

# ASIAN YOUTH NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION

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ORGAN OF THE ASIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT.

## HANDSWORTH 1985

The reports of Handsworth in the papers and on T.V. are almost the exact opposite of what actually happened. This 'news' has been reported nationally and internationally, and is causing great damage to the relations between Asian and African communities where they live side by side, both in this country and in other countries around the world. While we cannot compete with the power of the international news agencies, we can try to put the record straight here in our own community and tear away the veil of lies and distortion that has been cast over us. This is a report of the Handsworth Rebellion which took place on Monday 9 and Tuesday 10 September 1985.

On Monday at 5pm there was a confrontation involving brutality between the police and an Asian man over a traffic offence outside the Villa Cross pub in Lozells Road. An African woman intervened and was beaten to the ground. Some youths joined in, more police arrived and arrests were made. The police left but more and more youths began to gather outside the pub.

The previous week there had been a meeting of a local residents group which was attended by the Lord Mayor, M.P. Jeff Rooker and was sponsored by the police. The residents group is a WHITE residents group and is committed to stamping out drugs in the area, by force if necessary. For this purpose they have a vigilante squad. (In the past, such groups have been associated with fascist activity.) The meeting was called to oppose turning the disused Villa Cross Bingo Hall into an amusement arcade. It would become a den for drug-pushers, they said. Threats were made that they would burn the place down before it could become an amusement arcade.

At 8pm a fire was reported at the Villa Cross Bingo Hall. Police and fire engines arrived on the scene. A confrontation

developed between the police and the youths outside the pub over the earlier arrests, and generally over the heavy-handed policing of the community, the frequent drug raids, and the hysterical drugs campaign organised by the police and some white residents. Fighting broke out with bricks and bottles being thrown. The police withdrew and the youths had a free run of the place. They went down Lozells Road breaking into the shops there. The youths involved were white, African and Asian, male and female.

At 9pm police arrived with reinforcements and riot equipment. Running battles took place between the youth and the police. Bricks, bottles and petrol bombs were thrown. Buildings and shops were set on fire including Lozells Road Post Office in which two Asian men tragically died. Throughout this raging battle a group of African youths ran from shop to shop getting the shopkeepers and their families out of the buildings and to safety. One Asian shop was defended by the African youths because there were children in bed upstairs. The battle raged all night, dying out at about 2am.

On Tuesday hundreds of people were out on the streets to see what had happened. Police were out in force and so were newspaper and T.V. reporters. At about 1pm Home Secretary Douglas Hurd arrived. Booming and jostling turned into bricks being thrown. Douglas Hurd left and riot police attacked the crowd.

By 9pm hundreds of youth were on the streets of Handsworth, Lozells and Villa Road, with a large number of Asian youth on Soho Road. There were some police battles in Lozells Road and many shops and banks on Soho Road had windows broken. There were about 100 arrests made throughout the night.

By Wednesday, everything was calm but hundreds of police remained on the streets of Handsworth.

# POLICE HYPOCRISY & MEDIA CONSPIRACY

The Handsworth 'riot' was a rebellion against poverty, unemployment and police harassment - against the racism which confines us to the ghetto. Youth of all races took part in the attacks on property and the police. It was not an attack by one section of the community on another, and it is sad and tragic that two people died. On Wednesday 11 September Asian and African members of the community laid wreaths at the Post Office as a mark of respect.

The police and the media are now trying to divide our community by making a pretence of sympathy towards the Asian shopkeepers; they don't mention those African shopkeepers who lost their businesses and their livelihoods. But the sympathy shown to Asians is pure hypocrisy - What have the police done to protect our communities in East London and elsewhere from racist attacks? What have they done to bring to justice the murderers of the Kassam family in Ilford?

When the youth in London and Bradford - the Newham 7, Newham 8 and Bradford 12 - defended their communities against racist attacks, they were hauled before the Courts by the police on criminal charges. The police and the Courts insisted that people cannot take the law into their own hands. Now the police are silent and a Tory magistrate has attended a meeting where Asian businessmen have started to set up vigilante



## NEWHAM 7 - CRIMINALISED

squads of Asian youth to go against the African community. The police would like to have us fight each other so that we do not organise against the brutality and poverty we face. And when the youth get sent down, these rich Tory businessmen will be entertaining their friends from the Police Liaison Committee. They want to create a race war in Handsworth whilst they live in Handsworth Wood and Edgbaston.

In contrast to this, the small shopkeepers of Lozells Road have issued a statement that there is no enmity whatsoever between African and Asian. We sympathise with them on the loss of their businesses into which they have put many years of hard work, and demand that the Government compensates them in full.

## COMMUNITY POLICING, COMMUNITY SPIES

The youth rebelled in 1981. In 1985 they rebelled again. They rebelled against the inhuman conditions of their existence in the black ghettos of Britain. This is the inevitable result of the racism and brutality which we face. The British state knows that this is going to happen and they have armed the police with riot equipment, tear gas, plastic bullets, etc. In addition

to this, they have over the last few years, infiltrated our communities through their strategy of community policing.

Since the rebellions of 1981, the police have been very busy setting up 'community leaders' to spy on the community. They sit with the police on their Police Liaison Committees and



report on what is happening in the community. A lot of these are rich Asian businessmen who also have strong links with the racist Tory Party - they will sell their communities for the reward of white status and privilege.

