

Working class Muslims in Britain, 1850 to 1990¹

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One product of the demonisation of Britain's Muslims by those forces desperate to provide a scapegoat for the fallout from the 'war on terror' has been a concerted effort to separate them out from the rest of society, to make them seem 'alien' and culturally distant—especially in the eyes of the wider working class.² These attacks obscure the reality that the majority of Muslims (though not all, of course) belong to the working class.

Many people, including some who consider themselves on the left, seem to want to put Muslims in historical cul-de-sacs that deny, downplay or only nod briefly to their working class lives, background or heritage. Why should this be? Muslims have been living, working and struggling in Britain in increasing numbers for well over a hundred years, and early settlements go back much further, right back to the 1600s.³ Other sections of the working class are assumed to have traditions and histories of struggle. Muslims seem to have no history, radical or otherwise. In an attempt to challenge this distortion I have sketched out three periods in which Muslim workers have fought exploitation and oppression—the struggles of Arab and Somali seamen in Britain's ports during the period of imperialism and colonialism, the first industrial struggles of Muslim workers during the period of post Second World War migration, and the radical Asian youth movements of the 1970s and 1980s.

I have had to pick the Muslim 'strands' out of the general narrative of 'Black History'. This is not easy because its principle works, meticulous,

pioneering and inspirational as many are, were written in the 1980s when religious identity was regarded as subordinate to ‘racial’ identities, reflecting the unified struggles against racism which had taken place. This is not an indication of neglect or the passing over of religious identities. Rather it is because Muslim workers did not then see their religion as the defining part of their political identity. This did not change until the Rushdie affair (see below) at the end of the 1980s. In any case, the strength of their religiosity at any one period should not be automatically read as a sign of their willingness to engage or not in workplace or community struggles.

Part 1: 1850-1945—The portside struggles of the Muslim seamen and their communities

There had been a small Muslim presence in this country stretching back hundreds of years, itself an inconvenient fact for those who wish to cast Muslims as ‘foreign’ newcomers to our society.

However, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 marked the beginning of significant Muslim immigration. The port of Aden, seized by the British in 1837, became a major stop off and refuelling point and attracted migrants from Yemen and northern Somalia, doubling the port’s population by the end of the 19th century.⁴ Ship owners from Europe began to employ these migrants in increasing numbers predominantly as segregated unskilled labourers in shovelling coal in the engine rooms.

These Muslim sailors joined a floating multiracial and multinational proletariat that had up to that point been populated by Indian ‘lascars’, West Africans and West Indians, as well as British and Europeans. By the end of the 19th century small itinerant port communities were establishing themselves along the trade routes, including Europe’s seaports, especially those of France and Britain. Arabs could be found boarding in the dockside areas of Cardiff, South Shields, and to a lesser extent Liverpool and Hull. In Cardiff they joined other migrant workers from Africa, the West Indies, India, China, Malta, Greece, Italy, Germany and other countries. Portside licensed boarding houses and cafes sprang up to service the Muslim sailors, becoming hubs for welfare and community needs.⁵

Richard Lawless, in his groundbreaking book about the Yemeni community in the north east of England, *From Ta’izz to Tyneside*, tells how, ‘for Arab seamen arriving in a strange land with little knowledge of its language and customs, the Arab boarding-house was virtually essential for their survival’, providing ‘not only accommodation and food that was lawful according to their religion, but essential assistance in securing another ship, and credit if their resources ran out before they signed on for the next voyage’.⁶

Some seamen began to put down semi-permanent or permanent roots, often resulting from relationships that had grown up between them and local women. Women who married the seamen would often convert to Islam and take a Muslim surname, to be passed onto their children as the families became members of the dockside working class population. Prayer rooms and eventually mosques with koranic schools were established in both Cardiff and South Shields, where in the 1930s:

Elaborate and colourful processions through the streets were organised to mark the major Muslim festivals, occasions when members of the Arab community were able to make a strong public declaration of their faith. Muslims from other parts of the north east sometimes took part in these processions and groups of Arabs from Cardiff also participated.⁷

In Cardiff the religious culture of the seamen could mark them out in some respects. An invaluable 1940s sociological study of the city's Butetown area observed of Muslims:

The adherents of this creed not only carry out their ritual and religious obligations with vastly more fervour and enthusiasm than the rest of the community, but are correspondingly surer both of themselves and their own way of life. The principle injunctions of Islam are fulfilled assiduously, and the various prohibitions enjoined by the prophet are on the whole rigorously observed as are Ramadan and other fasts and festivals... This constant display of devotion is regarded by the rest of the community with a certain amount of respect and even a little admiration. There is a feeling that it gives 'tone' to the district.⁸

Nevertheless Muslim seamen, like the other black populations, met with fluctuating, sometimes extreme and sustained, levels of racism, hostility and prejudice. Modern racism had developed as a necessary ideological buttress for the transatlantic slave trade. During the era of empire it was 'refined' into a weapon to justify subjugation of the colonies. Former prejudices founded on notions of biological superiority of the 'white race' now mixed with assumptions of cultural superiority and a corresponding contempt for the histories, cultures and religions of the colonised.

The British colonisation of Muslim countries gave the racism of empire an anti-Islamic twist, an echo perhaps of older fears and prejudices produced at the time when Western Europe felt threatened by ascendant Islamic empires. Humayun Ansari in his recent history of Muslims has

written how ‘the early 19th century saw the emergence in Britain of ‘a new sense of cultural superiority’ with the decline of the Ottoman Empire that had once challenged Europe from the East. ‘British elites saw their nation vibrant and expanding’ and gained ‘a sense of superiority’ from ‘the expansion and consolidation of European influence over Muslim territories’ so that:

popular prejudice against non-Europeans and Christian hostility towards ‘heathens’ in Britain... gained considerable currency; colour was an outward reflection of mental and moral inferiority... By the 1860s negative images of Islam and Muslims were embraced in the hardening religious and racial prejudices that were beginning to be articulated in the form of pseudo-scientific theories of race in Britain.⁹

The drive to unite British society, especially the working class, behind the imperial project inevitably had an effect on attitudes. A 1918 survey highlighted ‘race prejudice’ as especially strong towards the colonised peoples. ‘Very little of this hostility was formed on the basis of personal contact; most of it was “derived” from the process of imperialism’.¹⁰ However, it would be wrong to assume that British workers were a homogenous racist bloc. The British working class movement also had a significant tradition of anti-racism. The London Chartists in the 1840s chose a black tailor, the ultra-radical William Cuffey, as their leader. In the 1920s the working population of Battersea elected an Indian Communist, Shapurji Saklatvala, as their MP. He stood alongside the black mayor of Battersea, John Archer. As we will see later the British Communist Party would oppose racism and attempt to organise the black immigrant seamen.¹¹

