

## Chapter 9

# Bradford: The Police – ‘If you print that I’ll deny that I said it.’

The folk in the queue for the bus from Darlington to Leeds looked drab. Their clothes, designed to be dateless, had been chosen to cover their bodies rather than adorn them, and the colours were dull. I felt conspicuous in bright pink. For the most part the dozen or so passengers stood in silence. They were aged around sixty, the generation that grew up in the war and were taught not to complain – ‘Don’t you know there’s a war on!’ They were also taught an undue respect for authority, with the twin result that they avoid contact with authority figures and accept without complaining abysmally low standards of service. At 10.55 a.m., the appointed hour, there was no sign of the bus. The queue seemed unperturbed. At 11.00 I asked if they would keep an eye on my bags while I went in search of an inspector and an explanation. The inspector was easy enough to find, the explanation was not. ‘I’ve heard nothing, so the bus can’t be in serious trouble. Nothing has happened to it. It must be stuck in the traffic.’

‘Stuck in the traffic!’ The daily excuse for millions of latecomers all over the country. Anyone would think we were a nation of car owners, but we are not: there are a mere 320 cars per 1,000 population, compared with 400 in Italy and France, 450 in West Germany and 540 in America. It hardly matters if a gypsy writer is running behind schedule, but I wonder how business efficiency is affected by all this. The Confederation of British Industry once estimated that sitting in traffic jams cost each family £300 a year and that congestion on the M25 (the ring road around London) was costing companies more than £1 billion a year. I was doubly irritated; irritated by my bus being ‘stuck in traffic’ and by the fact that no one had bothered to tell us anything. The latter – poor service – could be improved overnight and with little or no cost; no one seems to have the answer to packed roads. The Transport ministry boasts that it has an ‘enormous road-

building programme’ for the nineties, but new roads and improved roads only seem to create more traffic, because everyone takes to their cars and shuns shabby public transport where no one can be bothered to tell you that your bus is going to be late.

The bus takes one and a half hours to reach Leeds. I whiled away the time pondering the rural way of life and wondering why I had no desire to be permanently part of it. D. H. Lawrence understood. Having spent a weekend at some grand country house he said, ‘One is tempted to give in, and to stay there, to lapse back into its peaceful beauty of bygone things, to live in pure recollection, looking at the accomplished past which is so lovely. But one’s soul rebels.’ Yes, it does. It rebels at such worship of the past. The past is something to be studied and understood; something from which to learn. I do not see it as something ‘golden’ or ‘glorious’. I see it encrusted with conflict and poverty. Ten minutes recalling images of child labour convinces me that the past is not that admirable. Even the recent past, the 1950s, meant a dreary life for most women. Without fridges and washing-machines days were a cycle of shopping, cooking, cleaning and child-rearing, and year after year was the same and horizons were severely limited. Historians tend to present a very male and very middle class view of history; the working class in general and women in particular have benefited much from progress. It is indeed a pity that progress brings pollution, that the pill encourages promiscuity, that women’s liberation loosens family ties. It is indeed a pity that with every step forward we lose something of worth and value; but we should concentrate on retrieving the good things that have been carelessly cast aside. We should not daydream of the past.

The bus station at Leeds was a dump. There was nowhere to leave luggage and the girls in the office refused to let me leave my bags while I wandered into the town. I walked across the bus park to the parcel office, a wooden hut, and asked the man inside if he would be willing to keep an eye on my bags. He readily agreed and also gave me advice on where I could get a haircut. Cheered by his civility I headed off down the hill to the city centre. My eyes refused to register buildings or anything else of interest, they rested instead on one black face after another. I hadn’t seen black faces for months. If there were any in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Lake District and Newcastle, they were so few that they had not made an impact on me. In Leeds there are 20,000 Afro-Caribbeans and 17,000 Asians and in Bradford, ten miles down the road and my destination after a haircut, there are 70,000 Asians and 6,000 Afro-Caribbeans.

