THE 1919 RACE RIOTS IN BRITAIN : THEIR BACKGROUND AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis contains an empirically-based study of the race riots in Britain, which looks systematically at each of the nine major outbreaks around the country. It also looks at the background to the unrest in terms of the growing competition in the merchant shipping industry in the wake of the First World War, a trade in which most Black residents in this country were involved. One result of the social and economic dislocation following the Armistice was a general increase in the number of riots and disturbances in this country. This factor serves to put into perspective the anti-Black riots as an example of increased post-war tension, something which was occurring not only in this country, but worldwide, often involving recently demobilised men, both Black and white. In this context the links between the riots in Britain and racial unrest in the West Indies and the United States are discussed; as is the growth of 'popular racism' in this country and the position of the Black community in Britain pre- and post- riot. The methodological approach used is that of Marxist historians of the theory of riot, although this study in part, offers a revision of the established theory.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to describe the 1919 race rioting in Britain's port towns in detail by reconstructing the events through the means of primary source material (predominantly local and national newspaper reports, public and police records). From this body of information a basic pattern of events will emerge, which, when considered in the context of wider issues, including the great economic and social dislocation which followed the cessation of the First World War; the weakness of seamen's representation in this period; and, the exposed nature of the Black community in this country; allow for a more complete picture to emerge. With the establishment of a contextual background to the violence, the theoretical considerations behind riots will also be discussed, in the sense that the accumulated pressures mentioned above upon society's norms, bring tensions to a point where rioting is the only release. It is with the introduction of an empirical base that the specific racial violence around Britain's ports in 1919 may be considered upon two levels; as a symptom of the massive worldwide disruption which followed the Armistice; and, more importantly, as a working role model in the theory of riot.

CHAPTER ONE - WIDER PERSPECTIVES ON THE 1919 RIOTS

The race riots of 1919 occurred in nine British cities, all port towns, between January and August of that year, and involved crowds of whites (often in their thousands) and dozens of Black men. As a result of the clashes, five men (three white and two Black) lost their lives, dozens were injured, and over two hundred arrests were made. Behind these stark figures lies a background of economic competition in the merchant shipping industry as it began to contract to suit peacetime conditions. That job competition should lead to riot, and racial riot in particular, owed much to the effects of the post-war situation in Britain, as hundreds of thousands of men were unleashed upon the job market. In fact, between November 1918 and March 1919 2,105,404 'other ranks' had been demobilised.(1) That the merchant marine became the focus of rioting was due to a combination of factors, not the least of which was the weak level, and disorganised nature, of union representation in the industry, which meant that seamen were denied the traditional method of expressing their grievances through strike action. Similarly, it is clear that the fact that the vast majority of Black people employed in Britain were in the 'seafaring line' played an important part in the rioting, which was largely confined to the dock areas of the cities involved. This fact, however, should not lead to the conclusion that race was the major factor in the rioting. To argue this would be to fall into the 'race relations' (2) view of events as being determined by racial considerations above all else, including economic and social factors. Certainly, antagonism between Black and white was an issue, but not an over-riding one. White racialist thinking was too well-established a social phenomenon in twentieth century Britain for this to be anything more than a well-internalised mode of thought, called out into the open by a combination of economic and social pressures. Black people in Britain were being made the scapegoats for the deep frustrations felt among the white community due to their long war service, which seemed to many to have been a futile exercise, bearing in mind the unemployment situation to which they returned. The introduction of some figures at this stage can serve to illustrate the sacrifices of the British merchant service in the First World War. One near contemporary account puts the figure of seamen in the

merchant navy at the declaration of war at 193,500.[3] Of this number a significant proportion lost their lives. "Apart from the losses among merchant seamen serving under the white ensign, no fewer than 14,661 officers and men lost their lives, as the result of enemy action. . .".[4] By clear inference, there was a high mortality rate. This is the more significant in that some of these men were not in the organised armed forces. Hence the sailors' anger at peacetime high unemployment levels and wage cuts. It is worth stressing here that while there are no overall figures available for the number of Black British casualties it is likely that proportionally, a similar percentage of Black seamen lost their lives. Indeed, Black mortality may have been particularly high, given the fact that the majority of Black sailors were firemen working below decks, and were thus more vulnerable to enemy torpedo attacks, than those men working on deck.

Added to this heavy casualty rate was the low level of unionisation in the merchant service. Although this was an established feature of seaman's affairs, it took on an increased significance in the wake of the unprecedented sacrifices demanded of the service during the war. A general result of the post war winding down process was the increased level of aggression displayed by those who had seen war service. Trained to react violently in wartime situations, many men acted likewise in times of stress after their demobilisation. This phenomenon was no less evident among men who had served in the merchant navy, particularly when they had no recourse to traditional modes of industrial action when faced with the prospect of high levels of unemployment, exacerbated by the weakness of the unions in the industry.

Seamen always faced peculiarly difficult obstacles to trade unionism in the isolated work situation and mobility and instability of the workforce. To these were added in the second half of the nineteenth century the disturbing effects of rapid technological change and expansion, at the same time as the seaman's bargaining situation was being undermined by foreign, cheaper labour. (5)

The issue of foreign' sailors being used by employers to undercut white British sailors was, therefore, a major long-standing grievance and had resulted in violence, sometimes inter-racial, on numerous occasions before 1919. This

included a fight between 300 Black sailors and Greeks in Cardiff in 1903, which was prompted by the Greek seamen accepting lower rates of pay.(6)

Two further factors played a part in the inability of the merchant seamen to act through union channels to express their grievances. These were, the bad management of the largest seaman's union, the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, and the intransigent stance of the employers in the shipping industry. Of the 193,500 merchant seamen in the service in 1914, petty officers, firemen and sailors made up 106,500, and of these 90% belonged to the NSFU, according to the figures quoted in one near contemporary source.(7) This appears to be rather a high figure when compared to the assessment given in a more empirically based survey fifty years later, (which, admittedly, was for a slightly earlier period). "The union's membership in the period 1894-1910 appears to have fluctuated from less than 5,000 to 12 or 14,000".(8) Perhaps the success of the 1911 National Strike, which finally won official recognition of the union, and did result in an increase in wages, bolstered the number of union members. However, these gains were the only real achievements of the NSFU under the leadership of Havelock Wilson - a man whose domination of the union's executive was complete, and whose sense of his own importance prevented him from delegating any responsibility for union affairs elsewhere, even when he was chronically ill. This in part, led Wilson to agree to accept wage reductions without a struggle in the immediate post war period on the Shipping Federation's order, preferring to rest on the achievements of union recognition and representation on the Joint Maritime Board.(9) The longstanding worker's grievance against the employers was strengthened by the fear that the wide publicity given the shortage of seamen during the war was, "simply a cloak to cover the introduction of cheap alien labour for strike breaking purposes."(10) The sense among white British seamen that the employers and 'foreign' labour were conspiring to take advantage of the post-war decline in shipping tonnage to introduce wage cuts and usurp their position, unhampered by any noticeable union resistance, was strong, and it was in part from this feeling that rioting broke out.

The role of service and recently demobilised men was a significant factor in the riots, one which was commented upon in many local press accounts of the violence, and it is clear that the specific grievances of the white seamen were not the only issues in the riots. The sense that the great sacrifices of the war years had been futile was being experienced at a national level, as post-war shortages in housing and increased competition in the job market were the first results of mass demobilisation. Wider frustrations were being focused on the Black community in Britain as a means of release. That the authorities in part recognised this is often apparent from the light sentences meted out to the white rioters in various centres around the country. However, there is also an element of racial antipathy revealed by the official response to the riots. The fear of violence in the immediate post-war period became a world-wide phenomenon, and not without reason. The level of global unrest in late 1918 and 1919 is worth considering as it provides a wider context in which the race riots in Britain may be discussed. The successful Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1918 provided governments worldwide with the spectre of the overthrow of the state in a situation of crisis. The attempted revolts of the 'Spartakist' movement in Berlin, the establishment of soviets in Bavaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and the socialist revolt in Austria, although all ultimate failures, fuelled the worldwide fear of Bolshevism. It was not merely in defeated nations that unrest occurred; the politicising effect of war service and the opportunity the strains placed on everyday society by the war resulted in riots in the United States and the West Indies as well as in Britain. In the former two countries the specific politicisation among sections of the Black community, especially those who had served in the armed forces was apparent. In the West Indies a combination of economic decline caused directly by wartime conditions, and the return of men whose desire for political representation had been increased by military service overseas, mainly in the British West Indies Regiment, triggered off a series of riots which alarmed both the local governors and the Imperial government in London to a considerable degree. The violence of 1919 led to a thorough investigation into the economic conditions of the region, and periodic enquiries regarding the existence of Black political organisations in the West Indian islands.(11)

In the United States, meanwhile, a symptom of post-war stress can in part be found in the outbreak of twenty-six racial riots during 1919. These disturbances were on a much larger scale than the riots in Britain - but they, like their British counter-parts owed much to the fear of economic competition on the part of the host community, particularly in Northern states which had witnessed a great influx of Black workers into labour-starved industries during the war. This had been accompanied by Black settlement in what had heretofore been 'white' areas of towns, notably Chicago, which was the scene of the worst riots during the period described by James Weldon Johnson, as the 'Red Summer'.(12)

> Having helped as soldiers and war workers to win the war for worldwide 'democracy' blacks entered the year 1919 with aspirations for a larger share of democracy at home. Tensions mounted - and racial violence erupted - as these aspirations collided with the general white determination to reaffirm the black people's pre-war status on the bottom rung of the racial ladder. (13)

Again, as in Britain, the reaction to the supposed Black threat to white primacy could not be contained in the workplace. Union bars and campaigns for the replacement of Black with white workers were not enough in the characteristically violent post-war period.

> White mobs seized control of whole cities for days on end, shooting and burning, assaulting and looting, and when Negroes displayed a sudden determination to defend themselves, the fury increased. (14)

The parallels between the US and British riots of 1919 will be considered more fully in the following chapter, but suffice it to say at this stage that the violence in both countries owed much to the prevailing conditions of post-war society worldwide, and to the changing economic balance within these nations caused by the war.

If support were needed for the theory that it was economic pressure and social dislocation which led to the outbreak of the race riots in Britain, a consideration of the first incidence of rioting, in Glasgow during January 1919, provides this. Here, the riot broke out less than a week before a mass meeting of strikers at George Square was disper sed in a scene of chaos following a police baton charge. This was followed by the arrival of 10,000

troops and four tanks in the city, as the government sought to stamp out any threat to law and order, and remove any chance of a Bolshevist-type revolution on Clydeside. Such an official reaction is an indication of how seriously the government took the influence of the Russian Revolution upon the working classes in Great Britain. A quotation, admittedly from a Marxist historian, of the Prime Minister's view at the time, helps illustrate this point. "Lloyd George had almost as little doubt of the imminence of worldwide revolution as Lenin did. 'If a military enterprise were started against the Bolsheviki that would make England Bolshevist and there would be a Soviet in London'".(15) Of course, 'Red Clydeside' had a history of militancy, and there had been a number of industrial disputes during the war period, but the seriousness with which this industrial dispute (over the campaign for a forty hours' week) was viewed, owed much to the worldwide unrest of the post-war period. The riot at Glasgow was the beginning of a spate of riots in Britain's major ports, as the frustrations of the white communities in these areas became focused on the Black population as an easily recognisable target. In February, the pressure on employment again led to a racial riot, this time in South Shields. In April there was a more minor disturbance in Salford and a full-scale riot in London, which city saw further riots in May, June and August of that year. June was the peak of the rioting, with outbreaks in Liverpool, Hull, Cardiff, Newport, and Barry. Further riots occurred in 1920 and 1921 in Hull, and in the latter year in Newport and Salford. All this should serve to indicate that the riots, although owing much to the disrupting factor of the aftermath of war, were primarily rooted in economic grievances, breaking out again when the fortunes of the merchant shipping industry fell even lower as the post-war recession became an established fact of life. Further evidence for the role of economic tension as creating a riotous situation is supplied by the fact that several of the riots broke out in and around the merchant shipping offices as men came face to face while attempting to sign on for work. Such empirical support of the idea that economic competition directly provoked riots, reinforces the notion that racial antagonism was entrenched in the superstructure of Britain at this time, rather than being a basic factor in the outbreak of violence. Some time spent considering the history of the wider Black community in Britain in the

period from 1900 to 1918 will illustrate this point still further. While it may seem from this work that all Blacks in Britain in this period were involved in the merchant marine, this is far from being the case. A significant proportion of Black people in the early twentieth century in this country were students, mainly in London, but also at Oxford, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Glasgow and elsewhere. There was also an element of a professional Black community, which included lawyers and doctors, in the main. It is from these two sections of the wider community that an insight into the life of Black people in this country up to the time of the riots mainly emerges in the existing literature on blacks in Britain.(16) There were also other working class Blacks at this time, mainly involved in the service industries as servants and nurses, although a few worked in factories, and others as show people. Limited evidence for the size and condition of Britain's Black population did emerge during the 1910 Parliamentary Committees survey into 'Distressed Colonial and Indian subjects', from which it appears that London had the largest concentration of Black people at this time, followed by Liverpool and Cardiff. This report also found that discrimination in employment especially against Black seamen, was a well-established phenomenon.(17) An alternative source of knowledge for the condition of Britain's Black community is provided by a number of individual Black autobiographies and biographies although most of these relate to the comparatively privileged Black elite.(18) One very different account by an ordinary Black resident in Britain comes in the shape of the autobiography of Ernest Marke. His was, in some ways, the archetypal history of a Black resident in Britain at this time. Running away from home in Freetown, Sierra Leone as a boy, he became a sailor, and was landed at Liverpool. As a merchant sailor during the First World War his ship was the victim of a torpedo attack. Later, he enlisted in the British army in the last few months of the war, and on his demobilisation, returned to Liverpool to face the wrath of white rioters in 1919, and was beaten up. He had been a boxer in the army, and now turned to performing in travelling shows as a form of income. He was however, wooed by the promise of the good life in British Guiana if he took up the government offer of repatriation, which was a general one to all Blacks, in the wake of the race riots. This episode was a disappointment to Marke however, since life in Guiana was not easy and jobs hard to find, hence his return to Britain in 1920. If Marke had

only had the opportunity to take up the student life in his busy career, his story in these years would have read almost as a complete summary of Black life in Britain in this period. An incident which occurred when Marke was fourteen is indicative of the type of reception accorded to Blacks at this time. While he was serving Mass as an altar boy, a white woman in the congregation fainted on seeing him.

> There were very few Negroes in England in those days and there were certainly none at Wavertree. This was the first time that woman saw me and I imagine I was the first Black man she had ever seen. But why a devil? Why not an angel or a ghost? I suppose in her mind only devils were black. (19)

This quotation indicates perfectly the often isolated and exposed nature of life for Black people in twentieth century Britain, for only in small groups of the Black intelligentsia in London, (or in large university cities. One such as Edinburgh had a large enough Afro-Caribbean student element in the early 20th century to send two delegates to the 1900 Pan-African Conference.)[20], or in the dock areas of port towns, did Black people congregate in sufficient numbers to constitute a Black Community. Of course, in these areas as elsewhere, the Black population of Britain had to face the largely negative white response to their existence. Racism had become an established hegomonic ideology, and in turn a popular system of belief in Britain from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, and had by no means diminished by the early twentieth. Douglas Lorimer, [21] in his study of race and class during the Victorian era, puts forward a tripartite argument for the transition of racism from a pursuit of the ruling classes, to a mass reaction to anything regarded as 'foreign'. The first element in this was the fresh impetus Darwin's discoveries on the descent of man gave to racist anthropologists. Study in this field had led to the establishment (from the 18th century or even earlier) of a 'scale of humanity' school which supported the theory of the 'natural superiority' of the white race. This was based on such 'findings' as variations in the size of skulls between the races, and the alleged lack of development in the 'darker races' (as the jargon of the time put it), after puberty.[22] The second element in the growth of racialist thought was the vindication the belief in the innate inferiority of the 'darker races' gave to Britain's growing imperial conquests. In this way autocratic rule was not only a necessity, but a blessing, to peoples who were unfit to

govern themselves. The final element in the growth of 'popular racism' was the increasing use of the stereotype to define Black people.[23] Be it on stage as a singing, happy-go-lucky minstrel, a suffering slave, or a blood thirsty savage; in press advertisements as a 'pickaninny' child whom Pears' soap could wash white; or in missionary tracts which viewed Blacks in terms of infidel brutes or tame Christian converts; Black people were robbed of their individuality, and as such passed into the national consciousness as caricatures, the object of xenophobic distaste to the white masses. A number of contemporary examples focussing on one particular issue will serve to show the breadth of racialist feeling among white British people in the period up to 1919 - that is regarding the alleged sexual tendencies of the Black race, and Black men in particular. "My experience of the English convinced me that prejudice against Negroes had become almost congenital among them. I think the Anglo-Saxon mind becomes morbid when it turns on the sex life of coloured people."[24] This was the view expressed on the subject by West Indian poet and author Claude McKay, and there is much evidence to support it. It is worth mentioning here that, in establishing the existence of a feeling of repulsion at Black-white sexual relations, the day to day life of Black people in Britain is being directly considered, for, as the riots of 1919 demonstrate only too clearly, it was not simply in theory or words that this feeling was expressed. Nor was this simply a working class phenomenon. It is worth pointing out that many members of the Black intelligentsia found that when it came to the question of their marriage into a white family, their so-called privileged position in British society counted for little. Henry Sylvester Williams, a qualified barrister, and a man who was to become a Marylebone borough councillor, (not to mention his role in the Pan-African movement which will be discussed later), was not considered good enough by an upper middle class army Captain from Gillingham, to marry his daughter, Agnes Powell. Their marriage however, went ahead.[25] Jessie Fleetwood Walmsley also found similar family opposition when she gave notice of her intention to marry the talented Black composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, whom she had met at the Royal College of Music in London.

> It was only natural that my parents, and the family in general, were shocked at the idea of a mixed marriage, but when their objection was based upon colour prejudice, I determined to turn a deaf ear to all their reasons against my marriage to Coleridge-Taylor .... My feelings were outraged when

measures were adopted to separate us, vile suggestions were made to me and horrid threats hurled right and left." (26)

Even his connections with the London Missionary Society did not prevent Dr. Harold A. Moody and his future wife, Mabel, who was a nurse, encountering opposition from Mabel's family to the marriage. Interestingly, Moody's biographer also mentions that his own family in Jamaica were opposed to the marriage, so apparently prejudice was not entirely a one-way affair.(27) It was not simply at a personal level that opposition was displayed to Black-white sexual relations. F.D. Lugard, one of the great pro-consols of the empire and leader of colonial thought, summed up (less than two years after the race riots) what had become the general white attitude;

> The Asiatic or the African who visits England is received with little or no colour prejudice and not infrequently marries a white woman. It is not that the man who has lived amongst them is lacking in sympathy - he may have devoted his life to their welfare. But the idea of marriage between his women-folk and men of a coloured race is to him nauseous. (28)

Similar racist attitudes were in evidence among 'informed circles' during the riots themselves.

> Sir - May I who have governed and served in West Indian colonies for a long period of years and who have for years administered the government of Bechuanaland Protectorate in Africa, be permitted to say a word as to the present colour riots, which are likely to have a disastrous result?
>
> It is an undeniable fact that to almost every white man and woman who has lived a life among coloured races, intimate associations between black or coloured men, and white women is a thing of horror.
>
> And yet this feeling in no sense springs from hatred between the races. (29)

It is an indication of how deeply ingrained racial prejudice was in the white British consciousness that Sir Ralph Williams could come to this conclusion after his extremely racist comments. A similar attitude was clearly in evidence among the mass of white rioters. "The most commonly heard complaint of the white crowds - black relations with white women - had nothing to do with the economic situation of the rioters. This resentment was in fact, not an articulated complaint, but an inbred response."(30) Such evidence serves to indicate that white racial responses were not the cause of the rioting during 1919, rather this deeply-entrenched prejudice was part of the established response of white Britons, across class barriers, to Black people, both in the colonies and at home.

The realisation of this fact of life led many Black intellectuals to establish race associations within this country as a means of contact with other Blacks, and also in an attempt to 'educate' white Britain in regard to racial equality. How little had been achieved by 1919 is clear from the white attitudes displayed above. In fact, Sir Ralph Williams' letter prompted a ready response from F.E.M. Hercules, a West Indian resident in London who was a leading figure among Black political organisations, including the African Progress Union and the Society of Peoples of African Origin (hence the APU and the SPAO), during this period.

> I do not believe that any excuse can be made for white men who take the law into their own hands because they say that they believe that the association between the men of my race and white women is degrading. Sir Ralph Williams and those who think like him should remember that writing in this way gives a stimulus to these racial riots and can only have one ultimate result, the downfall of the British Empire .... If Sir Ralph Williams thinks that the problem can be solved by sending every black man or his unit forthwith back to his own country, then we should be compelled to see that every white unit is sent back to England from Africa and from the West Indian islands in order that the honour of our sisters and daughters over there may be kept intact. (31)

This last sentence refers to the double-standard applied by white 'Empire-builders' who could speak of the horror of Black men having sexual relations with white women, but were strangely silent on the subject of white male colonials doing the same with Black women and girls.

This debate reveals the weakness of the Black intelligentsia's position at this time, because it was clear that to move forward in terms of self-rule for Black populations within the British empire, Black political leaders had to work with white interest groups, often including people whose attitudes, while not so overtly racist, did eschew the beliefs which, as has been noted earlier, were so generally-held in the early twentieth century period. A prime example of this is the fate of the Pan-African Association which was established in 1900 in the wake of the Pan-African Conference (hence PAC) which was held earlier that year under the auspices of the Black barrister Henry Sylvester Williams. This conference, although only attended by thirty-two delegates (Black and white) marked a significant stage in the political development of Black people. Williams became involved with white, liberal, humanitarian organisations through his work for South African native liberties

and with the Church of England Temperance Society, while he studied law, first at London University, then at Gray's Inn. Despite his gratitude for the aid given his activities by white philanthropist elements, Williams was convinced that the only way for Black people to advance was to assume control over their own affairs. With this in mind, it is not surprising that he should promote the idea of a conference for people of African descent to meet, and discuss their own interests. The conference was duly held in July 1900 in London, and the name of the Association was amended to that of the Pan-African Association (hence PAA). Apart from a small white liberal element, the conference was attended by such significant figures as W.E.B. Du Bois, already a leading Black spokesman in the United States, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the Black British composer. The participation of two delegates from the Afro-West Indian Literary Society of Edinburgh University is indicative of the part played throughout this period by the student element of the Black intelligentsia in political activity. Although there were no further meetings of the PAA (despite plans to meet in the US in 1902 and in Haiti in 1904), the notion of a Pan African movement to campaign for Black political rights worldwide was a significant contribution to the movement for self-determination for the Black race. Williams in fact established a newspaper, the Pan-African, to disseminate information to the wider British public regarding the Black peoples of the world, in the hope of securing a more enlightened opinion. The journal however, was a short-lived affair. No more than one issue can be traced, although it is possible that he produced a further few issues during a trip back to Trinidad in 1901-2. It was when Williams was out of the country that the name and emphasis of the PAA was amended.

> It seems likely that it was Doctor Colenso, general treasurer of the Pan African Association and the only executive officer in England during William's absence who changed the name of the organisation to the Anglo-African Association. Like other British humanitarians Colenso no doubt thought that Williams and his black associates were too emphatic about black radical solidarity under black leadership. (32)

Although Williams was able to regain control of his organisation, the PAA probably did not last beyond 1902. This was not the end of Williams' political activity however; in 1906 he stood successfully as a Progressive candidate for the council in the London borough of Marylebone. His time in local British politics was something of a disappointment, since the council was

controlled by a conservative majority, and the issues dealt with were, naturally, local ones, far removed from Williams' original intention of representing the British Empire's Black population at Westminster. This could not be fulfilled. Williams, a member of the Liberal Club and the Fabian society, had not been able to secure a selection to a constituency during the 1906 general election. Perhaps due to this disappointment Williams left Britain for good in 1908 to return to Trinidad, where he died in 1911.

A man who attended the PAC in 1900 was Liverpool-born J.R. Archer, whose father was a ships' steward from Barbados and mother was Irish. At the time of the conference Archer was a medical student, and was still a student when he, like Williams, was voted in as a Progressive candidate at the 1906 London Municipal elections. From the outset however, Archer's election was more significant. Archer in fact, topped the poll for the Lathmere ward of the London borough of Battersea, for the ruling Progressive party in this most radical of boroughs. By 1913 his standing among his fellow Progressives was such that he was put forward as their candidate for Mayor, a decision which caused a few ripples in the press.

> Up to this time there had been no reference to Archer's colour or origins in the local press, but with the impending election and a Progressive majority of only two, one of whom objected to Archer on racial grounds, it became news .... Most of the papers saw it as another human interest story, but sections of the Tory press decided it was a good excuse for a cheap attack on the lower orders .... The Battersea reaction was to stress his twenty-three years of residence, in other words his localism ... (33)

In the 1913 election Archer won the contest for Mayor by a single vote. Archer never lost interest in the wider affairs of Black people during his years in local politics. In 1919 for example, when he once again topped the poll in the council elections, Archer attended the First Pan-African Congress in Paris. He was also a leading figure in the African Progress Union, formed in 1918 to campaign for Black political representation. The APU petitioned the British government to include an African in the British delegation to the forthcoming peace conference at Versailles; Archer's name appearing on the correspondence. Similarly, the APU helped pay part of the fees of Edward Nelson, a West African barrister based in Manchester who represented a

number of Blacks in Liverpool during the riot trials. Interestingly, Nelson himself was involved in local politics, winning a seat on the Hale Urban District Council in 1913, a post he held until his death in 1940.(34)

Another significant figure in the Black intelligentsia in this period was the composer Coleridge-Taylor. He was born in Britain the illegitimate son of a doctor from West Africa, who, significantly, returned home after his career prospects were curtailed due to his racial origin. Although a leading British composer, Coleridge-Taylor was only too often made aware of his ethnic background in the shape of racist remarks from people in the street, his fellow students at the London Royal College of Music, and in press reports on his work. Such comments served only to heighten his interest in the position of Blacks worldwide. His attendance at the PAC has been mentioned, and in fact, he was for a time, a committee member of the PAA.(35) Coleridge-Taylor's home also became a meeting place for Black people visiting, or resident in London. He was part of a developing network of Black contact established by individuals and organisations in the early part of the century. Although this had a London bias, a wider Black participation was facilitated by two newspapers, the African Times and Orient Review established in 1912(36) under the editorship of Dusé Mohamed Ali, which reported on the affairs of Black and Asian communities worldwide, stressing the link between all coloured peoples of the globe, in the common goals of equality and political representation; and the African Telegraph, edited by F.E.M. Hercules, which was the journal of the SPAO, and was established by West African businessman, John Eldred Taylor. He was to go bankrupt and see his newspaper fold as the result of a court case arising from the publication of an article in condemnation of the flogging of Nigerian women with the connivance of British government officials. Taylor did indeed draw attention to this ill-treatment, but the slander charge against him was proven, although he could not afford to pay the costs incurred.(37) Both newspapers supported the British war effort, in the hope that service for the empire would strengthen the persuasive power of Black pleas for increased representation in colonial government. Although this hope was not to be fulfilled in the short-term, it would be wrong to view the close network of Black intellectual activity established in this period as a failure - foundations were laid which

continued to give a voice and a direction to Black affairs in Britain until the arrival of greater numbers of Black people, including families, in the wake of the Second World War, altered the emphasis and nature of this country's Black population.

It was the arrival of increasing numbers of Black people from the so-called 'New Commonwealth' countries of the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent in the late 40's and more particularly, in the 1950's and 60's which touched off a debate on whether the number of Black people in this country should in some way be 'restricted'. This was a debate which had antecedents as far back as Elizabethan times,(38) and in 1919 saw the government implement a scheme of repatriation in the wake of the riots of that year. This should not however, be taken to imply that the process of repatriation was a continuous one, rather it may be said that the xenophobic fear of 'foreigners' has been a long-standing one in British society, which on occasion has led to the expulsion or restriction of groups which have been deemed to be so. This 'fear' has grown in the period of 'mass immigration' to the extent that Mrs. Margaret Thatcher could speak in 1978, of the fear among this country's white population of being 'swamped' by people of an 'alien culture'.(39) A common set of responses has been in evidence over a sixty year period from the time of the riots, one dictated by racial considerations. In this way, what was largely an economic problem in 1919: mass unemployment in the merchant shipping industry, caused by post-war recession; which, admittedly, did end in inter-racial strife, was dealt with solely through the scheme of repatriation of Black people to the West Indies and West Africa.

It is worth stressing at this point that British popular opposition to 'foreigners' was not simply racial. In the case of the first large-scale immigration to this country in modern times, Irish immigrants encountered opposition due to their Roman Catholic faith, their strange accent, and the fear that they would threaten the position of British workers by accepting lower wages. Of course, the transference of xenophobic fears from one 'foreign' group to another, is not solely a British phenomenon, as the American experience shows. There, Southern European immigrants in the nineteenth century were superseded in

the unpopularity stakes by later Chinese settlers, and they in turn, were subjected to less hostility with the arrival of newer groups such as Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, in the twentieth century. But as the recent history of both countries indicates, increasingly it was colour which determined both the popular and official response to immigration on the one hand, and an already established Black presence on the other.

In the early twentieth century however, it was the Jewish population which elicited a similar response to that which ultimately led to the closing of the 'open door' to Britain for 'New Commonwealth' citizens in 1962 with the Immigration Act. "Jewish immigrants elicited a set of reactions conspicuously similar to those aroused by the more recent influx of newcomers from the Commonwealth".(40) A 1905 Act prevented the entry of 'aliens' to Britain if they could not prove they had the means of subsistence to live independently on arrival. Also, no carriers of infectious diseases were to be allowed in. This Act, however, did not succeed in stemming the flow of Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe. In the period immediately following the passing of the Act, 5,000 immigrants a year continued to arrive in Britain, aided by the flexible interpretation given the Act by the Liberal government after 1906. The passing of the Act did bring to a close the activities of the British Brothers' League, however, which organisation had been established in 1902 in the East End of London, under the slogan 'England for the English'.

> It was the first English-based organisation to systematically wage a campaign based on popular support against an ethnic minority ... the main objections of the BBL were that immigration was creating over-crowding, was bringing about excessive rates and rents, and was causing unemployment. (41)

However limited in scope, the 1905 Act had begun a trend, which, given the increased xenophobia engendered by the atmosphere of wartime, led to the passing of the Aliens' Restriction Act of 1914: a piece of legislation designed to allow for increased control over the entry, movements and activities of aliens during wartime. In 1919 the Act was extended despite the return of peacetime conditions, and was subsequently renewed annually by Aliens Restriction Orders. Interestingly, these Orders continued to be issued every year until they were replaced by the 1971 Immigration Act, indicating the longevity of government policy towards 'aliens'. Indeed, it was by using the

powers of the 1920 Aliens Order that the government sought to control the entry and settlement of Black seamen in 1925, in the form of the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order. Although officially designed to restrict the numbers of coloured 'aliens' entering this country, in practice it placed restrictions on British Black subjects and British Protected Persons. The onus for proof of identification was placed on the Blacks, and in Cardiff for example, many could not do this having had wartime identity cards confiscated by the local police authorities, and they therefore, were forced to register as coloured 'aliens' in order to gain employment.

> ... Like current immigration legislation, the order was specially designed to restrict the entry and settlement of black colonial British citizens .... Further, though the 1925 Order in its title referred to 'seamen', in practice it applied to all black colonials wishing to enter the UK. (42)

The existence of a system of controls for Britain's Black population from as early as 1925 is significant for the future history of immigration control. The bias apparent in such legislation was to be manifested in more virulent form in the Immigration Acts of 1962, 1965, 1968 and 1971, when the 'problem' was increased by the growing number of Black British subjects entering this country from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent, a process begun in the 1950's and 1960's.

