

*An analysis of the landmark Bradford 12 Trial.*

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### **The Struggle of Asian Workers in Britain.**

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On July 17 1981, the attention of the West Yorkshire police was drawn to two milk crates of petrol bombs which were hidden in high bushes at the back of the nurses' home in Bradford. The police removed the petrol from the bottles, replaced it with tea and set up a vigil for the manufacturers. No one turned up. Thirteen days later, 12 young Asians from the Asian community in Bradford were arrested and subsequently charged with the following:

Count 1: Making an explosive substance with intent to endanger life and property contrary to Section 3(1)(b) of the Explosive Substance Act 1881. That on the 11th day of July 1981 (the 12) unlawfully and maliciously made an explosive substance, namely 38 petrol bombs, with intent by means thereof to endanger life or cause serious injury to property or to enable other persons to do so.

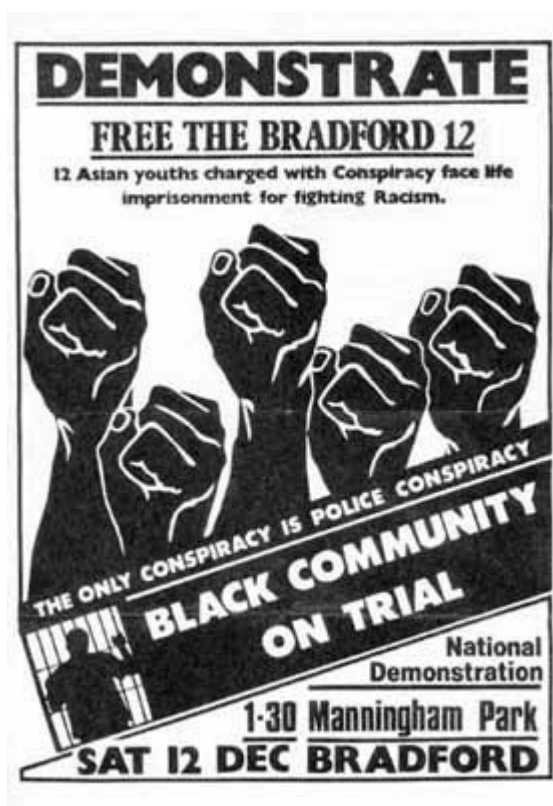
Count 2: Conspiracy to make explosive substances, contrary to Section 1 of the Criminal Law Act 1977. On the 11th day of July 1981 (the 12) conspired together to make explosive substances, namely petrol bombs, for unlawful purposes.

These charges were returned by the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions upon examination of evidence provided by the West Yorkshire police. They carry a penalty of up to life imprisonment, and legal pundits forecasted prison terms of seven to ten years should the defendants be found guilty.

The 12 appeared before the local magistrates on Saturday, August 1st and were refused bail. The defendants spent the next three to four months in prison before they were granted bail on conditions which included large sureties, daily reporting to the local police, an evening curfew and a complete ban on attendance at all political meetings, later relaxed to a ban on those meetings which related directly to their cases. Giovanni Singh, Praveen Patel, Saeed Hussain, Sabir Hussain, Tariq Ali, Ahmed Mansoor, Bahram Noor Khan, Tarlochan Gata Aura, Ishaq Mohammed Kazi, Vasant Patel, Jayesh Amin and Masood Malik appeared at the Leeds Crown Court on April 26 1982. They were all represented by counsel with the exception of Tariq Ali who chose to defend himself. The trial lasted 31 days before Judge Beaumont and a jury of seven whites and five blacks. All the jurors were local Leeds residents.

The main line of defence was self-defence. Gata Aura, Singh, Patel, Hussain, Mansoor, Malik, Sabir Hussain, Khan and Vasant Patel admitted to being involved somewhere along the line. Ali, Amin and Kazi denied any involvement at all. All claimed that he was told by Gata Aura about the existence of the petrol bombs and he advised Gata Aura to destroy them. Amin's counsel cross examined on the basis that his client knew nothing about the operation and was playing cricket at the time. Kazi denied any involvement at all.

