

had sold the old one, that are razing the last love of my life to the ground. It is simply the realization, on the part of most decent, working, normal people—in Italy as elsewhere—that things are going in a certain very obvious way, and that one must in the end be a stubborn, recalcitrant, almost suicidally lackadaisical sort of person not to go with the flow.

Well, Venice has not gone with the flow. It has stood athwart it, quite literally, for a thousand years, thanks to the obstinate, insular, suicidally lackadaisical race that inhabits this proudly surreal Canaletto landscape, ever mindful that progress—in any and every sense—is another word for inundation, deluge, entropy, or collapse of everything that is truly valuable, really important, and should be preserved just a little longer, and then a little while longer again. While the Superstate of Europe is being mooted, Italy as a whole will doubtless linger the longest among nations as the place with the stamina, or the contrariness, or the capriciousness, or the laziness, or the serenity, to deny the khan his spiritual tribute. But when that Superstate is truly upon us, this scheherazade of a city will become Superitaly, or Italy's Italy, destined to survive as an authentic social organism even as its more worldly, energetic, and accommodating neighbors gorge themselves on artificially inseminated spaghetti from Frankfurt and genetically modified sea bream from Minsk.

Two years ago, I wrote in this space that Italy was where I hoped to make my last stand, or at any rate to have my last sleep. Now I know exactly where in Italy.

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Letter From London

by Derek Turner

Lawrencemania and Anglophobia



"Into hell" read the headline in the tabloid *Daily Mirror* on February 24, 1999. The *Mirror's* reporter had "walked the streets where racism is a way of life—and death." He had found "racism seep-

ing from every pore," and his photographer took shots of neo-Nazi graffiti, such as "Kill all coons at birth."

The "hellish" place is actually a rather ordinary housing estate in southeast London—and the graffiti may well have been faked by the *Mirror*. These inconsequential streets have attracted such hysterical attention because this is the housing estate which gave rise to some of the five white men accused (although never convicted) of the 1993 murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

The *Daily Mirror* article was but one (albeit ludicrous) report on the Stephen Lawrence affair, which has swept across Britain like a psychic pestilence, leaving indigenous Britons with a sinking feeling of racial guilt or a sense of injustice, immigrant-descended Britons with a feeling of resentment against the "racist" society in which they are told they live, and a demoralized police force with a massive public-relations problem.

The facts of the case may not be familiar to American readers. On the evening of April 22, 1993, Stephen Lawrence, a black student, was walking through Eltham in southeast London with a black friend, Duwayne Brooks. According to Brooks, a group of five or six white men came after them, with one saying, "What, what, nigger?" Brooks ran away, but Lawrence stayed behind, only to be punched, kicked, and stabbed in the chest and shoulder. He staggered up the road for 100 yards, collapsed, and died about 15 minutes later. The police failed to make instant arrests, for which they were later much criticized. (That the police felt they did not have enough evidence to arrest anyone seems to have escaped many commentators.) The Lawrences' understandable sorrow and anger were seized upon by groups like the Socialist Workers' Party, and an ever-present subterranean current of hatred for the police began to turn into a chorus of bile; the police were accused not only of incompetence but also of lack of concern about dead blacks.

On May 6, 1993, Nelson Mandela visited the family. "It seems black lives are cheap," he intoned, less than helpfully. The following day, police arrested two white men, brothers Neil and Jamie Acourt, and over the next few weeks three others: David Norris, Luke Knight, and Gary Dobson. All had belonged to the same gang, all were pretty unpleasant, some had criminal connections (the father of one was a large-scale drug push-

er), and all were rather dim with a propensity for violence. Several had been implicated in the stabbing by nearby residents or anonymous callers.