> The issues of immigration, settlement and repatriation having been brought to the fore by the 1919 disturbances, subsequent periodic panics over numbers, unemployment, Public Assistance and the 'moral' question, led to further demands for tighter restrictions or removal, of sections of the black population. The Order was not repealed until shortly before the Second World War, when again Britain was in need of the services of colonial seamen. (43)

Two factors were to lead to the implementation of more strict immigration controls in the 1960's: the end of empire, and the beginning of large-scale immigration from the so-called 'New Commonwealth' settlers to Britain. The beginning of this 'visible' (by means of colour) immigration to Britain coincided with a time when the country was well on the way to cutting many of its ties to the empire. The old notion of Britain as the 'Mother Country'

was fast being eroded by the realisation, by both the government and the population at large, that one consequence of this was the arrival of thousands of its Black subjects. The official response was to begin to limit the numbers of 'non-white' Britons. The new wave of Black immigration involved greater numbers than had previously arrived in this country, and unlike the majority of Black residents in the former period, were not either seamen or students, who for one reason or another, were not regarded as being permanent settlers. This is not to argue that there were no completely settled Black Britons before 1950. The history of men like J.R. Archer demonstrates this, but it was only with the large-scale immigration of the later period that issues such as accommodation and education, for the new arrivals and their families, became of sufficient general concern to prompt a government reaction. Given the previous history of immigration in Britain when brought to official notice, this could only mean one thing: restriction. Not that the whole period down from 1905 was one of undiluted racism; it has been shown that the working of the 1905 Act was not so restrictive as had been its framers intention. Similarly, 1948 witnessed the passing of the British Nationality Act, which granted the right to all colonial and Commonwealth citizens (irrespective of colour), to enter, work, and settle in Britain, as indeed, had been the practice during the days of the empire, when subject and dominion peoples were free to reside in this country. Even during the period of strict immigration controls there was, at last, a half-hearted attempt to accommodate the Black community, with the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation during the 60's and 70's, which at least made gestures in the direction of recognising the fact that Britain was a multi-cultural society.

The trend towards increased Black settlement in Britain began in the aftermath of the Second World War, when a number of West Indian ex-servicemen remained in this country after demobilisation. The next significant episode was the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush in 1948. This arrival is considered important since it heralded the first incoming of a number of families aiming to settle in Britain. Although it was not until the 1950's that significant numbers of West Indian and Asian British or British Commonwealth subjects began to arrive in Britain, it soon became clear that for the first time a wider section of the British public would be coming into

contact with Black people, in the workplace, on housing estates, and in schools. The reasons for the negative responses which Black settlers encountered have been raised earlier, but it is worth stressing that fear was the key: fear of job and housing competition, and fear of the unknown, during a period of rapid change. As earlier in the century, all these fears were marshalled and mobilised by widespread and entrenched racist ideology at every level of society.

The reasons behind the increased number of Blacks settling in this country are not hard to discover.

> The main reason for the immigration was economic - the 'push' factors of over-population, under-employment, and poverty at home, combined with the restriction of West Indian immigration to the US by the McCarran-[Walter] Act of 1952, and the additional political and communal pressures of Partition and communal strife on millions in the Indian sub-continent. (44)

1956 was the peak immigration year of the decade, and the numbers rose again in 1960 and 1961, part of the reason being a 'beat-the-ban' move to settle before the 'open door' was closed. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962) stated that only Commonwealth citizens who obtained a Ministry of Labour employment voucher, or were dependents of such a person already in Britain, or were students, could enter the country. The number of such vouchers was to be strictly limited. This Act had been opposed by the Labour opposition but by 1965, the Labour government under Harold Wilson, sensing the popular support for immigration controls, stole the Conservative's ground with the introduction of a White Paper which ultimately led to the firming up of the 1962 Act. It is a feature of the 1960's immigration policy, (which in practice meant control), that what was one year decried as 'racialist' very soon became 'reasonable'.

> The Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1968) was even more explicitly racist than its predecessor. It had been introduced as a response to another political campaign initiated by the right wing of the Conservative Party which mobilised and focused public opinion around the 'race/immigration' theme again; it was an explicit response to the entry of 'coloured' UK passport holders whose right to enter Britain was then withdrawn. (45)

The Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath, had been quick to condemn the speeches of Enoch Powell, MP, in the late 60's, which painted a picture of millions of coloured immigrants making Britain a virtual ghetto, where old white people would be trapped in their homes, an easy prey to 'lawless Blacks'. His prediction of 'rivers of blood' flowing in British streets, while being shouted down, had the desired effect, with the passing of even stricter controls on Black immigration in the 1971 Immigration Act.(46) This legislation divided immigrants into 'patrials' and 'non-patrials', the latter having to obtain permission to enter the country. Right of entry was based on British birth, or having a parent or grand-parent of British birth, in other words, the introduction of a 'grand-father clause' into the immigration laws.

The strict policy of immigration controls continues to the present day. The 1987 controversy concerning Tamil refugees in this country, shows how the racist bias of the present government has continued the policies of earlier ministries. Indeed, one recent study of British immigration policy sees the current government tending in the direction of repatriation, bringing the study back full circle to the attitudes prevalent in 1919.

> The government argues that the 'fears of our people' about the size of the coloured population' and about being 'swamped' by 'alien cultures' are justified. It does so in circumstances where it is not immigration but natural reproduction which maintains that population, and therefore, the 'problem' can only be solved by a policy of repatriation. (47)

The purpose of this chapter has been to begin the study of the 1919 race riots by sketching in the wider background to the specific incidents which make up the main body of this thesis. In terms of historical context this was part of a wider picture of worldwide unrest in the aftermath of the First World War. Also the riots have been considered as part of the history of the union movement in the merchant shipping industry, with particular emphasis given the role of economic factors as a cause of the violence. A consideration of the history of Black people in this country is also necessary in building up a picture of the Black community which faced white aggression in 1919. Comments on the nature of government reaction to Black settlement in this

country up to the present also lends the initiation of the repatriation scheme in the wake of the riots a wider historical perspective. Having presented a contextual basis for the study of the race riots, the next step is to consider the wider theory of riot, as a method of approach to the study of the riots themselves.

NOTES

1. Glasgow Herald, March 26 1919, p.9.

2. See Michael Banton, White and Coloured (London, 1959) and The Coloured Quarter (London, 1955) for general surveys of Black settlements in Britain using this approach.

3. Father Hopkins, National Service of British Seamen (London, 1920), p.3.

4. C. Ernest Fayle, The War and the Shipping Industry (London, 1927), p.322.

5. F.J. Lindop A History of Seamen's Trade Unionism, unpublished M.Phil thesis, University of London, 1972, p.3.

6. M.J. Daunton, "Jack Ashore ; Seamen in Cardiff before 1914" Welsh History Review 9 (1978), p.191.

7. Hopkins, op. cit. p.4.

8. Lindop, op. cit. p.96.

9. Fayle, op. cit. p.261.

10. Ibid.

11. For further discussions of the post war unrest in the West Indies see chapter eight below on repatriation.

12. James Weldon Johnson, Along this Way, (New York, 1935), p.341.

13. William M. Tuttle Jnr, "Violence in a Heathen Land : The Longview Race Riot of 1919" Phylon 33 No. 4 (1972) p.234.

14. Ronald Segal The Race War (London, 1967), p.229.

15. C.L.R. James, World Revolution 1917-36 (London, 1937), p.108.

16. Kenneth Little, Negroes in Britain, (London, 1947), Edward Scobie, Black Brittania, (Chicago, 1972), James Walvin Black and White, (London, 1973), Harris Joshua et al, To Ride the Storm, (London, 1983), Peter Fryer, Staying Power, (London, 1984).

17. For details of the 1910 Parliamentary Commission see Banton, Coloured Quarter, pp. 31-32.

18. Owen C. Mathurin, Henry Sylvester Williams and the Origins of the Pan African Movement, (Connecticut, 1976), J.R. Hooker, Henry Sylvester Williams, Imperial Pan Africanist, (London, 1975), David A. Vaughan, Negro Victory, (London, 1955), Brian Willan, Sol Plaatje : South African Nationalist 1876-1932 (London, 1984), E.A. Ayondele, Holy Johnson - Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836-1917, (London, 1970), Jeffrey Green, /

18. (Contd..) Green, Edmund Thornton Jenkins: The Life and Times of an American Black Composer 1894-1926, (Connecticut, 1982), J.E. Casely-Hayford, Ehtiopia Unbound, (London, 1911), Dusé Mohamed Ali, Leaves from an Activel Life, serialised in the Comet (Lagos), 12 June 1937 -5 March 1938, W.C. Berwick Sayers, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, His Life and Letters. (London, 1915).

19. Ernest Marke, Old Man Trouble, (London, 1975), p.10.

20. Immanuel Geiss, The Pan-African Movement (London, 1974), p.182, J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-45 (London, 1973), p.29.

21. Douglas Lorimer, Colour, Class and the Victorians, (London, 1978).

22. P.D. Curtin, The Image of Africa, (Madison, Wisconsin), p.364-379, Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race, (Norfolk, England, 1971), p.17, Lorimer, Colour, Class and the Victorians, pp.12-14, Fryer, Staying Power, pp.165-181, Paul B. Rich, "Doctrines of Racial Segregation in Britain, 1900-44", New Community, 12 No. 1 (Winter 1984-85), p.75.

23. John M. MacKenzie (ed) Imperialism and Popular Culture, (Manchester, 1986), and John M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire, (Manchester, 1984), p.212.

24. Claude McKay, A Long Way From Home, (New York, 1970), p.76.

25. Owen Mathurin, Williams and the Origins of the Pan-African Movement, p.35.

26. Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, A Memory Sketch or Personal Reminiscences of my Husband - Genius and Musician, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (Bognor Regis, 1943), p.20.

27. Vaughan, Negro Victory, p.33, The Keys - The Official Organ of the League of Coloured People, Vols 1-7, (New York, 1975), Introduction by Roderick J. MacDonald, p.5.

28. F.D. Lugard, "The Colour Problem", Edinburgh Review, April 1921, 233, No.476, p.282.

29. Sir Ralph Williams, in the Times, June 14 1919, p.8.

30. James Walvin, Black and White, p.209.

31. F.E.M. Hercules in the Times, June 18 1919, p.8.

32. Mathurin, Williams and the Origin of the Pan-African Movement, p.104.

33. Barry Kosmin, "J.R. Archer - A Pan-Africanist in the Battersea Labour Movement", New Community 17 No. 3, (Winter 1979), pp. 432-433.

34. Jeffrey Green, "Edward T. Nelson 1874-1940", New Community 12 No. 1 (Winter 1984), pp.149-152.

35. Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, Reminiscences ... of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, p.38, Geiss, The Pan-African Movement, p.192.

36. Ian Duffield, Duse Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism 1866-1945. PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh (1971) Vol 1 pp.170-415, Geiss, The Pan-African Movement, pp.218-228.

37. Ian Duffield, "John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria", African Affairs, 70, (1971), pp.264-267.

38. Fryer, Staying Power, pp.10-11, Dilip Hiro, Black British, White British, (London, 1971), p.3.

39. These words were used by the then leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, in a speech in January 1978 on the immigration question. For discussion of this speech see Martin Barker, The New Racism - Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe (London, 1981), p.1., and Miles and Phizacklea, White Man's Country, (London, 1981), p.32.

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43. Ibid.

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CHAPTER TWO - THE 1919 RIOTS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE THEORY OF RIOT IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN HISTORY

It is in order to consider the nature of riot as a social phenomenon as a method of approach to the race riots of 1919, for, in expressing their feelings in violent terms, the crowds of white rioters were acting out a scenario which was not only an established form of social protest in this country, but also fulfilled the criteria of a form of direct action which had its roots in pre-industrial society. The most modern and generally accepted approach to the theory of riots, and study of the crowds which enacted them, has been evolved by two Marxist historians, George Rudé and E.J. Hobsbawm. The former has been the initiator of the notion of the crowd in history,(1) acting as a rational body, using violence, not simply for its own sake, but in order to produce a solution to grievances. This simplified description of a complex argument based upon the realisation of the importance of economic factors and underlying social motives and beliefs in causing riots, has generally superseded the old notions of 'mobs' staging 'riots of the belly'.(2) The old equation was; increased food prices - hunger - riot. Other factors such as the crowd's belief in the justice of their activity in keeping food prices down, and the lack of representation to express their grievances, did not come into it. Eric Hobsbawm, taking up the theory as developed by Rudé, has described riots in the 18th century as 'collective bargaining by riot',(3) in which the aims of pre-industrial crowds have been defined as actions undertaken in order to effect a change in the immediate circumstances. In the case of the food riot, this was to bring down, in particular, the price of bread, which was a staple item of the 18th century diet. Although both these, and indeed, most historians writing on the subject of riot, apply this theory in the main to pre-industrial riots, there is a valid case for using the general theory as a base from which the 1919 race riots may be considered.

The starting point of much of Rudé's work is an analysis of the people who took part in riots. For, in looking at the make-up of the crowd, the tendency to regard these groups as aimless mobs, bent on violence, is avoided. From this starting point a series of questions emerge, which when considered, indicate how useful the general theoretical approach to riots can be to more modern-day examples.

> What actually happened, and what were the origins and aftermath? How large was the crowd, how did it act? Who, if any, were its promoters, who composed, who led it? Who were the target or the victims of the crowds' activities? What were the aims, motives and ideas underlying these activities? How effective were the forces of repression, or of law and order? .... Finally, what were the consequences of the event, and what has been its historical significance? (4)

Each of these questions raises issues which will be discussed in regard to the 1919 race riots, for they are as relevant to these incidents as they are to the 18th century riots which Rudé considers in his own work. Both Rudé and Hobsbawm however, create a divide in the phenomenon of rioting in Britain. Because riots in their analysis are rational expressions of social, economic and political grievances by the 'lower orders' in British society, and as such ultimately directed at the 'ruling classes', there has to be a visible progression in the cycle with the onset of industrialization. What had been 'collective bargaining by riot', now became strike activity by mass unions against their capitalist employers, in industrial Britain. Social protest in their later period had similarly to develop an ideological base in order to fulfil this role, but this is not always the case. For, although strike activity replaced rioting as the main form of collective protest among the lower orders, the latter did not disappear. David Grimsted's view of these later riots like Rudé and Hobsbawm's is a negative one. "As significant social protest took less violent and destructive forms, riotous mobs became commonly more backward looking or self-indulgent".(5) In fact it can be said that the race riots of 1919 were a combination of the older and newer forms of collective social action; deprived of legitimate union activity due to the weakness of the NUSF, white sailors used riot as a means of negotiation with the shipowners. The tendency to see pre-and post-industrial collective action as a history of progression, with the rationality behind the activity remaining the same, does also tend to overlook the violence which the earlier form of protest introduced, (and, which of course, re-emerged in 1919). One recent follower of Rudé has suggested a revision of the theory.

> .... The 'rational response' interpretation is not a sufficient explanation, for it suggests that the rioters 'rationality' was a function of innate human nature, rather than the product of historical factors. A new, indiscriminate orthodoxy threatens to replace the 'bad' old syndrome of crowd

'madness' with a 'good' new stereotype of plebeian rationality. No wonder R.C. Cobb protests, "Professor Rudé's crowd is somehow altogether too respectable." (6)

In the case of the 1919 riots an explanation occurs for the gap in what may be termed the 'new orthodoxy' of riot, and that is in relation to the historical context of the incident. Following upon a time of world war, the violence which occurred in 1919 had a recent model, and this is also perhaps why these riots differ from the established formula in both the nature and level of violence. For, both Hobsbawm and Rudé have been at pains to stress the controlled nature of the violence in riots in France and Britain in the immediate pre-industrial period, something which only applies at a certain level to the 1919 variety of riot. Speaking of the late 18th century riots in Britain, Rudé has stressed the fact that, "... protest was singularly free from injury to life and limb except in disputes between one group of workers and another ... in spite of all the destruction of property, great discrimination was shown in selecting targets."(7) The example Rudé uses for this assessment, is the fact that only homes of well-to-do Catholics were attacked during the 1780 Gordon riots, while the homes of poor Irish workers were left untouched. The difference between 18th century incidents of riot and more modern examples, is that the former were actions by the 'common people' directed specifically against individuals, eg food suppliers, or ruling class institutions. By 1919 the egalitarianism of the earlier period among the 'lower orders' had been eroded, and economic competition was now a question of intra-class struggle. An example of the earlier unity is the role of Black people in 18th century riots and social protest movements, as participants in the Gordon riots,(8) and leaders of late 18th to mid 19th century radical political organisations.(9) By 1919 Black people had become the targets of white crowds. The discriminating nature of riots stressed by Rudé had not completely eroded however, since most properties attacked at the nine riot centres around Britain were those owned, occupied and rented by Black people, or at least thought to be so, by the white crowds. Other properties damaged usually neighboured those of Black residents. As in earlier riots there was little evidence of looting or general vandalism. Despite press reports to the contrary, the aimless 'mob' was no more apparent in 1919 than during 18th century riots. Mindless violence, however, was a more

comforting explanation for the riots than the real issues of intensified economic competition, post-war social stress, and racist ideology.

The fact that 'riot' was a recognised form of protest in an earlier period of British history, also meant there was an established pattern of official response, which included acceptance of a certain level of protest, as a form of safety valve against more major unrest. Part of this allowable level of social discontent was due to the sense among crowds, notably in 18th century food riots, that their action had its basis in a 'just cause'. In this way violence had limited objectives, and often ended in the distribution of flour or wheat at what the local community regarded, as a fair price. Food riots and other social protests also had an element of looking back to a supposed previous 'golden age' when the 'rights' of the 'common people' were recognised by the ruling classes.

> It is possible to detect in almost every 18th century crowd action some legitimising notion. By the notion of legitimation I mean that the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs, and in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community. (10)

The parallels between this older form of rioting and the riots of 1919 are worth discussing in some detail. In the first instance there was an element of toleration in the courts' treatment of the white crowds' activities, based in part on a common white response to Black people, which gave a sort of spurious validity to the violence. A further similarity between this and the earlier expressions of social discontent, was the feeling among white seamen in particular, that their position had been eroded, and that they simply wanted to restore the status quo ante, when jobs were easy to come by, and there was no 'Black threat' to their lifestyle. The fact that there had been no such 'golden age' for white British seamen in the preceding generation should not mask the fact that the white crowds actions were based on such perceptions. The presence of foreign and Black sailors had been a long-standing fact of life in the merchant service. There had been a significant increase in the number of Black British and other non-British Black and Asian seamen, due to the requirements of war, yet this in itself was not enough to cause riots to break out.

> ... it appears that popular protest is often motivated by 'relative deprivation' in which people perceive themselves to be underprivileged. It is this relationship between people's aspirations and their situation that is most crucial to the outbreak of popular protest. (11)

Concerted violent action is a selective process, occurring when shared values are perceived as being undermined, and beliefs are being challenged, be it in the shape of Black seamen supposedly usurping what should have been white men's jobs and houses and women, or by 'unfair' food price increases which struck at the fabric of life in the community.

It should come as no surprise that Black Britons should have been the target for white crowds in the 1919 riots, not simply due to the established nature of racist thinking in early 20th century Britain, but also in terms of the wider history of riots in this country, in which 'foreigners' were often the objects of attack, in what was a communal activity. Localism, therefore was an important factor. "A constant factor is perhaps the hostility to foreigners; that is non-townsmen. An instinctive kind of municipal patriotism seems to be a constant characteristic of the classical 'mob'."(12) Black people in Britain in 1919 were perceived as 'foreign', despite their nationality, and despite evidence of many having resided in this country for years. At a time of stress, when xenophobia had become almost a way of life with years of anti-German propaganda having just come to an end, those who seemed most 'foreign' of all by reason of their colour, were considered as 'legitimate' targets in the expression of 'real' grievances.

The correlation of riots with periods of stress should not be considered as an absolute factor in causing the incidence of unrest. For, there are many occasions when high food prices and shortages did not coincide with the outbreak of riots. This is a phenomenon considered by Rudé and subsequent writers on the theory of rioting, and their conclusions are worth considering in the context of the 1919 riots. For, as has already been mentioned, the race riots of that year were not simply reactions to economic pressures, although this was an evident motive; it was the combination of this factor with other, submerged ones (post-war social tensions and racial antagonism among

them), which were brought to the surface only by an inter-action of events. Without the existence of a deeper level of motivation, rioting need not necessarily break-out. " ... bad, even abysmal, economic conditions were not an automatic 'trigger' to disturbance."[13]

As an example of the significance of other, non-economic factors in precipitating riotous situations, it is worth considering other incidents of social protest in Britain during 1919, in which the dislocation caused by the return to peacetime conditions was a leading factor. There were three riots involving Canadian servicemen stationed at army camps around Britain in 1919 as these men waited for repatriation. At Kinmel Park army camp in March, five men (three rioters and two soldiers on picket duty) were killed as a result of riots attributable to frustrations caused by delays in the sailing of repatriation ships. Bearing in mind the disruptive influence of the successful Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1918, it is significant to note that a group of rioters carried a red flag during the fighting. Also of importance is the fact that the rioters employed active service tactics when attacking the camp, even to the extent of hanging out a white flag when surrendering.[14] This is direct evidence of how war service created a body of men willing to resort to violence when faced with stressful situations. It was a similar story of delays in repatriating Canadian servicemen, due to a shipping strike, which precipitated a riot at Whitley camp in June 1919. The same month also witnessed a riot of Canadian soldiers stationed at Epsom. The rioting erupted there after two Canadian soldiers were arrested at the train station for causing a disturbance as they quitted the London train. A group of soldiers from the camp attacked Epsom police station when the police refused to release the two soldiers. During the fighting a police sergeant was fatally injured, and eight Canadian soldiers were subsequently charged with his manslaughter.[15]

Tension between service personnel and civilian police authorities was also the cause of two riots in London and Edinburgh in 1919. In March, US soldiers and navy personnel became involved in a fight after a policeman challenged a crowd 'shooting the dice' outside the American YMCA hostel at Aldwych. The numbers involved swelled to 800 as the US servicemen were joined by

Australian, New Zealand and Canadian troops in an attack upon Bow Street police station. Eight or nine rioters were injured as a result of the subsequent police baton charge. Two Canadian and one US servicemen were subsequently each fined 40/- for their role in the riot. While James Ross Cambell, a US subject serving with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was given 6 months hard labour for police assault.(16) In Edinburgh in July, a crowd of 1,000 came to blows with the police at Gayfield Square after the arrest of a soldier by the military police. Subsequently, two soldiers and two sailors were fined for their part in the incident.(17) This latter incident shows that it was not only colonial and US troops who became involved in rioting. Both categories of troops took leading parts in the race riots, which incidents can be placed firmly in the context of the general social unrest which followed the Armistice.

One of the most striking instances of riot during 1919 occurred at Luton in July, and again, evidence of the disruptive nature of four-and-a-half years warfare, was apparent. Here, the Town Hall was burned down and damage of £250,000 inflicted upon the town centre, as a result of a riot on the day of the town's peace celebrations. Disquiet had been caused by the local peace committee's arrangements for the day, which resulted in the local Discharged Soldiers' and Sailors' Federation pulling out of the official celebrations. The local council then refused them permission to use a public park to hold an alternative memorial service. On the day of the celebration, as the civic party entered the Town Hall for a banquet, after the Lord Mayor had read the King's Peace Proclamation, the crowd outside demanded to know why the council had refused the Federation permission to use a public park for their own celebration. Receiving no explanation, the crowd rushed the building, and despite the police presence, forced the door, and stormed in, breaking windows, wrecking rooms, and throwing the contents into the streets. Such activity is similar to the conduct of the race riots, as is the subsequent successful attempt to set fire to the building, which happened in the second wave of violence which broke out as a larger crowd gathered later that night. Rioting continued into the early hours of the morning when troops arrived to augment the civilian forces, and restore calm.(18) This outbreak appears to have had its roots in the feeling of grievance among ex-servicemen, who felt

they were being given a raw deal by the local authorities, who appeared to be more concerned about the chance of a free banquet than the sacrifices of the ordinary people of the town during the war. It was reported that a man had been seen waving a red flag from one of the windows of the Town Hall after it had been stormed. There was also discussion of the possible role of troops from a near-by military camp in the violence - but it is clear that the unrest at Luton was a result of popular feeling running high - and this of course, included an element of service and ex-servicemen in this immediate post-war period. Significantly similar, though lesser disturbances, focusing on attacks on local police stations also occurred at this time of national Peace Celebrations in Wolverhampton, Swindon and Coventry.(19)

The level of violence around Britain in 1919 is an indication of how strong the influence of recent war service, and the sacrifices this entailed for the wider community, was upon British society, in creating a situation of stress which made riot - a well established mode of response among the 'lower orders' - appear a valid form of protest. The pattern and context of rioting which has been established as running through the history of modern social protest in Britain from the 18th century onwards, lasted well beyond 1919. It re-emerged, in amended form in the inner-city riots of 1985, prompting Neal Ascherson to comment,

> Rioting is at least as English as thatched cottages and honey still for tea. It is right to be appalled when young men - black and white together - burn, loot and rape and fight the police with petrol bombs, knives and guns. But it is badly wrong to conclude that we are entering unknown territory, that a violent break has been made with some 'law-abiding' gentle past of plebeian Britain ... Rioting, in short, is one of the instruments of British political behaviour. It is a terrifying instrument, not often used, but it is the traditional resort of those who feel excluded and oppressed by the social and political structure under which - rather than in which - they live. (20)

A feature of riot not yet fully discussed is the actual purpose of riot. For, the specific nature of grievances is what marks out the difference between riots and other forms of social protest, such as rebellion, which seeks to overthrow the existing power structure. The existence of a specific aim in

the rioting also explains the finite nature of such incidents, directed as they are at explicit and tangible relief of grievances. Such relief signals the end of the riot, but not necessarily the removal of the grievance, hence the continued threat of unrest, which can on occasion, erupt once more into violence, should the necessary social conditions prevail. In this way racial tensions continued to simmer under the surface in many areas in the months after the 1919 riots, and indeed, resulted in rioting on subsequent occasions in 1920 and 1921 at Hull, Salford and Newport.

A traditional characteristic of riot and social unrest as established by Rudé, is the spontaneity and lack of organisation demonstated in the outbreak. Applying this to 18th century riots the argument is that common perceptions within a community, of unfair food prices or the lack of political representation, or the spread of machinery which forced down wage rates, for example, made such pre-planning unnecessary. In this way, a small spark was enough to provoke a riot, given the acknowledged norms of behaviour among the 'lower orders' as a whole. His argument, however, is that this feature of social disputes is removed in the post-industrial period when organised struggles usurp riot as the prime means of collective bargaining:

> ... a common feature of the pre-industrial period is the transformation of a disturbance from a relatively small beginning into a wholesale rebellion and attack on property ... generally speaking, as trade unions and political parties develop, this element of 'spontaneity' (which of course, was never complete) begins to recede. (21)

A consideration of the 1919 race riots suggests an amendation of Rudé's position. For, in at least six of the nine cities where riots occurred, it was a minor altercation which precipitated a full-scale riot, suggesting a degree of spontaneity which undermines the theory of an end to disorganised protest activity with the advent of mass trade unions.

Both Rudé and Hobsbawm as Marxist historians stress the fact that riots, in the final analysis, were directed against the ruling classes, even if their immediate targets were someone else, such as food merchants or Roman Catholics. In his description of the 'classical mob', Hobsbawm states, "Nearly the only certain thing about it is that its activity always was directed against

the rich, even when also directed against someone else, such as foreigners."[22] While not totally accepting this viewpoint, a study of the 1919 riots does give a degree of validity to this analysis. The white sailors anger at the high unemployment levels in the industry, although physically directed against Black seamen, derived from the activities of shipowners, (who may be taken to represent the ruling classes, as they dominated the shipping industry), exploiting the shortage of jobs in order to force down the wage rates, and using foreign and Black labour to weaken the white seamen's position. Powerless to attack the real source of their grievances, white sailors turned on a body of people even more vulnerable than they were. It is from this manufactured division within the working classes that a Marxist interpretation of the riots may emerge, since the only beneficiaries of such a division were the shipping magnates.

It is interesting at this stage to turn to a psychological analysis of the theory of riot, and other forms of collective behaviour, to gain a different perspective on what has been considered so far solely as an historical phenomenon. One such work on this topic, by Neil Smelser, is particularly relevant to this discussion, focusing as it does on riots of a racial nature. Although using the example of race riots in the United States, many of his findings apply to the British experience.

> ... a racial incident between a Negro and a white may spark a race riot. But unless this incident occurs in the context of a structurally conducive atmosphere (ie an atmosphere in which people perceive violence to be a possible means of expression), and in an atmosphere of strain (ie an atmosphere in which people perceive the incident as symbolic of a troubled state of affairs), the incident will pass without becoming a determinant in a racial outburst. (23)

In Smelser's analysis people's perceptions and awareness of their position (real or imagined) is of paramount importance in determining whether a riot will take place. It is clear that in Britain in 1919 such a situation did prevail. Violence, with a long standing history as a mode of social expression in this country, was definitely regarded as a legitimate weapon, and this is particularly true in a period at the end of a major war, which had in itself, placed strains on society's norms. As the conditions of war had precipitated a

more visible Black presence in Britain, the host community's fears of a challenge to their predominant position was further put under strain.

As a general background to rioting, Smelser asks a number of questions in seeking to establish the motives of rioters, a consideration of which are revealing for the 1919 disturbances in Britain. "Which groups have reason (in their own minds at least) to attack others? What kinds of social situations drive persons to scapegoating?"(24) In identifying both the wider community of demobilised white men, and seamen in particular, as a group which felt that it had valid reasons for attacking Black people as a convenient focus for wider dissatisfaction, a scenario is established which fits the picture of violence developing from a specific situation, created in an atmosphere of social dislocation.

In detailing the reasons behind 'hostile outbursts', Smelser develops a theory of the 'precipitating factor', which is the immediate cause of a disturbance, and once again the theory, (which echoes Rudé's notion of a small incident prompting a larger disturbance), may be applied to the 1919 race riots in Britain.

> A precipitating factor may confirm or justify existing generalised fears or hatreds. Many racial outbursts have originated in the report - true or false - that one of the groups in question has committed some act which is in keeping with its threatening character. Stories of crime, sexual abuse, mischievous activity, unpatriotic displays, etc., have stirred whites into aggressive actions against Negroes ... (25)

A striking feature of the British race riots is the influence reports of Black-white sexual relations had on the outbreak of violence at many of the riot centres. In London, a riot occurred at a café where white women were employed by a Black man, much to the chagrin of the white men of the district. In Cardiff, the riots were precipitated by the sighting by a white crowd of a group of Black men returning from a day out in a number of carriages accompanied by their white wives and girlfriends. While in Newport, the riot began after the alleged insult of a white woman by a Black man.

The applicability of Smelser's analysis of collective behaviour using the example of the US race riots of 1919, to the British riots suggests that a comparison of these two events would be a worthwhile exercise. It is worth stating at the outset that the US riots of 1919 were neither the first of their kind nor the most serious in American history. This dubious distinction is reserved for the New York draft riots of 1863. Police estimates of white fatalities at the time ranged from 1,200 to 1,500, while no attempt was even made to calculate the number of Blacks who lost their lives. As in the riots of 1919, in both the US and Britain, economic competition was the key to the violence. In 1863 the main group which felt under threat by the 'challenge' of Black migrant labour to their position, was the group on the lowest rung of the economic ladder above the Blacks, namely unskilled Irish immigrants.

> The New York draft riots of July 1863, had their origin largely in the fear of black labor competition which possessed the city's Irish unskilled workers. Upon Emancipation, they believed, great numbers of Negroes would cross the Mason-Dixon line, underbid them in the Northern labor market, and deprive them of jobs. Similar fears helped produce mass anti-Negro violence in World War One and Two, also periods of acute labor shortage. (26)

It was not simply shortage of labour which caused whites to fear the threat of Black competition to their pre-eminent position in the wake of World War One. The stresses and strains of war service and the effect this had on the domestic population were as much in evidence in the United States as elsewhere in the world. "War always brings changes domestically as well as internationally, and trailing in the wake of World War One were not only deep suspicion and fear of foreigners and alleged radicals, but violent race hatred as well".(27) Part of the reason for the severity of the US race riots of 1919 (in which one hundred and twenty people were killed across the country) was the determination with which Black people resisted white attacks on them, something which was to be a feature of the British race rioting also. A major factor in this aggressive self-defence was the role Black servicemen had just played in the war. At one level, this made for trained and disciplined fighting men, used to reacting violently when attacked. At another, service overseas

had been an enlightening experience for thousands of Black troops. This acted at a dual level. For, service in Europe gave Black Americans a taste of life in countries (principally France) where segregation and discriminatory practices were not built into the system. It also forcibly brought home the difference in attitudes between the local people and their own commanding officers (who were of course, white).