Those who accepted that they were involved advanced the line that they were legally and morally right to manufacture the petrol bombs. They had heard that racialsists were on their way to attack the Bradford Asian community, and after a meeting at Amin's house, they took the decision to make and



use the petrol bombs to create a wall of flame along Lumb Lane which would deter the attackers from violently setting upon the Asian community. They had not intended endangering life or property; they merely set out to deter.

The English Common Law upholds the right of self-defence, qualified by the fact that the force used in self-defence must not be in excess of that which is reasonable to repel the attack. The defendants claimed, therefore, that the manufacture and possible use of the petrol bombs was a perfectly legal act and necessary for the defence of the community against a racist onslaught.

The second line of defence turned on the definition of explosives. The defendants argued, through counsel, that petrol bombs were not explosives, that on impact they did not explode. On June 16, the jurors, after deliberating for a day and a half, re-turned verdicts of not guilty. The breakdown was eleven to one.

### **The Mass Youth Movement and its Origins**

Firstly, who are these young men and what are the forces which shaped them and their actions? The 12 defendants are all young Asians, that is to say the offspring of immigrants who arrived in Britain from India and Pakistan. They are products of the British educational system and are aged between 17 and 25 years. With the exception of Jayesh Amin, a university graduate, and Ishaq Kazi, a bank clerk, they were, at the time of their arrest, either unemployed workers or employed in working-class jobs in the city of Bradford.

Politically they were members of the United Black Youth League, (UBYL), a small organisation which, at the time of their arrest, was three to four months old. By then no statement of policy and position had been stated by the organisation, but an interpretation of their activities in campaigns indicated a radical approach to the issues of racial attacks on the Asian community and deportations of Asian workers.

What is certain is that these young men did not fall from the sky, nor are they odd balls prone to irrational behaviour. They are products of an historical movement which first made itself felt at the heart of British society in the summer of 1976.



Every new historical movement invariably emerges around a single issue and has as its objective the transcending, perhaps, the shattering of the old. In this case the issue has been and continues to be the constant and murderous stream of racial attacks against the Asian community. The old at this juncture was and is being represented by the moderate approach of the traditional Asian organisations backed by the British state. The moment? The murder of 18 year old Gurdip Singh Chaggar by a gang of racials on the streets of Southall on June 4 1976.

Up to that moment, the Asian community throughout the United Kingdom had been complaining about racial attacks to anyone who would listen. Their experiences in this regard stretched way back to the late 1960s. Right-wing fascist organisations in some cases actually carried out the attacks and where they did not, they were able to stimulate disaffected young whites into what was popularly referred to as Paki-bashing. The Asian community made it clear, through their organisations, that the British police showed a marked reluctance in tracking down and bringing their assailants to justice. They were perfectly right. The official position, repeated in parrot-like fashion by police forces up and down the country, was that the term, 'racial attack', was a figment of the Asian imagination. These acts, claimed officialdom, were merely the expressions of vandals.

The Asian community responded to this phenomenon with an uncharacteristic moderation. Apart from scattered groups of vigilantes in East London they seemed to reply on complaints to the authorities as a way of dealing with this issue. Another factor needs to be considered. During the late sixties and throughout the seventies, the Asian community had developed a remarkable militancy on the shop

floor. There is a history of militant strikes in opposition both to the employers and the trade union bureaucracy. These militant activities won, for those activists in the traditional Asian organisations, recognition from the authorities. Some of them were rewarded with jobs inside the trade union bureaucracy, others became local councillors; the mosque and the temple attracted visiting Members of Parliament and other dignitaries. Add to this the vast race relations bureaucracy and the Manpower Services Commission with its equally vast and paralysing sources of state funding, and the corruption of traditional Asian organisations was complete by the time Gurdip Singh Chaggar lay dying on the pavement of a Southall street. The effect of this corruption was and continues to be the stifling of the traditions of militancy in the Asian community.

