

111 hurt in the bloody battle of Lewisham

by IAN MATHER, CHARLES GLASS and KEVIN O'LONE

THE streets of Lewisham in south east London became a bloody battle ground yesterday as blacks and left-wing protesters clashed with police and about 1,000 National Front marchers.

By last night 214 people had been arrested and 111 injured—including 35 policemen, two of them stabbed and many hurt by the scores of bricks hurled at them. It was London's worst street violence since the war.

Four members of the public and 11 policemen were detained in hospital.

It was London's worst street violence since the war. The timetable of violence began at midday when 2,000 people attended an anti-fascist rally which was intended to end before the Front's march in mid-afternoon.

About 4,000 police—a quarter of the Metropolitan Police's manpower—had been called in to cope with any trouble. For the first time, the police were equipped with heavy duty plastic shields and helmets.

There were 20 arrests during this first rally—and several policemen were taken to hospital after ammonia was thrown in their faces.

When the rally ended, many of the marchers waited for the Front to gather for their demonstration.

Then, as the column of Front marchers took to the

bricks and bottles and broke up in confusion as left-wingers swarmed into their ranks.

Violent fighting broke out as the police cordon surrounding the Front marchers broke under a barrage of more bricks, bottles, sticks and orange smoke bombs.

Within seconds, indiscriminate lighting flared all over Lewisham High Street. Shop plate glass windows were shattered as police charged demonstrators, and the street—bare of traffic—was filled with the sound of police horses, tramping police boots and the chanting of demonstrators.

Barricades, dustbins, and chunks of masonry rained down on the column of police and marchers from derelict buildings occupied by left-wing demonstrators chanting 'They shall not pass.'

The march temporarily disintegrated under the assault and the street became a maelstrom of fighting and injured people. The air was thick with acrid orange smoke as smoke-bombs were hurled into the midst of the fighting.

This was where many of the most serious injuries occurred and it seemed incredible that the missile-throwers should have been able to penetrate derelict buildings containing arsenals of dangerous materials literally within 100 yards of where several thousand policemen were waiting to escort the marchers.

Police officers themselves

were surprised by the sudden onslaught, and as the rest of the National Front column held back rather than march into the hazardous arena a police officer shouted: 'Come on. Come on. Keep going!'

Lewisham police station was surrounded by demonstrators at one point and police (both mounted) barricaded. A motor cycle was burnt by the besieging crowd.

Reaction to the day's events was immediate and strong in view of the fact that Lewisham Council had predicted precisely such a bloody outcome.

Seeing police marching past with their shields, a doctor at Lewisham hospital said: 'It's the sort of scene you expect in Belfast or France—but I would never have believed I would see it in England.'

Two policemen were transferred from Lewisham to King's College Hospital last night, with eye injuries caused by flying glass and ammonia.

The Front march was called to protest against muggings in the Lewisham area, which has a high black population. Lewisham council tried unsuccessfully in the High Court to ban all marches in the borough for the next three months because of the fear of violence.

Bloody fights broke out

before the march when Left-wingers tried to break through police lines to reach the Front rank.

The anti-Front demonstrators, many of whom had taken part in a peaceful protest march through Lewisham in the morning, had defeated a police attempt to bar them from the streets near the Front's assembly point.

Trouble started among the anti-Front demonstrators when a smoke bomb was thrown. Some 15 incensed police advanced into the crowd under a hail of sticks, stones, bottles and soft drink cans. Many policemen were covered in red dye from bombs.

The violence threatened to spill over when a crowd of about 300 Millwall football fans arrived to join and taunt the demonstrators. The fans, who were arriving at Millwall's ground nearby for a friendly match with Ipswich, shouted: 'Up the National Front—Kill the Blacks!'

On several occasions they tried to break through police lines to reach the demonstrators. One youth said to a policeman: 'Come on mate, we'll finish those bastards for you.'

The demonstrators kept up a continual chant of 'Company Police, the tank used against police by pickets

outside the Grunwick factory.

Last night Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Mr David McNee, accused 'extremists' of an orchestrated and violent attempt to halt it.

Mr McNee said that those who were determined to oppose the National Front were committed to the use of violence regardless of what form the National Front demonstration took.

Mr McNee said: 'I have been in constant touch with the events on the streets of Lewisham. Two lawful marches took place and, as those who have watched today's newsreels will have seen, a determined extremism made an orchestrated and violent attempt to

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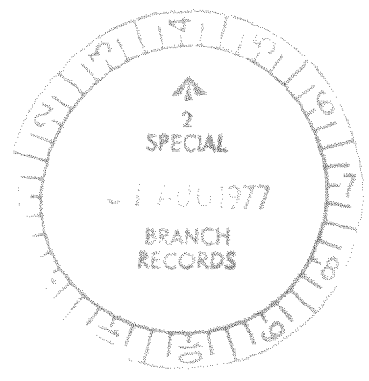
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STOP THE NAZI FRONT

Demonstrate this Saturday, 13 August;
Assemble 1pm, Clifton Rise (near New
Cross Station)

Called by August 13 Organising Committee, supported by
Lewisham 21 Defence Committee, SWP, Right to Work Campaign
and individual members of the Labour Party and Communist Party.
 All SWP branches and members in London, Midlands and Home
Counties to support

All Lewisham Campaign against Racism Demonstration,
Ladywell BR Station, 11am. SE, SW and Central London SWP
Districts to support.



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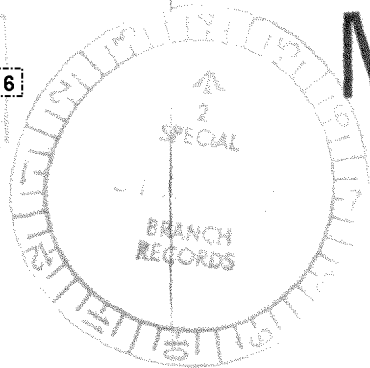
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Nazis off the streets! Make this Saturday a giant turn-out

PANIC IS breaking out in high places as the Nazis of the National Front prepare to march through Lewisham's black community this Saturday.

Newspapers like The Sun and the Daily Express have called for the march to be banned. So have a number of Labour MPs and the Labour-controlled council.

Their concern is not so much with the threat to black people as with the pledges being made by the left to stop the Nazis marching, regardless of what the authorities do.

That promise was made by the Lewisham 21 Defence Committee and the Socialist Workers Party.

The Defence Committee was formed when police swooped on 21 black teenagers and pinned conspiracy charges on them.

The Nazis' march is directed against the committee.

But many young blacks are prepared to defend it and have already occupied as a centre a building in the very road, Clifton Rise, where the Nazis are due to assemble.

A second march, by the All-Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism, has been routed by the police well away from the Nazis.

Confronting

While this march must be supported, it will provide no substitute for confronting the fascists directly.

It is only the thought of a confrontation that has led sections of the press to call for the banning.

There is a slim chance that the authorities will do that.

But almost certainly the ban would also be aimed at the Defence Committee.

Suddenly, it would become illegal to demonstrate in defence of the black youngsters awaiting trial.

As we go to press, all this is speculation.

But one thing is certain. Every effort must be made to guarantee a giant turn-out on the streets against the Nazis.



No Nazis in Lewisham! That's the call from Defence Committee members Aston Baily, Christopher Foster and Hazel Williams