I can just recall the arrival of the first influx of immigrants in the

mid-fifties. I lived in Hayes, and in neighbouring Southall a factory making rubber tyres was one of the first to encourage black labour. Their arrival was a topic of both interest and concern at school and in street gossip. In my youthful ignorance I remember thinking that they had been needed to swell the labour force because so many men had been killed in the war. Churchill had gone to the Caribbean and specifically invited West Indians to come and help 'rebuild the Motherland'. But when my music teacher left on a £10 ticket to start a new life in Australia, I became confused. If Britain was short of labour why were we encouraging folk to leave the country and travel to the other side of the world by giving them a passage for £10? It didn't make sense; it still doesn't make much sense now, even though I appreciate that Australia, frightened by the Japanese during the war, was desperate to increase its population and Britain no doubt felt obliged to help in some way; and even though I now realize that part of the labour shortage was created by white men being reluctant to do jobs they considered dirty or poorly paid. In Bradford that was the case. The mill owners eager to counter competition from abroad had invested in new machinery and found that they could only make a profit if they kept that machinery going twenty-four hours a day. White Bradfordians did not fancy night work and so the mill owners recruited in Mirpur, Pakistan. They would have preferred West Indians, but London Transport had got there first. The British, when they had an empire, were adept at moving men and muscle around the world and it is a policy which has left festering wounds. The British imported Tamils into Ceylon, considering them to be better workers than the local population; the British imported Tamils and Chinese into Malaya to work the mines and plantations; the British imported Indians into East Africa to build the railways. And look at the problems that have resulted and in some cases have yet to be resolved!

In the 1950s the same game was being played here. In 1955 there were 50,000 immigrants in Britain and Sir Anthony Eden's government was bothered enough to discuss the matter in cabinet. Papers released under the thirty-year-rule reveal that measures were considered to control the influx. There was no immigration policy at that time, and millions were eligible to enter the country. The cabinet considered limiting the number of entrants but ministers were worried about the impact of such an act on relations with the Commonwealth. They considered directing and managing settlement in order to avoid friction in areas where immigrants tended to concentrate. They considered admitting immigrants to work for a period of up to five years. Many immigrants at that time would have been comfortable with such a

scheme, since they themselves intended to come only for a short stay in order to earn money and then return home. Often one immigrant would return home and a relative would come over in his place to keep the money flowing. In the end nothing was done. Sir Anthony Eden took no action. He was fascinated by foreign policy but not that interested in domestic matters.

To my mind Bradford was yet another town born of the Industrial Revolution; it is near coal and a supply of soft, lime-free water, and its mills have made it famous. It has until recently been overshadowed by Leeds, which had the railway and the university and was the centre of much while Bradford got on with making money. It seemed pretty good at that. The mill owners had plenty and the workers had a rotten time in some of the grimmest houses built by greedy men who squashed sixty-five homes into an acre; in 1860 they were forced to improve that to forty-two, but still the back-to-back dwellings with one room up and one room down meant that inhabitants had to walk as much as 200 yards to a shared earth-closet. I can only suppose that the builders thought this set-up was an improvement on the smoke-filled, windowless huts from which the inhabitants came. And while they were building these things the mill owners were also erecting splendid public buildings. My first afternoon in Bradford was spent searching for fine buildings. And I was disappointed. In 1972 the city indulged in an orgy of rebuilding and in the process they sacrificed the old and the interesting. And, it seems, Bradford was not so rich in glorious buildings that it could afford such a loss. J. B. Priestley said the place was charmless, if not exactly ugly. And he has the right to say that, since he was born there. Of course, I was not seeing the city that Priestley remembered from his childhood, nor the city he saw on his 1930s journey, but I was seeing a city rebuilt by men who were used to charmless surroundings. Such men must have been inured to ugliness and inclined to rebuild in a similar mould. Priestley felt that no one had bothered with the city's looks in the first place because it had the good fortune to be on the edge of some of the most enchanting country in England. The city was merely a place where people worked and as soon as they were free of their chores they walked through the dales and on the moors. However poor you were in Bradford, he said, you never felt walled in like London folk, the countryside was but a walk away; a countryside made famous by *Wuthering Heights*. Or nowadays, no doubt, people prefer to think of it as a landscape made famous by James Herriot, a vet, who attracts tourists from far and wide.

In 1980 Bradford had few tourists; indeed, the thought would have been the subject of music-hall jokes. But everywhere now has tourists

and even the most unlikely places have been dressed up as 'attractions'. Bradford is seen as an ideal centre for touring the dales; visitors tired of walking can then visit the National Museum of Photography and watch a film on a very large screen, or perhaps they take a peep at an area known as Little Germany, which is being restored as a monument to the German Jews who flocked to Bradford and as a reminder that Bradford has always welcomed outsiders and courted a cosmopolitan reputation. I used to think that tourism was toy-town stuff and no answer to unemployment since it provided mainly part-time work for women. But I can see that tourism could enhance a place's standing. So far Bradford has attracted a good few grants to renovate hotels and pretty itself up and this could attract further investment. With this in mind I went into the tourist centre, but stayed only a few moments; it contained little but pictures of small hotels and boarding-houses under the word 'accommodation' (arguably the most misspelled few syllables in the language).

