved with wars and racialism and one thing and another.'

Hitler's 'one thing and another' was probably the biggest barrier to a real far-Right breakthrough in the Seventies. Richard Edmonds acknowledges that the Holocaust had been the most potent propaganda against the NF. 'We all remember, in the Seventies, people used to say, "Give the NF half a chance and they'll gas six million Jews".' But those people were wrong, says Mr Edmonds, because the British far Right would spare its enemies, as did Hitler. His acolytes have spent the Eighties 'proving' it.

The British National Party does not tell the voters of the East End that it believes the Nazis did not slaughter millions of Jews. Not yet. In this country, national socialists find that racism holds a more potent electoral appeal than historical revisionism in areas where white working-class resentment can be harnessed to their cause.

But it's something they tell each other, increasingly, and it sustains them in their wilderness. It is their secret, but a secret they are now increasingly willing to share with a world where memories of half a century ago have faded. □