

Cover Sheet

METROPOLITAN POLICE

SPECIAL BRANCH

Special Report

.....23.....day of.....April.....1979.....

SUBJECT.....

Protest Against
National Front
meeting.

On Monday 23 April 1979 at Southall Town Hall the National Front held a public meeting in support of their local parliamentary candidates in the forthcoming General Election. Prior to the meeting an anti-racist campaign was mounted to oppose (a) the letting of the hall by Ealing Borough Council and (b) the presence of the National Front in this predominantly Asian area.

Reference to Papers

The opposition to the meeting was organised by the Indian Workers Association (Southall) and the Ealing Community Relations Council, who formed a Co-ordinating Committee of Southall Organisations which operated from the I.W.A (S) headquarters at 16/18 Featherstone Road, Southall. This committee included representatives from other political, religious and community groups.

The Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party and the International Marxist Group/Socialist Unity gave the protest campaign wide publicity in their respective periodicals, 'Socialist Worker' and 'Socialist Challenge', as did the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 'Morning Star'.

To gain further publicity, on Sunday 22 April the Indian Workers Association (Southall) organised a march from Southall to Ealing Town Hall in protest against the proposed National Front meeting.

Of the estimated 2,200 persons who took part, the majority were respectable moderate Asians, including a significant number of women and children, indicating the peaceful intentions of the organisers: however there were also some 200 to 300 militant young Asians whomaneuvred their way to the front of the march, and, as a result of their disorderly behaviour throughout the proceedings, seventeen of them were arrested.

By their actions on the march these young Asians demonstrated their alienation from their elders, and their rejection of peaceful protest. The leaders of the IWA(S) constantly called for non-violent activity, but were obviously unable to control the unruly minority and eventually managed to dissociate the main march from them by hanging back and allowing the youths to go ahead.

In the days preceding today's demonstration information was received from a number of sources that some form of action would take place at 1 pm on 23 April, and the indications were that it would probably be organised from within the ranks of the militant Asian youths in Southall.

The day's events commenced at 1 pm with the closure of all shops and businesses in the Southall area in accordance with advice

given by the Chamber of Commerce.

At about 1.20 pm some sixty young Indians arrived at the footway outside the Three Horseshoes public house, opposite Southall Town Hall. They were joined by other Asians who had been in the public house, and by a small contingent of West Indians. This group, which numbered about 150, were promptly moved away from the vicinity of the Town Hall by police. This process was repeated on a number of occasions: each time police moved them on they reappeared in greater numbers. At approximately 5 pm this group, now 300 strong, gathered on the North and South footways of the Broadway and were temporarily contained in that position. After a few minutes police began to move both groups Westwards along the Broadway away from the Town Hall, and in attempts to evade the cordons some of the demonstrators ran from the North footway into the centre of the road: this led to disorder and a number were arrested.

The police presence was then increased, a cordon was drawn across the full width of the Broadway and the crowd was again moved Westwards.

The next incident occurred when a London Transport bus, stopped by the crush of people, was boarded by some of the young Asians and many of the upper deck windows were broken. Those responsible were immediately arrested by police and this led to further violence, during which some shop windows were broken and missiles were thrown at police officers.

Within moments of this incident a police car was stopped by the mass of people and was damaged by the crowd. By then arrests were being effected almost continuously.

Following these events the cordon, supplemented by officers with riot shields, pressed Westwards along the Broadway to a point some 100 yards from the Town Hall junction and many of the demonstrators dispersed down the numerous side streets.

Police then sealed off the area around the Town Hall completely by drawing cordons across the High Street, South Road, Broadway and Lady Margaret Road. With the exception of the last location large groups of demonstrators assembled behind each of these cordons and they eventually totalled about 2,000, the vast majority being of Asian origin.

At that point the protesters were noisy and restless and obviously frustrated by the effectiveness of police arrangements: however as the tension increased they became more and more agitated and a short time after six o'clock missiles were thrown at officers from a crowd of about 500 in South Road and there were many arrests.

