

# Law officers' concern over bombs trial

from MICHAEL NALLY in Bradford

THE HOME OFFICE and the Law Officers Department are expected to scrutinise transcripts of the Bradford 12 trial, which ended at Leeds Crown Court last week with the acquittal of all the accused, some of whom admitted being involved in making and stockpiling petrol bombs.

Sir Michael Havers, QC, the Attorney-General, and the Government's chief legal adviser, may ask the Court of Appeal to rule on the legal implications of the verdicts, which have alarmed police and lawyers.

The source argue that answers are needed urgently to two key questions: Are petrol bombs 'explosive' devices, as the prosecution submitted? and, is making them for self-defence really lawful, as defence counsel submitted?

If the answer to the first is 'no' and to the second 'yes,' it is feared that self-defence and vigilante groups may feel that they now have a licence to make petrol bombs unchallenged. The Appeal Court ruling would not affect last week's verdicts.

The charges against the 12, all young Asians from Bradford, arose from the discovery of 38 petrol bombs made from bottles in the city during the riots last summer. The prosecution argued that they were intended for use against the police and property.

Defence counsel argued that they were for the protection of the local coloured community against skinheads and fascists, reported to be out to cause trouble in the city, as they had done earlier. Tarlochan Gata-Aura, the only one of the 12 to go into the witness box, declared his determination 'to erect a shield of fire.'

Cross-examined by Mr Paul Kennedy, QC, leading for the prosecution, he denied bearing a grudge against the police. But he attacked them for failing to defend the community against fascism.

'Maybe you don't know what it is to be black in this racist society. In such a situa-

tion, the only thing you can think of is measures you might take to defend yourself.'

Most of the accused were arrested by West Yorkshire police after being identified by Special Branch officers; the court was told at one point—although earlier it had heard that their names came from voluntary statements.

Officers in the witness box were challenged sharply about their treatment of the accused and the validity of the statements. And they revealed a startling ignorance of racialism in the county and elsewhere and apparent naivety about right-wing politics.

The verdict is another blow to West Yorkshire Police, still smarting from criticism of their prolonged investigation of the Yorkshire Ripper case.

A police spokesman refused to discuss the implications of last week's verdict. 'If anyone is found in circumstances which suggest that they may be committing a criminal offence, then consideration will be given to prosecuting them,' he said. It wouldn't be proper for us to comment on judicial pronouncement. That is all we can say.

Some Asian youth are elated by the verdicts. Outside Vince's Cafe on the brow of Manningham Lane, in the district of Bradford where many of its 55,000-strong coloured community live, I found a group discussing the making of petrol bombs with enthusiasm and a little learning which may be dangerous.

Some community spokesmen are more cautious. They acknowledge the police's dilemma and fear reprisal from fascists incensed by the verdicts.

Mr Junior Rashid, of the Asian Youth Movement, said: 'It certainly gives us a precedent when we're on the streets with the need to defend ourselves — self-defence is no offence, that's clear. But what happens if 12 fascists with some sort of weapons are charged, and they claim that they've got them for self-defence? Will they be off the hook?'

## Legal immigrants

I HAVE encouraging news about the great bustard, that large and handsome bird that became extinct in England more than 100 years ago but still thrives elsewhere in Europe.

The Hungarian Government last month offered to collect some newly laid eggs and present them to our own Great Bustard Trust.

Eight of them were flown from Budapest to London, personally nursed by the British Airways captain.

At Heathrow, where the ground service manager turned out to be called John Bustard, the eggs were met by the trust's chairman, Aylmer Tryon, and driven down to Wiltshire.

By early June four were found to be added. But the remaining four have hatched out, some incubated artificially, others under broodies.

They have been called by the Hungarian numbers in the order of their appearance: Egy, Ketto, Harom and Negy.