Abandoning my search for pretty squares and eye-catching buildings I went into a bookshop to ask the way to Drummond Middle School. It's an odd destination to include on a late-afternoon walk, but for a while the school's headmaster was almost as famous as James Herriot. The school had 500 pupils aged between nine and thirteen, and 85 per cent of these pupils were Asian. Ray Honeyford had written some highly controversial words on the way in which these youngsters were being educated since the council had abandoned its policy of assimilation in favour of a policy of multi-culturalism. That is to say, instead of expecting immigrants to shed their skins and become part of a bland and homogeneous stew, they had decided to embrace diversity and encourage immigrants to retain their differences and become part of a salad where each of the ingredients retains its individual flavour. In educational terms this means allowing Asian children to learn Urdu, wear ethnic clothes, eat ethnic lunches and absent themselves from anything that conflicts with their religion. Supporters of the policy say that it has raised Asian self-esteem and that this in turn has improved their performance in school. Ray Honeyford felt that multi-culturalism was leading to a lowering of educational standards and that the white minority were suffering. He disliked the policy, believing it to have been trumped up by the ever growing race-relations industry.

In the first instance, Honeyford voiced his views in *The Times Educational Supplement*. They went unnoticed. Then he began writing in a more outspoken fashion in the right-wing *Salisbury Review*. These articles provoked a fine furor. He was, after a lengthy legal battle, forced to retire early.

This incident saddened me. I dislike seeing men or women pilloried for their views. Of course Honeyford put himself in a difficult position by openly opposing the stated policies of his employers; of course he put himself at risk making such remarks in a city which at that time had an Asian mayor and where the number of Asians is likely to reach 30 per cent by the turn of the century; of course he should have been more careful in the way he expressed his opinions. But having said that, the handling of the affair was hardly a good omen for democracy and freedom of speech – words which we English use with great abandon. A man lost his job for daring to voice his fears in public; that encourages hypocrisy; that encourages people to settle for a quiet life. And the saddest thing of all is that the whole episode appears to have achieved nothing. There was no serious debate about multi-culturalism, which is on the whole a popular policy but which none the less could have benefited from rigorous examination.

It was 6 p.m. and the gates to Drummond Middle School were firmly shut. But in the dusty, dull, adjacent streets many youngsters were to be seen with western anoraks covering their flimsy tunics and trousers. In groups they chatted and dawdled, alone they strolled along without speed. I knew something of the lives they led once they had closed the front door to their red-brick houses; I knew something of their attitudes and their state of mind from reading Dervla Murphy's *Tales from Two Cities*. To write this she had lived in Bradford for a while and mixed and mingled and indeed got involved with their lives. Her book is invaluable, especially since her viewpoint is decidedly un-English. As an Irish woman she happily admits that she is 'a non-member of the Master Race and a citizen of a country plagued by England for 800 years!' She liked Ray Honeyford despite a pre-conceived notion that he would be a 'ghastly man'. She thought it unjust to accuse him of being a racist.

Many people do not consider Enoch Powell to be racist either. They consider him to be a man who tried to tell us not to sweep race-relations under the carpet; who tried to warn us that ignoring the growing numbers and hoping that all would be well would lead us into trouble. Once again a man had chosen his words unwisely. All anyone remembers twenty years on is three little words: 'rivers of blood'. Enoch Powell's speech is referred to as 'The rivers-of-blood speech'. Powell is unrepentant. He tells anyone who will listen that as he goes about on public transport in Britain, 'the commonest thing is for a West Indian or an Asian to come up to me and say: "Mr Powell, may I shake your hand? I have always admired you. You are absolutely right."'

Sitting on a low wall outside Drummond Middle School, pretending I was waiting for someone, I wrote notes into a little book, one of which says: 'Who is there to teach us the difference between being mealy-mouthed and being diplomatic?' One martyr, Enoch Powell, was quite enough. What we need is solutions, not martyrs. We attempted to restrict immigration in 1962, but in the first instance this brought a steep increase in the number of Pakistani and Indian families wishing to settle here, in place of temporary male settlers who intended to return. There are 4 million Asian and Afro-Caribbeans in this country now. Many of them were born here. They will form 5 per cent of the population by 1991 and, while they account for less than 1 per cent of people over sixty-five, they will form 7 per cent of those under fifteen. In the sixties we also played around with laws to stop race discrimination. This provided jobs for well-intentioned liberal thinkers, but it has done very little to reform people's attitudes: racism and race discrimination exists and it is stupid to pretend otherwise. Centuries of propaganda against the black races has left its mark.