A whole generation of Asian youth had grown up by then. They, like everyone of the defendants, had been to school here. They were socially confident. They rose on masse to challenge the old ways and methods of dealing with racial attacks and to break through the solid wall of Asian organisations which maintained the status quo.

The first major expression of this new force came in the aftermath of Chaggar's murder. The terrain was Southall. It is a West London suburb in which some 30,000 Asians reside. They hail mainly from the Punjab. They work in local factories in the main and in various jobs at the Heathrow Airport. There is a solid proletarian base. The children are socialised in local schools and pursue lives increasingly dominated by British circumstances. The Indian Workers Association, the Sikh Temple and the local race relations industry dominate. That particular organisational formation exists in every Asian community in Britain.

In the days following Chaggar's murder, the youth took to the streets. They organised patrols and in a sharp outburst attacked white motorists and opposed the police. When two of their number were arrested, they surrounded the local police station and secured the release of their comrades. Meanwhile, the identical process was in motion among Bengalis in the East End of London. Young Asians in other parts of the country stirred in response.

This was a massive social upheaval involving thousands of young Asians throughout Britain who were prepared to throw the caution of their parents to the wind. They distinguished themselves from all that had gone before by employing militant and violent methods to defend themselves against racial attacks. Such was the impact that the rest of British society had to take notice. No longer could the issue be clouded by the smoke screen of official jargon and police semantics. Thousands of whites responded in support. They were mainly political radicals and well-meaning liberals. The mass of the British people were not against; they were merely bewildered, waiting for a positive lead. And the first generation Asians, who got nowhere with their moderate approach, were willing to go along with the youth.

All the defendants in the trial of the Bradford 12 cut their teeth in this mass movement. It is on this general terrain that they were blooded. But there is more to it than just the general. All new historical movements must constantly contest the old if they are to ground themselves and meet the historical tasks required of them. And this movement was no exception. The old is represented by a panoply of formal Asian organisations formed during the early stages of Asian immigration. They were progressive once, but had turned into their opposites. Behind this solid wall stood the British state ready and willing to hold the line against the invading hordes of young Asians.

The British state was cautious at first, leaving matters up to the entrenched Asian formation. The traditional Asian organisations did not manage too well. They barely contained a mass revolt against the demonstration which followed Chaggar's murder. Up to the morning of the march, no one knew whether the youth would demonstrate or not. Here are a couple of comments made by a young protester: "These people [the elders] have done nothing. Some of them have got rich. The party wallahs are asking us to join them when what they should do is join us, otherwise they are finished".

Posit these comments against those expressed by traditional moderates: "These people [the youth] are not political, they have no politics. It is we who have the political experience". Those were the political lines to emerge in the cut and thrust of events surrounding the Southall murder, but they replicated themselves among the Asian community throughout the country. As it is with these contests, the manipulation began. The young Asians set up youth organisations in Southall and elsewhere. The old struck back and their ways were many. Take this as an example: In Blackburn, a

northern town, a youth organisation had surfaced. The membership challenged the old on a range of issues. At the end of the day, the major figure in the youth movement was savagely brutalised by thugs organised by the old leadership. In other areas the soft option prevailed. The youth leadership was guided with much encouragement into state funded projects. The new was constantly courted with persuasive offers to sink differences and join up with the old. All manner of pressure was bought to bear.

These manoeuvrings penetrated large sections of the organised youth leadership, but the mass movement remained largely unaffected. When the front line fails it is the turn of the backline to prevail. In this case the backline was the coercive forces of the British state.

During the general election of 1979, the fascist and racist National Front put up candidates in constituencies where there were large black communities. They had no chance of winning but it would give them the right to hold public meetings in black areas. And a public meeting was carded for Southall. Young Asians gathered in their thousands to prevent the meeting taking place. The police mobilised in enormous numbers. They proceeded to attack the protesters with a savagery which no section of the society, except the Irish in Northern Ireland, had experienced in years. One person, an anti racist school teacher, Blair Peach, was bludgeoned to death by police batons. Over 300 people were arrested and the cases were heard by carefully selected magistrates throughout London who returned a disproportionate number of guilty verdicts. Only by the most vulgar, empirical violence could the British state hope to contain the Asian mass movement and its white support under the hegemony of traditional Asian organisations.