On July 29, 1993, however, the Crown Prosecution Service ruled out commitment of the five because of insufficient evidence. The police submitted more evidence, but the CPS made the same decision on April 15, 1994. The media frenzy mounted; internal police reviews of the case were demanded and dutifully conducted. On April 22, 1994, the Lawrence family undertook a private prosecution against the five. The police had obtained videotape evidence of four of the five shouting racial abuse at blacks and one of them demonstrating stabbing techniques with a knife. (Although the four had said nothing directly incriminating, it should be mentioned that the youths had also said that they would like to stab and kill "every copper, every mug.") Brooks identified Neil Acourt and Knight as two of the attackers. Weapons were found at the Acourts' home. There were other clues, too, but the defense objected to Brooks, claiming he was an unreliable witness, and the judge agreed. (In interviews, Brooks has admitted to "hating" the police; when the police first arrived at the scene of the crime, he was "jumping up and down and being very aggressive," "virtually uncontrollable," and he called the police "f---ing c---ts.") The case collapsed, and because of the ancient rule of double jeopardy, the five could not be tried for the same offense in a British court.

At the inquest in April 1997, the five invoked their right not to say anything that might incriminate them. The coroner instructed the jury to return a verdict of unlawful killing, but the jurors went one step further by saying that Lawrence had been the victim of "a completely unprovoked attack by five white youths." The next day, the *Daily Mail*, an ostensibly conservative tabloid, carried the headline "Murderers" above pictures of the five. There were cynical murmurings that this was a ploy to avert mounting criticism of the *Mail* as "racist" because of the paper's less than welcoming editorial response to Slovak gypsies and sundry other benefit tourists then swarming into Dover in larger numbers than usual. Lawrence's father had also worked as a decorator in the house of the *Mail's* editor: This is supposed to be how the editor first heard of the murder. The five did not have the resources to sue the *Mail*.

After the inquest, the Lawrence family complained formally to the Police Complaints Authority about the investigation. The Kent police, who conducted the review, found that the investigation had not been perfectly conducted and recommended disciplinary action against one officer. But this did not suffice. Regrettably, even Mrs. Lawrence began saying that the investigation had been mishandled because of police racism, not human error. (After the report's publication, she said that the police "acted in a manner that can only be described as white masters during slavery.") Other murders of black men, such as that of a musician in north London in January 1997, were instantly treated as racial murders (it was not until March of this year that it became clear that, in the latter case, there was no racial motive whatsoever). Never mentioned was the fact that the clear-up rate for murders of blacks is actually higher than for murders of whites, nor that the Commission for Racial Equality has estimated that 238,000 of the 382,000 crimes in 1995 thought by the victims to be motivated by racism were committed against *whites*.

In December 1997, with Labour in power, Home Secretary Jack Straw announced that a new public inquiry would be directed by Sir William McPherson, a retired High Court judge regarded as a "conservative" and therefore instantly dismissed as "insensitive" by the Lawrences. He seems to have taken this very much to heart, and his judgment was clouded in consequence. Certainly, as the left-wing *Guardian* noted, "From early on, his plain speaking made it clear his sympathies lay entirely with the Lawrence family." The other members of the committee were even tamer—Bishop John Mugabe Sentamu (described by the *Guardian* as a "radical" cleric who has "championed the causes of women priests and anti-racism"); Tom Cook, an obscure laborer in the withered vineyards of "anti-racism"; and Dr. Richard Stone, chairman of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality.

The public inquiry opened on March 16, 1998, and was featured in the newspapers and on the television almost every day from then until the report's publication. While the Lawrences were listened to reverentially (Sir William chivalrously but wrongly halted the proceedings one day when Mrs. Lawrence protested, "Am I on trial or something here?"), left-wing extremists had a field day ranting about

police brutality, police corruption, police racism, and the racism they saw in every part of society. On June 29, 1998, dozens of dark-glassed, clip-on-bow-tied Nation of Islam skinheads stormed the building where the inquiry was being held. (The police had caused them to attack, according to the TV news!) On the way out, the five were pelted with bottles, and, understandably enough, they returned the punches thrown at them by the frenzied mob. The following day, the *Daily Mail* showed a photograph of the five, looking both afraid and angry as they went through the murderous crowd, under the caption "Faces of hate." The five were fair game for anyone; the black newspaper *New Nation* carried an article headlined "Do you know where they live?" and suggested that black Londoners might like to visit them and "offer our suggestions as to how their media image or indeed their facial features may be enhanced." When the Press Complaints Commission declared that the article was an incitement to racial hatred and violence, *New Nation's* editor replied, "I was shocked to receive the PCC letter. It's another example of them discriminating against the black community."