It is these that have been quick to stand in front of the T.V. cameras alongside the police and tell their distorted views of what happened. It is they who have the support of the police and Tory magistrates to setup vigilante groups of Asian youth to attack the African community. In their own self-interest they are willing to sacrifice the lives of the young generation to gang warfare and to the British Courts and prisons.

The hypocrisy of these people are seen in their talk of drugs. They go along with the police campaign of criminalising the African community as drug-pushers. But it is them and their kind who are bringing the hard drugs into this country. Only a few months ago, three Birmingham Asian businessmen were caught bringing heroin in. The police



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### COMMUNITY POLICING ?

only harass the African youth for small amounts of soft drugs while they leave their rich friends well alone.

We must see through the lies and greed of these few parasites who live off the community and reject these so-called 'community leaders'.

## RACISM & REBELLION

Throughout the world black people suffer from the racism of white domination. The U.S.A. and Europe hold the world's purse strings while our countries in Asia, Africa and South America are wracked with poverty and starvation.

In Britain, in the heartland of capitalist wealth, our communities still face the racism of poverty and limited opportunities. We are confined to the worst areas of decaying British cities - the Black Ghettoes of Handsworth, Toxteth, Brixton, Southall and East London. We have the worst housing and over-crowding, the worst jobs, the highest unemployment, the worst schooling and the most brutal policing. In addition we face the violent attacks on our communities by racists and fascists, and the British Government itself attacks us with their racist laws, particularly the immigration laws which tear our families and communities apart.

This is the experience faced by all black people in this country, African as well as Asian. Our parents and grandparents struggled for years in this country to look after their families

and to build our communities. But throughout the world the situation is getting worse, and in Britain today there is no future for the youth. There is only frustration and anger. And there is rebellion.

In the 1981 rebellions throughout Britain's black ghettoes, the youth rose up together - white, African and Asian - to protest about their conditions. In 1985, in Handsworth, the youth again rose up. But this time our white masters have learnt. Since 1981 they have infiltrated our communities with their community policing and have sown divisions with their 'ethnic' projects. Now they can use their powerful media to try and set the Asian and African community against each other. They are trying to divert our struggle against racism and poverty into a race war confined within the ghetto.

But the youth must continue the struggle against racism. We cannot weaken ourselves by fighting our black brothers and sisters. We should reject those in our community who would sell our struggle for the reward of middle class status and a political career.

# HANDSWORTH

## DEFENCE

### CAMPAIGN

The police and their rich friends who claim to speak for us will not succeed in dividing our community. But they are out to criminalise the youth. They are trying to **pin the 'blame' for what** happened on some 'criminal' or 'hooligan' element. But when we face the racism of this country the whole community reacts - with the youth in the front line. We must rally to the defence of our youth who are being victimised by the police and the media.

The police presence on our streets has been reduced but they are now attacking our community with dawn raids on our homes. These have been very brutal affairs with one youth getting his jaw broken. Just one week after the event over 300 people, mainly youth, have been arrested. Many more will follow in the coming weeks. The Courts will give out conveyor belt justice with just one verdict - **GUILTY!** Only the community itself can defend its members.

The Handsworth Defence Campaign has been set up by Asian and African members of the community to defend those who have been indiscriminately arrested and charged. **SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN! DEFEND YOUR COMMUNITY!**

- \* The Defence Campaign has a list of solicitors which it feels will abide by the wishes of the defendants and their relatives.

- \* It advises all those charged to plead **NOT GUILTY.**

- \* Contact the Campaign if you have been arrested or know someone who has.

- \* Tell the Campaign what you saw - it may be of use to someone arrested.

- \* Go to the Courts and support those arrested.

Handsworth Defence Campaign: Tel 554 2747

## **A Y M says:**

The police must take full blame for the events in Handsworth and the damage caused to our community. It is their harassment and heavy-handed policing which sparked off the rebellion, while it was their deliberate decision to cut off the Lozells Road area and allow it to burn.

We reject the Government's Police Inquiry which will only look for new ways to control our community and stifle our protests. We reject also the Council's Inquiry which will only tell us what we already know - that we haven't got jobs, that we live in slum housing, that the police harass and brutalise us.

No amount of inquiries will change the conditions we live under. The demands of our community are simple. We want work for the whole community, we want decent homes to live in, we want proper education for our children, we want an end to police harassment.

**BUT ALL WE GET IS RACISM. AND WE HAVE SHOWN THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT.**

## **asian youth movement**

THE ASIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT IS COMMITTED TO A DETERMINED STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM AND FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK PEOPLE.

WE THEREFORE OPPOSE THE RACIST LAWS OF THE BRITISH STATE, PARTICULARLY THEIR BARBARIC IMMIGRATION LAWS, AND THE BRUTAL ENFORCERS OF THOSE LAWS. WE WILL STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ATTEMPTS OF THE STATE TO CRIMINALISE OUR COMMUNITIES AND PARTICULARLY OUR YOUTH.

BEING ONLY A MINORITY IN THIS COUNTRY, WE LOOK TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ASIA, AFRICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND ELSEWHERE (THE VAST MAJORITY OF HUMANITY) FOR SUPPORT IN OUR STRUGGLE. IN TURN, WE SUPPORT THEIR STRUGGLES AND ALL OTHER STRUGGLES WHICH BRING FORWARD THE DAY WHEN WE WILL BE RID OF POVERTY AND OPPRESSION.

Join the Asian Youth Movement and support the Handsworth Defence Campaign. Contact 101 Villa Road, Handsworth. Tel. 551 4518 (evenings only).