The general racism was sharpened by local antagonisms in the ports, especially when scarcity of employment could set British seamen against their black and Arab counterparts. The migrant seamen were herded into close-knit slum areas around the docks, with a colour bar in jobs and housing that tended to keep them from integrating with the local population. It was the official and open policy of Cardiff council and estate agents to refuse ‘coloured’ families housing outside of Butetown and as late as the 1940s they faced ‘ostracism, oral or newspaper comment, refusal to serve, non-admission to dance halls, hotels etc’.¹² Officials could argue that ‘coloured men who have come to dwell in our cities are being made to adopt a standard of civilisation they cannot be expected to understand. They are not imbued with moral codes similar to our own and they have not assimilated our conventions of life’.¹³ The local press agitated for repatriation

on the basis that the seamen did not ‘belong to the social system we have evolved on these islands’.¹⁴

Black and Arab seafarers faced a further obstacle in the generally hostile attitude that the trade unions had towards them. The seamen’s unions sought to bar foreigners from trade union membership, until union leader J Havelock Wilson¹⁵ reversed it, seemingly just on the practical grounds that it was better to contain the foreign seamen inside the unions than give the ship-owners a free hand with them. By 1902 Wilson was taunting white seamen with claims that 40 percent of his union’s membership was made up of foreign labour—which meant that in many areas they must have been the backbone of the union and a major contributor to its coffers.

The shipping bosses used pitifully paid and badly treated lascars to undermine the wages and conditions of white seamen, but instead of the unions making a common front against the owners to drive up wages and conditions of all workers, they fell into the trap of seeing the lascars as competitors and easily duped tools of the bosses. So when the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union (NSFU—later to become the NUS) emerged as a force out of a major strike in 1911 part of its attack on the shipping owners was the accusation that they were discharging British seamen and replacing them with lower paid foreign hands. The employers were happy to fuel this divisive stance by spreading it about that foreign crews were eager to do the work, and that Muslims seamen in particular were teetotal and compliant.

Articles and letters in the union journal show that the prejudice towards Arabs (and Chinese) went far beyond hostility arising from competition for jobs: ‘It is no use trying to persuade us that the question of colour does not enter the national consideration; it does and very seriously. We had growing up in our midst a population, not of young Arabs, but of half-castes, which is undesirable in the extreme’.¹⁶ Other headlines in the journal included ‘Menace of Mixed Unions’ and ‘White Wives’ Vain Regret’.¹⁷ Sexual jealousy and a horror at the prospect of white women marrying Arab seamen and having children was a permanent racist motif throughout the first half of the 20th century.¹⁸

The seamen’s representatives at the Trade Union Congress demanded that ‘Asiatics should not be allowed to work west of Suez’ and warned that ‘in our seaport towns there were little half-bred Arabs and Greeks who were being brought into the world and who were going to be a serious menace to the country’.¹⁹

The South Wales popular press was ever eager to embellish this spectre, talking of ‘an inferior race of Asiatics...men who can herd together like pigs, and are fed on cheap meals of grain or rice, have not got the pluck,

endurance, grip or power of a man fed according to English ideas'.²⁰

In Tyneside a correspondent to a local newspaper betrayed how racism encouraged by economic competition could fuse with the cultural racism of empire: 'No matter how bad conditions are aboard ship, Mohamed (who can live on the smell of an oily rag or a stick of incense for a week) will not complain, but a Britisher always does. This is why poor, puzzled, ostracised, uncomplaining Mohamed is given preference to Britishers'.²¹

The outbreak of the First World War resulted in a sudden increase in demand for seamen in the merchant navy, and the migrant seafaring population of Tyneside, made up mostly of Yemenis, increased fourfold.²² But the situation dramatically altered again when the war drew to a close. The Arabs were hit by a double blow. They found themselves out of work, once more suffering pre-war racist hiring practices by the shipping lines. And they also faced hostile mobs of demobilised seamen accusing them of taking their jobs. A West African sailor, Earnest Marke, recalled:

It now became scarcity of jobs, not men, with the demobbed men wanting their old jobs back and negroes being sacked to make room for them. Those who didn't get their jobs back immediately, began taking it out on the negroes—any negro... If the negro hadn't been there the confusion might have been worse. Perhaps even revolution. In a way, the negro saved the situation and the government by acting as a scapegoat.²³

The antagonisms exploded into the 'race riots' in the first half of 1919. The attacks have, paradoxically, to be seen in the context of the huge outbreak in class struggle that rocked the British ruling class that year. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia had lit a flame across Europe and beyond. The First World War came to an end amid turmoil throughout British society as workers returning from the front found, not a 'land fit for heroes', but rising prices and the threat of being pushed into the ranks of the unemployed and poverty. They rebelled with a massive wave of strikes, with an average of 10,000 workers on strike for every day of the year.

The first confrontation between the working class and the state came early in January 1919 when 100,000 Clydeside engineering workers struck in a magnificent show of strength, demanding a 40-hour week. However, the leadership of the strike failed to provide the political leadership necessary to generalise the action. This left Glasgow isolated, and on Friday 31 January the police attacked a massive 35,000-strong demonstration in the city's George Square as the state sought to reassert its control: 'Glasgow was an armed camp, occupied by troops with bayonets, machine guns, tanks and aeroplanes'.²⁴

One of the strike leaders was the future Labour cabinet minister Manny Shinwell, then the leader of the British Seafarers' Union, set up in Glasgow as a breakaway from Havelock Wilson's union. Evidently Shinwell reckoned that he could poach members from the rival union if he could be seen to be more hostile to foreign seamen (especially Chinese lascars). Shinwell urged in a public meeting four days before the Clydeside mass strike that 'action should be taken at once' against the Chinese. A racist gang attacked West African seamen in the Broomielaw docks area just a few hours later. As one historian has concluded:

The clash on the Broomielaw can be taken as an example of how one element of the working class can be made the scapegoat, by those supposedly protecting the interests of all workers (in this case the two seamen's unions), in order to secure the best deal for their members, at the expense of the minority.²⁵

The important point to add, of course, is that, although the black and Chinese seamen suffered most, the white trade unionists certainly didn't benefit either by being taken in by Shinwell's diversionary politics.

The threat to the British ruling class lessened as 1919 unfolded and there was a decline in class confidence, especially among the least organised sections of the workers. As this happened, there was a repeat on a nationwide scale of the scenario Shinwell had more or less purposefully brought about in Glasgow, with some white workers attracted by the possibility of 'kicking down' those worse off than themselves.