There is the time honoured conclusion, born out of centuries of social and political experience that repression of this order only serves to strengthen the resolve of the mass movement. In a period of five years, the young Asians had transformed the balance of power in this crucial struggle. Thousands of them participated in this movement. One moment of violent excess on the part of the police would not crush it.

All 12 defendants had at one time or another been activists in that general movement. Their membership in the UBYL placed them in a special category though. By being members of that organisation, they were openly repudiating the traditional Asian formations which dominated the Bradford community. They were, therefore, consciously laying down the challenge to the state and its Asian phalanx for the hearts and minds of the Asian community.

Gata Aura and Tariq Ali were involved in the initial breakaway from the old. They, along with others, founded the Bradford Asian Youth Movement in 1977. There they mobilised for anti-fascist demonstrations and campaigned against the deportation of Asian workers. The Bradford AYM had planned the Freedom March which would begin in Bradford and take in all major immigrant conurbations in Britain. They had hoped that this tactic would lay the foundation for Asian and West Indian unity. The march did not win effective support and was cancelled.

In the cut and thrust of attempting to transcend the old, a faction within the Bradford AYM succumbed to the practice of state funding and welfare activities. Gata Aura and Ali walked out and set up the United Black Youth League through which they aimed to draw membership from the West Indian community and to travel along a radical and revolutionary path. Above all, they persisted in their efforts to take the mass youth movement, with the support of older Asian workers, beyond the reactionary confines delineated by the old guard. For the membership of the UBYL, the manufacture of petrol bombs for use in the event of a racial attack was a normal activity. For this generation of young Asians there was nothing at all extraordinary in this approach. Also, Gata Aura had emerged as a national political figure as chairman of the Anwar Ditta campaign. He pursued this activity while being a member of the UBYL. Anwar Ditta, an Asian woman, was prevented by the immigration laws from having her children join her here. The campaign was national in scope and ultimately successful. Constant reports in the press and a documentary on television brought the issue to the nation's attention. The point to be made here is that by organising campaigns of this scope, Gata Aura and his organisation were in fact making clear what the traditional Asian organisations were not doing.

### **The Campaign to Free the 12**

As in Southall in the general election of 1979, the British state drew the line. On this occasion the

Director of Public Prosecutions was the cutting edge. Once that office received the evidence collated by the police, two options were open to the judicial arm of the British state. The Director could take the normal course of charging the defendants simply with manufacturing petrol bombs. It would have been a low key, straight forward matter. During the summer riots, which were going on at the same time, many were so charged. He chose the abnormal and consequently highly political course. Out came the political bludgeon disguised in judicial garb aimed at smashing that tendency in the Asian Youth Movement which sought to transcend the moderate approach.

By opting for the conspiracy charges, the DPP lay down a major challenge to the youth movement and its organisational activists. How did they fare? Here was a political opportunity, par excellence, to galvanise the thousands of young Asians into motion. They were there, alive and vibrant. They had shown their mettle over five dramatic years and all the evidence indicated they were on the move. Only weeks previous to the arrests, skinhead fascists were bussed into Southall for a pop concert at a local pub. Four members of the party abused an Asian shopkeeper and attacked Asian shop windows on the main street. The young Asians of Southall organised themselves, marched on the pub and despite police protection burnt the building down. Not only did a campaign to free the 12 have the opportunity to mobilise young Asians, the way was open to take the issue to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Thousands on the Asian continent would have responded. And finally, such a campaign would establish an organisational bridgehead which would have had the effect of eclipsing the traditional Asian organisations once and for all.