> Complaints flooded into the War Department that Negroes were continuously insulted by white officers. They referred to Negroes as 'coons' and 'niggers', and 'darkies', and frequently forced them to work under unhealthy and laborious conditions. Many Negro soldiers contended that white officers made it extremely difficult for them to advance and that they indiscriminately assigned them to labour battalions even when they were qualified for other posts requiring higher skills ... (28)

The parallels between the unfair treatment of US Black servicemen and men of the British West India Regiment, both of which played a part in the aggressive defence of their position on their demobilisation, are clear. As was the case with US Black troops, Black West Indians were also made to perform labour battalion duties and were denied the possibility of promotion beyond the rank of sergeant, despite promises by colonial officials during recruitment. Faced with such biased treatment, Black West Indian troops revolted in Italy in 1918.

> Black soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment, while stationed at Taranto, Italy in December of 1918, revolted in protest of racist restrictions which had been foisted upon them by the War Office. From fifty to sixty of the men were arrested, charged with mutiny, and sentenced. Eight battalions - some 8,000 men - were disarmed. The uprising prefigured insurrections that took place the following year in British Honduras and Trinidad. It stimulated the development of black nationalism in the British Caribbean. (29)

The unrest in the West Indies during 1919 in the period following the return of demobilised troops and repatriated seamen from Britain in the wake of the riots in this country, will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter, suffice it to say at this stage that both US and West Indian Black servicemen were returned to their respective countries with a set of grievances which made any pressures on their community, be it white attack in the UK, or severe economic deprivation in the West Indies, more likely to have a violent reaction.

There were more than twenty-five race riots in the United States in 1919, occurring throughout the country, although it may be said that the worst rioting was in the North, most especially in Chicago, and to a lesser extent, in Washington. That the worst rioting should be in the North indicates how far economic competition played a part in the violence, since it was to the industrialized Northern cities that Black people had moved to find employment in increased numbers due to the heightened demands of the war economy. This process continued after the war, but as in Britain in the merchant shipping industry, an economic decline, due to the return of peacetime conditions, coincided with an increase in the labour supply with the demobilisation of hundreds of thousands of troops, both Black and white. In Washington during July 1919 the 'precipitating factor' of Black-white sexual relations identified by Smelser was apparent.

> Newspaper reports of Negroes assaulting white women whipped the irresponsible elements of the population into a frenzy, although it early became clear that the reports had no basis in fact. Mobs consisting primarily of white sailors, soldiers and marines, ran amuck through the streets of Washington for three days, killing several Negroes and injuring scores of others. On the third day the Negroes retaliated when hoodlums sought to invade and burn the Negro section of the city. The casualty list mounted, but before order was restored the number of whites killed and wounded had increased considerably due to the belated, but stern action which the Negroes took. (30)

The leading part played in the violence by white servicemen is a significant feature of this riot, mirroring as it does the events in many of the British riots, and establishing a pattern of war service as a constituting factor in the violence.

The most serious outbreak of racial rioting in the United States during 1919 occurred in Chicago, and it is clear that the level of violence in this city far exceeded anything which occurred in Britain in the same year. The outbreak of fighting, however, again followed the established pattern of an isolated incident sparking off mass unrest.

> In the Chicago riot of 1919, the refusal of a white police officer to arrest a white person accused of throwing the rock responsible for the drowning of the first victim of the riot, followed by his later arrest of a

Negro on the complaint of a white person, is alleged to have been the precipitating cause of the riot. (31)

This incident at Lake Michigan beach occurred on July 27, when a Black man who had floated into the whites only area of the lakes was stoned by whites to drive him away. He got into difficulties as a result and drowned.(32) The fact that a Black man was killed due to the actions of a white crowd intent on reaffirming their dominant position over Blacks should come as no surprise given the background of increased racial tension in the country in the post-war period. The biased behaviour of the forces of law and order mentioned above, in which a white suspect in the drowning incident was not arrested, but a Black was, simply at the bidding of a white, is in fact, a general feature of the riots in both the United States and Britain. The subsequent Chicago Commission on Race Relations which produced a report on the 1919 riot noted that the Black population was hostile to the police, and the latter had been too few in number to cope adequately with the violence.(33) The conduct of the police during the riot was only partially due to their lack of numbers. Cases of alleged police brutality against individual Blacks were revealed in the Commission's report,(34) while the introduction of 'barred zones' to keep the two communities apart, in effect left the Black population of the city confined to a ghetto. Another policy, that of 'preventive detention' of Blacks to cut down the risk of potentially explosive confrontations, was something which also was put into practice in a number of the British riots. Another feature common to both sets of riots was the police policy of arresting more Blacks than whites, the implication being that the Black community were the aggressors in these incidents, a conclusion which is not supported by the figures of injuries received during the Chicago rioting, at least. Twenty-three Blacks and fifteen whites lost their lives in that city, and 342 Blacks and 178 whites were injured. It was not simply as a result of police action during the riots in Chicago that Black people doubted the impartiality of the police authorities in the city. For, in the period from July 1917 to July 1919 a campaign of bombing Black residences in the city, in what had previously been all-white areas, was conducted largely unchallenged by the police. During these two years twenty-six bombs were set off in Black

homes, as the white resistance to Black settlement in 'their' areas became characterised by violence. "Out of the inter-racial conflict over housing there arose in the black community a marked lack of faith in the willingness and ability of the police to provide impartial protection".(35) The struggle to preserve white domination of residential neighbourhoods, although most violently played out in Chicago, was a feature of life in many northern cities in the US as a result of the arrival of thousands of Black workers and their families to settle, both during the war, and in the years after this. In Britain too, white communal resistance to Black 'encroachment' into white areas and out of their 'defined' areas was a feature of the rioting, particularly in London and Cardiff. The perceived challenge to their position of social and economic dominance on the part of the white population is indicative of the pressures upon working class society in the wake of the First World War, for it was those on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder who resisted the supposed threat of Black people to their position most firecely.

The severity of the pre-war bombings of Black residences in Chicago was continued into the riots themselves, "White gun men in automobiles sped through the Negro district shooting indiscriminately as they passed, and Negro snipers fired back. The undermanned police force was an ineffectual deterrent to the waves of violence ... ."(36) Such activity serves to indicate that the Chicago riot was the most extensive riot of a racial nature witnessed anywhere during 1919. Rioting continued for a further four days, and sporadic outbursts erupted for a further eight day period. Something approaching normality was restored with the arrival of six regiments of militia in the city on the fourth day of rioting, to aid the overrun civilian authorities.

> Most of the activities of the militia were directed against the gangs of hoodlums composed of white youths. It prevented outbreaks of violence by the dispersal of incipient mobs and by taking stations at critical points before raids could take place. (37)

The vital difference between the militia and civilian police force was that the former (which was present in sufficient numbers to act as a deterrent to violence on both sides) was an outside force, with no history of association

with racial unrest in the city. In this way it could enforce order impartially. Indeed, of the thirty-eight fatalities which resulted from the Chicago riots, only one of these (a white) was killed by troops.

The use of troops to quell the violence was a feature of the official response to social unrest and riot throughout the world in 1919. In Britain troops were used during the 40 Hours Strike in Glasgow in January, at various stages during the racial riots, and in Luton in July. In the West Indies local governors applied successfully on numerous occasions to the imperial government to secure troops to quell disturbances in the Caribbean. The proximity of all these incidents to the end of the First World War meant that there were still many units at full fighting capability, so that they were able to be moved into centres of disturbance at very short notice. In his analysis of the theory of collective behaviour, however, Smelser suggests a further reason for the employment of troops to quell what were essentially civilian social protests. "Many miscellaneous historical examples show that frequently periods characterised by hostile outbursts are preceded by evidence of an inadequate police control apparatus".[38] Smelser uses a number of illustrations to back his conclusion, including the absence of law and order in boom towns in the United States during the Gold Rushes, and the diminishing effectiveness of the Nazi government as the fortunes of war turned against them. A more apposite instance of such a weakening in the authorities' ability to govern effectively in time of crisis is that of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1918. It was the success of this small group in overthrowing the government of the country which set the tone of response to social protest and collective violence during 1919, wherever it occurred.

It is worth pointing out that the use of troops during the US race riots was not a complete success story of the restoration of order through the demonstration of impartial force. During the East St. Louis riot of 1917, troops allowed their weapons to be taken away from them to be used by the white crowd in firing at Blacks. A subsequent investigation severely criticised the commanding officer of the military forces. This is a significant episode, because it suggests that it was the firm control of the military

forces in later riots in Chicago, Detroit, and particularly Omaha, which made for successful deterrents. Certainly it has been established that white service and ex-service personnel were prominent participants in the race riots, in both Britain and the United States, so it would appear that the impartial show of strength which was the main reason for the success of troop deployment during US riots, was largely a result of good military leadership. Indeed, in the wake of the Chicago riots, the actions of the militia were approved by both the Black and white communities.(39) In Omaha, Nebraska, the most complete military take-over of a riotous situation was witnessed. Here, the military assumed control of the police authorities, and "General Wood [the commanding officer] prevented the local press from running a dubious and inflammatory story of a second alleged rape."(40) (In Omaha, the precipitating factor behind the riot was again the alleged sexual abuse of a white woman by a Black).

A study of a later racial riot in the United States by H. Otto Dahlke(41) identifies a series of common features in the picture of riot as modern-day phenomenon which are worth considering at this stage. Using the Detroit race riot of 1943 as a model, Dahlke establishes a fist fight between two men - one Black and one white - as the precipitating factor in the violence. In common with 18th century riots in Britain and France discussed by Rudé, the rioting in Detroit was concentrated in one confined locality. Dahlke, however, identifies a leadership among the white rioters, an element which tended to emerge only in a limited sense in earlier periods. A consideration of local source material such as press reports on the 1919 riots in Britain tend to support the conclusions of Rudé and Hobsbawm; hence Dahlke's emphasis on the leadership of the Detroit riot in 1943 by teenage boys was either a specific local phenomenon, or he overstresses its significance. For, although the prominence of young men in the British race riots was a noted element in contemporary accounts, the importance of such 'riot captains' (to use Rudé's phrase) was not paramount. When Dahlke's study moves on to a consideration of the role of the police authorities and the media however, the parallels with the riots of 1919 in the US, Britain and the West Indies are clear.

> ... the police were either helpless, negligent, or actual participants in furthering the riot. Efforts of the police were predominantly directed against

the Negro. Press and radio reports added to the general excitement rather than endeavouring to induce calm. (42)

The fact that this riot occurred during the Second World War is significant, providing further evidence that riot is a means of collective behaviour more likely to occur at times of stress, when the norms of everyday society are either suspended or being challenged by some form of crisis. Again, the inability of the police to act effectively is a factor in the unrest. The role of the press as a provocative element in racial violence, a noted feature of the US riots of 1919, is also identified in the British riots. But here, there is only limited evidence of biased local newspaper reports fuelling or directly stimulating violent racial clashes.

In his conclusion, Dahlke produces a six point outline of conditions which, when taken together, are a useful summary of factors behind riot as a social phenomenon, and are particularly significant in relation to the race riots in Britain:

" 1. Historical Context - A transitional period, such as industrialization, or a period involving unusual stresses and strains, such as a major war...

2. The Role of the Subordinate Group - An outstanding trait or characteristic, such as religion or colour, which serves as a focal point for negative assessments... the subordinate group is regarded as an undesirable competitor for services, goods, control of market, and the allocation of occupations.

3. The Role of Established Authorities and Law - Law assigns the minority group a second or third rate role as citizen... there is a relation of hatred and suspicion between minority group and authorities...

4. The Role of Associations - There are one or more associations whose major function is devoted to propaganda, defamation, and advocation of violence and the minority group.

5. Role of the Press and other means of Communications - The press as official or covert policy indulges in race/minority baiting, or in general, reports the group in an unfavourable way...

6. Personnel - Upper class, professionals and more wealthy merchants are by-standers. Students and marginal employed workers are leaders..." (43)

The first three points of this outline have been dealt with in enough detail earlier in this chapter to have been established as common features of riot. The fourth point regarding the role of associations in stirring up racial antagonism fits in with the picture of bias demonstrated by the actions of the white seamen's unions in Britain at the time of the riots, not simply in the imposition of a colour bar, but also by individual instances of antipathy displayed by various NSFU officials in several of the riot centres. The fifth element in Dahlke's analysis, namely the role of the media has again been previously discussed, particularly in relation to the practice of white newspapers publishing inflammatory stories of the sexual abuse of white women by Black men during the US race riots of 1919. In Britain, however, biased reporting was more of a generalised influence on white racial aggression. Dahlke's final point on the personnel involved in race riots has also previously been dealt with, in the sense that it appears to have been more of a specific phenomenon of the Detroit riot of 1943, and perhaps later race riots in the US.

Having established a pattern for racial riots in industrial society, it is worth considering how far this may be related to the nature of riot as developed by Rudé. It is clear from the outset, that Rudé's analysis of riot has been substantially borne out by the consideration of later riots. In both Rudé's theory and in the examples of racial riot discussed in this chapter, two levels of motivation are apparent; an immediate cause, and a deeper level of grievances, which come to the surface when a minor incident provides the spark, or 'precipitating factor' to set off a general conflagration. Like later historians of the US race riots, both Rudé and Hobsbawm identified the theme of hostility to minorities, in the shape of 'strangers' to the locality, or as in the Gordon riots, Roman Catholics. The role of the authorities is also a theme common to both analyses of riot, with the identification of a level of permisiveness, in the shape of an element of toleration to 18th century food riots and other social protests in the one instance, and in the lax treatment of white rioters in the courts, in the second. The role of the press is something which understandably, is not given much attention in a period when few newspapers were in circulation, and their readership was so small as to make

their influence at times of crisis, marginal. A further reason for ruling out the influence of the press is the fact that Rudé's emphasis is always on the rationality of the crowd - those who took their cue for violence from outside sources do not fit well with the refutation of the notion of the unthinking 'mob'. This factor is of some significance, for there is a tendency in discussions of the 1919 US race riots to lump the crowds involved together, as a sort of 'racial superiority defence league', with motivating factors such as economic competition and recent war service being overshadowed, to some extent.

As a general methodological approach to the race riots of 1919 in Britain, the work of George Rudé in particular, is of immense importance. For, in developing an analysis of riot as a social and economic phenomenon, he creates a sounding board against which the mass of empirical data which is the basis for this thesis, may be directed. While agreeing with the majority of Rudé's theory of riot, the following discussion will in part constitute a revision of what has largely become the accepted view, particularly in regard to the notion of a break-off point in the history of riot as a 'legitimate' form of social protest in Britain. For, arguably, the race riots in Britain, beginning with the outbreak in Glasgow in January 1919, are examples of this phenomenon. If so, it is a dire comment on Britain that such events could be conceded a kind of legitimacy by the ruling class, its instruments of authority, the press, and by society at large.

NOTES

1. See George Rudé, The Crowd in History (New York, 1964), and The Crowd in the French Revolution (London, 1958).

2. E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century" Past and Present 58 (1971), p.77.

3. E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Machine Breakers" Past and Present 1 (1952), p.66.

4. Rudé, The Crowd in History, pp. 10-11.

5. David Grimsted, "Rioting in its Jacksonian Setting", American Historical Review 77, (1972), p.379.

6. R.C. Cobb, The Police and the People: French Popular Protest 1789-1820 (London, 1970), p.189, quoted in John Bohstedt, Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p.11.

7. George Rudé, Ideology and Popular Protest (London, 1980), p.140.

8. Peter Fryer, Staying Power, (London, 1984), p.96.

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CHAPTER THREE - THE GLASGOW RACE DISTURBANCES OF 1919

The place of the Glasgow disturbances within the general picture of race rioting in Britain during 1919 has hitherto been uncertain and at times, totally overlooked. It is the purpose of this chapter to bring the focus of attention to the events in Glasgow, using the outbreaks of racial violence elsewhere in Britain as a model. In looking at the events at Glasgow Harbour this chapter will also cover such diverse topics as the state of the British shipping industry at this time; the position of Black society in early twentieth century Britain, (particularly that of residents in Glasgow), and the identifiable links between this example of labour unrest and the wider picture of industrial upheaval on Clydeside (during what is generally recognised as a most significant period). When the focus of attention moves on to the coloured sailors (all natives of Sierra Leone) who were involved in the court proceedings in the aftermath of the disturbance, the significance of that region will also be discussed. In considering the particular circumstances of Glasgow, mention will also be made of the implications of these events as they parallel or diverge from, the wider theory of riot.

One difficulty facing historians of the period has been to coincide the outbreaks of violence with the post-war economic depression which did not effect most of Britain until the Spring of 1919. The phrase 'most of Britain' is carefully chosen for the unique position of Clydeside, with its recent history of wartime industrial disputes, made it both a particularly vulnerable and immediate target for the restriction of capitalist investment. Dealing with the 'Red Clyde', even before the events of early 1919 was anathema to many employers now that peace had come.

> The slump hit Glasgow industry immediately the war ended and worsened at the beginning of 1919, a time when almost all the rest of Britain was enjoying the brief post-war boom, and this contrast in circumstances made Glasgow an economic plague spot ... unpopular for its wartime record. (1)

The paramount role of economic dislocation as a factor in the riots can be seen when attention is focused on the immediate background to the Glasgow racial disturbances, and in detailing this the parallels with the Rude theory of riot are clear.

In view of the lack of secondary material on the Glasgow events it is clear that

only by looking at the contemporary local press reports that any assessment of the place of the Broomielaw disturbance within the general picture of the 1919 race rioting, can be made. Conversely, any points of divergence from the general background may emerge. It is important to note here that the following survey is based on the reports of the incident in the six 'dailies' then in circulation, namely: The Glasgow Herald, The Daily Record and Mail, The Bulletin, The Evening News, The Evening Times, and The Evening Citizen. Apart from these, there is also an account of the disturbances in the Scotman (which of course, is published in Edinburgh). Interestingly, a newspaper which was printed in Glasgow (but whose printing was soon to be transferred elsewhere), The Socialist, does not mention the Broomielaw incident in an article on the riots, (although no specific area is mentioned), in what is after all, a political analysis of the nature (or rather the necessity) of racial competition within the capitalist system.

> The racial question is however, a very serious one for the Socialist movement. Our intellectuals in the Labour movement are full of schemes for the 'backward races'. Likewise, as could only be expected, the Trade Unions have prided themselves on having ousted coloured labourers from certain occupations. This, of course, is but the logical development of the Trades Union's policy which is prepared to strike rather than that any unskilled white worker should get a 'skilled job'. The Socialist Labour Party has always insisted ... that no worker should be debarred from working at any job. It does not matter what the colour, sex or skill of the worker may be. Real industrial organisation must aim at protecting the international working class against the capitalist class. (2).

The above extract comes of course, from a politically motivated publication, and it is worth stressing at this point that no assessment will be made of the standpoint of the newspapers quoted, except where it is unavoidable, as in the case of 'Hal O' the Wynd', who appears to have been the 'voice' of the Evening Times at this date.

> ... In this country Sambo has been usually regarded with general tolerance. We have looked upon him as an 'amoosin' cuss', who would never create anything approaching a problem ... (3)

In utilising such racist terminology the Evening Times is illustrative of the dominant trend in the reporting of the riots throughout Britain. An example of this can be taken from the Manchester Guardian, (a report which was

reproduced in the Evening News), whose assessment of the Black man was given as follows:

> The quiet, apparently inoffensive, nigger becomes a demon when armed with a revolver or razor, caring for nothing except the safety of his own skin and the speediest method of overcoming his opponent. (4)

Despite such comments however, there is no evidence of press reports actively inciting violence in the British anti-Blacks riots, although this did happen in the United States race riots of 1919.

Given the low standard of objectivity displayed at times by the newspapers of the time it is fortunate that there are so many accounts of the events in Glasgow Harbour, from which a substantially correct picture of the events will hopefully emerge.

> A serious disturbance, extending for almost an hour, and at moments of a riotous description, occurred early yesterday afternoon among seamen at the Broomielaw, Glasgow. The affray began in the yard of the Mercantile Marine Offices, which following upon a heated dispute, was the scene of furious fighting between white and coloured sailors and firemen. (5)

A more colourful, but similar version of the events, appeared in the Daily Record and Mail,

> It was about half past three that the situation entered upon a critical phase. A large number of men of both nationalities were assembled in a court near the Mercantile Marine Office pending their being signed on for a vessel. There had been some chaff between the parties, and this led ultimately to a challenge being issued by one of the blacks who expressed his willingness to 'take on' any of the opposing faction. The invitation did not long hang fire ... (6)

The Evening Times took up the story from there,

> Making their escape into James Watt Street, the coloured men took refuge in the Sailors' Home, where the disturbance continued until the contending parties were ejected by the police. Beating a retreat along the Broomielaw for their lodging house, the coloured men were followed by a hostile crowd of British and other whites. All along the route a running fight was kept up, and at the lodging house several of the beleaguered aliens (sic) are said to have fired revolvers on their opponents on the street below. (7)

It was from here that the police removed, with no resistance, the cornered

Black sailors. The number of police involved in the operation has been put at around fifty, including reinforcements who had been summoned by locals to support the few policemen on duty in the area. In the course of the fighting three men were seriously injured: a Black man and two white men; Duncan Cowan (shot), and Thomas Carlin who had been stabbed. The Black man who had also been stabbed, was described as follows: The injured black gives the name of Tom Johnson, and is a stocky little fellow. Against him is preferred the charge that he shot a seaman [Cowan] ... (8) Johnson is further described as: a man from Sierra Leone who speaks little English, and who complained of having been stabbed, but it is understood that his wound is not of a serious nature. (9)

To quell the disturbance the police took the coloured seamen, all natives of Sierra Leone, about 30 in all, into custody. Although not mentioned in the immediate reports on the disturbance there was also a white man arrested for an incident involving a policeman. While being driven away in a closed van "The coloured man had a hostile reception from the crowd". (10) These then, were the events of the Glasgow race disturbance as described in the press. The reason behind the violence was also considered in four of the newspaper accounts of the incident and here there is some contradiction. The Glasgow Herald states:

> It is understood that the disturbance originated because of an alleged preference being given to British seamen over coloured seamen in signing on the crew of a ship at Glasgow harbour. (11)

Not surprisingly the Herald's sister paper, the Evening Times, expresses the same view, indeed using exactly the same words. (12) The account of the disturbance in the Evening News contains a similar statement, but when attention is turned to the Evening Citizen report of the events, the position is reversed:

> The trouble began because the blacks were being given preference over the whites in signing on for a ship about to sail. The whites resented this,

/... especially as it is well known that coloured men are paid lower wages. (13)

Such an explanation cannot be rulled out of hand, for, given the mood of the white sailors as expressed at the mass meeting of protest against the use of alien seamen held only hours before, such an occurence as this (Black seamen being taken on before white), would almost certainly have provided the spark that set off a blaze of violence particularly as the submerged factors described by Rudé as necessary features in creating riotous situations were already apparent in the shape of post-war social dislocation and growing unemployment in the shipping industry. However, since the Evening Citizen is the only newspaper to give this version of the events, it would be wrong to take other than an equivocal position on this point, particularly in view of another, eye-witness, account of the events,which seems to support the version of the incident as given in the three newspapers mentioned above.

As a result of an appeal for information printed in the Evening Times, the author was contacted by Mr. William Adams, a gentleman now resident outside Glasgow, but who lived in the area at the time of the disturbances. His reminiscences of that day, allowing for effects of the passage of 65 years, are of use in providing an alternative view of the incident, although the question of how far Mr. Adams' memory is unconsciously echoing the newspaper or adult comments of the time must be considered...

... I was a boy of twelve years at the time and I lived in Brown Street, that was the street next to James Watt Street, and I remember it was a morning when the seamen went to the office in James Watt Street. White men and coloured men alike to sign on for work, most times it was the white men who were getting the preference and this morning in particular the coloured men could stand it no longer, so they started fighting and it was said that razors were used and loaded walking sticks and batons, and there were supposed to have been guns as well. (14)

The discrepancy in Mr. Adams' timing of the incident, (newspaper accounts speak of the affray taking place in the afternoon), can perhaps be explained by remembrance of the fact of the seamen having attended a mass meeting in the morning in James Watt Street, after which they went to sign on for work.

The immediate aftermath of the riotous disturbance at the Broomielaw was a

series of court cases, which in themselves are revealing both of contemporary attitudes towards black people, and the exposed and uncertain nature of life as it was experienced by Black Britons at this time.

> Thirty men, all coloured, who were arrested last evening by the Glasgow police at Broomielaw as having formed part of a riotous mob and of recklessly discharging firearms to the danger of the lieges, were brought up at the Central Police court today, and were ordered by the Magistrate to be detained till to-morrow. (15)

This case, involving a relatively large number of Black sailors, attracted most press coverage, but there were others, which are worth mentioning here.

> In the course of their search for the man who wounded Michael Carlin ... the police of the Western Division arrested a coloured sailor, named David Samuel, a native of Sierra Leone, who was found with a revolver and twelve cartridges. Samuel was brought before the Divisional Court yesterday and was remanded on a charge of contravening the Defence of the Realm Act by having firearms in his possession. (16)

Perhaps the most potentially serious case arising from the racial antagonism entirely escaped the press, (if indeed it was ever held), for the injured Black sailor, Johnson, was not removed from the scene of the incident along with his fellow blacks.

> The exception was a native of Sierra Leone, who gave the name of Tom Johnson, and who was detained at the Marine Court on a charge of shooting a seaman named Duncan Cowan. Johnson, who subsequently complained of injuries was found to be suffering from a wound in the back and was conveyed to the Western Infirmary. (17)

The ultimate fate of Johnson is unknown; perhaps he was never brought to trial through lack of evidence.

> The Sierra Leone man (Johnson) is alleged to be the person who fired the shot which wounded the British sailor, but in the meantime it is difficult to say anything positive, owing to the excitement which prevailed. He is detained meantime. (18)

Indeed this may have been the reason for the charges being dropped against 27 of the Black seamen who appeared at the Central Police Court before Stipendiary Nielson :

... Mr. David Cook, writer, said he appeared for all the accused, and on behalf of three - Julius Parkinson, Daniel Pratt and Thomas Cole - tendered a plea of guilty. The Fiscal [Mr. George Smith] accepted that plea, and deserted the diet simpliciter against the other 27. (19)

It is worth mentioning here that the 'writer', (an old term for solicitor), charged with the defence of the coloured sailors was, on the evidence of his entry in the Post Office Glasgow directory at least, a successful legal representative of long-standing. His entry for 1919 reads: "Cook, David, writer, 162 Bath Street; house; Strathearn, Helensburgh; Tel add; 'Assize Glasgow'; Tel No.s Douglas 723 and 733". (20)

The first Directory in which he is entered dates from as early as 1897, the last 1934. From the length of his career alone, even by 1919, it is clear that in David Cook, however he came to defend them, the Black seamen involved in the Glasgow disturbance had secured a lawyer of some substance.

The whole question of the court's treatment of Blacks involved in the riots is a complex one. In Glasgow far more Blacks were arrested than whites, and there is a similar story in the other riot centres in Britain and also in the US race riots of 1919

Both in arrest and detention the Negroes, who were the victims of the violence, were subjected to scandalously biased treatment ... gross injustices inflicted on the various black communities in 1919 came, not solely from the mobs, but also at the hands of the police and the courts, although in London legal discrimination seems to have been absent. (21)

The issue of Black detention is not however, as clear-cut as James Walvin's quotation suggests. Certainly there were far more Blacks arrested than whites, which is suggestive of a degree of police bias, but this is not the whole picture. "With the active intervention of the police in separating the two sides, the most violent expressions of antagonism abated", (22) is the verdict of one article on the rioting. While Neil Evans' study on the rioting in Wales states,

The policy of police in arrests in Newport and Barry shows discrimination with a great imbalance in the numbers arrested. The courts were

more equitable. At Cardiff the legal processes started with flagrantly unequal sentences imposed on black and white men for similar offences but eventually the decisions of the courts seem to have reflected the nature of the offences. (23)

In Glasgow at least, there is evidence to suggest that the Blacks were removed into police custody for their own protection and to avoid further violence. However, the fact that the police could not deal with the violence head on and allow the Black community to go on leading their lives with sufficient police protection does suggest both a form of bias against the Black population and a failure in the system of law enforcement at this time. This latter point ties in with the ideas of increased pressure on everyday society in the immediate post-war period, and it is clear that throughout the time of race riots in Britain, the police forces involved were almost always taken by surprise by the scale of the unrest. The other point, that the police too, used the Black population as the scapegoat as the instigators of the violence, emerges from a consideration of the events both in Glasgow and elsewhere. For, if Black victims of violence were simply being taken into custody to avoid further trouble, why then, were they subsequently charged with rioting offences? However, a consideration of the Glasgow trials suggests that the courts did not simply follow the police lead. Only three of the thirty Blacks arrested were convicted.

The magistrate said the offence was committed under conditions of great gravity, and the result might have been more disastrous. He imposed a fine of £3 3s on each, with the alternative of 21 days' imprisonment. (24)

The sole white seaman arrested as a result of the Glasgow riot received a comparable sentence.

A case arising out of the rioting between white and Black sailors which occured at the shipping office, Glasgow, on 23 January, was heard today at the Western Police Court, when Patrick Cox (19) was charged with assaulting Constable Russell in James Watt Street. During the fighting on that day a number of white men had attacked a China man and knocked him down. When Constable Russell interfered and went to the Chinaman's assistance he was struck from behind. He was unable to identify his assailant, but witnesses stated Cox was the man who gave the blow. Baillie Mollison found the charge proved and fined Cox 3 guineas, with the option of 20 days' imprisonment. (25)

A final legal action arising from the fracas at Glasgow Harbour is given in

this extract from the Minutes of Glasgow Corporation's Magistrates' Committee, (the property involved was in the same building as the Black seamen's boarding house from which shots were fired and which came under attack from the white rioters).

> There was submitted a letter from Messrs. Robert Walker & Orr, writers, intimating a claim against the Corporation on behalf of Mr. R. Robin's Trustees, in respect of damage alleged to have been done, on 23rd ultimo, to property belonging to them at 120. Broomielaw, occupied by Mr. H.E. Thorne, through a disturbance which took place among a number of sailors on that date. The Committee, after considering the claim and a report thereon by the Chief Constable agreed to recommend that liability therefore be repudiated, and that the Town Clerk be authorised to defend any action that may be raised. (26)

An element in the court cases not previously discussed is the significance of nationality. All the arrested men were natives of Freetown, Sierra Leone. This fact is particularly significant for as residents of the Crown Colony they were British subjects. Sierra Leonians resident outside the Crown lands, (e.g. in the protectorate), were in a different category as British Protected Persons. The irony of white sailors, non-Britons among them, attacking these subjects of the British Empire is made more bitter when the history of that colony is considered. The establishment of Sierra Leone as a colony had its origins in the poor conditions suffered by the growing number of destitute Blacks in London as a result of the American War of Independence. Many of them ex-servicemen, this late 18th century group of Black Britons provided a ready source of unwanted humanity upon which philanthropists (or should it be paternalists?) such as Thornton and Sharp could carry out an experiment in Utopian settlement. The fact that such men genuinely cared for the sufferings of the 'Black Poor' cannot disguise the fact that Sierra Leone, the area fixed upon for the settlement, was far from being a paradise on eatth. The first expedition ended in disaster with the deaths of many of the settlers. But later settlements from Nova Scotia, and the influx of over 60,000 'recaptives' after 1807, (freed slaves rescued from ships belonging to nations still engaged in the slave trade), meant that a solid community was established. The object of the exercise was to "... provide Africans with the good things Europe could offer, instead of the evil slave trade". (27)

By 1808 the province of Freetown and its environs was made a crown colony. Throughout this period missionaries were at work on those in the community not already Christian.