At 6.23 pm in the High Street the worst violence of the day suddenly erupted. While it is impossible to be specific about what triggered it off it was noted that following a shout by an Asian youth a large section of the 400-plus crowd rushed the police lines. A barrage of missiles including bricks, paint and coloured flares accompanied the charge and a pitched battle ensued.

In order to restore peace mounted officers and others with riot shields were deployed and eventually the area was virtually cleared of demonstrators.

Beyond the other cordons small knots of Asians remained, but there were no further serious outbreaks of violence.

The National Front election meeting in Southall Town Hall commenced at 7.45 pm, by which time all was comparatively quiet, under the chairmanship of Ernest PENDROUS, National Front Organiser of Ealing Branch. There were five speakers: Clive WAKELEY, NF candidate for Ealing-Acton, James SHAW, candidate for Ealing-North, Joe PEARCE, National Organiser for the Young National Front, John FAIRHURST, candidate for Ealing-Southall and Martin WEBSTER, National Activities Organiser for the NF and candidate for Bethnal Green and Bow.

The meeting was attended by sixty NF supporters, including ten stewards, six representatives of the Press and six Asian members of the public. There was no heckling and no-one was ejected from the hall. The final speech ended at 9.25pm when the Chairman announced that there would be a break of five minutes prior to a question session. On resumption only National Front supporters returned to the hall. A collection was then taken and although the sum realised was not stated it appeared to be about £150, including contributions of £50 from candidate SHAW and £25 from candidate WAKELEY.

Although only sixty NF supporters attended the meeting (the maximum permitted by the Council) about 130 journeyed to the Southall area. The majority not outside Ealing Broadway Underground Station and then a group of them including Martin WEBSTER, went in a convoy of private cars to Southall Town Hall. The remainder about seventy, set off at 8.15pm to walk along the Uxbridge Road towards Southall, but a mile short of their intended destination they were halted by uniform police, who tried to organise them into a properly supervised march. At that time the pitched battle was being fought in High Street Southall and the group was held, pending developments. After a delay of some thirty minutes these NF supporters, sensing that they were unlikely to reach Southall Town Hall drifted back to Ealing Broadway and took no further part in the evening's events.

From late afternoon until the departure of the NF supporters from their meeting at 10pm a powerful public address system was operated from the first floor balcony of 10 High Street, Southall, almost immediately opposite the Town Hall entrance. Anti-National Front and anti-police slogans and chants, interspersed with music, were broadcast at maximum volume throughout. About thirty Asians stood on the pavement chanting the same slogans until moved inside the building by police when they continued the harangue from the balcony.

Due to the large number of persons arrested, dealt with at eight different charge centres, it is not possible to provide definitive statistics at this time, but it is understood that there were at least 340 arrests and that twenty-one police officers were taken to hospital, three were detained, and that many more were given first aid treatment. Latest information shows that twenty-two demonstrators were also taken to hospital and that one man Clement Blair PACH, born 25.3.46 in New Zealand has died, allegedly from injuries received during the demonstration. The circumstances of his death are currently under investigation. What is known is that he was taken to hospital by two women from a house in Orchard Avenue, Southall, but was found to be dead on arrival. One other man [Privacy] or [Privacy], approximate age 37, of [Privacy], SW17, was found in a gutter near Southall Railway Station, believed with a broken leg and other

injuries. He is said to have a weak heart and to be in a serious condition.

While it is generally recognised that Asians can be extremely emotional, volatile and violent on occasions, no valid explanation can be offered for the unprecedented level of physical attacks made against police today by the young Asians and some West Indians. Although the concerted charges had every appearance of being pre-planned no single person or group could be identified as directing operations, apart from the solitary instance in the High Street when the young Asian seemed to give a signal which prompted the worst violence.

Despite the prior publicity given to the protest by the extreme left there was an insignificant number of white supporters - probably less than one hundred.

A. Dickinson

Chief Superintendent

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