Our ability to fool ourselves led to riots. One weekend in April 1981, Brixton in south London saw 'disorder and violence, the like of which had not previously been seen in this century in Britain'. Hundreds of black youngsters attacked the police with bricks, iron bars and petrol bombs. The events leading to the riot are confusing. As far as anyone can tell it all began when a young black was stabbed by other blacks; when a policeman tried to help the wounded man, the other blacks either thought that the policeman was responsible for the stabbing or that the policeman was preventing him from getting to hospital. No bricks were thrown at that stage, but the following night police stopped a mini-cab driver when they saw pound notes sticking out of his socks. He said he kept them there for safety; the police suspected the money had come from drug dealing and searched the car. A crowd gathered. When a policeman found a black youth blocking his path the cauldron of discontent bubbled over – the festering boil that was the relationship between the forces of law and order and the black community burst. Let the statistics speak: 279 police officers were injured; 45 members of the public were injured; 61 private vehicles and 56 police vehicles were damaged or destroyed. Lord Scarman was asked to head an inquiry. His report is an indictment of our indifference; thirty years of pretending that we were not a racist nation had finally choked the white man and spewed the truth all over the pavements of Brixton, as West Indians, poorly educated, poorly housed and mostly without work, showed what they thought of the motherland their fathers had been invited to rebuild.

Lord Scarman can teach us how to be diplomatic without being mealy-mouthed. He made numerous recommendations to right the wrongs of thirty years, for housing, education and employment. And he was at his best when talking of the police. Without using a truncheon to beat them, he made it clear that he thought the police could do much to improve their relations with ethnic minorities. Some people listened; some people learned from what he had to say; some people acted upon his advice. Some did not.

In October 1985 we learned just how deaf some people can be. There was a riot on Broadwater Farm Estate in north London. A policeman was murdered. In time a young West Indian, Winston Silcott, was convicted of the murder. His parents, hard-working, law-abiding church-goers, had come from the West Indies in the fifties. The events leading up to the riot are confusing, but as far as anyone can tell the catalyst was an everyday event: the police stopping a car, a BMW, which they thought might have been stolen. It turned out not to be, but none the less the police decided to search the owner's flat for stolen goods. When they found nothing there, they descended on the home of his mother, Cynthia Jarrett. While they searched the house she died of a heart attack. News of the death spread across the estate like a bush fire. The police anticipated trouble; they were ready for trouble and it came very quickly. The riot was described as the 'most vicious ever seen on the mainland'. At the inquest on Mrs Jarrett, the jury returned a verdict of accidental death. In April 1986 her son, Floyd, aged twenty-five, was given a suspended sentence for possessing drugs. He had six previous convictions and had been twice convicted of possessing cannabis.

Lord Gifford was asked to head an inquiry into the riot that led to the murder of a policeman. His report is 243 pages long and one has to read every word to realize the full horror of the shaming mess. Lord Gifford was tough on the police. He criticized all ranks of the force and said that they were insensitive, unimaginative and uncomprehending in their dealings with ethnic minorities.

There were no riots in Bradford before Salman Rushdie wrote a book which some devout Muslims have interpreted as offensive. Then the deeply religious Mipuri retaliated. Before that all was quiet, perhaps because Asians, on the whole, have fewer frustrations; they might have the same housing problems, but their home lives are more stable, their educational achievements are higher and as a result their job prospects are better. This is coupled with the fact that many Asians run their own businesses, thus providing work for other Asians. Perhaps it is because they, as a race, are used to going abroad to seek work, they are

prepared for difficulties: they do not expect paradise. They told Dervla Murphy that they didn't like being lumped with the blacks; the blacks were, it seems, inferior to the browns.

I walked back to the pub where I was staying, knowing that I had a problem to solve. I had decided to visit West Yorkshire police headquarters to talk to the police about their relationship with ethnic communities. The police were being very pleasant on the phone. They were proud, they said, of their relationship with the public and I'd be more than welcome to spend three or four days asking questions. My problem is that I don't feel comfortable with the police. I was brought up to see every policeman as a kindly bobby; but that image is no longer appropriate. I know to my cost that policemen have changed. I had been prosecuted for drinking and driving. The prosecution level for drink-driving is 40 microgrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath. My reading was 41; it was so close to the margin that I was offered a blood test which I refused because I have a pronounced fear of needles. I was not offered a urine test instead. My solicitor suggested that I ought to have been offered a urine test. On his advice I decided to plead not guilty on a point of law: should I have been offered a urine test or not? The magistrate conceded the point of law - that anyone who has a good reason not to want a blood sample taken should be offered a urine test instead. But the police officers said that I had not mentioned my needle phobia. Indeed they said I had drummed up the story *after* the event, in order to get off. I was fined £100 and banned from driving for a year. Sitting in court listening to two police officers telling lies made me so angry that I told my solicitor that I had no intention of paying the fine and would rather go to prison. He laughed at me. For months after I crossed the road whenever I saw a policeman.