> Some missionaries gave the recaptives new names, but most preferred to choose names [of the missionaries] like Metzger, far more had names of officials (like MacCarthy, Reffel, Nicol, Coker or Macfoy). Some took settler names (like Williams, Jarret or Davis). (28)

This close link between Sierra Leonians of the crown colony, the capital of which was Freetown, and Britain therefore, evidently continued up to 1919, for, comments on the English surnames of the coloured seamen brought to trial in Glasgow are to be found in most press accounts of the trials.

> Most of the accused, although obviously of negro blood, bore familiar English-sounding surnames, such as Johnson, Davis, Parkinson, Alfred, Pratt, with Tom Friday at the end of the list. (29)

> In the case of two who gave the same name the magistrate had some difficulty in finding a means of distinction. Both said they belonged to Sierra Leone and when asked from what part of Sierra Leone, both replied Freetown. Dr. Neilson then asked them their occupations, and found that both were firemen, and he had at last to differentiate them by their ages, which on inquiry were found not to be the same. A similar process was gone through later with another two of the seamen who also had the same names, came from Freetown, Sierra Leone and were firemen. (30)

By the settlement between Britain and France of 1895, Britain's sphere of influence was divided between the crown colony area and a Protectorate (land where native chiefs still ruled under the guidance of District Commissioners). The importance of British sovereignty to the citizens of Sierra Leone must be stressed, particularly when it is noted that,

> in 1853 the Liberated Africans and their children [the inhabitants of the Crown Colony in other words], had been declared British subjects by Parliament, a fact which served to give a certain legal credence to A.J. Shorunkeh-Sawyerr's pronouncement in 1893 - that the Creole was a 'Black Englishman. (31)

However, as Britain's interest in the colony increased with the expansion of the Empire in the late 19th century those Black residents who had advanced themselves in business and land holding were forced from their positions of influence by white settlers.

That the defence lawyer, Cook, was aware of the injustice being done to these British subjects in 1919 is made clear from the press reports of the trial in which he is quoted as saying,

> During the whole period of the war and for some years before the war they [the Black men] were manning British ships and were, of course, entitled to the protection of the British Government. Some of them had formerly sailed from Glasgow, but on this occasion a number of men had come from Cardiff to man ships in Glasgow Harbour. (32)

That the Black seamen were treated relatively leniently can perhaps be attributed to a more general realisation of this injustice. Perhaps too, the fact that this was the first riot of its kind in 1919 made for more official toleration of the Black community than was to be demonstrated later.

When looking at the contemporary reports of the Glasgow race disturbances one is struck by the fact that few of the newspapers which mention these incidents link them to the more general phase of rioting from April to June 1919. Indeed, outwith Scotland there is very little evidence that the tension between Black and White sailors at Glasgow Harbour was even noticed, although exceptions to this general statement are to be found.(33) Why the Glasgow incident should be almost totally ignored is open to question, it may be that the disturbance was classed as too minor as to merit attention in the national press, yet far less severe skirmishes of a racial connotation, were reported in the Scottish press.

> An amazing scene was witnessed at one of London's popular lunching centres - Lyon's Corner House, Coventry Street - just as the mid-day trade was at its height on Saturday ... when a rather shabbily-dressed negro appeared in the hall, and quickly made his presence felt by his strange behaviour ... The negro who it appears, was recognised as a former employee of the firm, using his axe with disastrous effect, quickly smashed all the glass and china ware on several of the tables as well .... (34)

The resulting struggle between the armed man and a chef, while making the report good reading does not explain why such minor incidents are reported in the Glasgow press while the more significant occurrences on the Broomielaw attracted so little national coverage. The London bias of most newspapers at this time can be suggested as one reason for this lack of balance, but perhaps

a better case can be put forward for the Harbour incident being overshadowed by the upheaval and violence caused as a result of the 40 Hours' Strike in Glasgow, (which also spread to other parts of Britain). The Government reaction to the protest meeting at George Square, which one historian described thus: "Suddenly the police staged what could only be described as a riot and charged the crowd ..." (35) namely the drafting in of 12,000 troops, 100 lorries and six tanks, is certainly more spectacular, and of greater import than the events on the Broomielaw, particularly bearing in mind the unease with which the government viewed the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution among the working classes in the immediate post-war period, but the fact that the former event took place only a week to the day after the strife at the Harbour is surely of importance.

At one level what was regarded by some official commentators, (hence the undue show of force), as an attempt at staging a 'Bolshevik' type revolution in Glasgow has perhaps understandably, led to a neglect of the Glasgow race disturbances by historians. While the trend noticed above, (the bias of the national press), has at another level meant that Black historians are at a disadvantage when it comes to mentioning the place of the Glasgow disturbance in relation to the 1919 race riots in general. The proximity of these two incidents, the 40 Hours' Strike and the racial disturbance, is of great significance. There is a case to be made for seeing these events as interconnected, not merely indirectly in terms of evidence of the great post-war national upheaval which resulted in riots in so many areas but also in the form of one individual - Emmanuel Shinwell. For Shinwell was at this time leader of the Seafarers' Union and a leading light in the 40 Hours' Strike Movement. That the two campaigns were conducted in tandem is suggested by the fact of their occurring at virtually the same time, while other evidence also points to this conclusion.

> ... into the question of the strike ... has been introduced the subject of [the] employment of Chinese labour on board British ships, it being urged that the time is opportune for a movement to clear such labour from the ships

in order to provide fuller employment for British seamen. On this subject considerable feeling exists - as was manifested by the riotous incidents in the Broomielaw on Thursday last. (36)

Shinwell presided over a meeting of seamen at the Harbour on January 30, (the day before the meeting at George Square to hear the Government's response to the Strike Committee's proposal on a convention to discuss methods of securing fuller employment in view of the prevailing post-war economic depression), at which he "..... urged them to take effective steps to prevent the employment of Chinese labour on British ships ...". (37)
A newspaper report of January 28 had meanwhile stated, "An effort is being made to extend the strike to the seafaring men at Glasgow Harbour. The shore workers attached to the British Seafarers' Union are out for the 40-hours week, and ships crews are being asked to refrain from signing on in sympathy with them". (38)

A similar meeting had been held on the morning of Thursday, January 23,

> The question of Chinese labour on British ships, and its relation to the unemployment of British seamen, was held this morning at James Watt Street, Glasgow. Over 600 men were present. Councillor Shinwell, of the British Seafarers' Union, who addressed the meeting, directed attention to the large number of British seamen and firemen who were at present unemployed and the large number being demobilised who would find it difficult to secure employment aboard ship. This he attributed to the refusal of the Government to exclude Chinese labour from British ships, and it was essential, he said that action should be taken at once. (39) (Author's emphasis)

In between this series of meetings, in fact on the very afternoon of the meeting mentioned above, the disturbance between Black and white sailors occurred. On the basis of this evidence it is clear that competition for employment was the major factor in the rioting. However, there is no escaping the fact that white seamen (including foreign sailors), made Black seamen (British subjects included), the object of their frustration with the poor employment situation.

Bearing in mind the general nature of the men involved it is not surprising that demands that "action should be taken at once" would be converted into a physical demonstration, in Shinwell's own words;

"They were tough men, awkward to deal with, and without much of a social conscience." (40) Indeed, it took a tough man to lead a union composed of such men, "Local seamen's feelings ran high and easily to violence, but finally Shinwell, an expert boxer, agreed to try;" (41) is how Middlemas describes Shinwell's accession to power. However, it would be misleading as well as inaccurate, to regard the immediate background to the anti-Black riots solely in terms of the coincidence of Emmanuel Shinwell being the secretary of one of the unions involved in the long running campaign to rid British ships of alien seamen, and leader of the 40 Hours' Strike Committee in Glasgow. For, the latter was as much a product of the Clydeside industrial war disputes, as a result of the depression and subsequent shrinking job market which was the occasion for its birth, while the seamen's grievance had its roots in the pre-war years, even the use of force was not a new development. For, it must be stated here, that the apparent cooperation between the Seafarers' Union and the National Sailors' and Firemens' Union (under the demagogic leadership of Havelock Wilson) in attempting to enforce a colour bar on British ships, had not been the case in previous years when disagreement, often violent, was the characteristic factor in inter-union relations.

A tragic sequel to a quarrel between two unions took place at Glasgow Harbour last night. In the course of an encounter between members of rival organisations, a delegate of the British Seafarers' Union was fatally wounded by a revolver shot. The victim, James Martin, who was about 40 years of age, resided at 75 Finnieston Street. In connection with the affair Alfred W. French - Scottish Secretary of the National Sailors' and Firemens' Union of Great Britain, a well-known leader of the transport workers, was arrested with a revolver in his hand and lodged in the Southern Police Station. Although rivalry has existed in the ranks of the two organisations ever since the foundation of the British Seafarers' Union whose original membership was largely composed of seceders from the National Union, the circumstances of the present quarrel date only from last weekend when a change of crew was made on Messrs. David MacBrayne's (Ltd.) Steamer Columbia ..... (42)

The establishment of the Seafarers' Union at Glasgow Harbour had come about after Shinwell had angered the National Union's leader, Wilson (who had appointed him Secretary of the Glasgow branch of the N.U.S.F.), by

organising the shore workers at the Harbour as doing a job closely allied to the seamen's. The breach occurred when Wilson sacked all the local Glasgow officials, who continued to do their work under the breakaway title of the Seafarer's Union. The dispute between the two unions continued to smoulder into the post-war era, but there was agreement over the attempt to ban alien seamen from British vessels, a policy which pre-dates the violence of the race riots of 1919.

Foreign and coloured seamen attracted more attention in the decade preceding the First World War. The distress of colonial subjects in Britain was sufficient to prompt a government report in 1910 and the growing number of seamen of non-British birth was a subject which attracted widespread comment.

This essay continues, after describing an afternoon of anti-Chinese violence in Cardiff during the seamen's strike of 1911,

> ... the anti-Chinese feeling was an ominous development; the numbers of foreign seamen started to decline and a sad precedent for the exploitation of ethnic differences in a situation of economic conflict had been set. (43)

A report in the Glasgow Herald from 1914 shows that Glasgow seamen were not lagging behind in the campaign against the employment of foreign seamen.

> A demonstration in furtherance of the agitation against the employment of Asiatic labour on British ships was held last night in the City Hall, Glasgow ... The Chairman said that their objection to Chinese and Indian labour was not because these men were of a different race and different colour, but because they lowered the standard of life for white men. (44)

The differentiation in rates of pay for white and African seamen dated from the national seamen's strike of 1911.

> The strike arose out of the seamen's growing awareness of low wages and deplorable working conditions. Wilson also complained that British hands were being replaced by lower paid foreign labour. The strike resulted in higher wages for British seamen, but this was partly paid for by reducing the wages of African seamen. Ships' articles from after 1911 show white wages increased from £3.10s per month while those of African firemen were reduced from £3.10s to £2.10s per month. (45)

That the shipping companies exploited this difference in wages to hire cheaper crews is apparent from a report on Parliament in the Glasgow Herald late in 1918.

> Answering Mr. Houston (Liverpool, W. Toxteth, U.) Sir L.C. Money said - It is, I regret to say, not infrequently necessary to utilise men other than white British seamen to complete crews of British ships. The fact that white British crews are not always available for British ships is largely due to the extensive employment by British ship owners of foreign seamen prior to the war. The question of the adequacy of the supply of British seamen has been receiving the close attention of the Ministry of Shipping. A test scheme was recently initiated in London for training youths with a view solely to their suitability for immediate employment in merchant shipping. (46)

From the above it is clear that Black seamen were a disadvantaged class even before the outbreak of the war, being both lower paid and the objects of white union hostility. The resulting higher wages of wartime were also counteracted, as the threat to life was greatly increased. Indeed, if that threat was overcome, peace brought with it a renewal of white hostility and reduced wages, which even after the open violence of the race rioting had subsided left Black seamen a disadvantaged, and generally unemployed group of men.

Not all Blacks in Scotland were seamen, howevermuch this had become part of the stereotyped white image of Black residents in the community. "The coloured was assumed to be a seamen, someone who would go back 'home' and for whom no provision need be made." (47) Yet the 1910 government investigation had revealed that not all distressed Black people in Britain were in the seafaring line.

> One witness told the committee that about 3 in 5 of the distressed blacks were seamen. About a quarter of the destitute Black people were said to be 'student adventurers'. There were also a number of people brought to Britain as servants butlers and nurses from the West Indies who had left their employers because of bad treatment ... (48)

There was a notable sprinkling of West Indian and West African students in the universities of Scotland at this time. Two delegates at the Pan-African

Conference of 1900 were representatives of the Afro-West Indian Literary Society of Edinburgh University.[49] Two others were visited by Sol Plaatje, during his trips to Scotland in 1919 and 1920. "Modin Molema, Silas Molema's son who was now in Glasgow studying medicine; and James Moroka, a descendant of the Seleka Barolong Paramount Chief, Moroka, doing the same at Edinburgh".[50] The visits paid by Sol Plaatje, the A.N.C.'s first President, to Scotland are indicative of a more sympathetic white reaction to Black people and their world position on the part of the white middle-class 'liberal' element in this country. On the occasion of Plaatje's 1919 visit to Scotland, Forward, the newspaper of the Independent Labour Party, reporting on a lecture given in Glasgow stated, "He is probably the first black lecturer to appear on the Socialist platform in this country."[51] The appearance of this article in Forward is interesting in view of the fact that the disturbances of January were totally ignored, perhaps in embarrassment at the lack of fraternity shown by white workers towards their Black brethren.

A near contemporary Black account of Glasgow exists in the form of An African Savage's Own Story, the autobiography of an African who found his way to the Glasgow dockside in 1896 only to be looked on as a curiosity as he stood, a naked, shivering boy on the quay.

> ... Instead of a policeman's picking me up, someone else did; and, according to what that gentleman said before he died, he merely did it out of pity. He said that he saw me in that rude crowd, and he knew that I was cold, and he saw that none of those rough uncouth people showed any pity at all for a poor wee naked black creature from the African bush. (52)

By degrees, under the influence of the young son of the wealthy family into whose presence Lobogola was brought, he became 'civilised', and attended a school. His 'young master' often took him out to play in the parks of Glasgow, including Kelvingrove Park and,

> One night my young master himself took me out. It was a virtual crime, one of the seven sins, for us to leave the house after dark. I was bewildered. We walked through 'Sauchi', down 'Buccy' and along 'Argyle' seeing the sights of a lifetime. (These abbreviations are the first names I learned for

Sauchiehall Street, Buchanan Street and Argyle Street). (53)

The references to Glasgow in the book do seem to be those of a person who had lived in the city for some time, so despite the far-fetched description of his arrival as a stowaway, Lobogola's account is of some value in describing the life of a Black person in Glasgow in the early part of the 20th century. His statement, "during the whole time that I lived in Scotland and in England, I had never seen another Black man", (54) can be attributed to his relatively sheltered lifestyle in which a visit to the Broomielaw, for example, would have been out of bounds.

Interestingly, the accounts of both Lobogola and Ernest Marke in Liverpool[55] mention working as show men during their chequered careers. Indeed, the alternative to the sea or the university for black residents in Britain would appear to have been the showground, "The only other coloured man I knew lived on the corner of Oswald Street. He was called Jasper and he worked with show people". (56) Reference to the mixed reception given to Lobogola by the citizens of Glasgow leads on to a more general consideration of the historical links between this city and the black world. That there was a 'Black presence' in Glasgow in the late 18th century is clear from an entry in the Glasgow Public Records of Baptism dated October 12, 1782, which reads, "Anthony Cunningham, Labourer (Negro) and Margaret Pollok, a lawful son, David, born 19th, witnesses James Smith, John Finlay and John Aitken". (57) Despite this evidence of at least one settled black citizen in the second city of the Empire, it is through the medium of trade that links between Glasgow and the Black world can most clearly be traced.

> ... the merchant guilds of Glasgow ... thought primarily in terms of

trading to Ireland and to France, though in the later 17th century they developed a regular direct connection with the West Indies and the English plantations on the mainland of North America, and also to the Canary Islands. (58)

This pattern of trade with the West Indies and particularly with North America, in which tobacco was the main interest, remained the dominant one so long as trade remained a major factor in Glasgow's economy. Trade with Africa was negligible, until the partition of that continent was undertaken by the major European powers in the latter half of the 19th century. Part of the reason for this can be traced back to the ill-fated Darien Scheme, when the funds raised by public subscription for "a company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies"(59) were wasted on the failed attempt to found a colony at Darien in the isthmus of Central America and the embarkation of four ships to East India and Africa, only one of which returned with a profit. When in fact, a trade was developed (concentrating "in the early 70's mainly on West Africa, and thereafter on Egypt and South Africa") (60), it remained a minor part of the city's commercial life. The other long-standing connection between Glasgow and the black world, namely the once flourishing anti-slavery movement was little more than a memory by 1919.

There existed in Glasgow until 1876 an organisation known as the Glasgow Emancipation Society. Although the last meeting of this body, called on February 1876, was held to protest against the Fugitive Slave Ordinance issued by the British Government with respect to East Africa, it had nothing to do with Africa after 1870, and in fact during the last years of its existence was practically defunct. (61)

It may be concluded then, that apart from the presence of Black seamen in Glasgow Harbour, relations with the Black world were confined to trade, and since that trade was never in bonded Black humanity, the existence of an integrated coloured community was never a factor in Glasgow social life (as it was in Liverpool for example). In passing, it may be said that this factor

probably was the reason for the absence of sexual jealousy, something which of course, has been established as a common 'precipitating factor' in many of the riots in the U.S. and several of these in Britain in this year, as an issue in the Glasgow racial disturbances, although there were Black/White inter-racial marriages in existence in the city. The final aspect of the Glasgow racial disturbances to be considered is the subsequent fate of the Black seamen in the aftermath of the events discussed above. The position of coloured seamen in Glasgow remained dismal according to a report of March 1919.

> We make no apology for returning to the subject of coloured seamen, British-born subjects, in Glasgow. The apology is due from the National Sailors' and Firemens' Union which took the disgraceful step of refusing them - although members - to serve on British ships. [This ban of course was also being enforced by the Seafarers' Union.] The only shadow of an excuse is the shallow pretence that the places the coloured men would take are to be reserved for discharged soldiers. That is sheer bunkum. One poor fellow has died as the result of privations, and of 'sleeping out' for he had no money and no bed. Yet he was a Briton who had defied the Hun and his devilries for the sake of Britain. There are 132 of these ill-treated fellows in Glasgow most of these without a square meal any and every day. Their appeal to the Lord Provost has been calmly ignored. They are modest enough to say - 'first place for white Britishers; after that coloured Britishers'. Yet they are ordered to 'clear out' from ships at Glasgow, while they see Norwegians, Swedes and Spaniards taken on. (62)

The African Telegraph echoed this sentiment,

> the men now cast on the streets have paid their subs as members of the Sailors' and Firemens' Unions, but the officials of the Glasgow branch have made and enforced a rule that no coloured seamen are to be allowed on British vessels. (63)

According to Mr. William Adams the result of the fracas was the removal of most of the coloured seamen from the scene of the incident,

> ... not long after this trouble, work was found for most or all the coloured men on a ship and an awful lot of them left Anderston [leaving] wives and babies behind them and most of them never came back ... (64)

Whether the seamen were returned to Cardiff or directly back to their

homelands is uncertain, since it was not until the more severe riots in June 1919 in South Wales and Liverpool that a general scheme of repatriation was mounted at Britain's major ports including Glasgow.(65)

There remained however, a number of Black residents in Glasgow, the wife of one of whom was prompted to write to the Evening Times after the comments by 'Hal O' the Wynd' mentioned above (see page 54).

I think as the white wife of a British coloured man I have a right to speak. 'Hal o' the Wynd' thinks it repulsive to see a white woman in the company of a coloured man. It is a shame to say that. They are as God made them; they cannot help the colour of their skin. We, the white wives know better than anyone what they are. We have been married for years and find the British coloured man - I don't say all, but I say most - make us very good husbands. (66)

Another significant letter to the press as a result of the 1919 race rioting appeared in the Daily Record and Mail, (which will be quoted in full as the most extensive account of the contemporary Black Glasgow reaction to the rioting of 1919).

We, the members of the African Races Association of Glasgow, view with regret the recent racial riots in different parts of Britain, and resent the unwarrantable attacks that have been made upon men of colour, without exception as one common herd of inferior beings.
It seems from the newspaper reports that the seat of the trouble lies in the fact that men of colour are employed at seaport towns, while demobilised soldiers are unemployed. Is it not a fact that there are in the same towns ex-service coloured men also unemployed? But, granting that some coloured soldiers are employed are they not in the minority - about 1,000 to 1, and are they not British subjects the same as the white men, and consequently deserve the same consideration?

Did not some of these men fight on the same battlefields with white men to defeat the enemy and make secure the British Empire? Why can't they work now in the same factories with white men? Did they not run the risks of losing their lives by the submarine warfare in bringing food for white women and children in common with white men?

Is the treatment meted out to them now compatible with the British teaching of justice and equity, or is it an exhibition of British gratitude? (67)

The letter was signed by The Secretary, African Races Association of Glasgow. After this and other letters to the press on the subject of the riots,

nothing is known of the African Races Association of Glasgow until an exchange of letters in 1922 between the founder of the Association, Leo W. Daniels, a Black Canadian who had lived in Glasgow for 34 years, and Robert Russa Moton, Principal and successor to Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, U.S.A. The occasion for the correspondence was an appeal for funds and advice by Daniels to Moton who, as Principal of Tuskegee was one of the leading influences upon Black thought and activity worldwide (despite attempts to belittle its significance by black radicals). The basis for Daniels' appeal was Moton's recent visit to Glasgow as a speaker at the Glasgow Missionary Congress of October 1922, a trip which also brought him into contact with the African Races Association. It is clear from Moton's letter that he was not willing to give other than verbal support to the A.R.A.G., whose members apparently did not come from that class of black people who were the subjects of attack in 1919.

> ... I would urge you to draw just as largely as you can upon our own people there in Glasgow for the support of your movement. From what I saw of them, they are far from being poverty stricken... (68)

This assessment can be supported by the evidence of Daniels' letter in which he describes the Committee of the A.R.A.G. thus:

> Dr. Riberio of Accra, West Africa - Chairman, Dr. James Horsham of Meharry Medical College - Secretary, James Miller, Ships Joiner, Jamaica, B.W.I. - Secretary, Leo W. Daniels (Ontario) - Founder. (69)

It is unclear what Daniels did for a living, but it is likely that he and his fellow members were settled and relatively well accepted residents of Glasgow. This was most apparent in the links between the A.R.A.G. and Christian organisations in the city as Daniels' letter to Moton shows,

> Rev. John MacBeath wrote me a beautiful letter of encouragement and so did Dr. Donald Fraser and ex-Chief Constable I.V. [this should read J.V.] Stevenson of Glasgow who has given me £50 or £30 to use as I like in anything I care to use it for. (70)

MacBeath was the Secretary of the Scottish Churches Missionary Campaign and a leading light of the Missionary Congress (and thus known to Moton as

was Fraser). The Right Rev. Donald Fraser, D.D., was Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland and Chairman of the Congress. While ex-Chief Constable (he retired in March 1922), J. Verdier Stevenson was evidently a man of great religious feeling,

> The directors of the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association at their quarterly meeting in the Bible Training Institute, Bothwell St., yesterday presented Chief Constable J.V. Stevenson with a silver inkstand on the occasion of his retirement from the office of Chief Constable of Glasgow and in appreciation of his Christian character and the interest and help extended by him to the association in its work. (71)

It is likely therefore that he attended the Missionary Congress in a personal capacity.

The fellowship extended to Daniels on his approaches to these men of strong Christian belief, was similarly evident in the reception afforded to Moton on his appearance as a guest speaker at the Missionary Congress on the topic of, 'The Negro - His Economic and Social Progress'.

> In marked contrast with the restraint of this speaker [Mr. K.T. Paul] was the breezy and vehement address of Principal R.R. Moton, the chief (Author's emphasis) representative in the Congress of the negro race. (72)

Nothing more is heard of the A.R.A.G. until it is mentioned as affiliating with the West African Students Union established in 1925 in 1928 in the latter's newspaper Wasu. (73) Unfortunately, these glimpses are the only record of what appears to be a very interesting example of grass roots black self help and organisation in Britain.

Further evidence of a continued Black presence in the city can be found in the press reports of a court case in November 1919.

> Cornelius Johnstone, a coloured man, was charged at Glasgow Southern Police Court on Saturday with having kept or used a hall at 60 Mains Street, Gorbals, for public dancing without having obtained a licence, as required by the Glasgow by-laws for places of entertainment. Alexander McKay and John McDonald, Glasgow men, were also accused of having assisted in the management. It was explained by Superintendent Ord that the premises had been rented for the purpose of a coloured man's club which was designated 'The Order of the Star of Bethlehem's Shepherds'. At first no fault could be

found, but latterly the premises had been used for public dancing, and admission had been charged. When the police made a raid in the early morning of September 27, the hall was packed with dancers. Baillie Thomas Young fined Johnstone £10 with the alternative of 60 days' imprisonment. McKay was fined £5, or 30 days in prison and on McDonald a fine of 20s was imposed. (74)

Despite such colourful episodes, life for the Black population generally in Britain during the inter war years was a constant struggle against unemployment, poor housing and discrimination, blatant or otherwise. The latter particularly occurred in Cardiff where coloured people were forced to register as aliens, as a result of the local police's application of parliamentary legislation in the shape of the Aliens Order of 1920 and the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order of 1925. In these later years then, coloured British seamen were once again victimised, as they had been physically attacked in 1919, for being 'aliens' in the heart of the Empire for which they had risked their lives in the First World War.

From the discussion above it should have emerged that the race disturbance at Glasgow Harbour in January 1919 was not simply an early example of the spate of violent attacks upon Black seamen in port areas, which reached their height in June of that year. Nor, however, can the incident be explained purely in terms of the industrial strife which had been simmering below the surface on Clydeside throughout the war years, and which exploded into violence at George Square on January 31st. Indeed, it would be wrong to see the Broomielaw fracas in isolation, and this is why it has been discussed within the context of the ongoing rivalry between the two seamen's unions, and the contemporary position of Black people in British society. Both these aspects must be considered in the background to the rioting, along with the more obvious issues of the industrial/economic situation on Clydeside, against a background of post war social stress which led to an increased level of violence throughout Britain; all of which go some way to establishing Glasgow as a role model for riot 1919-style.

That this example of racial violence has attracted so little attention is unfortunate in view of the unique aspects of the Glasgow incident, namely its coincidence with wider labour unrest, the absence of sexual jealousy as a motivating factor in the white reaction to the Black presence, and the

relatively early date of its occurrence. Similarly, the absence of these events from works of labour history dealing with this period on Clydeside is also regrettable, particularly as the fracas 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), to secure the best deal for their members, at the expense of the minority.

In terms of Black history the episode on Clydeside is worthy of mention as part of the general picture of the 1919 race riots, but on closer examination the Glasgow events and their background are perhaps of more importance for the points at which they diverge from what has (up to now) been regarded as the established pattern of events. In conclusion then, a knowledge of the events at Glasgow Harbour at once adds to the information which is already available on the 1919 riots, and alters the perspective from which this series of incidents has hitherto been viewed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

'COME ON YOU BLACK [BASTARDS]'; THE FEBRUARY 1919 RACE RIOTS IN SOUTH SHIELDS

As in Glasgow, the previous month, the rioting at South Shields in February 1919 arose from a dispute in the local shipping office, as a group of nine Muslim sailors who had been hired as a stokehold crew of a ship were refused permission to sail by two seaman's union officials. The violence which followed took place between a group of Blacks, mainly Muslims, and a crowd of white seamen, British and foreign, and white locals. The Muslim sailors were British subjects who came from Aden, yet they, like the British sailors from Sierra Leone in the Glasgow riot, were being made the scapegoats for the social and economic pressures being felt by the white seamen and the wider white community. The paramount importance of economic competition upon the outbreak of the race riots in Britain is again illustrated at South Shields by the fact that violence again broke out as both sides met face to face at the shipping office, in a situation where the post-war decline in shipping was directly making itself felt on the employment levels at the port. Although evident in the actual outbreak of the violence at South Shields, the racist impulses of the white community did not take on the significance which this factor attained in the anti-Blacks riots later in the year. There remained however, a clear undercurrent of disapproval of Black-white sexual involvement. This was primarily directed against the employment of white females by male Muslim cafe and boarding-house keepers.

One significant variation in the events of South Shields from the more general pattern of riots in Britain is the relatively limited importance of the influence of war service as a factor in the violence. While it is evident that recent war service and the cessation of hostilities did much to bring about the prevailing tense social and economic atmosphere which was the background to riot, there is no mention of service or ex-servicemen playing a part in the main phase of the dispute.

The position of Muslim seamen as it differed from Afro-Caribbean and West African sailors at this time is an appropriate place to begin this discussion of the race riot at South Shields. The view of a West Indian old-timer who lived on Tyneside around the time of the riot is worth mentioning here,

> We always find that the Arabs are interested in keeping their jobs at all costs. Because they will do more than their contract requires and will more willingly obey their boss without question, and be more ready to give

their services in place of another Arab who might be indisposed, they seem to be favoured in their job. But although an Arab would do another Arab's work, he would not be willing to assist a West African or a West Indian, and vice versa. (1)

This picture of 'Arab' behaviour, favourable to the employer is repeated in too many varied accounts to make this statement appear a result of racial diversity. A major reason for the favourable description given to 'Arabs' was the fact that as Muslims, they did not drink alcohol, and preparing their meals in isolation, they adhered very much to those who shared their beliefs. Arabs were often engaged because they had a reputation for sobriety, docility and cleanliness. In particular, they could be made to work overtime without being paid for it. (2) At a time of growing unemployment in the merchant shipping industry the position of Muslim in regard to white sailors would therefore be delicate. Particularly when it is revealed that the actual incident which led to the riot was the signing on of a Muslim stokehold crew, not at the shipping office, but direct from their boarding-house by an engineer from the ship, the Trewellard : the implication being that he had received an under-the-table payment from the Muslim owner of the lodging house, a procedure which was held to be common practice. Indeed, even as late as the 1930's, the National Union of Seamen were campaigning against the continuance of this practice. This campaign occured at a time when violent clashes between 'Arab' and Somali seamen and the police were also taking place. (3) Viewed in this light the riot at South Shields was in the main caused by economic conditions; the unemployment situation, boarding-house keepers' sharp practice, and the willingness of Muslim sailors to accommodate their employers. Indeed, this assessment was expressed to the author by a local studies librarian at South Shields in a letter dated January, 1985.

Our so-called race riots were actually based largely on pressure due to unemployment and while there may have been a certain racist element, the main problem was that the Arab community would work for lower wages than the Tynesiders. This was possibly because the local men often had families, while the Arabs at that time were usually single men. (4)

This view ignores many of the factors which led to the violence and reduces the economic issue to one of simple under-cutting in wages. It is a fact that these Muslims were British subjects, ignored in the job market in favour of non-British whites, and that they were members of the NSFU, who were, on this occasion and on others, strong supporters of the rights of sailors, and unlike their white counter-parts, not only those of their own race.

The difficulty of finding ships to employ them was sufficiently extreme for a number of press articles on the question to be published in the weeks preceding the disturbance.

A coloured seaman who described himself as a native of the West Indies, complained to the South Shields magistrates this morning that he had tried several times to get a ship, but they would not have him. "Why ? Because you are black ?" inquired the Mayor, "Yes sir", replied the man, "and they will go and engage all sorts of foreigners from all over. What am I to do ?".

"I am afraid we cannot assist you in this matter" the Mayor remarked. "You must just go and have another try".(5)

This report suggests that it was not only Muslim sailors who were finding jobs hard to come by at the port of South Shields. The operation of a colour bar is the most likely explanation for their difficulty. Two days after the above report in the Shields Gazette the same newspaper sought to explain to its readers the reasons behind the unemployment problem in shipping in the area.