A group of activists from the Bradford AYM, in alliance with other forces in the community, formed the July 11th Committee to free the 12. The issue, which at once preoccupied the committee was the political line they would adopt for mobilisation. This, of course, would turn on the defence which those arrested would employ. Courtenay Hay, a former member of the defunct Bradford Black Collective and now Chairman of the Committee, visited Gata Aura in prison. Gata Aura tells us that he informed Hay that the line was self-defence. Hay moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform. He returned to the Committee with the line that the defendants were framed. His campaign message was that: "The UBYL, because of its political activities of fighting racism, its resistance to fascism and carrying forward the anti-imperialist struggle has been made a victim of political persecution by the state police".

It was obvious that he had elevated the UBYL to a position which did not accord with reality. The organisation was all of four months old, just about cutting its teeth and had made to date little impact locally or nationally. Had political activists been operating in a situation in which the British state would deliberately frame an entire organisation on conspiracy to make petrol bombs, then we were living in dire straits indeed. Nowhere in the country was such evidence available. There was ample evidence in the trial that the Special Branch tailed the UBYL waiting to pounce once a mistake was made, but the frame up line was indigestible to all but the most gullible.

The July 11th Committee went to the public for the first time on August 12 1981 at the Arcadian Cinema in Bradford. The leaflet inviting the public to the meeting screamed, 'Framed by the Police'. Some 900 Asian youth attended that meeting but the explanation for the arrests was difficult, almost impossible to swallow. The 12 defendants were their peers whom they knew politically and socially. The audience would know that the 12 were quite capable of making petrol bombs. No big thing. Some of them might even have known of the details. This is not pure speculation. Large numbers of Asian youth in Bradford were aware that all the defendants made statements to the Police on arrest, that they were party to making the bombs. The frame up line fell on deaf ears.

There was more to come. The platform boasted Councillor Ajeeb, Councillor Hameed and J.S. Sahota of the Indian Workers Association. The political practice of the speakers has been in mortal opposition to the mass radical and revolutionary movement of Asian youth. From that meeting onwards, the mass of Asian youth voted with their feet. They went away and stayed away.

Meanwhile the Yorkshire police had been visiting the elders of the Asian community warning them away from supporting the 12. They were terrorists, admonished the police. The elders accommodated the police and subsequently spewed out the line to their followers that the 12 were evil terrorists who had let down their villages back home.

The Committee persisted with the frame up line. In November, a full three months later, the

Committee held a meeting at the London School of Economics and again the leaflet harangued, 'Framed by the Police'. The degeneration was complete. Southall, Brick Lane, Newham are traditional strongholds of Asian youth revolt. Yet the meeting was held at the LSE. It was clear that the campaign was firmly in the grips of the Asian middle classes (student types) with every left tendency, every miniscule radical outfit on board. Whatever else the campaign would do, it certainly could not take the mass movement one step further.

And the only line which would generate support in the Asian community was the self-defence line. Sections on the committee in Bradford argued for it, debated the issue week after week. In the end they were defeated, overruled by the solicitors. The solicitors? Yes. The legal team advised that it would be the correct course to keep the defence secret and surprise the prosecution with the self-defence argument. They carried the day. Unimaginable!

We defy a single lawyer to explain what could the prosecution have done to strengthen their case if the self-defence issue was made public. Nothing at all. Here we need to explain the legal procedure involved. The police collate their evidence and send it to the Director of Public Prosecutions who returns the charges. All the police evidence is handed over to the defence. All. What on earth could the prosecution do to hinder the defence if the self-defence position was made public? Sweet F/A.

A word about lawyers in general. They, most of them, have the tendency to dominate the client. Not for them words of advice which the defendants may or may not accept. Their word is law. It needs a powerful, political campaign and equally strong defendants to hold the fort. Otherwise, lawyers do as they please, requiring of campaigns mere orchestration and stage decoration.

In time the campaign switched line to the obscure and liberal position that conspiracy charges were legally oppressive. Listen to this. "Conspiracy charges relate more to defendants' political views and activity than to anything else. They have been used before as a political weapon by the British state to repress opposition." The question to be posed here is 'so what?' That argument is appropriate to the National Council of Civil Liberties who convince intellectuals about complex legal matters. It could not mobilise a single Asian youth. Young Asians would have responded to the line which said, 'Yes, we made the bombs, we made them in defence of the Asian community. Self-defence is No offence'. They would have flocked to that position from every Asian community in this country.