It was not going to be easy to spend three days with men I no longer trusted. But then I told myself several times before going to sleep that I was interested only in the race-relations issue and that I must not judge all policemen by the standards of the Metropolitan police. The Metropolitan police were different. Most forces outside London look down upon them in much the same way as the Sikhs look down upon the Muslims, the Muslims look down upon the Afro-Caribbeans and the lighter skinned Afro-Caribbeans look down upon the darker skinned Afro-Caribbeans. Solidarity is a wonderful notion, but it hardly exists.

Inspector Arthur Kear was a natty dresser; on three consecutive days he wore three different suits. He talked a great deal; the shortest question led to a long answer. I wanted him to talk, and to talk

without prompting; it was the only way I was going to discover what he knew and what he thought. Inspector Kear is responsible for race-relations training: he organizes courses for policemen so that they have some understanding of the religious and cultural backgrounds of ethnic groups. They are taught simple things, like the fact that Asians and West Indians tend to get agitated and shout more easily than the British; that they are taught by their leaders to *complain* about the police (which the British are not); and that sometimes they are happy to accuse a police officer of having called them 'a black bastard' when this has not happened. They are shown videos of policemen talking about 'coons' over the car radio; and of policemen in canteens gossiping about 'coonstables' and 'coonductors'.

Inspector Kear mentions Scarman often. If it hadn't been for the Scarman Report he would not have his present job. He had to start from scratch in the early 1980s and build bridges to the Asian community. He considers the Brixton riots to have been a blessing in disguise. The police weren't equipped to cope and had little or no training in crowd control; they were taken by surprise.

'We are ready now, though. We've had plenty of riot training. Oh yes, we're ready now. And of course it meant that we had to do more to get to know the community. That's where I come in. I've many good links now with the community. Scarman said we must have input from the community into police training. So they come and talk to us and help us to understand. And there's much to know! The Asians came in the late fifties, you know. There was a textile boom then and the mill owners sent their representatives to the sub-continent to recruit labour. Then they chartered a troop ship to bring them out of Pakistan. It isn't like that any more, of course. They get to Heathrow and ask the taxi driver for 'Lumb Lane' - that's a £200 ride! Of course textiles went into decline in the sixties, but still they came. Bangladeshis it was then, and they're different. They're not astute like the Pakistanis and the Indians. They have below-average intelligence, and they are unemployable. They're fanatical Muslims; the women don't come out of their houses, which makes it impossible for them to learn English. The Koran more or less says that women should be servile. The men are often to be found in Lumb Lane, the red-light area, between noon and 3 o'clock is their time - it's their dinner time, if they are in work.

'There must be 207 organizations for Asians in Bradford alone. The Asians are very fragmented, culturally and religiously. They seem to split into factions easily and I don't understand why. But that's the reason for all these organizations. The communities need to have their own leaders to turn to for advice. If an Asian is in trouble, he will go

and see the leader of one of these organizations, and that leader will come and see me to ask my advice, and then this leader goes back and *sells* that advice to the guy in trouble!

'Their religious leaders carry a lot of weight too. A Muslim boy is expected to recite the Koran by the time he is sixteen, so he comes home from school and has to go to the mosque and not play football with his mates. Some of them decide to skip off and go to the pubs rather than the mosque. When the imam finds out he beats them. We've had calls from headmasters saying, come and have a look at this boy. If it had been a white boy there would have been a prosecution. But you can't prosecute a religious leader. They get let off with a warning. We have managed to arrest two imams for GBH: We got to the court and the judge said: "Holy man, promise you won't do it again." The whole thing melted away.

'We've got second-generation Asians now, Yorkshire-born blacks who do not know their own country and are pulled both ways. There's quite a rebellion against arranged marriages. One day they come home from school and the girls are told they are going to be married because there's someone in Pakistan who wants citizenship. The worst case I know is of a Bradford Pakistani boy who was sent over there to bring back his fiancée. He brought her back and took her to the Register Office and while they were waiting she collapsed. She was only twelve or thirteen, but she had said she was seventeen to get in. The boy had been instructed to get her pregnant and had damaged her internally. The marriage couldn't go through; she was adopted instead.