It is stated that the question of unemployment among merchant seamen is receiving the consideration of both masters and men. At present at many ports in the British Isles there is an excess of seamen, and it is difficult to place them all to ships.

The situation is caused to a great extent by labour troubles. Also by demobilisation, and the fact that ships cannot be coaled as they used to be. Some of the men say it could be solved if no Chinese were employed.

Among the unemployed British subjects are a number of coloured men and a serious view is taken of this fact. Yesterday the men's section of the Maritime Board had the matter under consideration but the proceedings were private, and no statement was issued. (6)

The decision taken at this meeting may well have been along the lines of all whites first, in the interests of pacifying the majority of their members, at a time of high unemployment for all in the merchant marine. Within days of this press report describing the uneasy situation at the ports, the riotous scene at South Shields occured, the events of which will now be discussed.

... On February 4th a great disturbance took place at the Mill Dam, when there was a conflict between certain Arabs and black seamen and a white crowd not composed altogether of Britishers. (7)

The presence of other Black seamen at this conflict is not without significance, suggesting as it does that the dispute was not simply one involving 'Arabs' who felt aggrieved by the treatment meted out to them at the Shipping Office. It was a racial dispute in which White Britons and others, fought Black Britons, both Muslims and Afro-Caribbeans. Nine

Muslim seamen had been signed on to form the stokehold crew by the engineer of the Trewellard, straight from their boarding-house, and had come to the Shipping Office via the NSFU offices, where they had first gone to pay off their lapsed union dues, prior to boarding ship. It is clear that it had been some time since any of these men had been employed, because all nine of them paid £2 each to the NSFU, whose members had to pay 1/- per week in or out of work, but should this fall far into arrears, a flat rate of £2 was charged. Ironically, while the Muslims were going to such lengths to ensure their union membership was in order, it was to be two union officials who played the largest part in the replacement of the Muslims at the Shipping Office by an all-white crew.

> ... while they were in the office the defendent, John Fye, who was the delegate of the Cooks' and Stewards' Union, came down and said to the crowd, "Don't let these Arabs sign on the ship". He then shouted, "Come on you black B[astards], you are not going to join the ship".
>
> "That language," said Mr Smith, the defence lawyer for the Arabs, "used to a crowd anxious to get employment, and used by a union official, was likely to incite the crowd. It was actually the dropping of the match into the keg of gunpowder". (8)

Meantime the ships' engineer was warned against employing the 'Arab' sailors by James Gilroy; a delegate of the NSFU, he told the engineer, "If you take those Arab firemen you will get no sailors and there will be bloodshed outside."[9] On hearing this the engineer went outside and hired eight Britons and one Swede. When these men entered, the Muslims left the office quietly. Significantly, they left their union books behind them, in a form of silent protest.

In the court case against the Muslims it was stressed that it was the practice of signing them straight from boarding houses rather than from the pool of unemployed sailors at the Shipping Office, which angered both the union officials and the white sailors at the docks. However, the fact that an all white crew was hired to replace the Muslims, suggests that it was more the race of these men which caused the objections, rather than the way in which they had been hired. For, as has been shown above, both Gilroy and Fye, the two union officials, expressed their opposition to the employment of the 'Arabs' in terms of their nationality, rather than at the manner of their being hired.

At the Magistrates' court the Mayor pointed out that the men had not been picked out from an assembly of all the unemployed men on the quay as the new regulations had laid down. This point was agreed to by James Gilroy, who contended that he had made no mention of the men being 'Arabs'.(10) However, during the trial of Fye it was stated that,

> When the engineer was spoken to by a Seamen's Union official he said that he had been given to understand that he could not get a white crew, and when the circumstances were explained to him he had agreed to pick a white crew. (11)

It is apparent that the local officials were intent upon employing White labour at all costs, despite their claims to be purely aiming at having men taken on according to regulation, in order to protect the interests of the White majority among their membership. Evidence to support this claim can be taken from the cross-questioning of a prosecution witness by the Arabs' lawyer, "Were the nine men replacing the Arabs chosen in the proper manner?" - "No", "Did the union official object?", "No."(12)

That the Arab seamen were aware of the union bias on the part of these two local officials is made clear when it is considered that both Fye and Gilroy were injured by the 'Arabs' who, goaded by the racial abuse of Fye and the events at the Shipping Office, fought back with great determination when confronted by a large crowd of hostile Whites. In fighting back, the Muslims at South Shields were foreshadowing the actions of Black Americans in 1919, particularly those in Washington and Chicago, who, far from giving in to violence and intimidation at the hands of white crowds, sternly resisted this challenge to their livelihood - and in some cases their very existence.

The riot at South Shields is unique in the fact that a White man was brought to trial on a charge of, if not actually causing the riot, using language likely to cause a breach of the peace, and with assaulting Abdul Zaid, one of the Muslim sailors at the Shipping Office. The unusual element in this case was the fact that Fye was found guilty of the first charge, before the Muslim seamen came to trial, so this background of the Muslims being provoked was already established. It has been noted elsewhere that Fye had incited the

crowd of white seamen waiting outside the Shipping office to hostility against the Muslims, and he continued this aggressive racist stance when asked by one of the Muslims why they could not join the ship as they had paid their union dues:

> Defendent then repeated, "You black ---------- this ship is not for you". This Arab was so provoked and excited that he struck Fye with his flat hand. Defendent then knocked this Arab down, and when the complainant, Zaid, went to the assistance of his fellow countryman, Fye struck him on the head with a stick. (13)

It is likely that the 'Arab' seamen ganged up on Fye after this, for he suffered head and neck injuries, but the Muslims were greatly outnumbered by white seamen at the Shipping office, who, having been fired by Fye's words, began to attack the Muslims. This is revealed by the evidence given in defence of the Muslims who were subsequently charged with riotous assembly. San Bin Salah said there were 200 whites to the nine Muslims in the Shipping office, and that they were threatened and frightened and he feared a beating. The white crowd threw bottles at him as he ran back to the Muslim quarter at East Holborn. Abdul Said, an independent Muslim witness, further stated,

> when the real trouble started there were 6 or 700 whites at the Mill Dam. The Arabs were frightened and went towards East Holborn. The white men followed them up and threw stones at them, which were supplied by some trimmers at the Harton Coal Company's Staithes boats. He was perfectly certain that the whites were the first to throw stones. (14)

Evidence supporting the claims of the Muslim sailors was given by an Englishwoman, Dora Sharp, who declared that she had seen a white man pointing an old gun at the Muslims in the course of the disturbance.(15) The significance of a white woman giving evidence on the behalf of the Muslim is worth dwelling upon at this stage, for the role of white-Black sexual relations and the jealousy such liaisons caused among the white male population, is by now a familiar element in the history of the race riots in Britain in 1919. The same woman, Dora Sharp, had in fact been involved in a disturbance two days after the riot, arising from her association with the Muslim community in South Shields. A large crowd had gathered in East Holborn to witness a shouting match between Sharp, who worked as a servant in a Muslim boarding

house, and two other white women, who complained that they had been assaulted by the defendant. They in their turn denied provoking Sharp by making a disparaging remark about the Muslims. "I wouldn't leave the Arab house for 20 of you", declared the defendant, "I'm probably going to marry one tomorrow. Happy days". (16) Sharp was fined 10/- for disturbing the peace, but her case is more important for revealing as it does, a hostility between the white residents of South Shields and the Muslim settlement and its associates. A deeply entrenched antipathy which gained in significance at the time of the rioting.

This hostility suggests that the riot was by no means a one-off affair arising from the particular issue of signing on 'Arab' seamen direct from their boarding houses, although it suited the press of the town to portray the violence solely as a result of Muslim settlement in the district. "Since an Arab colony has been settled in South Shields not a few disturbances, of a more or less serious character, due to their presence have occurred".(17)

It is clear that the involvement of white women with the Muslim population, as both waitresses and servants at Muslim eating and lodging houses, was a major source of white antipathy is evident. Confirmation of this can be taken from the Chief Constable of South Shields' report to the Director of Intelligence in November 1919 :

> In February last a serious riot took place here between whites and coloured men..... Cause - alleged inability by coloured men to sign on ships and preference given to whites. This was not found to be correct and a fair proportion of berths were allotted to coloured men.
>
> A serious disturbance took place a little later - cause - apparently that coloured men enticed white girls to their houses. This was much resented by white persons and in addition, complaint was made that Adenese had opened shops and cafes which was unfair, while the whites had to perform their Military and Naval obligations.
>
> The complaint is also that young girls are sought to act as assistants and waitresses in the shops and cafes and succumb to the advances of these men; naturally this arouses antipathy with the relatives and neighbours.
>
> About a fortnight ago a somewhat serious case of wounding arose. A West Indian who had been drinking, entered a bar and demanded a drink, but because he had had sufficient he was refused and it was near closing time.

He ran amok with a razor, wounding a constable and two civilians. He is now undergoing 12 months' hard labour.

I understand exhibitions of feeling have taken place at the local Shipping office, by sailors declining to sail with coloured men as part of the crew and I believe this was somewhat acute last week. (18)

This report raises several interesting points, not the least of which is the apparent contradiction between the statement that coloured seamen at the time of the riot had no real grounds behind the claim at they were not getting their fair share of ships, with the concluding remarks regarding demonstrations by white sailors at the Shipping office who were opposed to the employment of such men as part of a crew. It has already been established that Black seamen found it difficult to find ships out of South Shields in the months after the war had ended, and the assessment of the Chief Constable appears to be writing off the Black sailors' grievance as unfounded in order to make the episode fit in with his preconceived idea of Blacks' as the aggressors in all inter-racial violence. That the Colonial Office (to whom his report was also sent), were aware that this was a trap that local authorities could fall into is shown by the C.O. comments preceding the report. "The reports on the riots appear to indicate that in most cases the negroes were the aggressors, but I do not think we can accept this view as proved." (19)

The Chief Constables' comments on the ill-feeling caused by the belief that the 'Arab' community had somehow made good, (opening up businesses etc.), while white servicemen had been risking their lives in the war, and were now at a disadvantage, is a major one in the riots in Britain as a whole, and is a direct consequence of the social pressures created in the community by war service - although the basis in fact for this charge is questionable. What is clear, however, is that white women such as Dora Sharp, who worked for Muslims, were ostracized by their native community and found that their workplace also became their social sphere, if not always by choice, then by circumstance.

The various other incidents of racial violence detailed in the Chief Constable's report suggest that tension between the two communities was by

no means eradicated by the full scale riot on February 4. Indeed, there are parallels between the pattern of sporadic outbreaks of unrest at South Shields and other riot centres where discontent habitually simmered under the surface, boiling over to violence from time to time, London and Salford being other examples of this. A graphic incident illustrating this point is a case of wounding involving a Muslim, Abdulla Hassan, who was walking down a street with a few fellow Muslims. They were met by a group of soldiers, one of whom struck Hassan, while another tried to steal his watch and chain by cutting it away with a knife. In retaliation Hassan took out his razor and slashed one of the soldiers. Although Hassan counter charged the two soldiers with assault, he was the only one found guilty, being fined 40/-. The assessment of the defending counsel, Mr. Smith, (who had also been involved in the defence of the Arabs arrested after the riot), is revealing; "the life of the Arab fireman is becoming intolerable".(20) This incident is significant suggesting as it does that the events in South Shields were firmly part of the wider picture of riot and unrest which characterised British society in 1919, in which service and ex-servicemen expressed their dissatisfaction at the post-war job and housing shortage in violent terms.

It is worth stressing here that the racial conflicts in south Shields were not straight Muslim versus white British contests. The main riot involved other Black seamen, and on the white side, it was stated on numerous occasions during the subsequent court cases, there was a noticeable element of white foreign seamen. Other incidents around the time of the riot also involved Black men of non-Muslim origin. On Thursday, 6 February an Indian fireman, Zanda Shay, was arrested at the Mill Dam with two stones in his pockets. His defence was that he feared a white attack in the wake of the riots. He was bound over for three months.(21) The following week another Indian, Essup Mahommed, and a West Indian fireman, Richard Jones, were fined £1 each for being drunk and causing a disturbance at a refreshment house whence they had gone. The circumstances of the fracas are not detailed, but it is likely that there were some whites involved, since the defence lawyer spoke of timely police intervention preventing another riot.(22)

The actual place of origin of the men referred to as "Arabs" is difficult to specify. It is more than probable that the majority of the 16 men arrested for their alleged part in the riot hailed from Aden, and since they, as were all the men, described as British subjects, this suggests they came from the actual colony rather than the protectorate. However, the whole matter is a difficult one, the newspapers of the time being open to charges of inaccuracy when it came to defining the nationality of Blacks. In this way it is possible that some of the men were in fact, Somalis. It is clear that at least one of the men, Mahomed Goodal, gave his nationality as Egyptian. It has been mentioned earlier that the Muslim sailors formed a close association, helping each other out in times of need, such as illness, and this close knit quality was also evident in the wider Muslim community in South Shields at the time of the riot. For example, the link between boarding house keepers and their seafaring lodgers went far beyond merely providing accommodation and, to the chagrin of the white seamen and their union officials, finding them ships. It will be shown elsewhere in particular in London, that Black boarding house-keepers (often ex-sailors themselves) acted as a form of social security, maintaining their seamen lodgers in times of unemployment, often to the risk of their own livelihood, and this was also the case with Muslim boarding house owners. Some however, made such a good living out of their trade as to be the objects of jealousy from others in the community. Faid Abdulla, a South Shields boarding house-keeper was found murdered in the same month as the riot at Mill Dam, with a wound to the head and a muffler wrapped tightly about his neck. £430 was taken from his safe. It appeared that Abdulla had been murdered the night after returning from Sunderland where he had been attempting to sign a Muslim crew onto a ship. A fortnight later his brother was arrested and charged with his murder.(23) While running the risk of exciting the jealousy of some of their fellows, Muslim boarding house and refreshment house owners were important elements in the Muslim community as it had developed in the East Holborn district of South Shields. And it was to this district that the Muslim seamen, pursued by a large white mob, fled to safety and began to re-group in the wake of the struggle with Fye. Here, the Muslim seamen were joined by other members of the Muslim community, and a group of around fifty re-emerged to face the crowd and drive them back to

the Mill Dam area. It was stated in the defence of the Muslims who were arrested that, although shots were fired by these men, no one was wounded. The plea that they fired over the heads of their attackers being accepted by the Magistrates, since no firearms charges were laid against the Muslims.(24) It is clear that the Muslims were not intent on causing general mayhem, rather they were fighting back after initial white aggression, and also, and this is important, out to take revenge against the union officials who had imposed a colour bar against them. It has been mentioned that Fye was beaten about the head, while Gilroy of the NSFU had his arm broken in two places. Other injuries included a 15-year old white boy who had been struck on the head with a brick, and a Muslim who was taken to hospital suffering from broken ribs. Among the Muslims arrested, several were in bandages due to injuries received during the fighting.

Of the 16 Muslims arrested, fourteen had their occupations listed; 10 were described as firemen, two were donkey men and two were refreshment house-keepers. These last two are the most significant, demonstrating that the South Shields riot, unlike the Glasgow disturbance, was not simply a clash involving seamen which spilled out onto the streets, for it involved other members of the community on one side, and non-seafaring whites on the other.

The role of the police in the riot was far less central than was to be the case in riots elsewhere. Two policemen at the Shipping office tried to prevent the confrontation between Fye and the nine Muslim seamen, but were soon swallowed up in the scuffling and missile throwing which followed as the white sailors became involved. That the police presence proved ineffective as the violence developed into full-scale rioting supports Neil Smelser's(25) theory that in times of 'hostile outburst' those in authority find it difficult to maintain law and order. In South Shields, as in many other towns throughout the world where riots occurred during 1919, troops were called in to restore calm, in the guise of a regiment of the Durham Light Infantry and a squad of 'bluejackets' from a ship stationed in the harbour. These additions on the side of law and order were soon able to disperse both crowds, and indeed it is questionable if the Muslim contingent had any specific intention of causing wide-scale havoc. It seems that they reacted to violence, rather than

instigated it. Once they had 'got their own back', particularly in the attack on the shipping office, it is difficult to see this level of violence continuing without an object.

During the court cases which followed, evidence was plentiful to suggest that despite the fact that only one Englishman, (Fye), was arrested, the Muslims were by no means the aggressors in the incident. Of the sixteen Muslims arrested, four were released without trial. Among the twelve tried at the Durham Assizes in March, three were found not guilty of riotous assembly, two were given one month sentences, while a further seven were sentenced to three months imprisonment. A strong feature in the defence case was that the Muslims were British subjects, and in the case of the sailors, were members of the NSFU, and had moreover, played their part with great sacrifice during the war. Indeed, on the last day of the trial the defence stated, "The Arabs were brought into this country by the British Government at the start of the war to replace British seamen, and since the war 700 had lost their lives sailing from the Tyne".(26) The great sacrifices of the Muslim community of South Shields during the war go some way to explaining why they were so intent on expressing their anger at the imposition of a colour bar at the port. Their resort to violence is part of the more general picture of post-war social disturbance which is more often focused on the white crowds in the race riots during 1919 in Britain.

If the figure quoted above is anything to go by, the Muslim settlement in South Shields must have been fairly extensive, and certainly it outnumbered the Negro community considerably. Despite the riot it is clear that they remained in sufficient numbers to retain their sense of group identity, and over the years this community was augmented by newcomers. After the Second World War this was to be mainly in the shape of Muslims from the Indian sub-Continent, particularly from what is now Pakistan. In considering the continued existence of the Muslim community, it must be stressed that there was only limited mention of repatriating these men in the wake of the riot, and given the continuing high unemployment in the Merchant shipping industry. Unlike Liverpool and elsewhere, there were no press editorials demanding the removal of the Black population from these shores. In fact

only two references to the possibility of repatriation appeared in the local press. The first was a letter from a 'coloured man' (not specified) to the Editor of the Shields Gazette before the riot, which stated, "If we are not wanted ... the Government should send us home".(27) The role of the press in encouraging white negative responses to the Black community in times of crisis is something which has been established as a major factor in the US race rioting of 1919, and is to be seen to a lesser degree in Britain. In South Shields however, this general feature of the riots was not apparent. One reason for this perhaps was the relatively early occurrence of this incident - when the wider significance of the race rioting in Britain had not become apparent to the authorities. Hence the attempt to play down the riot in the Newcastle Daily Journal, a couple of days after the incident. "The Editor has received letters about Arabs, but nothing would be served by publishing them. It is understood the authorities are planning a scheme whereby Arabs are to be returned to their own countries."(28)

There was, however, a Repatriation Committee established at South Shields in mid-1919 as there was at every port where there was a sizeable Black community, and indeed South Shields was spoken of as, along with Cardiff, an area of large Muslim settlement. The local Committee however, had great difficulty in inducing men to return, principally to Aden, (although Somalis and other men from East Africa were included in the scheme), despite the offer of a £6 inducement.(29) For those who refused the offer of repatriation the future was bleak, even in the longer term.

A deputation of three Somalis representing the dockland colony discussed their plight with the Mayor through their lawyer, asking him to get repatriation or stop discrimination against their employment on British ships. (30)

Arguably, the position of Somali seamen was slightly different to that of Adenese sailors, the latter being British subjects, the former being British Protected Persons. But it is clear that often this difference was meaningless as both groups were treated in practice as aliens. This was particularly evident in the 1930's when the combination of the misapplication of the Aliens' Restriction Order to Black British subjects, and the introduction of a

rota system for Black sailors on British ships made life increasingly difficult for Muslims in South Shields. In March 1930 a remarkably similar incident to the 1919 riot occurred in North Shields when Somalis from South Shields who had gone to the port to find a berth on the Cape Verdi (which traditionally employed a Black crew), were prevented from signing on by a white crowd, who had been stirred up by a campaign in the NUS newspaper, the Seaman, against the alleged practice of Muslim boarding house-keepers smuggling 'Arabs' and Somalis into the country to find them jobs. As in 1919, violence was again the result. Again, only Blacks were arrested, and three were subsequently imprisoned and then deported.(31) Deportation was to be increasingly used as a solution to the problem of unemployed Muslim seamen. A solution which may be regarded as having certain parallels both with the 1919 repatriation scheme and with more modern policies on 'aliens'. In 1931 alone, according to one source, 58 Muslims were deported.(32) Some of these men were sent home as a result of being imprisoned for offences arising from a confrontation between Muslim sailors and the police during the agitation against the rota system introduced by the NUS, which demanded that any coloured seaman must provide a PC5 form before he could be engaged, and these were only issued in turn to the coloured sailors. On August 2, 1920 a number of Muslim sailors refused to obtain PC5 forms to re-engage on a ship, after they had been paid off at South Shields. When two white sailors attempted to sign on for the ship, crossing the Muslim picket line at the Shipping office, the Muslims rushed forward to stop them. At this point the police intervened, baton charging the Muslims who fought back fiercely. All the Muslims arrested were found guilty on this occasion, and the majority were later deported.(33) The aggressive stance of the Muslim sailors towards both the strike breakers and the police in the district suggests that these men were antipathetic to the authorities. A result no doubt of years of mutual mistrust and the feeling among Blacks that they did not receive even-handed treatment from the police - the riot of 1919 being an example of this 'scapegoating' of the Muslim Community by the police as will be shown below. Compounding the employment difficulties being faced by the Muslims at this time was the refusal of the local Public Assistance Committee to pay them outdoor relief. In Cardiff, the local PAC had established the practice of paying 5/- per week for each man, straight to their lodging housekeepers, but

in South Shields the only public relief offered those who were not entitled to unemployment allowance, was of the indoor sort, i.e. the workhouse. This state of affairs has led Byrne to suggest, "... throughout the 1930's the Arab seamen seem to have depended on boarding housekeepers for support."[34] The Muslim population in this inter-war period in South Shields is nowhere quantified, but it is likely to have numbered several hundred. A newspaper report at the time of the riot spoke of "many hundreds"[35] of coloured men in South Shields at the time, although how much weight can be placed on this assessment is open to question.

In 1948 a survey by the Muslim community of their population put the figure at 850, including white wives and children.[36] This number began to rise steadily in the 50's and 60's with the arrival of settlers from the Indian Sub-Continent, as already mentioned. Interestingly, one study of the Black population in South Shields suggests that the Negro settlement in the area, although smaller, had, "seniority of residence",[37] and it is worth spending some time looking at this, for once, over-shadowed section of the Black community. Although mentioned in some of the press reports as having taken a part in the riot of 1919, their role in this was undoubtedly secondary to that of the Muslims. It is possible however that the Muslim community was being made the scapegoat for the violence, and perhaps had been rounded up en masse, leaving other Blacks who had taken part in the riot free to return to their homes. In this way, claims that, "all the prisoners had been identified as having taken part in the riot",[38] soon proved to be an exaggeration, for of the sixteen men arrested, seven were found not guilty. To return to the position of the Negroes settled in South Shields, even had they not figured largely in the riot, they too were faced with the colour bar and found it difficult to find ships. And, as has been mentioned elsewhere, the Government considered the Black unemployment situation in South Shields serious enough to warrant the establishment of a Repatriation Committee to enable those men from the West Indies and West Africa who wished to return home as well as those from Muslim countries. That many stayed on is made clear from a petition by men from these places and now resident in South Shields to the Mayor in July 1921, which was forwarded to the Colonial Office for their consideration, with the following covering letter:

A deputation of four coloured men belonging to West Africa has interviewed me ... They pointed out to me the difficulty which West African cooks, stewards and firemen have in obtaining employment at the Shipping office as practically all the men shipped are white men and they have no chance of signing on, despite the fact that they are members of the National Sailors' and Firemens' Union. They informed me that out of 23 ships recently signed on in North and South Shields not a coloured man was taken. In consequence they are in a state of distress which has been accentuated by the Miners' recent lock-out. I should be glad to know if the Colonial Office are in a position to afford any relief to these men, and if so in what manner. (39)

The letter to the Colonial Office revealed a state of affairs among West African and West Indian seamen which not only mirrored that at the port, but is similar to that of the continued distress faced by Black sailors at various ports in Britain in this year, (and it would seem, in every other year during the inter-war period).

The petition was signed by 44 men, 33 of whom were firemen. Twelve of the group were married, but the number of those with children was not given. Most had been out of work for between 6 and 12 months. One, J. Dogma, from Calabar, had been unemployed for a year and a half. Although the Lord Mayor described the men as West African, 13 were from the West Indies. Of the rest, 8 were from Lagos, 6 from Calabar, 5 from Sierra Leone, 3 from the Gold Coast, and 10 from other, unspecified, locations. Interestingly, it was not simple repatriation the men asked for, rather the implication was that they desired official assistance in this country ...

We are chiefly cooks, stewards, sailors and firemen, and we are unable to obtain ships from the port. In consequence we are in a distressed condition having been in some cases out of work for 12 and 18 months. Some of us are married and reside in South Shields. [Author's emphasis] Any relief which your Worship can obtain will be gratefully received. (40)

Whatever their needs, these distressed Afro-Caribbean sailors were not to find success in their petition. The Colonial Office reaction being ...

"We can't give them any relief ... We can add the Sierra Leone and Gold Coast men to the rest and tell the Mayor that the Board of Trade is being asked to arrange for the repatriation of various Sierra Leone seamen and that these can be included". (41)

It has been stated elsewhere in this thesis that the Repatriation Scheme operated by the British Government in the wake of the 1919 riots had been wound down by the end of that year, although a limited number of people continued to be sent home in 1920 and on into 1921 to the West Indies. Repatriation to West Africa however, was a more short-lived scheme lasting no longer than September 1919. It seems to be the case that a more modest scheme to repatriate distressed seamen to Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast was launched during 1921, partly in response to the press campaign which reported on the depressed state of Black seamen, in particular those who walked the streets of London down and out. The lead in this campaign was taken by the publication West Africa,(42) but the long-term success of this mini-scheme, as with the wider plan, is questionable, given the continued high level of unemployment experienced by Black seamen throughout the inter-war period.

The riot which took place in South Shields was different to the incidents which are considered elsewhere in this thesis, in the sense that 'Arab' seamen rather than Afro-Caribbeans and West Africans, who were the main forces of violence elsewhere, were the victims here.

To white racists of the time, however, they were all, in J.B. Fye's words, "Black ----------". (the space is not hard to fill in) What is striking is that men living hundreds of miles apart, from countries thousands of miles distant, were faced with similar instances of abuse and attack, simply because their skins were dark.

The sense of irony in the case of the Muslim seamen at South Shields is strong. They were among the staunchest supporters of the union, and yet were to be some of the first victims of the policy of the colour bar which was being reinforced as the war-time boom in the Merchant Shipping industry came to a close. The subsequent history of Blacks in South Shields, both West African, Afro-Caribbean and Muslim in many senses epitomises the poor prospects and bread-line existence of Blacks throughout Britain in the inter-

war period. For this reason, as well as for providing further insights into the nature of British racism at this period, and the Black resistance to its consequences, the history of the riot at South Shields is well worthy of consideration.

Notes

1. Sydney Collins, Coloured Minorities in Britain, (London, 1957), pp.75-76.
2. Daid Byrne, 'The 1930 "Arab Riot" in South Shields : A Race Riot that Never was', Race and Class Vol. XVIII No. 3 Winter 1977, p.263.
3. Ibid.
4. Letter to the author from Mr. T. Graham, Head of Cultural and Leisure Activities, Central Library, South Shields, 9 January 1985.
5. Shields Gazette, January 19 1919, p.3.
6. Ibid., January 31, 1919, p.4.
7. Ibid., February 10 1919, p.3.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., February 12, 1919, p.3.
10. See Shields Gazette, February 12, p.3.
11. Ibid., February 11, 1919, p.2.
12. Ibid., March 4, 1919, p.3.
13. Ibid., February 11, 1919, p.2.
14. Ibid., March 4, 1919, p.3.
15. Ibid.
16. Shields Gazette, February 8, 1919, n.p.
17. Newcastle Daily Journal, February 5, 1919, p.5.
18. CO 318/352 December 1, 1919,CO Memorandum on the Repatriation of Coloured Men Arising from Directory of Intelligence Reports.
19. Ibid.
20. Shields Gazette, March 10, 1919, p.4.
21. Ibid.. February 7, 1919, p.3.
22. Ibid., February 13, 1919, p.3.
23. Newcastle Daily Journal, February 13, 1919, p.3, February 21, p.4, February 25, p.3.

24. See the Shields Gazette, February 13, 1919, p.3.

25. Neil J. Smelser Theories of Collective Behaviour (London, 1962), pp.233-234.

26. Newcastle Daily Journal, March 6, 1919, p.7.

27. Shields Gazette, January 31, 1919, p.3.

28. Newcastle Daily Journal, February 6, 1919, p.3.

29. For a discussion of the Repatriation Scheme enacted by the Government see Chapter 8 of this Thesis.

30. Shields Gazette, April 8, 1936, quoted in Collins ibid, p.89.

31. Byrne op. cit. pp. 267-272.

32. Ibid., p.273.

33. For accounts of this incident see Byrne Ibid p.273 and Ian Turner, "A Spot of Bother - Civil Disorder in the North East Between the Wars", Bulletin of North East Labour History Society, No.18 December, 1984.

34. Byrne op. cit., p.274.

35. Shields Gazette,February 5, 1919, p.4.

36. Collins, op. cit., p.151.

37. Ibid.

38. Shields Gazette, February 5, 1919, p.4.

39. CO 323/880, Mayor of South Shields to C.O. July 23, 1921.

40. Enclosure in CO 323/880.

41. CO 323/880 Colonial Office Memorandum on Distressed Colonial Seamen in South Shields, July 26, 1921.

CHAPTER FIVE

RIOTS IN LONDON : APRIL TO AUGUST 1919

The race riots which took place in London were different from those which occurred in Glasgow and South Shields, in that there were numerous outbreaks at various centres of Black settlement in the city. The first riot dated from April 1919, the last in late August. Although rioting was confined to the East End of the city, within this area Limehouse, Poplar, and Canning Town were all affected. There was also a riot at Limehouse the following year. An interesting aspect of the London riots was the extent to which these disturbances were attributed to the sexual relations between Black men and white women in these districts. The local public and press opinion being that the white violence these 'liaisons' occasioned was an 'understandable reaction'. This attitude is given far more press coverage than issues such as post-war social and economic pressures, principally on the job prospects in the shipping industry and on housing shortages. The undue emphasis placed on the inter-racial sex issue by local press reports suggests that this source, which is the main primary evidence used in this chapter, must be handled with circumspection. The particular press role in the atmosphere of violence is something which also will be considered, bearing in mind the major influence newspaper reports had on the race rioting in several US cities. The continuing harsh conditions faced by Black residents of this country will form part of this case study of London in view of the relatively extensive media and Colonial Office attention received by destitute Black London residents in the immediate post-war years.

BLACK SETTLEMENT IN LONDON PRE-1919

Although there had been Black people in London for centuries, reaching a peak in the late eighteenth century - early nineteenth century, with the presence of freed slaves and 'loyalists', who had fought in the American Revolution, there was a definite increase in the numbers of Blacks who made London their home, or used it as a base from which they sought employment, towards the end of the nineteenth century. By the first two decades of the twentieth century this trend was a by-now confirmed feature of life, in the East End of London, at least.

The opening of the Royal Docks in Newham after 1885 led to the arrival of people from other parts of the world. Initially they were sailors who simply needed somewhere to stay while their ship was in dock. Subsequently, as some decided to settle communities of black people grew up in the south of Newham. (1)

As this quotation suggests the main body of Black people who lived in London were seamen, but as has been discussed in an earlier chapter there were other categories of Blacks resident in the city, including students, professionals and businessmen. In fact it is fair to say that as the capital, London attracted a more varied grouping of Black people than other areas which were simply port towns. Life however, was not any easier here than elsewhere.

