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Chaudhary, Vivek; Bowcott, Owen

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'Racist rivals' behind attacks on BNP

**Vivek Chaudhary
and Owen Bowcott**

RECENT attacks on three leading members of the far-right British National Party were organised by a rival group, Combat 18, anti-racist campaigners believe. The BNP insists they were beaten up by leftwing activists.

The dispute between the BNP and Combat 18 arose shortly after the election of Derek Beackon in Tower Hamlets, east London, last September, the party's first council, success.

The BNP, which is attempting to cover its thuggish image with a veneer of respectability, tried to distance itself from the violent Combat 18.

The group, formed in 1992 to protect BNP marches and attack anti-racists, openly promulgates Nazi ideology. The number 18 stands for the first and eighth letters of the alphabet, Adolf Hitler's initials.

The BNP chairman, John Tyndall, proscribed Combat 18 last December declaring it a hostile organisation working to disrupt and divide the BNP. "It has also attempted to employ physical intimidation against BNP members," said an article in *Spearhead*, the BNP's magazine.

It is believed that Combat 18 has been trying to dismantle the BNP's election machinery in recent weeks by attacking senior party members who have been instrumental in trying to disown its street tactics

and promote electioneering. Two weeks ago Michael Newland, the BNP's press officer, was attacked in his north London home by three men, and suffered a broken hand and fractured ankles and knees.

Three weeks ago, Eddie Butler, the BNP's national elections officer, was slashed across the face.

Two candidates and three party workers were also attacked in Newham, east London and BNP candidate Michael Davidson lost an eye.

Last January, Tony Leomber, head of the the BNP's election campaign in east London, was attacked by a mob believed to be Combat 18 members.

Last month an incendiary bomb exploded at the BNP's

office in Welling, south London. "C18 has been trying to take out the BNP's election operation. They feel that the BNP is becoming too soft and respectable," said Gerry Gable of the anti-fascist magazine, *Searchlight*. Mr Tyndall has admitted that some of the attacks were carried out by Combat 18, but the BNP yesterday claimed they were probably the work of a leftwing group called **Anti-Fascist Action**.

Jim White, a BNP national officer said at its administrative headquarters in Welling: "There's no shred of evidence to say that an organisation calling itself Combat 18 has been involved in perpetrating attacks on our personnel. By resorting to such smear tactics the left is exposing its lack of credibility."