'The whites' view of Asians is not so bad. They are the ones who own their own homes and whose kids go to school, private schools sometimes, and university. Pakistanis are the best financiers and businessmen, better than us sometimes. The Asians around here are becoming affluent. When the textile industry went into decline, Asians bought out a number of mills and started printing their own cloth - sweat-shops they are, but we're on to that! They go into the market and sell the stuff themselves. And in Dewsbury there are 137 off-licences, and every one is owned by Pakistanis, and all of them can be traced to five families. On the whole we've been lucky with the Asians.

'It is the West Indians that suffer, and they are mostly in Leeds where their drinking parties cause all the trouble. They'd wire the whole house for sound, including the toilet, and then sell booze and drugs. We used to spend a lot of time raiding them. But we've stopped that now; we had to improve our relations with them to stop another 1981. We've gradually got their confidence, and nowadays they cooperate with us. We can go into a house and say we are looking for "X",

who has mugged an old lady, and they will turn the guy over. The whites have a poor image of the West Indians; they are seen as muggers, and lazy people who won't work. They have brought it on themselves. They won't work, whereas the Asians will. But then again, I could show you reliable young West Indians who have come through the system well, and made friends with whites and got good qualifications. They try and get jobs and they don't get them because of this reputation, and they get demoralized and are prey to the mob, Rastafarian locks and the lot. But the best West Indians are better than the best Asians. They don't have this religious pull to contend with. They don't have much culture, really.'

To aid my understanding of the local scene, Inspector Kear suggested we take a drive and he would show me Manningham, where the Asian community congregate, and Lumb Lane. He said Lumb Lane sported a prostitute on every corner. We couldn't find one, and they weren't hiding from the police, since we were in an unmarked car and Kear was not in uniform.

'That's a doss house for whites, over there; they're the only whites who live around here. And over there, the building with the red-and-green doors, is Pakistan Centre. That's a Bangladeshi fish-and-chip shop, and all the little corner shops are owned by Asians. And I must show you Drummond Middle School. Have you heard of it?'

I said that it rang a faint bell and asked him to refresh my memory. I wanted to hear his version of the story. His version of the story was very straightforward. He said that Ray Honeyford was merely trying to point out that the white kids were disadvantaged being in a school with so many Asians and that standards were falling.

'He was a bit of a left-winger, you know. At one time I'd say he was a left-wing extremist. I think he quite liked being a martyr. He must have enjoyed it all because he kept on expanding on his original remarks, and that's what caused the trouble. The majority of people, including a policeman like me, think he's right. I go to church, so I wouldn't want them to give up their faith, but I think it is wrong to encourage them to carry on here as they did in Pakistan. It's so damn false. A lot of people are afraid to speak out because they are afraid of the race-relations lobby. I don't think Honeyford is racist. The school's governing body supported him, you know. It was the council who wanted him out.'

We had stopped the car outside the school and were gazing at the sand-coloured building. I asked him what he really felt about the black community now that he had so much contact with them.

'I've no feelings towards the blacks,' he said, giving me a safe

answer. I remained silent, knowing that he would go on. 'Except that my upbringing as a miner's son is still there. Miners have no time for blacks. Look, 90 per cent of whites don't like blacks. If they had close ties, as I do, they still would not be converted. Things are better than in the past. When I was a child, parents would scold their kids with: "A black man will come and get you!" I don't suppose they say it now. But there is no genuine tolerance; and there won't be in my lifetime. I'll be honest: I can't say that I like them. No way would I like one of my daughters to marry a black.'

I warmed to his honesty. I warmed at times to most of the policemen I met during those few days, but underneath I felt strongly that I wouldn't want to cross any of them. What was warming was their humour and their bluntness, but there was a hardness that was easy to detect. The police force is mainly made up of working-class men, and many have come from poor families and have had to struggle. They tell stories of how, when they first joined the force, they earned £9 a week and by the next pay-day they were 'down to a bag of carrots'. Their attitude is that they have struggled and made it, so what's stopping other people? Their attitude is that there is no poverty these days compared to the past. Today's poor have videos and don't know what it is like to be 'down to a bag of carrots'. What was most chilling was their habit of saying something, and then adding: 'Now if you print that, I'll deny that I said it.' Those words are a nightmare. Are policemen born thinking like this, or does someone teach them; does someone offer up the little sentence as a near impenetrable shield? No wonder journalists have become fond of hidden tape-recorders.