Blacks and Arabs were set upon in all Britain's major ports and suffered savage beatings, fire bombings and murders. In February the violence erupted in South Shields, in April in the London docks; in May it hit Liverpool and Cardiff in June. The intensity of the violence seems to have increased at each stage. In Cardiff the rioting lasted several days, and resulted in three deaths. A Cardiff Somali, Ibrahim Ismaa'il, later remembered in his memoirs that;

A Warsangeli [from a Northern Somali kabil or clan], Abdi Langara, had a boarding house right in the European part of town... As soon as the fight started all the Warsangeli went to defend Abdi's house... Seven or eight Warsangeli defended the house and most of them got badly wounded. Some of the white people also received wounds. In the end the whites took possession of the first floor, soaked it with paraffin oil and set it alight. The Somalis managed to keep up the fight until the police arrived—one of them was left for dead.²⁶

A local newspaper report described how:

A black man was spotted—he was first insulted and then attacked by three whites, one of whom blew a whistle. This seemed to be the expected signal, because hundreds of persons rushed up from the neighbouring street, including many women and girls—who had sticks and stones, and flung them at the unfortunate coloured man as they chased him along the street.²⁷

Black and Arab seamen never took these attacks lying down, even when they were outnumbered. One account from the 1919 riots tells how a Somali imam, Hadjii Mohammed, ‘was prepared to face the mob, but his white wife pleaded with him, so he clambered up a drainpipe, hid on the roof and watched his residence being reduced to a skeleton’.²⁸ A white racist was killed on the first night of the race riot in Cardiff. One historian writes that ‘the police protected the main black settlement around Loudoun Square (Because they feared the blacks would kill more whites if they didn’t) but left unguarded a secondary area of largely Arab settlement nearer the city centre. This population moved into Butetown for self-protection’.²⁹ The subsequent police report, openly betraying its sympathies, concluded that ‘if the crowd had overpowered the police and got through, the result would have been disastrous, as the black population would probably have fought with desperation and inflicted great loss of life’.³⁰

In South Shields fighting broke out after an Arab seaman punched a racist trade union official outside the dockside union offices. A large crowd then attacked the Arabs who, outnumbered, ‘armed themselves with knives, sticks and revolvers’ and drove back their attackers’,³¹ while in Liverpool black seamen had defended their boarding houses against a police raid, one ‘armed with a poker, others with revolvers, knives and razors. One policeman was shot in the mouth, another in the neck, a third was slashed on face and neck, and a fourth had his wrist broken’.³² Soon afterwards a West Indian, Charles Wotten, escaping police clutches after one raid, was cornered by a crowd of 200 to 300 racists who threw him into the docks and pelted him with stones until he drowned.³³

There were some reported spontaneous acts of solidarity from individual English people, and socialist newspapers such as Sylvia Pankhurst’s *Workers’ Dreadnought* would excoriate ‘negro-hunting’ and ask the rhetorical question, ‘Do you wish to exclude all blacks from England? If so, do you not think blacks might justly ask that the British should at the same time keep out of black peoples’ countries?’³⁴ But in the main the blacks and Arabs were left to put up resistance by themselves against the mobs and their organised

collaborators in the forces of 'law and order'.³⁵

Part 2: 1919-1950—The seamen and the inter-war years

The reaction of the authorities to the 1919 mob violence was to further crack down on the Muslim seamen. Arab and Somali sailors were reclassified from their previous status as British passport holding workers to unwelcome and problematic 'aliens', their rights as British subjects deliberately and callously stripped away.

In 1921 the Cardiff Town Clerk recommended that destitute seamen 'be repatriated forthwith, or accommodated in a concentration camp',³⁶ and in 1922 hundreds of Adenese were repatriated out of the city. Seamen, including numbers of Somalis and Yemenis in South Shields who had lived in Britain for a long time, many with white wives and British-born children, were told that they had to prove their citizenship rights from scratch, and many had their British status removed for lack of documentation or financial resources to register it.

The National Union of Seamen seized the opportunity to do a 'British First' deal with the shipping owner. The government and Home Office issued new restrictions in 1920 and then 1925 under the Aliens Act which had been targeted in the first place against poor Jewish immigrants:

All coloured alien seamen were henceforth to be registered with the police and to carry an identity card marked 'SEAMAN' in red ink bearing a photograph and a thumb-print. It was argued that the last was necessary because it was more difficult to tell coloured men apart and some more positive means of identification was needed! The holder was not a person but an invisible man, a black; only the criminal associations of a thumb-print could give him an identity.³⁷

The NUS was granted the sanction in 1930 that Arab and Somali sailors specifically should be picked last (if at all) and go on a forced rota that meant they had to take any job offered them if they were not to lose all rights not only to a job but the right to stay in Britain. The order specified that;

A white card shall be issued...to any Somali or Arab who satisfies the Port Consultants that he is a bona fide seaman and lawful in this country. The white card shall only be issued after being stamped by the National Union of Seamen and the Shipping Federation... Officers engaging Somalis or Arab crews shall be informed that it is very undesirable to mix Somalis and Arabs of other races, and asked to specify which one they prefer.³⁸

Soon Somalis, Arabs and their families were pushed into starvation and destitution.

Police harassment and a local authorities' ban on them moving out of the depressed port areas effectively segregated these 'aliens' and their families, treating them as a 'social menace'. Very top of the list of moral crusaders was Cardiff chief constable James A Wilson, who clearly had a pathological hatred of 'race mixing':

The coloured seamen who live in our midst...are not imbued with our moral code, and have not assimilated our conventions. They come into contact with the female sex of the white race, and their progeny are half-caste, with the vicious hereditary taint of their parents.³⁹

Wilson was delighted to hear of the South African Immorality Act of 1927 that forbade sexual relationships across racial boundaries.

The Arab and Somali seamen responded to the attack on their already precarious existence by launching a militant and vigorous campaign to smash the rota, picketing shipping offices and lobbying to get the union's position changed. The violent confrontations that took place in Cardiff and South Shields as a result ended with Arab and Somali sailors being prosecuted and receiving 'exemplary' sentences tagged with judicial recommendations of deportation.

The seamen looked to radical forces to help them. In Cardiff they were drawn via activists in the Seaman's Minority Movement and the International Transport Workers' Federation into a working alliance with the Communist Party and the Colonial Defence Association it influenced. One historian tells how 'the International Transport Workers Federation sprung to the defence of coloured men in one of the perennial conflicts over national insurance. The following year black men were involved in a movement to increase wages within the NUS.' As Neil Evans has written in his meticulous study of the period, 'Butetown was viewed by the Communist Party at the time as one of the most productive areas to hold corner street meetings and sell literature. In the late 1930s the Colonial Defence Association led protest marches and deputations about relief scales to the City Hall in Cardiff'.⁴⁰

An article in the *Negro Worker* (edited by Trinidadian communist and Pan-Africanist George Padmore) in 1933 under the byline of Minority Movement port organiser Harry O'Connell was headlined 'Race Prejudice in England'. It reported a debate at a Cardiff City Council meeting over the issue of relief for blacks and concluded, 'Coloured and white workers

in Cardiff must unite to fight for equal employment rates for all workers irrespective of colour and race. As long as the British Slavemasters are able to play out one section of the working class against another, they will be able to rob and exploit both alike'.⁴¹ In 1934 the anti-socialist LCP leader Dr Harold Moody was forced to complain (with some exaggeration) that 'the coloured people of Cardiff are mainly Communists, simply because no one else has seen fit to give them a helping hand'.⁴²

