



EDWARD SYKES



THE LAST time Bushmen from the Kalahari desert came to London was in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Now Dada (pictured left), believed to be 60, and Komtsa, "about 70", wearing the hat, are here under the auspices of Survival International, to promote a sale of tribal paintings. More than half the estimated 80,000 Kalahari desert Bushmen live in Botswana, largely serfs to local farmers. Much of their traditional land has been turned into game parks. Animals in that part of southern Africa appear to rate higher than human beings.

Their paintings and art are at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery in London, but according to Komtsa, the Nahru, his tribe, want land. This was the key to their survival, not painting, not weaving, not singing.

The couple found London in its heatwave terribly cold. They rather enjoyed the variety of berries at Kew Gardens, but were amazed there were no thorns on our pavements and found English food too sweet; they missed mealie porridge. They were surprised to find so many different races in London and felt more at ease here than in Gaborone, the Botswana capital. As Komatsa said: "Here among white people no one looks down on you." I suspect he would change his mind on that after a few more weeks.