

Asian Youth Movement

c/o 87, The Wicker, Sheffield 3

Only days after the dawn raids that led to the arrest of the 12, 800 people, mainly Asian, including community leaders, shop keepers and religious elders, enthusiastically pledged their unqualified support for the youth of their community.

A community that had grown accustomed to the inability, even refusal, of the forces of 'Law and Order' to afford it protection in the face of growing incidents of stabbings, fractured skulls, fire bombings and arson.

A community that had come to understand through the ever-tightening grip of deportations and passport checks, that the masters of the police shared with the fascist boot-boys, a common notion that the unrestricted presence of black people in Britain is a problem.

When on 11th July, reports were received of coachloads of 300 fascist skinheads about to attack black people in their homes, there was no questioning the need for the community to mobilise for its own survival. The climate of racist terror was heightened when police ordered shops and market stalls to close down, and shutters began to be put up. Hundreds of people, black and white came on to the streets to meet the threat. People remembered Southall the week before when coaches of skinheads had rampaged through the community, insulting and attacking families and shops. Police had stood by. Reinforcements had taken 3 or 4 hours to arrive, and came only when hundreds of local youth had assembled to physically take on the aggressors.

The skinheads were driven out, and every community that had ever shared the grisly experience of racist terror, joined in the triumph of a people that had risen up successfully in its own defence.

But, in Bradford, when no skinhead invasion came, there were little more than minor disturbances and no "petrol" were used.

In contrast, the viciousness and severity of the charges against the 12 have astonished local people. The prosecution will say that the 12 conspired to cause explosions, to blow up buildings in the city centre, including the police station, to stir up a 'copy cat riot' in Bradford.

Community

This fantasy of accusation serves only to reinforce local fears that the 12 are being made scapegoats. The state's need for a stage-managed conspiracy trial can only be understood in the context of the July uprisings of 1981. The speed with which the sparks of Brixton, spread into the flames of Southall Moss Side and Toxteth and then further into the possibility of generalised wild-fire rebellion shook the authorities to the core.

The desire of the police and the media to lay the blame on 'copy cat hooliganism' and 'extremists' and 'political agitation', is clear. In this sense, the 'show trial' of the Bradford 12 stands side by side with the use of paramilitary tactics

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and CS gas as a public demonstration of the determination of the state to crush the growing spirit of defiance inside the black community, and in sections of the working class.

" Police officers must be prejudiced and discriminatory to do their job...to search long haired youths in bedraggled clothing...and West Indian youths wearing tea cosy hats and loitering in city centres... The police are expected to act against those people, who, by their conduct, mode of life, dress, associates and transport are most likely to be criminals."

There is a further reason why the weekend of July 10/11th is of special national significance. It is now well-known that this weekend saw remarkably similar rumours of skin-head attacks in communities as far apart as Southall, Hounslow, Camden, Woolich, Kilburn, Luton and Handsworth and gave rise to similar mobilisations of community self defence.

Viciousness

There is also evidence that in some areas these 'rumours' were further fanned by police. Whether the 'rumours' of July 11th were because of mistaken police tactics or were part of a police strategy to pre-empt and control further riots is unlikely to come to light.

But of one thing we are certain. The black community will not allow our brothers to be framed in a show trial. We stand full square behind the action taken by our youth in defence of our community. For us, self defence is no offenceit is survival.

"It is my belief that when a people are attacked, it is their right to act in self defence... We decided that an organised defence of our community was necessary. In my view, the defence of black people, of all working class people, who are threatened by the menace of fascism, necessitates the forming of defensive organisations. It was with this in mind that we did what we did."

Tariq Ali.