These Muslim communities organised among themselves for their political, social and religious needs as well as forging links with radical anti-racist organisations. In Cardiff the British Somali Society (BSS) and the Somali Youth League (connected to organisations in Somalia) were formed in the mid-1930s, and the BSS leadership collaborated with the Communist Party.⁴³ The United Committee of Coloured and Colonial Peoples Organisations, set up to unite the migrant seamen of Cardiff across national, ethnic and religion divides, sent an Arab delegate, Mohamed Hassan, to the landmark 1945 Pan-African Congress organised by George Padmore in Manchester, along with two delegates from a Somali Society.⁴⁴ There were also welfare organisations and a religious grouping, the Islamia Allawia Friendly Society, in Cardiff⁴⁵ and similar formations in South Shields. As Ansari has written, 'Muslims in Britain found themselves forming part of a broader multicultural identity, which coexisted with and sometimes transcended religion'.⁴⁶

After the Second World War renewed migration from the colonies boosted the Yemeni populations. As Richard Lawless has written:

In the 1950s and 1960s a new influx of Yemenis into Britain found employment not in shipping but in heavy industry, especially in the steel and metal-working plants in Sheffield and Birmingham... Some Arab seafarers moved to the Midlands where new employment opportunities were opening up in industry and in this way forged a link between the two phases of Yemeni migration to Britain.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, harassment of Muslim sailors by the police and local authorities in Cardiff and South Shields continued. A sharp reminder came in 1952 when a Somali seaman, Hussein Mattan, was fitted up by the police for the murder of a local woman and hanged after a sham trial. It was not until 1998, 46 years later, that his widow Laura and sons Omar and Mervyn managed to get this gross miscarriage of justice recognised as such and Mattan's name cleared.⁴⁸

Part 3: The Second World War—Shipboard militancy and early industrial roots

Labour shortages with the outbreak of the Second World War strengthened the position of lascars. They were in demand once again, but they were not prepared to put aside their maltreatment. Cynical demands for them to unite behind the war against fascism were evidently rejected, many probably recalling how in 1919 they had been ‘rewarded’ for their efforts at the end of the First World War.

As Rosina Visram has written:

Three days into the war, by September 1939, as many as eight ships were on strike, Indian seamen demanding, in some cases, a 200 percent wage rise, including essential provisions like soap, warm clothing and bedding... The Board of Trade was forced into negotiations, enlisting the help of the India High Commissioner, Sir Firozkhan Noon, to act as mediator in order to minimize concessions.⁴⁹

An attempt by ship-owners to impose a 25 percent across the board wage rise to head off militancy backfired, as did mass jailings of strikers. This bitter struggle continued throughout the war, led by a Bengal-born political activist named Surat Alley,⁵⁰ and eventually succeeding in achieving better pay and conditions for the seaman, although still way behind that enjoyed by their white counterparts.

Meanwhile employment was opening up in another sector—the war industries, drawing in ex-seamen and new migrants, especially from pre-partition India (Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis). Visram describes how:

Factories and war-related industries in London, Glasgow, but particularly in the Midlands, needed labour. Indeed, demand was so high that even their lack of English language was apparently no longer considered a handicap... Some gave up peddling [a trade traditionally occupied by Indian men] for more secure factory employment... The two most numerous ethnic groups engaged in industries in wartime Britain were Bengali Muslims, largely ex-seamen, and Punjabis, both Sikh and Muslim.⁵¹

By April 1943 there were up to 2,000 Indians labouring across Birmingham and Coventry.⁵² Although they filled a crucial gap in the war industries, they were, as before, crowded into poor accommodation and faced discrimination at work. They responded by starting to organise themselves, socially, politically and through the trade unions.

The Indian Workers Associations (IWAs) had their origins in 1937, formed by Sikh activists living in Coventry with political connections to the Indian independence movement in Punjab, and by 1942 also existed in Birmingham, Bradford, London and other towns, with Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims joining together. The IWAs' early activity was heavily influenced by Indian socialist and communist organisations, and branches and individuals had close political and membership links to the Communist Party. The secret service described a founder member, Coventry-based Akbar Ali Khan, known as the 'driving force' behind the IWA, as holding 'advanced political views'.⁵³ Another founder member was Udham Singh, who became a martyr when he was hanged in Pentonville Prison in 1940 after shooting dead the colonial governor of Punjab responsible for the Amritsar Massacre, which Singh had witnessed as a boy. Singh called himself Ram Mohammed Singh Azad to embody Hindu (Ram), Muslim (Mohammed), Sikh (Singh) freedom (Azad) in unity against British colonial rule.

Part 4: Making their mark—post-war migration, new workers, racism and the industrial struggles

The long economic boom that followed the Second World War pulled significant numbers of migrant workers into Western Europe. As a commentator observed in the mid-1970s, 'migrant workers are used largely to fill jobs that native workers will not do, because of their low wages or low esteem. And yet they are jobs which are essential to the maintenance of public services that bolster our consumer economy.'⁵⁴

Workers from the Indian subcontinent made up the majority of Muslim migration during this period, although there were other smaller groups—Turkish Cypriots fearing the prospect of ethnic conflict on their island, Moroccans to work in the hotel and catering industries, Yemenis in the steel industry in Sheffield. In all cases they followed in the footsteps of earlier settlers, but in larger numbers and into different industries.⁵⁵

Muhammad Anwar describes the way in which this 'chain' migration took place in relation to Pakistani workers:

The mass migration of Pakistanis started in the late 1950s and early 1960s when new migrants followed the routes established by the pioneer Pakistanis... The sponsorship and patronage by the early settlers helped to overcome the intervening obstacles for migrants. This led to a chain of migration on the kinship, friendship basis... It was estimated in 1951 that there were 5,000 Pakistanis (including Bangladeshis) in Britain... In 1961 the estimated number reached 24,900, and by 1966 it grew to 119,700.⁵⁶

The IWAs as a movement had faltered in the period after the Second World War⁵⁷ but revived in the late 1950s as Indians, including Muslims, faced other challenges. The Southall IWA, for instance, went from a membership of 120 in 1957 to 12,500 by the late 1960s.⁵⁸ The branches gave a militant edge to community organisation, meeting welfare, social and cultural needs along with trade union and political leadership.

As Dilip Hiro has recorded:

The leftist element continued to exhort IWA members to participate in trade union activities, and even to set up unions where they did not already exist. In this they were quite successful. Many local IWAs could justly claim that their members, in spite of victimisation and the threats of employers, managed to found unions. Also, without exception, IWA members supported whatever militant action was taken by established unions in factories and public transport, because they believed that the economic lot of Indian workers was intimately intertwined with that of British workers.