Instead, the campaign persisted in the conspiracy argument with the consequence that support came exclusively from Asian university students, law centre workers, other state-funded projects workers and various denominations of the white left. Here the campaign organisers had a fine political opportunity and squandered it. What is most ironic is that the campaign eventually adopted the self-defence position, but only after the trial was half-way through.

However all was not negative. The 12 entered Leeds Crown Court with much behind them. The mass movement's dramatic actions over a period of five years ensured that no jury in this nation could be un-aware of the general issue of racial attacks. That was a major plus. The campaign, although not historically in tune with the needs of the movement, was able to let thousands know of the trial. And the defence secured a major weapon when a Home Office study revealed the existence of 2,581 instances of racial attacks in two months. William Whitelaw, Home Secretary, was forced to change the official position. In his introduction to the Home Office report he said, "The study has shown quite clearly that the anxieties expressed about racial attacks was justified". That admission was dragged out of him by the ceaseless militancy of young Asians on the question. And finally a team of radical lawyers, blooded in and shaped by the black revolt in Britain would take the fight to the judicial authorities.

There was one major hurdle to transcend nevertheless. Tarlochan Gata Aura, on arrest, made two statements to the police. They had offered the inducement that he would be granted bail if he came clean. They also prompted him with the information that his finger-prints were found on one of the bottles. In his statement he mentioned Ishaq Kazi, Praveen Patel, Jayesh Amin, Bahram Noor Khan, Sabir Hussain, Tariq All and Vasant Patel as part of the general organisation. He admitted to making the bombs for use "in case the National Front were there causing trouble". Following Gata Aura's admission, all the other defendants crumbled and made varying admissions. Without these statements the prosecution would have had no case.

Gata Aura's admission created a great deal of acrimony among the defendants. The rank and file membership expressed a serious hostility to the leadership trio of Gata Aura, Amin and Ali. The three, they claimed, got them into the mess and created extra difficulties by being the first to sign statements of admission.

More needs to be said on this issue. On the face of it a serious question mark is raised when the leadership of a radical and revolutionary political organisation crumbles so easily before normal police interrogation. In this instance, the issue is much more complex. Gata Aura admits that he signed because he thought "it was the end of the world". Obviously he could see no way out. His attitude is quite understandable. The UBYL was perhaps the sole Asian youth organisation which sought to take the struggle forward against the state and a solid and entrenched wall of Asian reaction. An immense task, one which they were attempting in virtual isolation. Once the entire membership was locked up, with apparently incontrovertible evidence at hand, it was likely that a youth of 25 years with little experience of police stations, would crumble.

### **The Trial at Leeds Crown Court**

And so to the Leeds Crown Court, April 26 1982. The first major issue at the trial turned on jury selection. Defence counsel challenged the fact that out of a panel of 75 none of the jurors were from the Asian community in Bradford and only two prospective jurors were Asian. Old legal statutes were invoked, complex arguments were offered, specialist and technical jargon was employed. Eventually, Judge Beaumont, by an administrative sleight of hand, met the defence half way having expressed his sympathy with the view that there should be some black representation on the jury. Eventually 12 jurors were sworn in, seven of whom were white and five black.

Paul Kennedy opened for the prosecution. Not a man of great sparkle, wit and incisive intellect which are the characteristics of an exceptional barrister. He was quite ordinary, mediocre even. He referred the court to events of July 11 1981 when he recalled "there was considerable disturbance in Bradford City Centre in which windows were broken, property was damaged and crowds behaved in a menacing way and had to be dispersed." Tariq Ali, he offered, was identified by police officers as moving between groups of Asians. Tarlochan Gata Aura, he added, was organising members of the UBYL to attend a meeting in which "Tarlochan made it clear that trouble was expected that evening and that petrol bombs should be made."

