

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH

5th day of October, 1982

SUBJECT

East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR)

Reference to Papers

400/82/33

BOX 500

TO

12 OCT 1982

P.A. IN

1. The following information has been received from a secret and reliable source:-

2. On Wednesday 29th September, 1982, between 7.30pm and 9.45pm, at the Brady Club, Barbury Street, E1, the East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR) held a public meeting to discuss the case of Afia BEGUM. Approximately 70 people attended. BEGUM is a Bangladeshi woman due to be deported as the result of a change of her personal circumstances following the death of her husband in a fire in Brick Lane in March, 1982.

3. The Chairman was Keith THOMPSON, organiser of the East London Branch of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR). A video film of the meeting was made by supporters of the group from Sheffield.

4. First speaker was 'Shafiq' (phon) from the Bangladesh Welfare Association (BWA) who made a very brief speech in which he urged support for the campaign to relieve BEGUM from deportation and promised the full backing of his organisation.

5. Councillor HOK of the Tower Hamlets Council, an independent Bengali member of the council, then spoke. He urged that pressure should be put upon the council to support the campaign because it was a result of their 'racist housing policies' that BEGUM's husband was living in a slum at the time of his death and, as a result, there was no way of escaping the fire. HOK cited other cases of bad housing conditions in which immigrant families had to live to illustrate the charge of 'racist housing policy' by Tower Hamlets Council. His contribution was marred, for the organisers of the meeting, when he stated that there must be an 'honest' approach to the question of immigration since even Bangladesh had immigration laws and some controls were necessary.

6. Next speaker was Judith HARRISSON, national organiser of Workers Against Racism (WAR). HARRISSON pointed out the humanitarian reasons for allowing BEGUM to stay and took up HOK's point of the need for immigration control, but adopted the normal WAR line that all immigration controls were racist in their final application. She also covered aspects of racism in the education policy of the local council, and the sinister implications of the new nationality checks at hospitals and DHSS offices. Considerable emphasis was given to the fact that Tower Hamlets council was responsible for the death of BEGUM's husband because of their failure to provide proper housing.



7. The final contribution came from BEGUM's grand-father who merely pointed out that all close members of her family, with the exception of her mother and three sisters, were resident in the United Kingdom and that there was no-one to support her in Bangladesh.

8. In conclusion THOMPSON announced that a fund for BEGUM had been set up and asked for contributions, at which point Councillor HOK demanded to know who the signatories to the fund's account would be. Some-what taken aback by this THOMPSON promised that, following the meeting, discussions would be held to decide who should control the account.

9. The first contribution from the floor came from a Bangladeshi man who demanded to know why attempts had not been made to retain an Asian lawyer in the case instead of a white lawyer. As he was dissatisfied with the reply he walked out of the meeting.

10. Further support for the campaign came from [Privacy] a Tower Hamlets Labour councillor, [Privacy] of House Labour Party and Socialist Organiser Group, [Privacy] of Newham Afro-Asian Association, a member of Weaver ward Labour Party and [Privacy] a solicitor with D. M. RIMBERG & Co. [Privacy] gave a brief background to the legal rights of Afia BEGUM and concluded that so far as could be determined initially, the only grounds upon which the case could be fought was that of exceptional compassionate reasons. He also said that the legal services were being provided free of charge. The meeting was concluded with an announcement that the collection had raised a total of £129.00.

11. The meeting was fairly successful with representatives from a number of organisations clearly wishing to become involved in this campaign. It became clear that a few of the Asians present harboured some degree of hostility towards WAR but the majority were interested in supporting action to prevent the deportation of BEGUM. Even so, as the intervention of Councillor HOK showed in relation to the administration of the fighting fund, WAR may have some difficulty in keeping autonomous control of the campaign. Needless to say WAR would 'power-share' only with the greatest reluctance for fear any of the resulting glory would be diverted from the BCP."

12. Special Branch references to the persons and organisations mentioned in this report together with persons identified at the meeting are as follows:-

[Privacy]





Privacy

Judith HARRISON

100 Privacy

Privacy

Councillor BOX  
(Mohammed Nural HAQUE) 14-11-1981

Privacy

Keith THOMPSON

100 Privacy

Privacy

weaver ward Labour Party	No Trace
Limehouse Labour Party	No Trace
Socialist Organiser	317/81/13
Bangladesh Welfare Association	400/55/123
Newham Afro-Asian Association	No Trace
Revolutionary Communist Party	400/82/18
Bimberg & Co	400/65/182

1 Nigel Short

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