The IWAs also ‘showed much vigour and initiative in combating racial discrimination and opposing racist immigration policies’, taking the lead in organizing national demonstrations in 1961 and again in 1968.⁵⁹

Immigrant workers, although doing long hours of shift work for poor pay, were not in peripheral sectors of the economy: 43 percent of black workers in the mid-1970s were in factories employing over 500 workers, compared to 29 percent of white workers. And 61 percent of male black workers were unionised compared to 45 percent of white male workers.⁶⁰

They were soon to move into confrontation with the employers, and quite often obstructive and racist local union officials.

In May 1965 the first significant post-war ‘immigrant strike’ took place at Red Scar Mill in Preston, Lancashire, involving Indian, Pakistani and African-Caribbean workers. It was opposed by the local TGWU organisation who characterised it as ‘tribal’, ‘racial’ and ‘unofficial’.⁶¹ In May 1972 Pakistani workers struck at Crepe Sizes, Nottingham, and a month later African-Caribbean workers struck at Stanmore Engineering Works. In June 1973 another strike involving African-Caribbean workers hit Standard Telephone and Cables. Then Asians struck at Harwood Cash Lawn Mills in Mansfield and at EE Jaffe and Malmic Lace in Nottingham, and Indian and Pakistani workers at Perivale Gütermann in Southall, west London.

What then was the industrial and political background to this rash of strikes and the race and class dynamics within them?

In 1962 the Tory government passed the openly discriminatory

Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Harold Wilson's Labour government further turned the screws in 1965 and then in 1968 bowed before the racist hysteria unleashed by Enoch Powell to rush through parliament a law to block Asians with UK passports coming to Britain when they were driven out of East Africa. Further waves of racist hysteria accompanied the plight of Ugandan Asians in 1972 and Malawi Asians in 1976.

Those who did get through the barriers settled predominantly in areas of London, especially west London and Middlesex, Birmingham and the East Midlands. Although many had arrived in Britain penniless, that did not mean they were prepared to be passive in the face of hostility or unequal treatment. About half were from Hindu backgrounds, the rest being Muslims and Sikhs.⁶² One contemporary report recorded, 'The newcomers include traders, doctors, teachers, bank clerks, civil servants, motor mechanics and labourers. Most of the young people have received an English education'.⁶³

East African Asians, whatever their previous status or profession, found only badly paid textile factory work open to them in Leicester and other nearby towns.⁶⁴ Their entry into the manual workforce coincided with the first weakening of the long post-war boom and disillusion with the record of the 1964-70 the Wilson government. There was a rising tide in workers' militancy:

There were more than 200 occupations of shipyards, factories, offices and workshops between 1972 and 1974. Workers also won important battles on the wages front... The total of strike days reached 10,980,000 in 1970 and 13,551,000 in 1971, climbing to 23,909,000 in 1972—the highest figure since the 1920s.⁶⁵

The 1972 miners' strike had been won after mass picketing at Saltley Gate stopped a strategically important Midlands coke depot. In 1974 the Tory government was to fall after it lost another confrontation with the miners. Against this background, why should Asian workers hold back?

But alongside the rising level of struggle there was also an underbelly of racist scapegoating, exacerbated by the ability of the far right to exploit disillusion with Labour's failure to fulfil the expectations of its supporters. The response of important groups of Asian workers marked a fundamental shift in the landscape of British trade union politics and its approach to black and immigrant workers. It was in June 1972 that the first of the series of major industrial confrontations involving East African Asians took place at Mansfield Hosiery Mill in Loughborough:

The lowest paid workers, bar loaders, all of whom were Asian, asked for a

pay rise and in October struck—against union advice. All the other workers came out with the bar loaders, although the whites returned to work within a week. What underlay the bar loaders' anger was the refusal of management to train them as knitters (all the knitters were white). Eventually the bosses agreed to train two Asians as knitters and the white workers struck in protest. The outcome was a new deal which the bar loaders then rejected and struck against. Their strike was eventually made official in December after they occupied the union offices. A return to work eventually took place when the Asian workers accepted that 30 of the 80 knitters' jobs be reserved for them.⁶⁶

The politicised strike committee afterwards called a 'trade unions and racialism conference' that was attended by 350 delegates from the left, black organisations and the trade unions, and offered solidarity to other workers in their position.

Mansfield Hosiery was followed by a larger confrontation at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester in 1974. This strike involved 400 mostly East Asians, lasted for four months and quickly became political, with the focus moving from the issue of wages to that of racism and democracy in the trade unions. The strikers, many among them young women, fought against open and ugly racism on the part of white union members and their leaders. They organised mass pickets, resisted intimidation by National Front thugs, held three mass rallies, won widespread support inside and outside the local Indian community, and appealed successfully to the TGWU national leadership for an inquiry into the lack of Asian representation on the factory shop stewards committee. The casually bigoted attitude of the local union leadership was shown by the TGWU's district official who in an interview not only sympathised with the company, but attacked the women strikers: 'They have got to learn to fit in our ways, you know. We haven't got to fit into theirs'.⁶⁷ He clearly couldn't comprehend that the Asian women 'fitted in' more with 'the ways' of British trade unionists than he did.

The Imperial Typewriters strike committee refused to mirror this hostility. It put out a statement saying, 'Our struggle has taught us also that black workers must never for a moment entertain the thought of separate black unions. They must join the existing unions and fight through them'.⁶⁸

Those white workers inside Imperial Typewriters who opposed the strike were soon proved to be ultimately acting against their own interests. As one contemporary account described:

When Littons [the US multinational that owned the factory] decided to close its two UK factories in 1974, the Leicester plant put up no resistance, while

the Hull workers occupied their factory in an attempt to save their jobs. The Leicester workforce, weakened and demoralised by racist divisions, was in no position to fight back over the closure, and black and white workers alike lost their jobs.⁶⁹

The challenge to the trade union movement reached its height at Grunwick's two years later. The workforce at this film-processing factory in north east London was 80 percent East African Asian. In August 1976 nearly half of them walked out demanding union recognition. The ensuing strike was to last two years, with the trade union movement, black community and radical organisations and the left on one side and George Ward, the Anglo-Indian boss, the courts, the police and organised right forces on the other. It also drew in the TUC and the Labour cabinet, albeit kicking and screaming. The inspirational leader of the strike was Jayaben Desai, a Kenyan East Indian whose bitter experience of the lack of TUC backbone led to her trenchant comment, 'Official action from the TUC is like honey on your elbow: you can smell it, you can see it, but you can never taste it'.⁷⁰

The secretary of the strike committee was Mahmood Ahmad. He told a mass meeting of 2,000 trade unionists at a British Leyland convenors' conference that TUC promises of real support were so much hot air: 'If the British trade union movement wants to recruit Asian workers then it has to do better than this.' It was reported that 'Mahmood was the only speaker that day to receive a standing ovation'.⁷¹