At length this state of affairs led to a parliamentary inquiry. The Committee on Distressed Colonial and Indian subjects reported in 1910. One witness told the committee that about three in five of the distressed blacks were seafaring men ... about a quarter of the destitute black people were said to be 'student adventurers'. There were also a number of people brought to Britain as servants, who had left their employers because of bad treatment ... (2)

Witnesses before the committee revealed that a bias existed against coloured seamen, on the part of white seamen and ship owners alike, which was to reach even greater proportions at the time of the riots,

A witness reported that 'West Indian and West African seamen have rightfully or wrongfully acquired the reputation of being troublesome, so much so that no ship master will carry them twice....' . (3)

Interestingly, a similar account of the employment problem facing Black seamen emerges as a result of a Colonial Office inquiry to the Marine Department of the Board of Trade regarding this difficulty in April 1918. The date is important here because it suggests that the hitherto unchallenged view of the war years as being a time of full and regular employment for Blacks in the merchant shipping industry is in need of review.

Acting on the Colonial Office's request, the Board of Trade contacted the Superintendent of the London Mercantile Marine Office, who reported,

> There is great difficulty in obtaining employment for West Indian coloured seamen in the London district. Masters will not engage them except in cases of urgent necessity, and a mixed crew is unsatisfactory, the white men objecting to coloured men in their forecastle so that unless the whole crew or department is entirely composed of coloured men, Masters prefer to take Aliens to complete their crew. Several Masters have tried wholly coloured crews, but the report on the return of the vessel is generally the same : 'Never again' as the men are disobedient, argumentative and indisposed to work satisfactorily. (4)

It is clear from this quotation that the colour bar which as has been shown, operated in the pre-war period in Glasgow (and probably elsewhere) and was strongly in evidence during the 1919 race riots, was not completely eradicated during war-time, despite the increased opportunities for jobs given Black seamen by the enlistment of white British merchant seamen in the armed forces, and the disqualification of sailors from enemy countries. In the years before the riots then, Black people and seamen in particular, found life in London a struggle. Faced with biased white attitudes when seeking employment even at a time when jobs were plentiful, it was almost inevitable that when the war-time boom came to an end, their economic and social position would become even more precarious.

The first rioting in London to receive widespread newspaper coverage, (there are indications of lesser affrays occurring as tension built up between the two communities in the preceding months), occurred on April 16, 1919, the Times reporting,

> Last night there was a serious riot in the East End, arising out of a feud which has existed for some time between white and coloured seamen arriving at the port of London. Trouble occurred in a number of cafés in

Cable Street near Leman Street. About half past nine o'clock the neighbourhood was startled by the noise of firearms and the breaking of glass, and in a few minutes a crowd of men were engaged in a violent fight in Cable Street. The police were summoned from Leman Street and these were quickly reinforced from other stations. A number of coloured seamen were injured before police quelled the disturbance and one policeman was slightly injured. Several seamen were detained by the police. (5)

This then was the bare outline of the events, but by looking at other, local newspaper accounts of the incident, a more detailed picture emerges, of an affray confined to a single Muslim restaurant arising from, " ... some friction between the Arabs and some young Englishmen who objected to English girls visiting an Arab eating-house and soon afterwards revolver shots were fired ..."[6] From this initial mention of sexual tension causing the violence, a pattern of reporting Black-white confrontations in this light soon emerged. A few days later the Eastern Post expanded this attitude.

A scandal to which we have on more than one occasion called attention in these columns - viz., the association of coloured men especially Arabs - with white women in East London, has had further light thrown upon it by proceedings at the Thames Police Court on Saturday, when four Arab seamen were charged with participation in a riot which broke out in Cable Street, on the previous Wednesday night .... In the East End there is a colour-line, as there is in America, in South Africa, and Egypt, and the white woman who is seen in company with a negro is regarded as outside the pale. Unfortunately, the number of women who come within this category in the East End is increasing .... (7)

The role of press reporting of riot in London was clearly one of focusing on the inter-racial sexual issue, giving a kind of spurious 'validity' to the white community's actions, by supporting the notion that such relations were 'wrong' and white resentment 'understandable'. As a result of the Cable Street affray four Muslims were detained at the London hospital, while a further four were attended to in police custody at Leman Street police station. It is clear from the subsequent newspaper descriptions of the trials and the police court records themselves, that no white person was arrested for the attack upon the restaurant, despite the injuries inflicted and the damage done. "The eating house which was badly damaged during the fighting, is said to be kept by an Arab, who caters for seafaring people of his own nationality".[8] There is evidence to suggest that the Muslims once attacked, fought back. One white man was detained in hospital with a knife wound, and two policemen were

injured, two Muslims subsequently being charged with police assault. This early instance of Afro-Asian resistance to white aggression is an indication of how the Black community, like their counter-parts in the United States and the West Indies, were not content merely to meekly accept the challenge to their existence presented by white attacks upon them.

At the Thames Police court three days later it was made clear that the Muslim seamen in the restaurant were the victims of the assault,

> Police Sergeant McKay explained that the riots arose in a restaurant frequented by coloured seamen. A couple of English girls were often the subject of insulting remarks with the result that rows were of frequent occurrence. The place was besieged on Wednesday night, and bottles, bricks and other missiles were thrown both by the seamen inside and the crowd outside. In this case however, he believed the coloured seamen present were thoroughly frightened by the attitude of the crowd. (9) (Author's emphasis)

This however, made no difference to the sentences given by the magistrate, the most severe 6 months hard labour being given to Nathaniel Cassan for wounding a white man with a knife. He was also given fourteen days for police assault. Mahomed Ahmed was sentenced to 14 days for assault, while another Mahomed Ahmed (younger by 6 years but also a seamen, as were all the defendants), was fined 40 shillings for discharging a revolver. Saleb Masoub received 14 days for being involved in the police assault with Cassan, but was cleared of a wounding charge.

A final aspect worthy of mention in connection with this initial riotous incident in London was the reaction of the Black intelligentsia to the press accounts of the disturbance, as voiced in West African John Eldred Taylor's publication the African Telegraph :

> Our investigations proved that no Africans were involved in the Cable Street riot, which set the tongues of Negrophobists wagging with such remarks as 'serious fight between white and coloured seamen', 'fracas over coloured men and white women', ... 'white girls insulted by black men' etc. (10)

While making a very valid point about the inability of newspapers to differentiate between people of different races, this view also seems to

ignore the possibility of fellowship between non-white peoples of the world, if only in the face of white aggression, an important issue, which however, was (and is), the topic of contentious debate among many Afro-Asian people. Such debate however, was rather academic, for the reality of the rioting in 1919 showed no differentiation between Black people of various nationalities. In London, as in South Shields, Muslims were regarded as 'legitimate' targets for wider white frustrations at the poor social conditions which were a characteristic of the post-war years.

After this initial incident which was limited to the attack on a Muslim eating-house, a month later there was a series of riots and disturbances in the Limehouse area of the city. These took place over the space of four days, beginning on Monday May 16 1919. On that day a number of Black men were attacked by a crowd of whites. As a result of this attack, a Black named Herbert Clarke was charged with unlawfully wounding one of the whites, Ernest Wendorp. Clarke, was described in the court records as a seaman, aged 28.(11) After several remands he was granted bail on a surety of £5, but his ultimate fate is unclear, his case being referred to another court. This was also the case with a Jamaican ships' fireman named John Martin, who was charged with wounding a white man named James Hanrahan on Tuesday May 27, the day when the racial disturbances reached their height.

> Tuesday night's affray which was apparently a sequel to the disturbance on Monday, developed from a rough and tumble into a pitched battle, which raged in the Commercial Road between Limehouse Church and the Sailors' Palace for three hours. It culminated in a rout of the black men, who were driven into St. Ann's Street. The conflict continued until the police drew a cordon across the road to quell the riot. (12)

The actions of the police in creating a 'barrier zone' is a common occurrence in the British, and indeed, the US, race riots of 1919. The implication being that only by dividing the two communities physically could the authorities cope with the scale of violence. The fact that in London however, no troops were deemed necessary suggests that in this city the police were able to maintain a degree of law and order which was not witnessed at any of the other major centres of disturbance. The size of the crowd was put in the above account at between four and five thousand, but it is unlikely that as

many as this were involved. This was nevertheless, a full-scale riot, the crowd laying siege to a Black men's boarding house in St. Ann's Street, which was home for over one hundred men.

> It was alleged that the defendant [Martin] ran up flourishing a revolver, and fired in the direction of the crowd, with the result that the prosecutor, Hanrahan, a white man, who was walking along the street at the time, was hit by the bullet, but not seriously hurt. The defendant was arrested in the lodging house. He had wounds on the head and face, and in reply to the charge he said : 'Me no shoot - Crowd knock me down with large sticks.' (13)

In the evidence it was shown that Martin, who had a wife and two children living in Jamaica, and who was on four weeks' leave from the Royal Navy, had no past history of association with white girls. It is likely that it was this, rather than any protestations of innocence, which led to Martin being found not guilty of wounding, and discharged. The implications of Martin's trial are important, for it would seem that the court echoed the white crowd's attitude to London's Black populace. A Black man could, it appears, only be an 'innocent victim' of the riots if he had no connection with white women. In other words, any Black men who 'consorted' with a white female was 'fair game' for the white crowds.

Although this trial was probably the most significant case arising out of the riots in late May, there were a number of others dating from this highpoint of violence in London, and this time, unlike the earlier April incident, not all the defendants were Blacks. Indeed, one of the court prosecutors at a subsequent trial stated that :

> ... the disturbances arose owing mainly to the action of roughs - white people - who interfered with coloured men, in many cases British subjects. If white men would leave coloured men alone, and if the authorities would take steps to send the latter to their own homes, nothing of this kind would occur. (14)

Of the eleven men identified as having been arrested for taking part in the May riots in London, five were whites, four of whom were charged with threatening behaviour. Two of these were also charged with throwing stones, and were fined 40 shillings with the alternative of 21 days imprisonment. Two white youths were each bound over for 12 months. The other white,

Maurice Katz (whose name suggests he was a member of London's Jewish population) was charged with unlawfully wounding another white man, but his case is something of an exception and will be mentioned below. When one considers the charges against the Black men however, it is apparent that in arrest at least, the London police demonstrated the same kind of bias which is seen elsewhere during the riots. Martin, as has been discussed above, was charged with wounding, despite the fact that he was himself being attacked, and although he was found not guilty, other Black men were not to find themselves so fortunate.

Two Black ships' firemen, Charles Smith and Thomas Wilson, were both charged with 'unlawfully and maliciously attempting to cause grievous bodily harm' to two different policemen on May 27, while James Everitt, aged 19 and also a fireman, was charged with attempted grievous bodily harm to a civilian, Arthur Booth. Smith had been spotted by one of the white crowd which had formed, armed with a revolver in Commercial Road; when stopped by a police officer he threatened to shoot him. As he was being led away another officer who had come to the aid of the first was challenged by another Black, Thomas Wilson, with an open razor. The use of such weapons serves as a reminder that the Blacks were prepared to use the most severe means to defend their position, and also that they, like many in the white crowd, had been used to violence, having seen war service, principally in the merchant navy, but also in the British armed forces during the war. Blacks were similarly on occasion, in real fear for their lives, as white crowds attacked Blacks wherever they were found. As The Times account of the riot which occurred the following day, in which the Asiatic Home in West India Dock road was mobbed, indicates,

> In the streets where coloured men are lodging crowds assembled and attempts at mobbing were made both against coloured men and against girls with whom they are supposed to have been associated. A police officer stated that the crowd generally succeeded in mobbing the wrong person. Several arrests were made. (15)

The view of the police officer here is important, suggesting that had the correct Black person been mobbed the police may have turned a blind eye.

The magistrate may have been aware of the possibility of extenuating circumstances however, in regard to the Blacks arrested since all three men

were sentenced to one month hard labour on the reduced charge of common assault. Still, these were relatively heavy sentences when compared with those given the white rioters. An example of this imbalance can be seen in the final case involving a Black in this particular phase of racial unrest in London. For, Ozias McIntosh was fined 10 shillings after being found guilty of using threatening behaviour on May 27, while the two whites convicted of the same offence were merely bound over to keep the peace, as has been mentioned above. The most significant factor to emerge from this severe outbreak of rioting was not mentioned in the courts during the resultant trials. Namely, that it was the Black crowds who were the victims of white aggression. The number of Blacks arrested outnumbered that of whites, notwithstanding this fact, and this could only have been the result of police bias in their policy of arrest. Something also worthy of note however, is the relatively low figure of those arrested even during the most severe instances of riot. It appears that in London, the police were more intent on breaking up the crowds, before more serious face to face confrontations developed, rather than taking people into custody.

The one case involving a serious charge against a white man concerned Maurice Katz, who was charged with maliciously wounding a fellow white, George Campbell.

> Inspector Chamberlain stated that on the previous evening Thursday he saw a prisoner at Clemence Street, Limehouse, followed by a hostile crowd. Witness stopped him, and a person in the crowd said, 'He has just shot a man'. Prisoner replied, 'Yes, that's right. I did shoot him. I threw the revolver away. Take me away anywhere from here.'. By Mr. Young who defended - Witness had heard that the mother of Katz had incurred enmity owing to serving black men in their shop and that her windows had been smashed. (16)

Interestingly, the two whites found guilty of stone throwing had been attempting to get at Katz as he was led away in police custody. Perhaps, Katz, like the Black community, was a victim of racial bias due to his Jewish origin, since racism, always a factor in early twentieth century British society, had become of increased significance in this period of social and economic stress. After several remands at the Thames Police court Katz, whose occupation was given as seaman, and whose age was nineteen, was committed to a higher court for trial on June 5 1919, bail being set at £25. A perusal of

the County of London Quarter Sessions Court Records revealed no trace of Katz, so either his case was dealt with at another court, or it did not ultimately come to trial. Although the fate of Katz is unknown, the fact that he was driven to the use of firearms by the acts of violence directed against his mother's store for her doing the simple act of serving Black men, is indicative of the fever pitch of racial tension in the East End of London at this time. The fact that Katz' mother's relationship with the Black community was economic is particularly important. Serving as a reminder that it was this, above all else, the 'threat' of Blacks as competitors in the job market, which provoked the wrath of the white crowds.

The continued violence of late May did not go unnoticed in the national press as has been seen from the Times accounts quoted above. However, a more marginal view of the riots appeared in Sylvia Pankhurst's revolutionary publication the Workers' Dreadnought, in the first week in June, under the heading, "Stabbing Negroes in the London Dock Area".

> An attack springing from a particularly sordid cause is being made upon Negroes and other dark-skinned foreigners in the London dock area; women who have sunk to adopting prostitution as a trade find that black men can pay them and white discharged soldiers who are out of work cannot pay them.
>
> We submit a few questions to those who have been negro-hunting:- 'Do you wish to exclude all blacks from England?' 'If so, do you not think that blacks might justly ask that the British should at the same time keep out of their countries?' .... 'Do you not think that when negroes are employed instead of British it is because it pays the employer to do it?' 'Do not you know that if it pays to employ black men employers will get them and keep them even if the white workers kill a few of the blacks from time to time?' 'Are you afraid that a white woman would prefer a black man to you if you met her on equal terms with him?' (17)

A striking thing about this subjective, but in many ways truthful article, is its similarity to the account of the race riots in the Socialist (10 July 1919) quoted in chapter three, page 54. Both accounts stress the role of employers in exploiting workers (Black and white) for their own profit. However, the Dreadnought article is also very much in line with Black intellectual opinion in Britain at this time, using as it does the argument that if Blacks were to be made to go home, whites then, should quit the Black people's countries. It also faces the vexed sex question head-on, both were issues which particularly

angered the Black community and were raised by F.E.M. Hercules of the Society of Peoples of African Origin only days later in his letter to the Times quoted in chapter one. The West Indian poet and author Claude McKay, who was living in Britain in 1919, was a contributor to the Workers' Dreadnought, so it is likely that Pankhurst had a degree of contact with London's Black intelligentsia, and perhaps with the Black community in general.

The riots which flared up again in June included the first press mention of attacks upon the Chinese community in London, so much so that the Foreign Secretary received an inquiry later in the month from the "Chinese minister as to the 'colour riots' in South Wales and East London". (18) The actual document has not survived but this fragment of information suggests that the news of anti-Chinese attacks was disturbing enough to prompt an official response from the Chinese government. As was the case in the white attacks upon Black seamen, sexual jealousy was again a major factor behind the violence, although the competition for housing, at a time when accommodation was scarce was a feature of this phase of the London riots.

> Much excitement was caused in St. Saviour's district of Poplar on Monday evening, when a house in Northumberland Street was attacked and wrecked. A Chinaman had just moved into the house, and it was stated that a demobilised soldier had previously been refused as a tenant. This preference for a foreigner was alleged to be the cause of the trouble. A crowd gathered and stormed the premises. The furniture was thrown out into the street and set on fire, while the occupants of the house [said in one account to be two Chinamen and their white wives] were roughly treated, and had to seek police protection. The fire brigade was summoned and, unhindered by the crowd, they extinguished the fire in the street by means of a hydrant. The police arrived in large numbers, and the riot soon died down. There was some talk of wrecking the whole of the Chinese quarter, but the vigilance of the police prevented any such happening. (19)

The following day trouble flared up again. This time it was the Chinese laundry in North Street which was the target, its windows being smashed, and only a large police presence curtailed further violence. The next day the police stationed a man outside the laundry and in Grundy Street after a 'slight disturbance' in that area. A report a week later in the Eastern Post shows how similar the white attitude was towards the Chinese and Black communities.

.... since the war the yellow population has increased in the East End .... As Englishmen joined the army, Chinese came to replace them in many instances, in the factories and in the kitchens of hotels and restaurants. The Chinaman gave up the sea for a shore job, earned good money, and then he and his compatriots over-flowed from his original quarter, forming alliances in some cases with white women.

These white women are not in all cases of the most desirable character, and this added to the basic grievance of scarcity of houses, provides a popular excuse for disturbances. (20)

These last two quotations are evidence of how far the post-war social climate in Britain was a determinant in the race rioting. The latter quotation indicates how far Chinese people were considered in the same damaging light as the Black community, while the former describing the alleged preference of a Chinese over an ex-serviceman for accommodation, shows how easily tension could be raised among the white population in this post-war period. The fear among the white population that Blacks and Asiatics were usurping their position in regard to jobs, housing and sexual relationships, had their roots in the deeper frustrations caused by war service and the precarious post-war social and economic situation. Attacks on the Black community were taking place in tandem with those on the Chinese population. Two Blacks, Moses Quaker and Isaac Morris, both from Sierra Leone, were arrested as the result of a fight between these two and a crowd of whites in the West India Dock Road on June 16, the same evening as the anti-Chinese attacks described above. Both Blacks were convicted of using insulting words and behaviour at the Thames Police Court the following day, Quaker being fined five shillings and Morris two shillings, for not dispersing along with the rest of the crowd when ordered by the police.

In August it was the Black community which was once again the main target for violent attacks, and this time the issues of sexual jealousy and housing competition were absent - the incident being an apparently unprovoked attack by a white man upon a Black man, Thomas Pell, as he stood at the door of his house.

At the West Ham police court on Monday, a riotous scene, in which blacks and whites were concerned, in Canning Town on Saturday afternoon was described.

It appeared, according to the Magistrate, the whole affair arose out

of an unprovoked attack on a coloured man who hit back, and he reminded one of the offenders that the blacks were also subjects of the king, and were entitled to the protection of the law.

Revolvers were fired by Blacks, but a police inspector said the weapons were fired over the heads of the crowd. (21)

James Grantham, a white, walked past Pell who was standing on his doorstep and made a remark against him. He then returned, saying Pell had laughed at him, and began to hit Pell in the chest, who retaliated before being pulled into his house by two other Black men. Grantham then turned his attention to Pell's house, breaking the windows. This rumpus attracted a crowd of whites, who soon joined in attacking Blacks in the area. The police were overwhelmed by the scale of the violence at this stage, but order was later restored. The court case arising from this incident is important for the sympathetic hearing given the Black defendants, by the magistrate, Radcliffe Cousins. He sentenced Grantham to two months hard labour for assault and being drunk and disorderly.

Three coloured West Indian seamen were charged with discharging revolvers, and it was pleaded that they had been chased by the crowd for a quarter of a mile, and the shots were over the heads of the people.

Mr. Daybell, defending, said a number of butchers with choppers and steels joined with the crowd, and the men felt they were in great peril.

Fining two of the men 20 shillings for having revolvers without a licence, Mr. Radcliffe Cousins said he regarded their conduct as the acts of desperate men in danger of violence. (22)

Such an understanding reaction on the part of this magistrate is hardly mirrored elsewhere in court cases arising from the riots, the more usual stance taken being to consider only the acts of violence on the part of the Blacks, rather than the events which may have led up to them.

An incident which serves as a salutary reminder that the Black community in London shared the social frustrations and tendency to violence which characterised the white crowds' activities during the race riots, occurred on August 8 1919.

Following an affray between two separate parties of coloured men of various nationalities in a recreation ground at Fairfield Road, Bow, the

previous night, ten blacks were charged at Thames Police court with disorderly conduct. It appeared from the evidence that there was a quarrel, followed by a general fight. Missiles - bricks, pieces of wood, metal belts, and lead suspended from thick rubber bands - were used, and much alarm was created in the neighbourhood. Large numbers of people were sent from Bow station to quell the disturbance. It was alleged that one of the prisoners shouted, 'Kill the white men and white women', and that another said, 'Me fight white men and black men, too.' (23)

The fact that such an incident was given a prominent position in the local press, is indicative of how the press of the time viewed Blacks as lawless, violent people, who could not even agree among themselves. All ten Blacks arrested were seamen, seven of whom were given 10 shilling fines for insulting behaviour. One other was fined 4 shillings for being drunk and disorderly, and the final two were released. Evidence that this press attitutde was firmly established emerges in an account of an incident which occurred on August 21, in which a Barbadian, Joseph Thompson, was accused of wounding a white man named Andrews. This report appears under the highly suggestive heading, "Black and White Riots - Detective Says Coloured Men are Becoming Pests."(24)

Thompson was fleeing from a crowd of whites in West India Dock road, after a white sailor had attempted to strike him. A white named Andrews saw Thompson running towards him, pursued by the crowd, who shouted for him to stop Thompson, which he did by tripping him up. The prosecution then alleged that Thompson slashed Andrews in the arm with a razor, although Thompson denied this, saying that the razor was not his, and by the time Andrews tripped him he was too weak from running to be violent. Interestingly, Thompson's defence was undertaken by a Black barrister named Callander, whose career it is worth mentioning here.

W.E.S. Callander was a Guyanese lawyer who had lived in Toronto and the Bahamas before coming to England. Married to a white Englishwoman, they eventually settled in Acton. Callander's links with the London Black community are clear. Apart from this case, he was also one of the barristers who defended John Eldred Taylor later that year in a libel action arising from a report in the African Telegraph on the flogging of black women in Nigeria on the order, allegedly of a British resident, Captain Fitzpatrick. Although he

lost the case, and subsequently went bankrupt, Taylor was vindicated by the jury's recommendation that such practices should immediately cease.[25] The link between Taylor and Callander was continued in July 1921, when both attended a meeting of the African Progress Union, at which Dr. John Alcindor was elected president.

The jury's verdict on Thompson was guilty under great provocation. The judge, however, chose to ignore this caveat, and ...

> ... addressing the prisoner Mr. Cairns said that in future if he took part in street disturbances he would be severely punished. The prisoner was fortunate in not having to stand in the dock on a charge of murder. He ordered him six months' imprisonment. (26)

Violence Again : The 1920 Race Disturbance

West India Dock Road was again the scene of a racial incident in May the following year,

> During the past week there has been a recrudescence of the recent troubles between coloured and white seamen in the East End, and, as a result several men have appeared before the magistrate at Thames police court.
>
> It was on Monday evening that Inspector Knowler ... of Limehouse was informed that trouble was brewing between blacks and whites; and immediately the officer took precautions to have on duty a large number of police officers. The step he took was justified, for there was a disturbance, which might, in the absence of his forethought, have developed into an extremely serious affray. (27)

Although this incident would appear to have been on a smaller scale than some of the 1919 disturbances, the fact that violence could still break out suggests that ill-feeling among the two communities remained strong particularly bearing in mind the continued depressed state of the merchant shipping industry. The new police tactics do seem to have been more successful, and one wonders why the early warning system had not operated the previous year - perhaps the police had learned from experience. Again however, it was Blacks who were arrested for their part in the violence, so some things had not changed. Two Blacks, Ernest Johnson and Thomas Bailey were given sentences of 21 days imprisonment for insulting words and behaviour, the following day

at the Thames police court, which seems a heavy sentence when compared to the fines given for this offence the previous year. But this may have been intended as a deterrent to prevent further violence occurring. A 21 year old Black ships' fireman, named Victor Thomas was given a four months' sentence for refusing to give his name and address when arrested by a policeman for having a loaded revolver in his possession which he had in his hand during the affray.

London's Black Community : The Post-Riot Position

So far this study of the London riots has focused on the actual incidents of violence. However, it is worthwhile at this stage to look at the background to these outbreaks, before moving on to discuss the subsequent history of the Black seamen, who were the main object of attack during 1919. In many press reports describing the riots, great stress was laid upon the comparative wealth of the Black seamen, who it was said, could afford to pay white prostitutes much to the chagrin of white men, especially ex-servicemen. This view however, is at odds with the picture painted by the Board of Trade document from 1918 quoted above (see page 106), which reveals the difficulties Black seamen had in finding work in wartime. How much more of a problem this would have been as the shipping industry contracted to suit peace time requirements, is not difficult to imagine. Perhaps the answer to such apparently contradictory pieces of information lies in the fact that since the prevalent attitude among whites was to frown upon Black-white sexual relations, it was better to see them solely in terms of business transactions (which of course, some were), rather than arising from mutual attraction. Certainly, the plight of Black seamen, at a time when they were supposedly 'paying for the favours' of a 'certain type' of white girl, led a number of them to visit the Colonial Office in September 1919 to ask for aid.

> These poor men called this morning in great distress. They had been refused assistance by the Charity Organisation Society, the Central Charities Committee, and the Salvation Army ... and the West Indian Committee would not keep them further. As a last resort I gave them a note to the Master of the Lambeth Workhouse. (28)

Indeed, apart from the repatriation scheme canvassed by the Government in the immediate aftermath of the June riots in London, Liverpool and in South

Wales, (which will be discussed in detail elsewhere), admission to the workhouse was the only alternative official quarters had to offer unemployed Blacks. A number were entitled to out of work donation, having resided in this country between ships and having paid their insurance contributions, but many were unaware of this fact, and no one was too concerned about enlightening them. Hence the numbers of men able to pay for the service of a prostitute could not have been so extensive as local opinion suggested - being limited to men with some kind of income.

The problem of destitute Black seamen grew after 1919, despite the repatriation scheme of that year. A letter from the Secretary of the British and Foreign Sailors Society to the Colonial Office in April 1920 explains why;

> ..... it appears that the only resort of many of these men is the Poor Law ... Owing to the surplus number of white seamen available (due to the loss of 3154 vessels during the war) coloured seamen from the colonies cannot re-berth. The number remaining in various ports therefore increases, and the extended stay on shore involved poverty and ultimate destitution. This presents a problem of most serious importance both from the point of view of these coloured British subjects and of the communities where they temporarily dwell. (29)

The plight of the destitute seamen stranded in this country was taken up the following year by a magazine with black sympathies: West Africa, which began a campaign to aid West African sailors to return home. The first report on these destitute men appeared in August 1921, and speaks of 250 men living in a state of semi-starvation in Cardiff, Liverpool, Glasgow and the East End of London, before going on to give the reasons behind this state of affairs;

> The West African seamen problem has arisen since the war ... when hostilities ceased they were given the opportunity of returning, but as few can read or even speak [Author's emphasis] English, it is not surprising that this brief offer was not taken advantage of by all. Most, practically all, never even heard of it. Moreover, there were plenty of ships, and men were in demand for a time. In a few weeks however, these conditions changed, and a barrier was placed against the signing on of coloured labour at British ports as the ranks of the unemployed swelled on this side. Africans who came to Liverpool, London, and Cardiff on ships when paid off were not allowed to sign on again by the British unions while white labour was available, and so the trouble has been allowed to grow since 1919. (30)

This was far from being a general phenomenon, particularly in regard to West

African seamen from Sierra Leone, and smacks of paternalism in this white-run magazine.

This edition of West Africa focused on nine particular seamen hailing from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, in the hope that by drawing attention to their cases the Governors of these countries, who were currently in London, would be moved into taking some action to provide them with passages home. The above report continues,

> As for the seamen themselves they are anxious to get home. As they explained to West Africa, they are agriculturalists, and their desire is to return to the land in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, and these colonies can do with their labour. All they want is a free passage or the right to work their way between Liverpool and the Coast, and a little money to get their goods out of pawn etc. (31)

Subsequently, a number of seamen were given berths on ships bound for West Africa through the beneficence of several shipowners, and the Gold Coast Government provided £200 to be administered to men from that place, through the Gold Coast National Aid Society, the organisation which first alerted West Africa to the plight of these seamen. R.J. Wilkinson, Governor of Sierra Leone, met with representatives of the destitute seamen from that country, (a figure put at 120) in October 1921, agreeing to pay for the repatriation of the twenty who wished to return to Sierra Leone. For the rest, a degree of aid was forthcoming four months later, as stated in an optimistic, if short-sighted report, bearing in mind the continued bias against Black seamen practised by the white seafaring unions. This in fact was to lead to the establishment of the Coloured Seamen's Association in the 1930's, a time when it was said 500 coloured seamen were 'on the beach' in London alone,(32) West Africa stated :

> The sum of £129, collected in Sierra Leone towards the relief of distressed West African seamen in London, largely through the efforts of the Venerable Archdeacon M. Wilson, was forwarded to London to the Gold Coast National Aid Society in February last. The money was subscribed generously by every section of the Community in Siera Leone. Readers will be glad to know that the seamen are now signing on, and their time of stress is practically over. (33)

The campaign mounted in West Africa, while resulting in little more than a

partial amelioration of the conditions suffered by Black seamen, did reveal a number of interesting points to consider in relation to life post-1919, as it was lived by the erstwhile victims of attack. Significantly, the magazine stressed the problem of job competition between white and Black seamen, which, while not providing the direct impetus for any of the riotous episodes in London (as had been the case elsewhere in Britain), was an obvious cause for uneasiness between the two groups at the time of the riots. The West Africa articles similarly throw light on a degree of self-help among this, the most distressed, element of the Black community in London at this time. At its most basic this could mean the sharing of scant resources, as a report from a local paper, the Star (which was reprinted in West Africa), acknowledged,

> There is a spirit of genuine comradeship among these stranded sailors, and at mealtimes it is a common thing to see those who can afford to pay for food sharing it with the half-starved. (34)

That such fellow-feeling had existed in East London at the time of the riots is demonstrated in Michael Banton's 1950's account of the history of Black settlement in London, The Coloured Quarter, which states, albeit briefly, "In 1919 the 'United African Brotherhood Society' was formed in Stepney and achieved a membership of 150." (35)

Individual Black people were also moved to help the seamen,

> Mr. J.E. Thomas of Sierra Leone was interned in Germany in 1914 when a music student there, set up a small shop in Royal Mint street when released, but used his money taking in fellow Sierra Leonians, who were destitute. Through this he has lost his shop and was thrown out last week, only to be helped by the Gold Coast National Aid Fund [Society]. (36)

The report went on to describe two concerts organised by Thomas to raise money for destitute West Africans. The first, held at Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday in 1920 raised £60, through a display of West African dancing performed by out-of-work seamen. A later concert, this time at Canning Town, raised £175 with which twelve seamen were repatriated. Among the circus-type acts were fire-eating, and dancing on broken bottles. There is no doubt that such fund-raising activities were necessary, for, in the space of a

month West Africa carried two reports of two destitute Black seamen dying in London hospitals.(37)

In London, as in South Shields, destitute Black seamen relied heavily on Afro-Asian boarding house keepers in the dock area, one such being James Doe Royal, a former seaman, who kept a lodging house at 90 Cable Street. Through his auspices a number of destitute seamen found work at the Royal Dock in August 1921, but the cost was great. "He has been keeping so many of the stranded men that he has reached the end of his resources, and is now unable to give them a piece of bread, he says, unless he gets help".(38) The report gave Royal's view that the miner's strike had affected job prospects badly and that the destitute seamen were being arrested as suspicious persons, to add to their troubles. The financial pressure upon Royal was so great that he wrote to the British and Foreign Sailor's Society in the hope of being given aid. His letter to them was forwarded to the Colonial Office for their consideration, the BFSS, feeling the problem was too great for them to tackle.