While the inquiry was continuing, other race-related stories kept the kettle boiling over. The chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality (formerly the chief executive of Lambeth Council at a time when several high-profile and well-documented cases of racial harassment of black staff by the council occurred) launched a hectoring extravaganza, lambasting everybody from soldiers and doctors to teachers as "racists" and trying to build up the levels of *angst* in the body politic generally. A memorial stone placed in the pavement where Lawrence had met his death was defaced several times (most recently on February 26, when a *black* youth was arrested). Sir Paul Condon, commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, a left-leaning man who had earned himself the nickname "PC PC" for his earnest attempts to combat racism in the force, began to face increasing pressure to resign, especially after he refused to accept that his force was "institutionally racist" (unlike his Manchester colleague, who knew on which side his bread was buttered). In an effort to avert the coming storm, Jack Straw said that there would be nationwide police quotas (euphemistically called "targets") for ethnic minority recruitment.

The report, issued on February 25 (al-

though leaked beforehand), concluded that the force was guilty of "racism, professional incompetence and bad leadership." But it went much, much further than that, offering a list of 70 recommendations, from multiple internal reviews to "sensitivity" training. The report also recommended that racial incidents should be considered to include both crimes and *non-crimes* and that both should be reportable 24 hours a day and investigated with equal thoroughness. Sir William then strayed far beyond his remit by arguing that the national school curriculum should reflect "cultural diversity" (as if it does not now!), suggesting that the rule against double jeopardy should be "reviewed," and saying that "racist" language and behavior, *even in private*, should be curtailed. As the *Daily Telegraph* declared, the proposals "represent the wild dreams of the Left, kept down, just, in the 1980s, and now reaching for power."

The effects of the report were predictable. The battle against crime, which the police were losing anyway, has been further hindered, and the police have become demoralized. A British Transport Police officer said that his fellow officers now think twice about arresting black or Asian suspects and that they were "spitting blood" about the media's inaccurate and unbalanced coverage of their work. The Home Office postponed the publication of a crime trend survey carried out by a senior female researcher which showed that black people are more likely to become involved in crime than Asians or whites. A feeling of resentment grew among whites, who began to realize that they really are second-class citizens in their ancestral homelands. This resentment was typified by a correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph*: "These proceedings have given grave offense to ordinary English people, most of whom have fathers or grandfathers who fought to put down real institutionalized racialism." But perhaps the last word ought to go to Steve Dunne, whose brother Patrick, a well-liked Clapham policeman, was killed six months after Lawrence's death by a black gang who were likewise released because of insufficient evidence: "If we don't counter blanket accusations with balanced realities, then we, the public, will be guilty of allowing our country to drift into anarchy."

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LAW

Matthew Shepard and the Thought Police

by Justin Raimondo

Long before the advent of “political correctness” as we have come to know (and hate) it, there was an active and ongoing campaign to outlaw “hate crimes.” This movement had its first big success in 1944, when 36 isolationists of varied backgrounds were indicted for sedition. In charging the defendants—who had nothing in common but opposition to the war—with engaging in a conspiracy to cause insubordination in the Armed Forces, the federal prosecutors did not bother to cite any facts to support their case. The entire basis for the government’s charge was the similarity of the defendants’ writings and beliefs. When the judge died, the government did not pursue the case, and the legal issue of thoughtcrime was left unresolved.

Politically, however, the idea that governments might criminalize certain thoughts was far from dead. The left, spearheaded by the Communist Party, launched a frontal attack on civil liberties, starting with the demand to revive and expand the sedition indictments: Their immediate goal was a show trial of the isolationists. But their long-range objective was far more radical, and they were not afraid to proclaim it openly.