But if the top of the trade union movement was failing the Grunwick strikers, that accusation could not seriously be levelled at the rank and file. The mass picket deployed at Saltley Gate manifested itself at Grunwick's. As the 'official' account of the dispute pointed out:

It was the mass picket that transformed the strike... It was the arrival in Willesden of thousands of trade unionists from all over Britain which was to reassure the strikers that they were not, after all, alone and that besides the right wing section of the labour movement there was also a left wing, a radical and a militant section which responded with class feeling to the call of all workers in struggle, whether male or female, manual or clerical, black or white.⁷²

The police, including the paramilitary Special Patrol Group, attacked the mass pickets but they did not stop building the mass actions, building to a peak on 11 July 1977 when 20,000 turned out, including Yorkshire miners led by Arthur Scargill. But national trade union leaderships would not defy a court ban on postal workers refusing to move Grunwick's mail, and the

struggle eventually ended in a defeat for the strikers. It was an important episode in the development of the downturn of workers' struggle that would culminate in the 'Winter of Discontent' as the Labour government turned on its own supporters, ushering in the Thatcher years. However, the wider lesson of Grunwick's was not lost:

Grunwick's was the most important dispute in the history of the British labour movement concerning the immigrant community. It laid the ghost of black and brown workers not being prepared to join unions and undercutting the wages of white workers. Gone forever is the image of the passive and unorganisable traditional Asian women. There are still problems with race within the trade union movement, but Grunwick did much to erase the painful memory of disputes in which black and brown workers were not supported by their white colleagues.⁷³

Grunwick's set down a marker for the British working class and trade union movement. National union leaders had used the annual Trades Union Congress since the 1950s to argue against racism and for immigrant workers to be recruited into the unions. This reflected a massive step forward from the 1930s when the congress had conducted rancid racist debates and could happily unite around seamen's unions calls to bar lascars. However, the TUC had rarely been under pressure to deliver on this stance. Grunwick's changed that and paved the way for a new black presence inside the union structures. The TGWU union, which had been the union of choice for Asian workers despite the position of many local union leaders, would go on to elect Bill Morris as the first black trade union general secretary in 1991.

It had been a hard struggle since the Red Scar Mill strike in Preston. Muslim workers, including women workers, were among those actively involved in the strikes of these years.⁷⁴ The strikers were class conscious and prepared to use the most radical and advanced tools in the class struggle to achieve their collective aims. It is not what set Muslim workers apart that stands out from an analysis of this period: rather it is what they had in common with other workers.

Part 5: The Asian youth movements—radicalisation and the fight against racism and fascism

The radical period detonated by the events of 1968 had its effect on Muslim and other black and Asian workers in Britain. The rising class struggle internationally, the anti-imperialism of the fight against the Vietnam War and the black movement that emerged from the United States civil rights period all

made their mark, especially on the younger generation of Asians confronted by the rising threat of the National Front and ever more barbaric immigration controls from Tory and Labour administrations.

The Imperial Typewriters strikers had had to confront counter-pickets by the National Front (carrying banners saying 'White Workers of Imperial Typewriters'). Two years later in 1976 the National Front polled 15,000 votes in Leicester, against the backdrop of a powerful racist campaign against the entry of Malawi Asians to Britain. A series of racist murders followed. In Southall, west London, in an area of major Punjabi settlement, a young man, Gurdip Singh Chaggar, was struck down by a gang of drunken racist white youths. The Metropolitan Police commissioner rushed to say that it was not necessarily racially motivated. A leading fascist and Blackburn councillor, John Kingsley Read, celebrated the murder of Chaggar with the notorious phrase 'One down, one million to go'. As a historian writes, 'This senseless murder made most of the members of the local Asian community realise that they were being overly optimistic in thinking racism would subside... Out of this traumatic experience arose the Southall Youth Movement'.⁷⁵

The Southall Youth Movement considered itself more radical than the 'old guard' who were connected with the IWAs and the Communist Party. Many members of the youth movements had moved in and out of Trotskyist organisations, and although some later ended up hostile to the far left, there is no doubt that they were influenced by its politics and methods. The success of a mass mobilisation initiated by the International Socialists in stopping the National Front from marching through a black area of Lewisham had been followed by the rise of the Anti Nazi League and Rock Against Racism, and the strategy of building mass organisation and direct action dominated the political culture.⁷⁶

A flavour of the times and the rapid development of the Southall Youth Movement is reflected in this contemporary report:

The emergence of a militant anti-racist Indian youth movement in Southall in the last few weeks took the entire local left by surprise. In fact, youth organisation was the inevitable conclusion to the spontaneous youth movement that sprung to life in the hours and days following the brutal murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in the heart of Southall... The Southall Youth Movement...has brought out hundreds on a number of demonstrations... Further the Southall youth astonished...by organising a mass sitdown in Piccadilly Circus on the 11 July [1976] demonstration when two of their number were arrested for chasing racists.⁷⁷

A Sivanandan, commenting on the period, pointed out that:

Various youth movements sprang up from this initiative—whenever and wherever there was a need and in response to specific circumstances. But since these circumstances were invariably connected with fascist attacks and murders, and/or police inability either to protect or apprehend...the youth movements tended to centre largely around the defence of these communities, and their organisations to reflect that purpose.⁷⁸

Youth movements were established in Luton, Nottingham, Leicester, Manchester, Bradford, Sheffield and Birmingham and elsewhere.⁷⁹ There were several set up in London, for example among the Bangladeshi and Pakistani populations. The Bangladeshi Youth Movement was organised in response to the racist murder of Altab Ali in Whitechapel.

In Newham a youth movement was organised after the murder of 29 year old Akhtar Ali Baig. He was 'savagely attacked on East Ham High Street by a skinhead gang—two boys, two girls, aged 15 to 17—who stopped him, abused him and spat in his face before one of them, 17 year old Paul Mullery, pulled out a sheath knife and stabbed him in the heart. 'I've just gutted a Paki', Mullery was said to have boasted'.⁸⁰

The youth movements had different ethnic and religious membership reflecting the geographical area which they operated from, but, as Anandi Ramamurthy has pointed out, they all 'worked with white anti-racists'.⁸¹

It was members of the Bradford Youth Movement who came to national prominence. In the summer of 1981 there were rumours that the Asian community was to be the target of an organised fascist attack (not for the first or last time). The youth put in preparations for self-defence, much in the manner of the Cardiff seamen over 60 years before. Petrol bombs were discovered by the police on some waste ground. Twelve members of the Bradford Youth Movement were arrested and charged with conspiracy to cause an explosion and endanger lives—a charge of 'terrorism' up to then more commonly used against Irish Catholics.⁸²