And here was the major point around which the central contention between defence and prosecution turned. "There was no threat from skinheads and the National Front... they [the bombs] were to be used against the police... against large shops when they would have a larger effect... they were to be used in a riot". Then he outlined the specific allegations against the 12:

Tarlochan Gata Aura - Co-leader of the United Black Youth League (UBYL). Organised the meeting and the manufacture of petrol bombs. Obtained the petrol, stuffed the bottles with wicks. Wiped the bottles clean of fingerprints. Went to the town centre to participate in a 'riot' and was arrested and charged with threatening behaviour.

Tariq Ali - Co-leader of the UBYL. Took decision with Tarlochan Gata Aura to make petrol bombs on July 11. Went to town centre to agitate and incite a riot in which petrol bombs would be used. Arrested for disturbing the peace.

Jayesh Amin - Leading member of the UBYL 'reluctantly' allowed his home to be used for the manufacture of petrol devices.

Giovanni Singh - Bought rubber tubing for syphoning petrol. Arrested in town centre intervening in Ali's arrest.

Praveen Patel - Present at UBYL meeting. Obtained milk bottles, filled with petrol, syphoned from car.

Ishaq Mohammed Kazi - Present at meeting. Allowed his car to be used to obtain necessary materials.

Bahram Noor Khan - Present at UBYL meeting. Obtained petrol, kept watch while others made

devices.

Masood Malik - Present at UBYL meeting. Obtained materials necessary for petrol bombs. Kept watch while others made devices.

Vasant Patel - Present at UBYL meeting. Obtained milk bottles and material for wicks.

Saeed Hussain - Present at UBYL meeting.

Sabir Hussain - Present at UBYL meeting. Arrested in town centre intervening in Ali's arrest.

Ahmed Mansor - Present at UBYL meeting. Obtained bottles, kept watch, wiped bottles clean to remove finger prints.

The basis of all this information lay in the statements of admission signed by all the defendants.

Then there followed some 37 officers most of whom testified to the fact that they accurately recorded, in the language and wording of the defendants, hundreds of questions and answers. The line of cross examination by defence counsel aimed to show that sizeable areas of the police documentation were fabricated and that they intimidated, harassed and used violence against the defendants to sign certain admissions.

The major issue turned on the use for which the bombs were manufactured. The police claimed that some defendants admitted that the bombs were to be used against the police and property. The defence denied this allegation and claimed that those words were fabricated by the police.

The high point of the fabrication issue was reached in Helena Kennedy's cross examination of Officer Maloney. He claimed that he questioned Sabir Hussain extensively without taking any notes. Some 200 questions were asked and replied to. Maloney claimed to have gone away and recorded verbatim 196 questions and answers. "Did you do that from memory?" teased Ms Kennedy. "Yes, I did", replied Maloney triumphantly. What was the first question I asked you today?" demanded Kennedy, a sharp edge to her Scottish brogue. "I can't remember", surrendered Maloney.

And then there was the crafty 'hatchet job' on Detective Inspector Sidebottom executed by Paddy O'Connor, counsel for Masood Malik. Paddy enquired of Sidebottom whether, "Further to my previous statement I would like to clarify the points which I did not mention before", were really the words of "an 18 year old Yorkshire lad?" "Yes", replied Sidebottom.

O'Connor then read from Sidebottom's own statement, "Further to my previous statement I would like to clarify the point I did not mention before". Out came O'Connor's sledge hammer. "Did the 18 year old lad draft your second statement for you?" Sidebottom was demolished.

Highlights those were, but there were many like moments in the detailed and rigorous cross examination by defence counsel. At the end of the day the jurors were aware that the police were prolific at putting words in mouths of defendants. Then there was the other key issue. Were racial attacks prevalent in Bradford? Officer after officer described Bradford as a haven of multi-racial peace. They would not budge even in the face of clear evidence to the contrary. They made themselves sound and look ridiculous.

At the end of the prosecution's case, the defence is invited to make submissions. They are invariably to the effect that the prosecution had not made a case against this or that defendant. Following like submissions, Sabir Hussain and Saeed Hussain had count 1 dropped against them. There was no evidence to show that they had participated in manufacturing the actual devices. Both charges were dropped against Jayesh Amin, there being no prima facie case made against him. He was set free.