In a pamphlet touted by Walter Winchell, professional anti-rightist Henry Hoke invoked the popular expression “there ought to be a law” to propose that “there should be laws, several of them, to prevent our nation’s being devoured by the bigots, the hate-peddlers, those who would deny equality to neighbors because of race, religion or national origin.” Furthermore, “there is no logical reason for refusing to extend our libel laws so that they protect the mass, as well as the individual.” If individuals can be hurt by libel and gain redress in a court of law, then why not whole classes of people? Hoke writes that stereotypes have victim-

ized minority groups: “these people actually have been hurt, personally, because so many still insist that freedom of speech also means freedom to lie.” Such laws, concedes Hoke, will not wipe out prejudice “because a good portion of those who spread it are mentally diseased and chances are, for the next few generations anyway, we’ll have the mentally diseased with us.” To meet their rather ambitious goal of wiping out all “mental disease” (i.e., political opposition) in a few generations, Hoke and his friends had a few suggestions to help things along:

There should be some kind of law which would treat the *causes* that produce the bigots and hate-peddlers. It’s nonsense simply to “punish” the overt act which the causes produce. A whole section of America’s Fascist movement . . . is made up of people who are mentally ill.

While we don’t punish lepers, “at the same time we aren’t stupid enough to allow the leper to roam freely about our community.” Lest they “contaminate” society at large, the political lepers of the postwar period have to be locked up and “treated” for their “mental disease,” for their own good as well as society’s. “Some machinery must be set up whereby our ‘mental lepers’ can be segregated and given proper medical care.” Of course, the Soviet Union had long ago set up such machinery, which came to be called the Gulag.

In 1950, the campaign to enact “group libel” legislation received important intellectual and political backing from a sociological study commissioned by the American Jewish Committee. It purported to show that “reactionaries” were not just wrong but were suffering from the mental disease of “status resentment”—and were dangerous to boot. As Theodor Adorno put it in *The Authoritarian Personality*, these “pseudo-conservatives” show “conventionality and authoritarian submissiveness” on the surface; in the “unconscious sphere,” however, lurks “violence, anarchic impulses, and chaotic destructiveness.”

Throughout the 1950’s, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, in alliance with black civil-rights organizations, pushed “group libel” laws in tandem with civil-rights legislation, and

at least one state, Illinois, passed such a law. But the push for limitations on speech in the name of combating racism took a back seat to the more acceptable civil-rights legislation outlawing discrimination in housing, employment, and other “public” accommodations.

In an important sense, however, these two legislative proposals were twin prongs of the same weapon, both aimed at the heart of American liberty. Each sought to criminalize the thought, not the deed. Since the intent to discriminate cannot be proved without the assistance of a mind-reader, both the judge and jury must surmise and weigh the thought-processes of the defendants.

The movement to enact “group libel” laws did not evolve overnight into the effort to enact federal hate-crime legislation. It has been half a century since Hoke, Adorno, and their sponsors dreamed of silencing the right with legal strictures on “hate.” Their scheme, and the brazen confidence with which they pursued it, was born in war-time, naturally enough. Today, another kind of war is giving new impetus to the assault on civil liberties. The ongoing culture war is a civil war, and a particularly vicious one, fought in movie theaters and on television screens rather than in the streets—for the moment, at least. The stakes are nothing so uninspiring as the exact location of national boundaries: The contested terrain is the territory of the soul. In the aftermath of this war, the Henry Hokes of the “hate crime” brigade are at hand to give the legal imprimatur to the dictatorship of the victorious Allied Powers—Washington, New York, and Hollywood. Flushed with their victory over traditional American culture, the triumphant Allies have set out to make an example of anyone who would flout their will.

As a reactionary holdover from the old culture, “homophobia” is a promising area for the heirs of Henry Hoke to make the link between “hate speech” and “hate crimes.” Just as anti-porn feminists and their Christian fundamentalist allies depict pornography as the theory and sex crimes as the practice, so the left is now arguing that “anti-gay” rhetoric by the “far right” emboldens and incites violence against homosexuals. When Christian fundamentalist groups bought a series of newspaper ads averring that ho-