'The Bradford 12' were put on trial a year later, prompting and inspiring a huge political campaign in their defence. Over half of the defendants came from Muslim families.⁸³ Their lawyers ran what was seen as an audacious defence—rather than lodge a guilty plea they would argue that the 12 had been acting in legitimate self-defence and in defence of their communities. The jury agreed with them and the Bradford 12 were acquitted.⁸⁴

Although the youth movements could incorporate and unify activists across different faith backgrounds, it would be a simplification to describe

them as purely secular movements. Members of the youth movements could hold strong religious convictions or be influenced by the religious cultures of their families.⁸⁵ Tariq Mehmood looking back explains that:

Most of the people in the youth movements were religious, but religion was not an issue for the members, it was their own affair. Many Sikhs, Hindus and Christians helped to protect mosques, as Muslims did of temples when they were attacked. We had very close relationships with gurdwaras and mosques. There were many among the Muslim [members] who kept all fasts... The unity was in anti-racism and anti-imperialism... Ishaq Mohammed Kazi came to me about the question of God. Two weeks later he was in jail as part of the Bradford 12... Any divisions were political, either Labour Party or left party. Or else caste or national.⁸⁶

The youth movements went into decline through the 1980s, partly as a result of the general downturn in workers' struggles that removed a unifying outward-looking focus for Asian youth. Another weighty factor in their decline was the 'carrot' dangled by substantial state funding of 'community' resources and the consequent co-option of activists. This state funding was also increasingly organised on ethnic and religious lines.

It is argued that the Rushdie affair in 1988-89 had a decisive and destructive polarising effect. On the one hand Conservative forces in the Muslim communities campaigned against his novel *The Satanic Verses* as 'sacrilegious' and supported an Iranian fatwa against him, while on the other the media launched a wave of Islamophobia which led to Muslims of all sorts being taunted with the chant, 'Rushdie'. Many youth movement members or ex-members were divided on where they stood, (or, as one activist put it, 'there was no middle ground left'.⁸⁷) However, the common interpretation that the response to *The Satanic Verses* desecularised the youth movements and set in motion a wholly reactionary religious identity ignores political and organisational splits and stresses that were already in existence. It would be more accurate to say that Rushdie exposed a decline that had been in motion for some time. This was a downward trend mirrored in the other social movements that had sprung up in the 1970s, for example among women.

It is also increasingly clear that the assertion of a religious identity in the face of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism contains a strong positive element and the potential to engage in militant mass action with others, religious or otherwise. It would be wholly wrong to counterpose the politics of the youth movements against those of today's anti-war movement. They should not be placed in opposition to one another—if anything they should

be regarded as varied manifestations of a militant and proud tradition.

The youth movements should be viewed in the broader sweep of the history of struggles of working class Muslims in Britain. As such they became part of an historical and political continuum set in motion many decades previously. From the courageous and radical struggles by the pioneering seamen and their families, through the tenacious and uncompromising struggles of the factory workers to the radical formations against fascism and racism, this is a history that anyone can be proud of. The future chapter in this narrative is already in the making.

In all the periods I describe groups, of black workers were defending themselves, moving into struggle and asserting their rights. They all demanded solidarity from the wider working class—sometimes they gained it; sometimes they didn't. The role of the left, of anti-imperialists and anti-racists, was crucial to how much solidarity was delivered, to the degree to which racist attitudes were challenged, and whether or not the struggles of black workers began to interact with the class struggles in general. The same remains true today.

NOTES

1: I would like to dedicate this article out of respect to Peter Fryer who died on 31 October 2006. His book *Staying Power* remains unsurpassed in the study of British black history.

2: For more on my analysis of Muslims and the war on terror see 'Racism: Myths and Realities', *International Socialism* 95 (Summer 2002); 'Racism', in Farah Reza (ed), *Anti Imperialism: A Guide for the Movement* (Bookmarks, 2003); and 'Racism: A Boost for the Bigots', *Socialist Review*, November 2005, <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9579>

3: For good accounts of this early history see Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (Hurst & Company, 2004), and Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors & Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (Columbia University Press, 1999).

4: Richard I Lawless, *From Ta'izz to Tyneside: An Arab Community in the North East of England During the Early 20th Century* (University of Exeter Press, 1995), p31.

5: In the east London docks in the early 1940s there were still Somali and Bangladeshi cafes open along Cable Street, giving rise to speculation that Muslim seamen may have taken part in the 1936 Battle of Cable Street against Mosley's fascists.

6: Lawless, as above, p48.

7: As above, p220.

8: Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp171-172.

9: Humayun Ansari, as above, pp60, 61.

10: Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration & British Society, 1871-1971* (Macmillan, 1988), p106.

11: See Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain 400 Years of History* (Pluto Press, 2002), pp304-319.

12: Little, as above, p127.

13: As above, p104.

14: As above.

15: Havelock Wilson started off as a militant fighter, a working activist like Tom Mann, but moved to the right and by the end of the First World War was getting secret payments from an anti-Labour pro-empire organisation.

16: Kenneth Lunn, 'Race Relations or Industrial Relations?: Race and Labour in Britain, 1880-1950', in Kenneth Lunn (ed), *Race and Labour in 20th Century Britain* (Frank Cass, 1985), p12.

17: As above, p16.

18: See Kenneth Little for details of racism directed against relationships between Arab sailors and white women. The white women were denigrated as either prostitutes or 'loose women'. Little in his surveys finds there was a cross-section of women married to Arab men: 'It would be a mistake to assume that the origins of all the Loudoun Square womenfolk are of such "poor class"'. There are examples of girls coming straight from middle class families whose marriage to a coloured man has proved socially inauspicious from the point of view of parents or friends, and who as a consequence, partly for convenience, partly through social pressure, were obliged to move to the coloured quarter of the town. With the arrival of children their position in the district became consolidated more or less for good. Other whites have arrived here in a variety of ways. A few have left home from a spirit of adventure, or because they have found the ideas and customs of their original social group too restrictive and have "taken up" with a coloured man'—Little, pp136-137. Lawless in his book on the South Shields Muslims quotes articulate and well argued letters from white wives in response to racist attacks in the local press. One, who signed herself 'White Woman', replied to an attack on 'half caste' children, 'No matter what colour we are all flesh and blood... As for our kiddies being outcastes I think those

who say that do not know the meaning of the word; one thing we can send our children to school clean and tidy, and they can come home to a good dinner... If the white men were out of the coloured man's country, we would be quite willing to go back with our men to their country.' Quoted in Lawless, pp186-187. Lawless also reproduces posed family photos from the 1930s that visually demonstrate that the Arabs and their families considered themselves wholly 'respectable' members of the working class.

19: Trades Union Congress Minutes 1925, pp100-101, www.unionhistory.info/reports

20: Kenneth Lunn, as above, p12.

21: Lawless, as above, p92.