> Could not something be done for us to enable us to live decently and so prevent bad feeling between the white and coloured races, which cannot be of ultimate good effect to inhabitants of the British Isles, the headquarters of 375 million coloured peoples. The cause of this bad feeling is that we are unable to pay our way and have to walk about all night after having no food during the day .... we have little other than fish to feed upon and that without potatoes, and the rent and taxes cannot be met without help. We are far from Sunny Africa and are not living among our own relatives. Yet have not many Coloured races done good work and will they not do so again in the future if the need arises? (39)

This conclusion hints at the frustration felt by many Black people in this period due to the feeling that their efforts for Britain during the war counted for little when it came to providing material aid for Blacks in this country. Something which emerged strongly in the Society of Peoples African Origin and its newspaper, the African Telegraph, beginning with a public meeting held at Hyde Park on June 14 1919. "The final straw came a month after the London riots when it was decided not to allow any Black troops to take part in London's victory celebrations: The much-trumpeted Peace March on 19 July 1919".(40) F.E.M. Hercules as Editor of the African Telegraph drew parallels between this decision and the government's attitude during the riots. "In the face of official silence on the absence of Black troops, and the sup iness of the

Imperial Government during the recent race riots, we can only conclude that it is the policy of His Majesty's Ministers to ignore the services of the black subjects of the Empire."(41)

The Colonial Office reply to Royal's request for assistance in 1921 showed that little had changed in two years, stressing that the temporary arrangements which it had made with the West Indian colonies to repatriate seamen after the war was at an end. No mentioned was made of the position of West African seamen, and the reply concluded, " ... meanwhile Mr. Churchill the Secretary of State for the Colonies fears that there is no alternative but to refer cases of distress to the Poor Law authorities whose duty it is to provide relief in such cases".(42)

Despite this setback, Royal continued his work for the cause of distressed coloured seamen, in fact, he presided over a Christmas dinner, followed by a concert, given to thirty such men at his hostel at Cable Street, financed by gifts from Sierra Leonian readers of West Africa. In the same week he found employment for a further four West African seamen, three from Sierra Leone and one from Nigeria.(43)

Another coloured man working in this field was Kamal Chunchee, a Malay, born in Ceylon who had fought in the British army during the First World War, and who was sent as a missionary worker to the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest in Poplar in December 1921. He found it difficult to preach Christianity to these men, and after witnessing the so-called Christian actions of some whites in the area at first hand, he could understand why.

> My first week in the East End of London I met an English sailor lad, down and out. I took him to a magnificent building. I saw outside this building in large letters 'All Seamen Welcome' ... I asked the lad to sit at one of the tables, went over to the counter, placed a shilling and asked the English girl for two cups of tea and a piece of cake. The girl stared at me and said, 'We don't serve niggers here!' What hur t me most was behind that girl on the wall, I read in large letters 'God is love'! I left that place and gave the lad the shilling. (44)

No doubt prompted by such instances of racism which, of course, were not uncommon in early 20th century Britain, Chunchee went on to found by his own initiative, the Coloured Men's Institute in Canning Town in 1926. It is likely

however, that he was materially assisted by white philanthropists, who continued to be interested in the plight of Black people into the 1920's. Indeed the 'Committee for the Welfare of Africans in Europe', established during the war by the African Society and the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society to look after the interests of South African labour contingents, was actively involved in the repatriation of destitute Black seamen and students after the war. One estimate of the number of distressed persons aided by the Committee put the figure at 200. Such activity however, could only have an ameliorating effect, merely touching as it did upon the outward results of deeper frustrations in the white community, and so long as the white seamen's unions refused to allow the employment of Black and Asian seamen on British ships, the problem, (both in London, and at ports throughout the country), would remain.

The race riots which took place in London over a period of five months in 1919 certainly bore many of the hallmarks of the major riots elsewhere; post-war social tension, competition in employment, the housing factor, and the increased importance of established racist thought. However these riots also bear some distinctive aspects which are worth stressing. The fact that the riotous episodes occurred over such a lengthy period of time indicates a level of social and economic tension which accounts of the June riots for instance, would not reveal. Similarly, the description of many of the incidents in London paint a picture of an almost constant unrest in the cafés around the dockland areas of the city, which, as the disturbance of 1920 indicates, did not readily subside, despite the often ferocious, fighting of April-August 1919. The implication is that the riots discussed here were only the most severe examples of what was a period of apparent massive unrest. In the East End in these months Afro-Carribean and Asian people were being made the scapegoats for much wider white frustrations, something which strongly links these riots with earlier pre-industrial riots as discussed by George Rudé.

A significant feature of the London riots was the relatively limited number of people arrested as a result of the disturbances which were apparently every bit as extensive as those in the other major riot centres of Liverpool and South Wales. This suggests that the police in London were more intent on breaking

up the crowds, rather than taking people into custody. Having said this, it is also clear from the court records that when the proportion of whites to Afro-Asians involved in the disputes is taken into account, the Afro-Asians came off worst, as was the case in most of the riot centres around the country.

Despite the sustained level of violence in London there were no obvious fatalities from the riots. The reasons for this are not clear-cut and may perhaps, have been simply due to good fortune, since there is ample evidence of both sides being armed with knives and revolvers. Mention of weapons brings the discussion round to the issue of press bias, for it is clear that both the national and local press viewed the fact that Afro-Asians in London were going around armed, a serious threat to public order. That this may have been a precautionary measure in case of attack rarely enters the pages of such accounts, even when this is made explicit by the trial reports, as was the case in the riot at Canning Town, when three Blacks were being chased, shot over the heads of their assailants, in order to frighten them off.

It is clear that the London riots, far from being simple anti-Black demonstrations, were part of a much wider picture of post-war unrest in Britain. In this sense it is significant that Blacks in London proved that they too, were capable of violent acts during the incident at Bow in August 1919. An indication of how riot as a form of social protest was still an important factor in all sections of British society in this period.

1. London Borough of Newham Teaching Pack, "People who Moved to Newham" (London, 1985), p.6.
2. Peter Fryer, Staying Power (London, 1984), p.295.
3. Michael Banton, The Coloured Quarter (London, 1955), p.31.
4. Public Record Office, CO 318/347, Board of Trade to Colonial Office, 30 April 1918.
5. Times April 17 1919, p.7.
6. East End News (London), April 22 1919, p.3.
7. Eastern Post and City Chronicle April 26 1919, p.4.
8. East End News April 22 1919, p.3.
9. Boroughs of Stepney and Poplar and East London Advertiser, April 26 1919, p.7.
10. African Telegraph, Ibid., p.184.
11. East End News, June 6 1919, p.5.
12. Eastern Post and City Chronicle (London) May 31 1919, p.5.
13. Times, July 1 1919, p.4.
14. East End News, May 31 1919, n.p.
15. Times May 30 1919, p.9.
16. East End News June 3 1919, p.3.
17. Workers' Dreadnought (London) 6, (June 7 1919), p.1354.
18. PRO FO 371/3695 91777 (no date) June 1919 Index card to untraceable record.
19. East End News June 20 1919, p.5.
20. Eastern Post June 21 1919, p.5.
21. East London Observer August 16 1919, p.3.
22. Ibid.
23. Eastern Post June 21 1919, p.5.
24. Ibid., September 13 1919, p.5.
25. Ian Duffield "John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria" African Affairs 70, (1971), p.264.

26. Eastern Post September 13 1919, p.5.

27. Ibid., May 15 1920, p.5.

28. PRO CO 137/733, Memorandum on a visit paid the CO by a number of distressed seamen in London, September 8 1919.

29. PRO CO 323/844, Reverend G.F. Dempster to Colonial Secretary, April 28 1920.

30. West Africa (London), 5, (August 6 1921), p.798.

31. Ibid.

32. Banton, op. cit., p.38.

33. West Africa, 6, (May 20 1922), p.493.

34. Ibid., 5, (August 20 1921), p.963.

35. Banton, op. cit., p.34.

36. West Africa 5 (August 20 1921), p.963.

37. West Africa 5, pp. 908 and 1048.

38. Ibid., p.908.

39. PRO CO 323/881 Enclosure from the British and Foreign Sailors' Society to CO, (October 12 1921).

40. Fryer op. cit., p.315.

41. African Telegraph, 3 (July-August 1919), p.243.

42. PRO CO 323/881 op. cit., CO to General Secretary of BFSS November 25 1921.

43. West Africa 5, (December 31 1921), p.1641.

44. Coloured Men's Institute Report 1945-46, (London, December 1946), p.1.

CHAPTER SIX - SALFORD AND HULL

(1919-1921)

The riots and various inter-racial disputes which occurred in Salford and Hull during the years 1919 to 1921 are important elements in the wider picture of the race rioting throughout Britain. Although both towns had relatively small, compact Black settlements, (between 60 and 100 in both cases) the events in these places are remarkably similar to the riots involving much larger Black communities such as those in South Wales and Liverpool. Outbreaks occurred at the Shipping Offices in both these towns in separate years, as Black seamen attempted to find employment in direct competition with Whites. Also in Hull the main phase of rioting took place after the meeting of the two races in a public house, (in Liverpool, London, and Cardiff disturbances occurred after both sides had been drinking in pubs). The issue which received most press attention in relation to the riots in these two towns was that of inter-racial sexual relations, a factor so often reported as the 'cause' of the disputes, to the detriment of wider social and economic issues.

In one sense the White fascination for such inter-racial relationships is most useful, for it gives the researcher plenty of information regarding the social environment of the Black community, and in the case of Hull and Salford this is especially of value, giving an insight into an hitherto ignored Black population in this vital period of that people's history in Britain. Partly because of this, much of the following chapter will be based on the various local press reports of the riots and various inter-racial clashes and the conclusions which can be based on them. In the case of Salford which was served by one compact, but informative weekly journal, the Salford Reporter, rather than being merely a study of reports of various riots, this study will also take into account reports of court cases of a non-riot connotation involving Black men, such as a divorce action and a charge of indecent assault, which will hopefully provide a wider perspective of life in Britain for its Black population. Salford, as a more minor town provides a contrast to much longer established, larger Black settlements in the big port towns, such as Liverpool and Cardiff.

The fact that this chapter will cover a time-span of three years (1919-1921) is important in itself, demonstrating as it does a level of sustained violence

against Blacks in this country which suggests that the theory of post-war dislocation and mass demobilisation as a major factor in the racial disturbances, must be if not questioned, then amended, although of course, it is recognised that it took the country more than a few months to settle into peacetime conditions after four and a half years of warface. Perhaps the way to do this would be to lay more stress on other factors, such as the continued decline of the merchant shipping industry in Britain, playing a large and sustained part in the continuing racial friction of these years, and by emphasising the fact that rioting was a well-developed feature of social protest in Britain, which was not likely to be eradicated in the space of a few years. Having laid the basic groundwork for this discussion, the focus of attention will now move on to the borough of Salford, and to a consideration of the Black settlement in that area of North West England.

How a Black community came to be established in Salford by 1919 is probably the most logical starting point for this discussion, and the suggestion is that it had grown up during the war years as West Africans, in the main, travelled to Britain to aid the War effort. However there is only one source for this theory, which suggests that the Black population at Salford was an archetype for the settlement of Black people in Britain as a whole in this period. This movement had been expressed in more general terms in one of the more major works on Black British history in this period:

> World War One produced an enormous increase in Britain's Black population. Workers were in a sellers' market as the armed forces drained industry of its manpower. Black seamen left their ships to look for work on land while other travelled from the colonies in search of lucrative employment.... Black workers from the colonies found their way into the chemical and munition factories of the North and Midlands. (1)

A contemporary source detailing the origins of Salford's Black community appeared in a local press report in March 1919. "The prisoners are all from Sierra Leone, and apparently came to this country when the mule boats were carrying soldiers...."[(2)] Later, the same report carried the Chief Constable's view of the Black settlement in the area, which contained additional information on the nature of that community; "He recommends that they be returned to their respective colonies, especially so as the labouring work which

they had been undertaking during the war can now be satisfactorily done by the returning soldiers and sailors."[3] What the nature of this 'labouring work' being done by the Black settlers actually was is not made clear, but it is likely it was menial employment, the sort of jobs which soonest fall vacant in time of war, as workmen join the forces. However, it is clear that not all Blacks resident in Salford worked ashore, many were employed as seamen, by which route they had arrived in this country. Indeed, later in the same police report, (which had, in fact, been sent to the Home Office, giving the local inhabitants objections to the Black settlement on the grounds of their lawlessness), mention is made of several of the Blacks having been convicted of offences while at sea, including armed threats against superior (presumably White) officers.[4] In terms of the racial riots elsewhere in Britain this report and the disturbance which occasioned it, is of significance, suggesting as it does a pattern of racial violence and white opposition to the Black community in the months before the widescale rioting of June 1919. Indeed, the Chief Constable's report mentioned that even before the March 1919 disturbance the police force had been called out five times[5] to the area inhabited by the Black population, a level of disruption and incident which suggests that this group of men were far from being accepted into the wider community, despite their war work. That the Black community were regarded as having a defined 'area' in the town suggests that some white inhabitants of Salford had extended their opposition to Black people beyond disapproval of inter-racial sexual involvement, to a desire to confine Black people to a 'ghetto'.

During the past few months, sporadic trouble has been experienced with the coloured population in Greengate, Salford, and this came to a head on the 8th March 1919, when a negro, Thomas Williams, was arrested for being found on enclosed premises. While he was being taken to the police station, a number of coloured people massed together and attacked P.C. Noddle, who had arrested Williams. The two men who were to be witnesses were assaulted and the prisoner was rescued. Fifty coloured people were involved, armed with knives staves, sticks and razors, and the constable and his prisoner were on the floor when police reinforcements from Chapel Street station arrived. When the police constable recovered from the effects of the attack, he went around the area to identify his attackers and during this process the prisoner was recaptured. Ultimately six coloured people were arrested and charged with assaulting the P.C. and rescuing his prisoner. (6)

This description of the first major racial disturbance to occur at Salford is

contained in the Chief Inspector's yearly report, summaries of which have been collected in a single volume by a local historian, and is similar to the press article which appeared as a result of this incident, which seems to have been a storm in a tea cup; Williams calling in at a tailor's shop and asking for a Black named Peters, who was not there, then refusing to leave when asked by the proprietor. But the hostile response he met with and the subsequent (successful) attempt to rescue him by a large crowd of armed Blacks, suggests that this community in Salford were isolated from the white population and felt they were victimised by the police authorities. This feeling re-emerged with greater force in the US race riots later in the year, during which impartial policing was almost unknown. The arrest of Williams brings to mind the five other occasions when police had been called to the area in the preceding months, and it is likely that what appears to have been an over-reaction on the part of the constable prompted by White complaints, was in fact, a conditioned response, with the Black community habitually regarded as the aggressors. A reaction which has been established as the general one demonstrated by the police when faced with riotous crowds of Blacks and whites around Britain's ports at this time - hence the tendency to arrest more Blacks than whites. This is not to say that the Blacks in Salford were shrinking violets, it is clear that many of these, in many cases battle-hardened men, were capable of looking after themselves and their fellow Blacks. Indeed, of the eight Sierra Leonians arrested; Albert Cuthbert, Jack Andrews, Lewis Wyndham, John Barber, Thomas Peters, George Nelson, William Johnson, and Thomas Williams; three were found with razors in their possession. One of these armed men, Thomas Peters, was described as the ringleader, who had featured strongly in the attack upon the Police Constable.

> When he was taken to Chapel Street police station he was found to be in possession of a razor with a jagged blade which was undoubtedly unfit for h aving with. It was suggested ... that beyond doubt the man was carrying it for the purpose of using it as the necessity arose. (7)

Both accounts of the incident, in the local press and in the police report, mention that it took six policemen to remove the razor from Peter's possession. The fact that he subsequently had to be carried into court in a chair due to a broken leg and with a face covered in cotton wool to conceal wounds, suggests that any resistance on his part was met with equal force by

the six policemen who sought to disarm him. Six of the Blacks charged, including Peters, were sentenced to three months hard labour for attacking P.C. Noddle and for freeing Williams. The other two, Cuthbert and Andrews, were given lesser sentences of one month in prison, the Magistrate condemning the 'rowdyism' of the Blacks against the police.(8) It is worth taking time out at this stage to consider this specific incident within the framework of the pre-industrial riots as discussed by Rudé in his work on England and France in the eighteenth century. It is immediately apparent that the criterion of a minor incident precipitating a wider disturbance is fulfilled, in the shape of the detention of an individual Black, Thomas Williams, provoking a larger disturbance. In regard to the question of leadership, it appears that Thomas Peters fulfilled the role described by Rudé thus,

> We might say that as a general rule, at this time, leadership 'from within' the crowd was still comparatively rare except in short-lived affairs where some persons had a more commanding presence than others or behaved more conspicuously, or were believed to be so, or to do so, by the magistrates or police. (9)

In looking at the issues behind this incident a plurality of motives emerges, a factor which also has a leading role in the analysis of riots undertaken by Rudé. The Blacks in Salford acted in this incident for the immediate goal of freeing one of their counter-parts. While the strenuous resistance put up by the Black crowd suggests a deeper grievance against the forces of authority in the town. This incident is not typical of the 1919 riots in Britain since it was a Black crowd who started the riot, yet the parallels between this violent outburst other riots during 1919 (including those involving service and ex-servicemen of many nationalities) are clear. By such means this incident can be placed firmly in the context of the wider social unrest which followed the end of the First World War. An important development arising from this episode was a visit to the Home Office by the Chief Constable of Salford to inform them of the threat to public order perceived by the existence of the Black 'colony' at Salford. In fact, while the above case was being heard, the local Watch Committee was in session, and on hearing the result from the Chief Constable of the trial asked him to seek a meeting with the Home Office authorities.

> The Chief Constable visited London yesterday and called at the Home Office in the afternoon. In the meantime he had sent up a report

pointing out that the presence of these negroes in Salford was causing a great amount of dissatisfaction and was looked upon as a public menace. Many of these men he proceeded were living with white girls and several had been convicted in the borough court for living on the earnings of women. The white population in the district of Greengate and the docks were living in terror at the present time and it was feared that serious trouble would occur in the near future. (10)

This quotation from the Chief Constable is indicative of the biased official attitude towards the Black community as 'pimps' and 'thugs' who threatened the well-being of the law abiding white community. A reaction which was based on total neglect of the Black community's position in Salford, which was a precarious one given the hostile white reaction displayed to them in all other racial disputes in the town in this period.

The Home Office response to this approach from the Chief Constable was presumably to draw attention to the existence of the scheme of repatriation which was already in operation, since this was their pat response when approached by other local authorities who regarded this as a problem of law and order. There is however, no record of the Home Office reply. The subsequent actions of the Chief Constable, do tend to add weight to this conclusion.

The Chief Constable took prompt action. After ascertaining the attitude of the Watch Committee and the Home Office, he caused all the coloured people living in that part of the borough (62 in all) to be interviewed. He later reported that all of them with the exception of 17, wished to return to their native land, and that arrangements were being made accordingly. (11)

This quotation raises several interesting points. Most importantly, it reveals a more systematic control over a Black community than had hitherto been seen in 1919, due perhaps to the relative smallness of the Black settlement, and in one sense foreshadows the regimentation of all, (British and alien) Black sailors by the Aliens Order of 1920. The reference to a Black population in 'that part of the borough' used above could suggest that there were other Blacks living in the town, perhaps scattered around in twos and threes and not subject to such a high level of hostility and investigation. Despite this vigorous activity on the part of the Chief Constable, nothing was done to speed the departure of Salford's Black population, although, as will be

shown later, they were a part of the original repatriation scheme, and were similarly involved in the enhanced scheme launched in the wake of the June riots, indeed a local repatriation committee was established at Salford.

The following month a further racial confrontation re inforce. the idea that white disapproval of inter-racial sexual relations came to the fore as the most virulent form of racist thinking in this period of social strain. Two White brothers named Hall living in rooms next door to a number of Blacks in the Greengate area of Salford, on hearing their neighbours having a musical evening, passed disparaging remarks about Black men dancing with White girls, and were beaten up for their pains. This is the sequence of events which can be pieced together from the colourful and slanted reporting of the incident in the press, both in Salford and in Manchester. Three Blacks, described as 'coloured men', namely, James Johnson, William Daniels and Obadiah Williams, (whose surnames suggest they came from Sierra Leone) were charged with assaulting John Hall and Johnson was further charged with the assault of William Hall :

> William Hall in giving evidence, said there was a banjo playing in Johnson's room which appeared to be occuped by a number of niggers. When Johnson asked him what he was doing he told him he was going to his own room. Johnson then produced the poker and hit him several times. Johnson now stated that a friend was playing the banjo when they heard William Hall making abusive remarks about black men dancing with white women. He never left his room, but some of the other blacks did, and they were responsible for the assault. There were eight or nine negroes about at the time. (12)

It is clear that an attack was made and John Hall positively identified all three men later in court. Johnson was sentenced to two months imprisonment, while Daniels and Williams were each given six week terms. There was no mention of Johnson's claim of provocation being taken into account. Interestingly, another account of the trial misquoted Hall's description of the events leading up to the assault, to create an impression of Black-White sexual involvement followed by a violent attack on innocent Whites. "In a lodging house in Duke Street, in the Greengate district a negro concert party was being held. Niggers were strumming banjos while white girls danced."(13)

It was not simply the Chief Constable and the press, however, who held a belief in the 'Black man's taste for white girls'. This is evident in the report of an incident of alleged indecent assault by a Black man against a white woman, only a week after the incident detailed above. A 26 year old Negro named Thomas Williams who lived in a furnished room in Salford, was charged with indecently assaulting a white woman, Ida Donaldson, who lived in the same building. There is a suggestion that she was the landlady or perhaps a char woman, since Williams claimed he had asked her to clean out his room, further stating that he had not even seen the woman on the day in question. His strenuous denial of the charge won the day and he was found not guilty, the jury deciding there was no case to answer. It is worth pointing out at this point that the same newspaper which referred to Black men as 'niggers' (the Salford Reporter), did not on this occasion report the case in the sensationalised terms which might have been expected, confining itself to the comment that, "another case from the 'Black Colony' of Salford occupied the attention of the court".(14)

Indeed it would seem that this local newspaper viewed the activities of the Black community as almost a regular feature. Six weeks later there is a report of another inter-racial disturbance which, occurring at the time of the first riots in Liverpool, arguably owed much to the influence of example. In fact the events themselves are reminiscent of the sort of episode which was common in the riots in Liverpool, South Wales and London; a group of white men gathering outside a Black man's residence taunting the inhabitants of the house and challenging them to come out, then beating anyone who did. As a result of this disturbance a Black man named Davies was charged with being drunk and disorderly. Interestingly, Davies lived in Ravald Street, the same street as Thomas Williams, who had been charged with indecent assault, suggesting that the 'Black Colony' of Salford was not merely confined to the Greengate district of the borough, but to a few streets therein. It would be a simple matter then for any group of people with a grievance, pretended or otherwise, to seek them out, as was apparently the case in early June 1919;

A number of white men were challenging some black men to come out into the street. The prisoner came from a house in Ravald Street, and as a crowd quickly began to assemble, he ran away. A white man began to fight

him while another struck him with a poker. He was running to the police station when the constable got hold of him. (15)

The fact that no whites were arrested as a direct result of this attack, while Davies, who was on the wrong side of a beating from the crowd, was, clearly shows that the police in Salford were unable to act impartially even when faced with clear-cut cases of white aggression. Arguably, it was Black recognition of this fact which played a part in their aggressive stance towards the police.

Davies was admonished, the magistrate advising him to try and keep out of trouble, as if it had been he who had created the white crowd. The potential of this situation for violence can be measured by the fact that six policemen patrolled the area for the next three hours to ensure there were no further clashes. In the course of this patrol a white man was arrested, again for being drunk and disorderly. In this case the magistrate did not treat the white defendant with the toleration which may have been expected given the authorities attitude towards the Black settlement in the area.

The prisoner, Frederick Linton, had taken part in the squabble earlier in the night, and just before midnight he came out and "swore to have the black man's blood". The prisoner told the Stipendiary that a black man had called him a --------, and asked "Do you think I could take that quietly?" The Stipendiary, "No, neither do I believe he called you what you say. You will be fined 30 shillings or 13 days." (16)

If this incident at the beginning of June was influenced by events 30 miles away in Liverpool, so too was the decision to do something in the way of repatriation, after three months of inactivity following the Chief Constable's trip to the Home Office in April and the subsequent discovery that three quarters of the Blacks living in Salford wished to return to their native countries. This desire however, may not have been more than an expressed wish to return 'home', but when and how this was to come about was probably not specified, for Blacks in Salford appeared to be no more keen to take part in the repatriation scheme than their counterparts elsewhere in Britain. Even the reasons given for the limited response to the offer of free repatriation were the same in Salford as those elsewhere:

- Way back to Dixie. Only 15 Salford negroes accept free passage - Fifteen members of Salford's negro colony are now on their way to their own

sunny clime. They sailed from Cardiff at noon yesterday by the SS Batanga on which they were given free passages. The offer of free passages was only communicated to the Salford police on Wednesday night. When the negroes were informed the response was not great, partly owing to the short notice. There were difficulties to be overcome, the only solution of which was time, and that was not available. One problem was that of English wives. At last the party of fifteen left the Board of Trade office, Trafford Road, on Thursday night in time to catch the midnight train from London Road station for Cardiff. Two detectives accompanied them. (17)

This description of the practical working of the repatriation scheme is significant, giving a detailed picture of the speed and regimentation which was exercised by the authorities. The information that the Blacks were accompanied by two detectives indicates the level of tension between the Black and white communities at this time, when any group movement of Blacks had the potential to provoke a white reaction. It is worth looking at other press reports of this significant incident in the history of racial conflict in post-war Salford. Both the Manchester evening newspapers carried accounts of the repatriation of Salford Blacks to West Africa on the SS Batanga in mid-June. They contain additional information and indeed put the number of men accepting repatriation at ten, not fifteen.

"Few home-sick coons' - Salford negroes not keen on free passage". The dusky denizens of the Greengate colony have not 'cottoned on' to the offer of a free trip back to 'Dixie' and only about ten have volunteered. The few collected in Salford town hall will leave today for Cardiff to join the Batanga en route to Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa. (18)

The racist terminology here displayed is nothing out of the ordinary in contemporary press reports of 1919. Yet it is interesting to see the identification of Black West Africans with the racist terminology of the United States. This no doubt, owed something to the close British public knowledge of racial discrimination in America as opposed to the Black British Colonies. Such 'knowledge' was based on information derived from the popular press, novels and the theatre, including 'minstrel shows' which originated from the United States. (19)

The above report went on to list three difficulties faced by the men who agreed to become part of the repatriation scheme; several had articles in

pawn, another had an unmanageable amount of possessions, but the most important consideration was the position of the men's white wives. The same reasons for the lack of volunteers were given in another account of the incident, whilst the additional information was given that the police toured the streets of Salford in order to drum up support for the scheme. "Officers visited the Greengate and Trafford Road districts and whilst many men were anxious to avail themselves of the offer, they were unable to complete arrangements in time."(20)

The sailing of the Batanga coincided with the inaugural meeting of the Government's inter-departmental Repatriation Committee, and it is clear that this sailing was regarded as the first of many. Within a fortnight a local repatriation committee was established at Salford as in other ports, a circular being sent out from the Government to all the local committees in early July informing them of the introduction of the £5 resettlement payment to facilitate the return of Blacks to their home countries.(21) Apart from the references to the establishment of the local repatriation committee at Salford there are also other earlier references to two of the Blacks imprisoned in March and April 1919 respectively, Lewis Wyndham and James Johnson, who were mentioned in the lists of men who had refused repatriation which were circulated by the Board of Trade around all the local Mercantile Marine offices, to ensure that men who had once refused repatriation could not obtain maintenance money at another port. Both men were included in a list(22) of fifteen West Africans who failed to join the vessel allotted them to return home compiled by the Manchester MMO in April 1919. It was mentioned that both men were in prison for assault. Failure to take up berths home was a common occurrence judging by the lists compiled by the various Mercantile Marine offices, and there is certainly evidence of a continued Black presence at Salford well beyond the existence of the repatriation scheme.

As has been mentioned above, the existence of a number of inter-racial marriages proved to be a stumbling block to the smooth working of the repatriation scheme. It also demonstrated that the Black men resident in Salford were a real part of the wider community - not simply a group of 'foreigners' who happened to be working in the area - and they continued to be

so beyond 1919. There is evidence to show that such marriages between the races were apparent in Manchester too. This is demonstrated by a press report of the strange behaviour of a Black American from Virginia, Ebenezeer Nathan Butterfield, who was found wandering the streets in an unsound state of mind. He was speaking nonsense and had attracted a crowd and was taken before the magistrates. His White English wife gave evidence on his behalf," .... she said her husband had been strange in his behaviour for some time past. This she thought, was due to worry - he had been engaged on perfecting a patent and had so far, failed to accomplish his object. In addition to this he had not been in regular work."[23] This account was presumably carried for its curiosity value, but again it serves as an example that the marriage of Black and White was not an unusual occurrence in Brtain at this time.

There is another instance of inter-racial marriage, this time in Salford the following year, a fact which emerged in the course of a report on what appeared to be a totally unprovoked attack on a Black man named John Davies, by a white, (the events of which show a remarkable similarly to the incident in London involving a West Indian named Thomas Pell, who was also attacked by a white, James Grantham, as he stood in his doorway, an incident described in the previous chapter). He was standing at his doorway when he was accosted by a 46 year old white, Thomas Bannister, who asked him to give him a cap since he had lost his; a remark seemingly made to begin an argument. When Davies replied that he had none Bannister replied, "You Black ----------. You get everything but give nothing away."[24] This remark is the key to the attack, based as it was on the widely held belief that the Black population in Britain had somehow done well out of the war in terms of money, housing, and settling down with white women, while the white menfolk had sacrificed everything in the war, and returned home to find their place usurped by Blacks. Bannister was obviously spoiling for a fight because when Davies moved from his doorway down to another street, Bannister turned on him and accused Davies of following him, at the same time striking at his stomach with a knife. Davies, although suffering with a deep cut in the abdomen which was to see him detained in hospital for several days, picked himself up and chased his assailant, bringing him to the ground. A crowd had gathered by this time and

one of the onlookers removed a pocket knife from Bannister's trouser pocket. At the trial, which was heard at Manchester Assizes, Davies' white wife gave evidence on his behalf, and indeed the case seemed a clear one of assault. Bannister was found guilty of unlawful wounding and sentenced to six months imprisonment, but there was no comment made on the basic injustice of his attitude. This example of racial antagonism is by now, a familiar one in the history of this period, and three days later, August 12, 1920, there was an incident which clearly demonstrated the lack of respect which many Blacks felt for the police, when an unnamed coloured seaman was arrested for violently attacking a policeman. Although no details were given it is clear that there remained a continued feeling of mistrust between the Black population and the local police authorities, who as has been shown, seemed unable to act impartially when faced with any disturbance involving the Black community.

It is unfortunate that so many of the sources for the history of the Black population both in Salford and in Britain as a whole, are based on press reports of violent incident since this obviously gives a rather one-dimensional picture of the community, either as victims of attack or lawless renegades against (white) society. The appearance in the press of a local divorce action involving a Black man and his white wife comes then as something of a relief, offering as it does a glimpse of normality in the affairs of at least one Black living in the borough. The case was brought by Annie O'Koro against her presumably African husband on the grounds of cruelty.

> ... she appeared in court with her half-caste child. The defendent husband, Thomas O'Koro, was represented by the well-known coloured barrister, Mr. Nelson. The charges made by the wife in support of her application were very flimsy, and the magistrate dismissed the case after advising her to see a solicitor. (25)

It is significant that Edward T. Nelson defended the case for O'Koro. The career of Nelson has been outlined elsewhere[26] in this work, and his commitment to his race mentioned in the context of his defence of some of the Blacks arrested for their alleged part in the Liverpool riots. However, it is interesting to note this involvement in bread and butter Black affairs on his own doorstep. This case also serves as a reminder that there was a growing British-born Black population (here in the shape of a racist description 'half

caste child') , which, notwithstanding the government repatriation scheme of 1919 ensured a continued Black community in this country.