It was now the turn of the defence. Mansfield opened for Tarlochan Gata Aura who then went onto the witness stand. Soft features belied a formidable political experience. Tarlochan had just turned 25. He was blooded in the anti fascist, anti racist movement of Asian youth and sought relentlessly for some organisational and ideological clarity through which to advance the Asian struggle. He had joined the International Socialists, a Trotskyist off-shoot. There he was part of a black caucus which probed and



prodded the leadership on its grasp of the black question and its practice in relation to this vibrant and lively terrain. 'Black and White Unite and Fight' was all the leadership could muster. Tarlochan and the majority of the caucus left and formed 'Samaj inna Babylon,' a combination of Asian and West Indian activists who produced a newspaper. That organisation fell apart and he moved on to the Indian Progressive Youth Movement in Bradford, then to the Bradford AYM, the Black Socialist Alliance and finally the UBYL.

Tarlochan gave his evidence quietly and moderately, if somewhat nervously. His delivery under examination in chief and cross examination could be described as 'suaviter in modo, fortiter in re'. Moderate in manner, strong in content.

Yes, he had made the bombs; yes, he had organised others to manufacture them. He would take full responsibility. He had pursued the course because he was told that the fascists were coming to attack and a wall of flame would deter them. No, he was not a man of violence. He had not left the Bradford AYM because he wished to pursue violent methods. He left because the organisation had degenerated into living off state funding. Coolly and calmly he informed the court of the different campaigns in which he had been involved. At the end of his three day ordeal, he impressed the jury and the public as a young man of moderation and sensitivity, searching for ways and means of alleviating the Asian condition. It was a splendid performance and the high point of the trial.

Evidence was called to show that the Asian community throughout Britain had been living under a reign of racist terror, and that on July 11 1981, the whole community was under virtual siege once news of an impending racist onslaught spread like wild fire. Evidence was also put forward, and not questioned by the prosecution, that a Chief Inspector was actually informed of the impending attack and the police did nothing to protect the community.

Then came the dramatic moment. Not a single defendant, apart from Tarlochan, would go into the witness box. They would make statements from the dock on which they could not be cross examined. Even Tariq Ali, a formidable political activist, stayed away. It was a curious decision. Thousands throughout Britain would have been moved by their responses to the prosecutor's questions. Silence!

The lawyers advised on this course because they speculated that the defendants were too naive to withstand lengthy and hostile cross examination. We beg to differ. These speculations are based on interviews between the lawyers and defendants. A more precise analysis of those interviews must be presented if we are to be convinced.

It is understandable that the defendants were thrown on the defensive when they discovered that the campaign failed to muster the Potential support from young Asians, but that they could not withstand hostile cross examination because of their naïveté is so much liberal speculation based on the poor, docile Asian victim theory.

Five years of mass revolt do not docile Asian make. All of these voting men have experiences in organising demonstrations, campaigns and other militant activity. They have lived through the jungle of the school playground, the cut and thrust of working class urban social life, three to four months in prison and the rigorous discipline of the bail conditions for close to a year. At the end of that process you become many things and certainly not among them are docile and naive victims. The mass of Asian youth up and down the country would have warmed to the spirited defences which they surely could have mounted.

The closing speeches and the judges summing up were of the usual order, apart from odd flourishes of rhetoric from defence counsel. The jurors deliberated for a day and a half before returning verdicts of not guilty. The verdict carried clear implications. The five black and seven white jurors were asked by the defence to scale two formidable hurdles.

Firstly, they were asked to say that the manufacture of petrol bombs was a legal act required to meet the threat that racials posed against the Asian community. And that the petrol bombs were necessary because the police failed to protect Asians from racial attacks. Secondly, they were required to accept, that 'the best police force in the world' contained men and women who would fabricate evidence against defendants. In a provincial area, far away from London, a mixed jury, by

accepting the defence's version of events, defied the fundamental propositions that the police placed before them. There, the mass movement of recent years was expressing itself.