I decided that I would like to take a look at Chapeltown police station in Leeds, an area torn by riots. I based myself in the Community Involvement Unit, a post-Scarman invention. Sergeant Peta Platts was my guide. She was twenty-nine and had joined the police force at the age of twenty-three, having got a geography degree and started training as an accountant. She found a structured office life not to her liking and toyed with joining either the RAF or the police. Her sister is in the army.

'I decided against the RAF because I didn't want to train for something I didn't want to happen - a war. And I chose the police because I wanted to do something useful and I wanted to experience the world beyond my upbringing. My mother is a teacher and my father is a business consultant. I'm glad I did not join the force any younger; there's just too much for an eighteen-year-old to cope with.'

She had been with the unit for just a few months and her job was to make contacts and friends with the ethnic groups. 'I have been sur-

prised at the welcome I have received from the vast majority. It's only a small minority who are anti-police, and they are going to stay that way for some time. *They* are the ones I really need to get to know, but it's a hard nut to crack. For the moment I have to be content to help the ones who are willing to be helped. And there are enough problems there to keep me busy.' She described her job in some detail. 'I might for example get a phone call saying that a girl known to have been beaten by her husband hasn't been seen for weeks. I've got good links with the battered wives groups in Leeds, so I'd then get on to them to try and find out where she was. Or a Pakistani whose wife had left him might come to me and ask if I could find out where she was and if she was OK, or if she had gone off to Pakistan with the kids.'

'You sound like a social worker.'

'I'm not a social worker: I'm a police officer and we've always done a lot of missing persons work. But it's true that in this unit we want the ethnic groups to come to us with their problems. We are here to try and help.'

'In that case, it sounds as though the police are trying to put the clock back twenty-five years. Then we all thought we could go to the police for help.'

'Very good. I hadn't thought of it like that. But you're right. We want to get back on that footing and it's working. We do get families coming to us because they have disputes with other families and they want us to try and calm things down.'

And if I hadn't been there, taking up her time, she would have been out on the estates talking to nineteen- and twenty-year-olds, trying to persuade them to spend a few days at the station, seeing police work at first hand, trying to interest them in a career in the police. Much time and money has been put into recruiting black and brown policemen and women. It has not been successful. A recent open-house for community leaders yielded nothing. Far too many view the police in the worst light and would be seen as traitors if they joined. Part of this, I was told, was because the police forces in Asia and the West Indies are aligned with military and political aims and this cultural difference puts up a barrier. The miners' strike and the concept of 'Maggie's boys in blue' which had resulted had not helped the communities to appreciate that there was a significant difference in this country. The West Indians are more inclined to see the act of joining the police as one of betrayal to the community; but Asians can be persuaded in small numbers. They quite like the snob appeal attached to 'knowing a policeman'; sometimes they get invited to family weddings.

There was an Asian policewoman in Dewsbury and I was anxious to

meet her. And *en route* for Dewsbury I stopped at Pontefract and broke my promise to myself to stick firmly with race relations. I'd been listening to canteen gossip about the miners' strike. The official word was that relations between the police and the mining communities were back to normal, but several people had told me that this is what they told the press, but the truth was very different. It would take a generation to put things right.

Pontefract police had been in the thick of the troubles. Inspector Hufton had the task of dealing with the media. 'My father was a miner; he was fifty-two years down the pits, so you can see that I was brought up in that fraternity. It is my honest belief that it will take one or two generations to forgive. Miners are very proud people. The older ones had a great deal of respect for the law.' And he told me the story of a south Kirby boy called Davy Jones who had been killed on the picket line in Nottingham, and how he had to organize the policing of the funeral which was attended by thousands. 'I did it with six men. Six. My uniform had to go to the dry-cleaners after because my back was covered with spit. I've taken a lot of abuse to my face, that's one thing, but spitting is another. Each year there is an anniversary march for Jones and each year you can feel the hostility towards us. Not one person says good morning. We are having to build bridges via the young people – through the schools – and through the old people.'

Dewsbury is the heart-attack capital of Britain. It's not a very pretty title; perhaps in time another piece of research will dump the crown on another town. The community physician blames smoking, diet, lack of exercise and alcohol, in that order. But nobody seems to know why those four factors should be any worse in Dewsbury, with a population of 50,000, than in any other place. Sickness rates aside, it is a modest little town, its skyline dominated by the largest mosque in Yorkshire. The police station is modern. It lies next to the bus station and within a step or two of the main shopping streets. Jagjit Dehele, born in Mombasa, Kenya in 1953, came to England in 1968. Her father, a joiner, had left India long before she was born and had his own business in Mombasa. Then one day he was told he had to become a Kenyan citizen; he chose to stay a British subject and came to Leeds, where his son was at university. Jagjit completed her A-level studies here and very easily made up her mind to become a policewoman.