22: Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Pluto Press, 1984), p299.

23: Earnest Marke, *In Troubled Waters: Memoirs of my Seventy Years in England!* (Karia Press, 1986).

24: Chanie Rosenberg, *1919: Britain on the Brink of Revolution* (Bookmarks 1987), p38.

25: Jacqueline Jenkinson, 'The Glasgow Race Disturbances of 1919', in Kenneth Lunn (ed), as above, p65.

26: Quoted in Fryer, as above, p306.

27: As above, p306.

28: As above, p307.

29: Neil Evans, 'Regulating the Reserve Army: Arabs, Blacks and the Local State in Cardiff, 1919-45', in Kenneth Lunn (ed), as above, p73.

30: Fryer, as above, p304.

31: Lawless, as above, p81. At the 1925 Trades Union Congress a seamen's union leader in his speech dramatically 'pro-

duced some clubs and other weapons that [he said] the Arabs and Somalis took down to the shipping office'. See TUC website above.

32: Fryer, as above, p300.

33: As above.

34: *Workers' Dreadnought*, Issue 7, June 1919. During this time Pankhurst employed black radical poet Claude McKay as a journalist, as well as a black sailor, Reuben Samuels.

35: See Marke, as above, pp30, 31, for an account of how he was helped by a local woman to escape mob attack and on one occasion was rescued from a beating by a group of women factory workers.

36: Visram, as above, p204.

37: Evans, as above, p80.

38: Lawless, as above, pp251-2.

39: Evans, as above, p88.

40: As above, p102.

41: *Negro Worker*, April-May 1933 (nos 4-5, vol 3). Four years earlier Harry O Donnell had been sentenced for eight months in jail after taking part in an Arab and Somali picket in South Shields that led to a violent confrontation with local NUS officials and the police (see Lawless, p138). An Arab boarding house owner Ali Said, who had emerged as a forceful leader allied to O Donnell, was sentenced to 16 months hard labour with a recommendation for deportation at the end of his sentence (Lawless, p147). A photograph from the time shows maybe 40 Arab and white members of the Seamen's Minority Movement posing outside the Minority Movement's offices in South Shields (Lawless, plate 5).

42: Evans, as above, p98. During the 1920s a Gujarati communist, Upadhyaya (Paddy), had attempted to organise

'lascars' in Britain into the Indian Seamen's Union. His leaflets were translated into several Indian languages by the imam of the Ahmadiya Mosque in Southfields, south west London. See Visram, p231.

43: Ansari, as above, p113.

44: See Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (New Beacon Books, 1995), p119.

45: See Evans, as above, p114. During this period Cardiff Muslims successfully lobbied for a special section in Ely Cemetery to be set aside for them (see Evans, p101).

46: Ansari, as above, p116.

47: See Lawless, as above, p246 (the Sheffield Yemeni's most famous son is the boxer Prince Naseem—full name Naseem Salom Ali Hameed).

48: Duncan Campbell, 'Seaman Wrongly Hanged in 1952', *Guardian*, 25 February 1998. See also the case of the late 1980s miscarriage of justice concerning 'The Cardiff Three', three black men, one of them named Yusef Abdullahi, who were framed for murder. In both cases the real murderers were eventually identified.

49: Visram, as above, p236.

50: As above, p239.

51: As above, pp267-8.

52: As above, p269.

53: As above, p271.

54: Robert Moore, *Racism and Black Resistance in Britain* (Pluto Press, 1975), p7.

55: Ansari, as above, p151.

56: Muhammad Anwar, *British Pakistani: Demographic and Economic Position* (Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1996),

pp7,8. (In the 2001 census the number of Pakistanis in Britain was estimated at 658,000).

57: As above, p273.

58: Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British: A History of Race Relations in Britain* (Grafton, 1991), p140.

59: As above, pp139-140.

60: As above, p20.

61: As above, pp269-270.

62: Douglas Tilbe, *The Ugandan Asian Crisis* (Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches, 1972), p9.

63: As above, p4.

64: From 1968 to 1978, Leicester received more than 20,000 displaced East African Asians, more than anywhere else in the country (Leicester City Council figures).

65: Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, *The Labour Party—A Marxist History* (Bookmarks, 1988), pp308-309.

66: Kim Gordon, *Black Nationalism and Socialism* (SWP, 1979), p69.

67: Amrit Wilson, *Finding A Voice: Asian Women in Britain* (Virago, 1978), p58.

68: Crisis Special Report, 'Racism: Who Profits?', Counter Information Services *CIS Anti Report*, no 16 (Autumn 1976), p22.

69: As above.

70: Jack Dromey and Graham Taylor, *Grunwick: The Workers' Story* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), p102.

71: As above, p102.

72: As above, p103.

73: As above, p198.

74: Significant solidarity was subsequently delivered in 1980 to Asian women workers on strike at the Chix bubble gum factory in Slough.

75: Dilip Hiro, as above, p169.

76: As Ramamurthy records, 'Among the founding members of the Bradford Asian Youth Movement were young Asians who had left the International Socialists (IS, forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party, Militant and the Revolutionary Communist Group). Anandi Ramamurthy, 'The Politics of Britain's Asian Youth Movements', *Race & Class* (Institute of Race Relations), vol 48, 2006, p43.

77: John Rose, 'The Southall Youth Movement', in *International Socialism* 91 (first series), September 1976, pp5-6. An important role in leading the sitdown was played by an Indian female International Socialists activist.

78: A Sivanandan, *A different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (Pluto Press, 1987), p40.

79: Ramamurthy, as above, p44 (see also the Tandana-Glowworm digitalised archive of Asian Youth Movement political ephemera at www.tandana.org).

80: *From Newham: the forging of a black community* (Newham Monitoring Project, 1991), p40.

81: Ramamurthy, as above, p44.

82: As above, p53.

83: See 'Reflecting on the Trial of the Decade The Bradford Twelve', in *Race Today* (vol 14, no 4, August/September 1982), pp124-132. The two leading members of the group on trial were Gata Aura, who had previously been prominent in the successful fight of Rochdale Pakistani Anwar Ditta to overcome the immigration laws that were preventing her children joining her in Britain, and Tariq Mehmood Ali. Both had been members of the International Socialists. Tariq Mehmood is today a novelist and co-director of the award-winning film *Injustice*—a documentary exposing black deaths in custody. Another defendant was Marsha Singh, who is now a local Labour MP. Lawyers involved in the defence included Helena Kennedy (now a Labour peer) and Ruth Bundy (involved in the Stephen Lawrence inquiry).

84: The contrast between the successful Bradford 12 campaign and its outcome and the trials and 'exemplary' sentences handed down following the similar circumstances in Bradford in 2001 is painfully obvious.

85: Ramamurthy, as above, p46.

86: Tariq Mehmood, email conversation with the author, 13 November 2006.

87: Ramamurthy, as above, p57.