'There was all this talk of lack of integration and it seemed one way of learning what goes on. Life was pretty restricted here for me. In Kenya we had a good lifestyle and plenty of money; coming here we had to start all over again. When I filled in the form I had no idea that I was the first Asian to apply in Leeds, but I discovered that when the

superintendent visited my home. I was frightened. I hadn't told my father, but that night I ran to the bus stop to meet him and tell him. My father was very supportive and has been a community leader, so that if the community disapproved of what I'd done, we didn't hear about it.

'I've been in the police force for fourteen years now, and I'm happy being a police constable; I'm not interested in promotion because I don't want to run anything, that's just not me. I'm happy working with people, particularly with the Asian community. I speak most Asian dialects and this is really useful. After one year in the service an Asian girl was murdered and I was called on to the case. At least the family felt at ease with me, especially as they couldn't speak English.'

We went out on the beat together. It was my idea; I wanted to see how people reacted to her. Jagjit Dehele is exceptionally good-looking, poised and authoritative. Her fingernails are polished and pointed, her hair is scraped back and there are tiny blue painted lines swinging upwards from the outer edges of her eyelids. She would turn heads anywhere. She turned numerous heads on our walk. As we strolled through the town centre I had the curious sensation of being invisible. Those walking towards us would fix their eyes on her, and then when they had walked past, they would turn around and stare. Jagjit was used to it.

We wandered along, chatting about her work, through the main streets which had lamp posts adorned with hanging baskets of flowers, newly watered and dripping spots on to the pavement; past the market with a huge sign saying: 'Don't talk tripe, eat it!' There was a smell of chips, of frying, perhaps a clue to that heart-attack title. A Ford car pulled up at the curbside and asked her the way to Daisy Hall. The town was quiet. The previous day, Wednesday, had been market day and the place had bustled. Thursday, the day before pay-day, is always quiet. We talked of recruiting problems: 'Where we come from the police force is considered a lowly job, so once a person gets O- and A-levels, their parents want them to do something better.' The West Yorkshire police do not parade her as bait for recruitment, which showed more sensitivity than I might have expected. We talked of those who settled in their new country, and those who constantly went backwards and forwards; of girls who run away from home to avoid arranged marriages, which Jagjit said was a class-based problem; the more affluent and better educated Asians don't try to marry off their daughters. We talked of the murder cases she had covered and was covering, which often proved difficult because some Asians use false names to cover up the fact that they are illegal immigrants. Murder



## CHOPPING DOWN THE CHERRY TREES

cases make interesting work and had taught her the most, because that's where the detailed questions can be asked. She talked of Asian men who drink and 'bird around'. Their wives know nothing until something happens and then they tend to close the net and deny that their husbands could ever do such things. 'Of course, there are married Asian women who have lovers and drink too. It's not just the men.'

We were heading now for the Asian heartland. Neat rows of identical houses, some of them in poor condition, some of them with messy gardens. Children strolled home from school. I saw a little girl in a white shroud come out of one house and dump a cardboard box in the garden of the neighbouring house.

'They are all owner occupied, but often overcrowded, and they will sometimes have a television and a video and no carpet on the floor. They have greater need of the television and the video because it means they don't need to go out; the video is for those Indian films that are so popular. The girls get all sorts of romantic notions watching them. Why are the families so hard up? Well, it's often because they send money home to their relatives, and not just their immediate family. Such ties are strong and they don't question it. Whatever they have here it is a great deal more than their relatives back home.'

Her radio began to crackle; 'To all radios: look out for red Escort car stolen from the car park at 9 a.m. this morning.'

'Well, it won't be anywhere near here now,' she answered in a precise voice.

Minutes later it crackled again: '50/50; 50/50'. That was her number and she was being asked to go to the bus station where kids were drinking cider and lager and causing a nuisance. We turned around and headed back to the bus station. Whoever had been drinking cider and lager and causing a nuisance had disappeared. Dewsbury is an average sort of place, with no special problems, except the high rate of heart disease. Jagjit says she will marry, but not have children, and that she would like to spend thirty years in the force. She doesn't mind being called a 'black bastard' from time to time. White policemen get called names too.