Probably the most severe racial disturbance to occur in Salford in this period took place in August 1921. Significantly, this most serious affray bears the strongest resemblance to the major riots of 1919 elsewhere in the country, arising as it did at the place where the two races gathered in numbers to seek employment, namely the Shipping Office. The fact that white seamen were still reacting violently to the prospect of the employment of Blacks, two years after the full-scale rioting of 1919 suggests that the whole basis for the riots goes much deeper than simple racial antagonism. The continuing depression in the merchant shipping industry in the post 1919 period meant that the social and economic tensions so apparent in the rioting of 1919 were by no means eroded, particularly in the workplace. It is significant that in Salford in 1921 it was Black seamen from Somaliland - a group of men who had a very long association of working in the British merchant marine, who were the victims of attack. Again, as was so often the case during the riots of 1919, it was the Blacks who were arrested for their part in the fighting, which in this case had spread from the Shipping Office to a piece of waste ground opposite the docks, known locally as 'the croft'. The suggestion of the local newspaper report was that but for speedy police intervention far more serious unrest would have occurred. More interesting however, is the description of the incident given by one of the seven Somali seamen arrested for causing a breach of the peace by fighting:

> One of the accused then said, that on Tuesday four of his countrymen were signed on as ships' firemen, and in consequence the white men, who were annoyed that they had not been given the jobs, began 'kicking up a row'. The man added, "I saw the white men strike two of my comrades, and afterwards in the Shipping Office, I saw fifty white men pummelling one of my comrades. I told them they had done enough to my friend. Afterwards they set on me and bruised my eye and left me for dead. When the policemen came to the house the coloured men came into the street and everybody kicked them. I went away for about a quarter of an hour to a house where I usually go for my dinner. When I thought the crowd had gone away I came out and was chased by about a thousand people and then the constable came and took me. (27)

The parallels between this incident and those which precipitated the riots at Glasgow and South Shields are evident. This is an indication of how far direct

economic competition played a part in the rioting. From this initial confrontation the violence became more widespread, the police intervention not improving matters by driving the Blacks out into the street. The police determination to restore order followed a by now well-established pattern of arresting the Black victims of the violence.

Allowing for a measure of exaggeration on the part of the speaker it is clear that this was a violent attack by a large number of whites, who, not content with beating up a few Blacks in the Shipping Office, were intent on inflicting injury on any coloured people who happened to be in the area, even to the extent of lying in wait for them as the police sought to restore order.

The conclusion of the case is an interesting one bearing in mind the frequent hard line taken by magistrates in similar cases of racial violence throughout 1919:

> Constable Fowden : There was a general melée and when the black men were retreating they threw stones. The Stipendiary : They were perhaps trying to get away and defending themselves. (28)

Six of the men were discharged, the Stipendiary remarking that the bench thought they had been more or less attacked. The seventh, Osman Ali, was bound over to keep the peace for six months. Two other cases arising from this incident saw another Black, John Adam, being charged separately with the unlawful wounding of a white, by striking him on the head with a razor. He was remanded in custody for a week, the outcome of his case being lost in the mists of time. Meanwhile, Abdul Mohamed was fined 10 shillings for having 24 rounds of ammunition in his possession whilst in a house which was raided as the police arrested three of the Black men charged with breach of the peace.(29)

The understanding attitude displayed by the magistrate on this occasion does not however, disguise the fact that Black seamen of all nationalities remained under threat of violence long after the widespread attacks of 1919 had diminished. Even in an area where the Black population was relatively restricted as in Salford, there were enough violent incidents involving this community to maintain a fairly continuous running story through the period

March 1919 to August 1921. The question however, was never raised in the press as to why these Black men were so often the victims of white aggression (the fact being that they were rarely perceived as such, the August 1921 riot providing a notable exception). Description, often lurid, not analysis, made up the main body of local reporting of this section of the inhabitants of the borough.

HULL

The similarities between the Black community at Salford and that of Hull on Humberside at this time have been mentioned earlier, but it is worth looking at these a little more closely by way of introduction to a description and analysis of the inter-racial strife at Hull. As in Salford, although there were a few skirmishes in 1919, the most severe racial fighting took place later. In Salford this was in August 1921, while in Hull race riots occurred in June 1920. The size of the Black community in Hull too, was of similar proportions to that in Salford. The source for the assessment of the Black community at Hull was a report in one of the local newspapers, which stated in 1920, "It is established that there are now between 60 and 100 coloured seamen now resident in Hull."(30) The veracity of this statement of course, is something which must be questioned, bearing in mind the often exaggerated use of numbers by the local press reporting on the Black inhabitants of their areas, which has been noted elsewhere in this work. However, this figure could not be too much of an overestimation because it is unlikely that any full-scale racial rioting would occur in a town where there was only a sprinkling of Black residents. There would be no defined area of Black settlement upon which Whites could focus their anger, a scenario which was definitely played out in Hull during a week-end in June 1920, when systematic white attacks were mounted over two days upon streets of defined Black settlement.

The racial clashes of 1919 in Hull were isolated incidents. One of these is particularly interesting, revealing as it does, that Black sailors could turn upon other races in an attempt to ease their own unemployment situation. "During the past month [May 1919] there was a little disturbance in the street - the

coloured seamen clearing the Shipping Office and Yard of Chinese crew - with the result that the Master decided to take Britishers".[31] This report appeared in a seaman's union newspaper branch report from Hull and is unusual in that it appears to take the side of the Black British sailors. However, the union in question, the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers, was not one of those which had been to the fore in implementing a colour bar at British ports. Although no circumstances are detailed in this brief report, the fact that Black or 'coloured' seamen were challenging the practice of employing Chinese crews, who were paid at lower rates than British sailors, (including most Black Britons), is significant. Although this report is not repeated in the local press, the incident which occurred in May 1919 coincided with a reported mass meeting of seamen and firemen at Hull to protest against the employment of lower-paid foreign sailors by non-British shipping companies. The meeting was held under the auspices of a body called the International Seafarers Union, and protests were made about the tactics of using lower paid foreigners in the face of high unemployment in the industry. The report concluded quoting the rates of pay for the different categories of seafarers. British rates were £15 a month for firemen and £14/10- for sailors, while foreign rates were £12 and £11/10- a month respectively, a saving of £3 a month per man for foreign companies who employed foreigners out of British ports.[32] Such a practice makes it more puzzling as to why in so many instances of racial rioting all over Britain during this period, Black Britons were attacked as being a threat to the livelihood of white British sailors, while at the same time white foreigners went unmolested. The answer perhaps lies in laying the stress on the word 'racial' for it is clear that in times of social stress, in the 20th century, the practice of scapegoating - an established phenomenon in riot as a form of protest - was becoming more racially based. However, it should be mentioned that not all Black seamen in Britain were British subjects or Protected Persons, as in fact, may be demonstrated with reference to an inter-racial dispute which took place later in May 1919 in Hull, and was described in the press as "an excited foreigner [making use of a] ... razor". The report continued, "coloured men and Britishers were involved, and a Portuguese fireman was alleged to have used a razor. The Portuguese was charged with wounding a woman and a British fireman with a razor. There appeared to have been a fight between three or four coloured men and some white men."[33] It is clear from this report that an inter-racial dispute had

occurred, but it is only by referring to another newspaper[34] that it emerges that the Portuguese subject, Manuel de Siloa, was in fact a Black, most probably from the Cape Verde islands. As for the fight itself, it appeared to be a result of a slanging match which got out of hand, and although de Siloa used a razor, he himself received a wound in the mouth which needed six stitches. The result of the wounding charge against de Siloa is nowhere mentioned, but this can be regarded as a typical incident between Black and White seafarers in port towns in this period.

It has been shown in the case of Salford, that even a relatively small Black community in, by no means the largest, port town in Britain could fall victim to a racial clash on a major level. This was also the case in Hull during mid-June 1920, when the violence reached a level of intensity as to bear comparison with all but the prolonged rioting of Cardiff and Liverpool in 1919. That the riots in June 1920 were of a severe order is made clear in a report from the Hull Branch Officer of the Cooks' and Stewards' Union in their newspaper, the Marine Caterer.

> As I am writing this, I have the report of further black and white riots here. This is the worst we have had up to date, fifteen having been treated at the Infirmary and, I am afraid, one death. This is the result of companies being allowed to discharge coloured men in this country who have been engaged abroad, instead of enforcing the discharge at port of engagement, or repatriate them, it being more difficult every day to ship them. (35)

Although in fact there were no fatalities arising from the Hull rioting, this report does go into an explanation of the reason behind the unrest. Or rather, it explains why there was a notable settlement of Black people in Hull at this time, owing to their inability to ship out of the port. The implication is that Blacks were not being given berths on any available ships - a colour bar in effect. A local newspaper editorial suggested that the disturbances were a direct continuation of the racial riots of 1919:

> The ill-feeling between some white and coloured men, which has been 'boiling up' in certain ports, notably those on the South Wales coast since the Armistice has extended to Hull, and resulted in disgraceful and startling scenes on Saturday night. (36)

Indeed, this riot which continued on the Sunday night, indicates how little things had changed for the Black population of Britain in the twelve months

since the riots. As in the press reports of 1919 the sex relations between Black men and white women were referred to as a factor in the violence. "When paid off [Black seamen] are not averse to flourishing their wages to attract white women." This was also the account given in the national press, the Times reporting, "The outbreak is a recrudescence of trouble which has been simmering for some time, and is due to local resentment at the relations between coloured men and women of the town."(37) Why this factor which had apparently been a long standing component of British racist thinking should lead to violence in the 6-7 months directly after the Armistice is never questioned.

The exact incident which caused the riot is nowhere described, but it is clear that trouble broke out around 10 p.m. after Black and white men had been drinking in a public house. A large crowd gathered and chased a Black, later identified as Marell Pigott, who took out a revolver and fired in the air and then at his pursuers. One of the mob, James Devaney was hit in the cheek. At the subsequent court case, Pigott gave evidence in his own defence to the effect that his actions were in self-defence and that the gun had gone off accidently when he was mobbed by the crowd:

> Pigott said he was out for a walk and saw 200 people kicking a small negro, they then rushed for him, he took out his revolver and fired in the air. A crowd gathered round him, attempting to disarm him and the revolver went off twice in the struggle. He did not fire at anyone. The intention of the crowd was to lynch him and he was badly bruised. (39)

Pigott's evidence appears reasonable, given the facts reported elsewhere that as he was being arrested someone stole £15 from his pocket, and when the police had been moving in to take him into custody, he was pinned to the ground with six men on top of him, "one of whom suggested he be strung up from a lamp-post."(40) The judge at York Assizes however, does not appear to have taken the plea of self defence into account in passing a sentence of nine months' hard labour on Pigott for a charge of unlawful wounding.

After the shooting incident it was reported that the white mob proceeded to an area of the town where Black lodging houses were situated and began to vandalise them. Two houses in Lower Union Street were damaged as were

numbers 72 and 74 Pease Street, as the violence continued into the early hours of the morning. Despite a strong police presence, two Blacks were injured and a further seven or eight were taken into protective custody. One white man was also reported hurt with a cut wrist. Interestingly, the Black men taken into protective custody were not charged with any offence, as had often been the case with Black men similarly detained during the 1919 riots. There was one exception, Isaac Wilson, who was found to have an unlicensed revolver in his possession. He was later fined 10 shillings for his offence.(41) Apparently no attempt to restore law and order by arresting the white aggressors was made by the police. The permissive role of the authorities towards crowds of rioters is something which has emerged from the earlier discussion on Rude's work in relation to 18th century riot - and the parallels are clear - tolerence was practised in both periods as a means of expressing a degree of sympathy for the crowd's position, and to head off further unrest.

The following night, despite the dubious precaution of barring Blacks from all public houses (a policy which was also pursued by the authorities during the US race riots of 1919)(42) rioting broke out again, and it is clear that the white mob were the aggressors.

> On Sunday night negroes stayed indoors but a large crowd gathered and stormed a residential area to a house where they thought negroes were. Two negroes in hiding from this surge were discovered and when sought by [a white man called Wilkinson] , one fired at him with a revolver, hitting him three times. (43)

Wilkinson was gravely injured and a Black was charged next day with intent to do him grievous bodily harm. As in the Pigott case there was a strong suggestion that the shooting was done in self-defence. "A short, thick-set West African negro, Tom Toby, (27), fireman on the S.S. Oristano, who stated that he resided at Dartmouth was charged with shooting and maliciously wounding Harry Wilkinson ... last night."(44) A police sergeant who was attracted to the area by the sound of screams found Toby lying on the ground. He had a cut hand and said that he had been fighting. The sergeant found a gun lying nearby, along with five spent cartridges. He arrested Toby, but due to the continued presence of a hostile white crowd, he led him away through one of the houses already wrecked by the mob. The ferocity of the white onslaught may be measured in terms of the damage done and the method of

Toby's removal. He was in fact, later charged with attempted murder, but was found not guilty and released, the jury on this occasion believing he had acted in self-defence.

A fourth Negro arrested as a result of the week-end of rioting in Hull was Joseph Stanley, who was charged with causing a crowd. At his trial, "He protested that coloured men were told to move on while white men were allowed to loiter in the streets. He also claimed that a police constable stood and laughed at a fight between a black man and white instead of stopping it. He was bound over for six months."[45] This allegation of police bias is certainly supported by the fact that while four Blacks were arrested due to the rioting, two being charged with very serious offences, no whites were arrested, despite clear indications that the white mob were the aggressors, particularly on the second night. The indication is that the authorities regarded the Black people as the trouble-makers; witness the allegation that the police moved Blacks on, while allowing whites to loiter in the streets, and also the refusal of publicans to serve them on the second night of violence. These examples of police and local prejudice against Blacks in Hull are similar to those detailed elsewhere in this work in reference to the events of 1919, and it is unlikely that such a level of antipathy would soon diminish. That the particular issue of white opposition to Black seamen shipping out in competition with White sailors continued to be a violent issue has been demonstrated in relation to Salford in 1921, and indeed it is clear that such a situation was in evidence throughout Britain's port areas in the inter-war period as merchant shipping worldwide continued to decline.

In Hull, like Salford, a local repatriation committee was established at the Marine Office, and indeed even before the June 1919 riots which prompted the introduction of paid repatriation, a close watch was being put on Black seamen in Hull, as elsewhere, who refused a berth on ships to their home countries, the Hull Mercantile Marine Officer reporting in May 1919 that nine coloured sailors had refused repatriation from Hull, eight West Indians and one man from Singapore.[46] The continued existence of a fairly sizeable Black population in Hull in 1920 perhaps owed something to the failings of the repatriation scheme, as perceived by the Black sailors themselves. This is suggested by a letter from the Secretary of the local repatriation committee

to the Ministry of Labour in August 1919, detailing the men's objections:

1. The inadequacy of the gratuity. The men state that even if the full amount was given to them on arrival it is insufficient to tide them over the interval between the time of landing and finding employment, and to provide any small capital required to establish them in any business. Further in most cases the men would not receive the whole of the gratuity owing to reductions for redeeming pawned articles.

2. The men complain that foreigners receive preference of employment on board merchant ships as against them, the coloured men, who are British subjects.

The committee pointed out to these men that Masters and officers of ships have the right to choose whom they will in picking a crew. (47)

It is worth pointing out here that in detailing such difficulties the Black seamen were looking at the scheme in a more far-sighted manner than its framers, whose aim was merely to bring an end to the rioting, not think of the consequences of sending hundreds of men thousands of miles distant with very little in the way of financing themselves.

It may be added that when the Repatriation Scheme was brought forward, many of these men had small sums in hand, but the delay in providing ships for repatriation has led to the exhaustion of these funds.

The Government's response to such appeals was to propose a further Inter-Departmental Conference on this issue, but an amendment was not considered necessary and the basic two-part £6 gratuity remained. The later concession by the Government, namely allowing the white wives and families of Black men to be repatriated with them, did however, benefit Blacks in Hull, as elsewhere, with at least two mixed race families leaving the town under the scheme. In October 1919, R. Joseph and G. Steede left for Canada and Barbados respectively, with their white wives, and their children.(48) Despite the repatriation of such men, Hull as elsewhere, maintained a Black community, partly owing to the arrival of Black sailors who were signed on for a one-way trip only, and who were now stranded in Britain, unable to get a ship out, due to the colour bar. Even the scheme's limited success in terms of the end to the rioting was short-lived, for as has been shown in the case of both Salford, and in particular Hull, riots continued to break out, although this was not, as in 1919, a country-wide phenomenon. It is worthwhile mentioning that riot was by no means a receding occurrence in this period of British history, despite Rudé's views on the subject. "In industrial society, the disturbances most prone to be historically significant, take the shape of strikes ...."(49) One study

of Victorian and early 20th century period of British history supplies figures to show that strike activity had not totally superseded riots in the post-industrial period. "During the half-century from 1865-1914 there were 452 riots noted in Great Britain".(50)

The history of Black settlements in Salford and Hull during the period from 1919 to 1921 illustrate how even relatively small groups of Black people were subject to discriminatory practices from the courts and police in one instance, and open violence from whites, in the other. Using Salford as an example, it has been shown that everyday life for Blacks in Britain was frequently punctuated by racial abuse and insensitive police handling of incidents involving their community. The riot at Hull in 1920 similarly suggests that fierce anti-Black fighting was not limited to the year of 1919 with all its associations with post-war dislocation. The fact that so little is known of the history of these communities today when the riots and various racial incidents received such high profile reports at the time suggests that these settlements, only became fit subjects for the authorities' attention when they were perceived as a threat to law and order. Presumably the arrival of an increased number of Black Britons in the post-1945 era altered the make-up of these previously male-dominated communities, and with the arrival of Black families, the isolation which was so apparent in the years after the First World War was lessened. Hence the white public identification of Blacks with seafaring and likewise the perceived threat to white job prospects in this ailing industry, which had characterised the inter-war period, did eventually recede.

This alteration was for the future however, and as has been shown very clearly in both Hull and Salford, the riots of 1919 were not simply isolated incidents of racial antagonism on the part of whites in major port towns, to be latched upon by historians as a convenient way to round off the war period in the history of Blacks in Britain. Indeed, the issues raised in that year had repercussions which lasted well beyond one single twelve month period.

NOTES

1. James Walvin, Black and White (London, 1973), p.204.
2. Salford Reporter March 15 1919, p.3.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. J. Platt, History of the Salford Police (Salford 1980), p.417.
7. Salford Reporter March 15 1919, p.3.
8. Ibid.
9. George Rude Ideology and Popular Protest (London, 1980), p.142.
10. Salford Reporter March 15, 1919, p.3.
11. Platt, History of the Salford Police, p.418.
12. Manchester Evening News April 17, 1919, p.3.
13. Salford Reporter April 12, 1919, p.4.
14. Ibid., April 19, 1919, p.4.
15. Ibid., June 17, 1919, p.4.
16. Ibid.
17. Salford Reporter June 21, 1919, p.5.
18. Manchester Evening Chronicle June 19, 1919, p.4.
19. Douglas Lorimer Colour, Class and the Victorians (London, 1978), pp.89-91.
20. Manchester Evening News June 19, 1919, p.4.
21. CO 323/814 477-478 Copy of Ministry of Shipping Circular to local repatriation committees, July 9, 1919.
22. MT 4/761 Mercantile Marine Office Manchester to Board of Trade Marine Department, April 9, 1919.
23. Manchester Evening News, June 20, 1919, p.3.
24. Salford Reporter, August 13, 1920, n.p.
25. Ibid., Saturday October 16, 1920, p.3.

26. See Chapter One of this thesis.

27. Salford Reporter, August 13, 1921, p.2.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Hull Daily Mail, June 21, 1920, p.4.

31. Marine Caterer, (Liverpool), 9, No. 13 (June 1919), p.204.

32. Hull and East Yorkshire Times, May 17, 1919, p.10.

33. Ibid., May 31 1919, p.4.

34. Hull Daily News, May 31, 1919, p.1.

35. Marine Caterer, XVI No. 1, (July 1920), p.5.

36. Hull Daily Mail, June 21, 1920, p.4.

37. Ibid., p.5.

38. Times, June 21, 1920, p.11.

39. Hull Daily Mail, July 14, 1920, n.p.

40. Ibid., June 21, 1920, p.5.

41. Hull Daily News, June 21, 1920, p.1.

42. Times, Ibid., June 21.

43. Hull Daily Mail, June 21, 1920, p.5.

44. Hull Daily News, June 21, 1920, p.1.

45. Ibid.

46. MT 4/761 Board of Trade to all Mercantile Marine Offices, May 1, 1919.

47. CO 323/816 6 Copy of letter from Hull repatriation Committee to Ministry of Labour August 28, 1919.

48. CO 318/350 List of Appeals for Repatriation October 1919.

49. George Rudé The Crowd in History (New York, 1964), p.5.

50. Donald Charles Richter, Public Order and Popular Disturbances in Great Britain 1865 - 1914 Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland (1965), p.239.

CHAPTER SEVEN - "... NEARER THE ANIMAL THAN ... THE AVERAGE WHITE MAN" : LIVERPOOL'S ANTI-BLACK RIOTS

The 1919 race riots in Liverpool unlike so many of the other riots taking place in this year have attracted some notice from writers on the subject of Black British history, in fact two articles[1] on the settlement of Blacks in Liverpool touch upon the riots, while drawing wider conclusions. Similarly, more general studies on Black history in Britain, including two of the more recent,[2] describe the main events of the riots and suggest some of the reasons behind them. A researcher approaching this aspect of the 1919 riots is thus presented with a different task than has been the case with most of the other chapters of this thesis which have been compiled using mainly primary sources as a basis for constructing a theory which takes into account all the various local factors while highlighting some general features in the rioting. In the case of the Liverpool riots, (which were arguably, the most sustained outbreaks in the history of the 1919 riots), the author has also to contend with secondary sources containing their own theories behind the violence. One definite advantage of the background knowledge supplied by secondary sources on the Black population of Liverpool is the ability such information gives the researcher to view the riots of 1919 in the context of the more general history of Blacks in that area, avoiding the pitfall of exaggerating the importance of the incidents out of all proportion by focusing on them so closely as to ignore other factors in the story. An example of this is the comparison between the race riot in Liverpool in June and the subsequent police strike in the city in August contained in the article by May and Cohen, suggesting the link between these two incidents as direct outcomes of post-war domestic tension in Britain, although of course, the aim is not to explain away the riots simply in terms of a general unrest among the British population in the wake of the First World War.

Having mentioned the existence of a body of published secondary material on the race riots in Liverpool which will be used in this discussion, it is worth stressing that a wide range of primary sources have been utilised, including the local and national press, Government papers, and local records. Also of use in the case of the Liverpool riots is a contemporary Black account of the violence in the shape of Ernest Marke's autobiography, Old Man Trouble. Such sources combine to make Liverpool one of the most well-documented of all the riots so far considered. The aim of this chapter is to synthesise this information and to draw some conclusions therefrom.

The background of Black settlement in Liverpool is nowhere better illustrated than in an article by Ian Law[3] which outlines the history of that community from the time Liverpool became a major port down to the post war period. The first Black people arrived in Liverpool as victims of the slave trade as that city became established as the major slave trading port in Europe.

> 'Between 1756 (or earlier) and 1870 the largest black community in Britain, outside London, came to be established in Liverpool ... Black slaves were frequently sold in the port and used primarily as house servants ...' (4)

A reaction to Black enslavement typical of Britain at this time was the steady trickle of runaways who, along with freed slaves, began to settle in the cheapest slum areas of Liverpool, along the docks on the south side of the city, sharing this accommodation with other outsiders; pauper immigrants from Wales and Ireland, who however, had the advantage of upward mobility in the economy, unlike the great majority of Black settlers. For, throughout the country all but a fortunate few Black Britons remained in low-paid, casual jobs, typified by seafaring, down to the period of this study and beyond.

> Between the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the rise of racism and colonial expansion in the 1850's, black people shared the day to day life of the port - though their role and occupations were still restricted by racial attitudes. Some of the social limitations on them seem to have been relaxed in the wave of humanitarian feeling to which abolition was due. (5)

This feeling of brotherhood was fast evaporating as the new so-called 'scientific' racial theories of white superiority were being expounded. Blacks in Liverpool were, as was the case elsewhere, subjected to this growing sense of white superiority, tied as it was to a feeling of condescension different in degree to the earlier paternalist-humanitarian concern for enslaved Blacks. In a sense, the earlier feeling was dictated by class distinction as much as anything. By the second half of the 19th century however, it was working class whites who led the way in jingoistic disdain for all things 'foreign', Blacks being the most foreign of all by virtue of their colour. In other words, racism had become popular.

The initial impetus to Black settlement having receded with the ending of the slave trade, a fresh source of settlers came by way of the Elder Dempster

shipping line securing the main trade routes to West Africa for Britain, entailing the employment of a good number of native seamen. The company could even afford to keep a pool of unemployed Blacks stationed in Liverpool to fill any vacancies which arose. These, and other Black sailors arriving at the port augmented the growing number of locally born Blacks as a result of the inter-marriage of white local women and Black settlers. This development had of course led to much white comment, for the fear of Black male sexuality was one of the main components in racism in Britain at this time. One result of this was the misplaced belief that mixed race children were mentally inferior to white children.

The 20th century in Liverpool saw a by now well-established and large Black community, although unlike other settlements looked at elsewhere in this thesis, e.g. Salford, this was not confined to a few streets wherein a 'colony' of Black people resided.

> Black Liverpool families were not all concentrated in the immediate Stanhope Street area [on the dockside] although an analysis of addresses of black seamen shows that this was indeed the main area of settlement. But over half of the Black population of roughly 3000 living in the port in 1911 were spread throughout the central and southern slum areas of the city. They were confined to the poorest areas by limited job opportunities and the equation of blackness with poverty and fecklessness. The slum housing was, in many cases, over 100 years old and in squalid condition. (6)

Confined to such dwellings by reasons of economy and convenience, the large section of the Black community involved in seafaring were also at a disadvantage with the introduction of different wage rates for Black and white sailors introduced as a result of the national seaman's strike of 1911.

> Ships articles from after 1911 show white firemen's wages increased from £3.10s to £5 per month, while those of African firemen reduced from £3.10s. to £2.10s per month. (7)

The number of Black seamen affected by this racist differentiation in wages was increased as the heightened demands of wartime led many more Black men to travel from the West Indies and West Africa to fill jobs vacated by whites enlisting in the forces. Many other Blacks also served in H.M. Forces and made their way at the end of the war to Liverpool among other ports. By 1919

there were thousands of Blacks looking for work at the docks in the city. So too, were many demobilised whites and given the increased tendency to violence established as a post-war phenomenon in Britain and, coupled with the nature of Black settlement detailed in the preceding pages(living as the majority were, on the margins of society and considered as 'outsiders' by the white population), it is not surprising that the tension created by this dire unemployment situation resulted in rioting. Only the scale and sustained ferocity of the unrest came as a shock. Even this however, had been predicted by the Lord Mayor of Liverpool in a letter to the Colonial Office in May 1919, following a visit from the organiser of the Ethiopian Association to his office with the suggestion that paid repatriation be introduced as a solution to the dire unemployment problem among Liverpool's Black residents.

> If the Government could repatriate these Black men without delay it would not only be doing them a good turn but relieve the irritation which the presence of these men causes to our men. Only the other night there was a fight between the two races and matters are not likely to improve in this direction as the position develops and probably grows worse... (8)

The Colonial Office rejected his plea on the grounds that they could not bribe those unwilling to be repatriated to go with the offer of £5. This attitude was soon to be revised however.

Evidence of how the post war social dislocation combined with the deeply ingrained suspicion of the Black community by the Whites merged in the riot situation, can be seen in the widely held belief that Blacks had somehow done well out of the war, avoiding the sacrifices of the whites and taking advantage of the situation - a direct continuation in fact of the theme of Black fecklessness so often the target of white abuse in popular novels of Empire and in contemporary press reports;

> There is ... [an] unemployment grievance - the fact that large numbers of demobilised soldiers are unable to find work while the West Indian negroes, brought over to supply a labour shortage during the war, are able to 'swank' about in smart clothes on the proceeds of their industry ... [to the annoyance of] the white man who regards him as part child, part animal and part savage. (9)

The racist view that Blacks had not taken the same risks as whites in the war was also voiced by the Liverpool police's Chief Constable in a report to the

Ministry of Labour in November 1920, two years after the war, suggesting that this had become a sort of 'common knowledge', however ill-founded.

> The plight of the coloured men is no worse, in fact it is better than that of the ordinary white seamen of whom there are a large number out of work. These latter men have a higher standard of living and more family ties than the coloured men. Besides they took greater risks during the war than most of the coloured men, many of whom ... stopped ashore to avoid the submarine menace. (10)

An indication of how Blacks reacted to this unfounded claim can be measured by the fact that many took to wearing their military service ribbons in a bid to prove that they had 'done their bit' for the British Empire. Another reason for sporting military insignia was the hope that somehow this would protect them from white crowds, to no great effect. The white claim that Blacks had shirked their duty in the face of the German submarine threat cannot be substantiated by figures however, since the actual extent of Black losses from the port of Liverpool is nowhere quantified. What can be shown nevertheless is that the Elder Dempster shipping company suffered a very high casualty rate during the war in both ships, and more importantly, men, and as has been shown above, the Elder Dempster line employed many West Africans on their ships, principally as stokehold crews, a position particularly vulnerable to submarine attack.

> When the First World War broke out, the Elder Dempster fleet consisted of 101 steamers. Of these 43 were lost during the war ... As the Elder Dempster fleets carried vegetable oil and palm oil seeds, from which high explosive could be made, they were particularly sought after. In 1917 no fewer than 25 ships were lost. (11)

This loss in ships was matched by a high casualty rate,

> Elder Dempster lost 487 of their employees during the Great War. Of these, 67 were killed on active service. The remaining 420 men died when their ships were torpedoed or sunk. (12)

It is difficult to say how many of these sailors were Black, since the Elder Dempster roll of honour did not list the place of birth of their seamen, and although some of their surnames are identifiably African, in other cases it is impossible to tell. However, the fact that the Elder Dempster line maintained a hostel for African seamen in Liverpool throughout the war period implies that these men were a constant feature on their ships at this time.

While it is perhaps not surprising that the white ex-servicemen faced with few prospects and tough employment competition after demobilisation should be on the look-out for a scapegoat on which to pin all their grievances in the post war period, it is also a fact that the Liverpool police did likewise. (This is not to argue however, that white attacks upon Blacks can be explained away in terms of psychological reasons, these are merely factors which make understanding the riots possible). There are too many instances of police officials placing the blame for the riots on Black aggression to come to any other conclusion than that this was soon the official view.

> The Head Constable begs to report to the Watch Committee that for some time there has existed a feeling of animosity between the white and coloured population in this city .... In nearly all cases negroes have been the aggressors and in a number of cases they have used knives and razors in their attacks upon white men. (13)

To back up this claim the police report cited the case of a white, James Williams, being slashed across the neck with a razor by one of a crowd of Blacks on May 31st, 1919, a few days before the outbreak of the riots. However, there is evidence to suggest that whites were giving as good as they got, if not leading the way in the violence, as illustrated by the second of the following incidents. On July 2nd a Black named Gladstone Gardiner a 29 year old riveter, was found not guilty of attempted grievous bodily harm against a policeman in the wake of a disturbance on May 11 between a Black and white man, after a rumour circulated around the white community that a Black had chased a white woman. A police constable had come across Gardiner with a revolver in his hand and disarmed him.(14) Gardiner's claim that he had no intention of shooting the policeman was accepted by the Court. The potential for violence due to white disapproval of Black-white sexual involvement is clear, since the inter-racial confrontation was provoked by the rumour of a Black man chasing a white woman. In another incident three whites were convicted on June 2 of robbing David Abrahams, an Indian in the city of £110. Two received three month sentences, the third one month.(15) Such incidents serve to show the involvement between the police and the Black community in the weeks preceding the riot, and this perhaps helps to explain why the forces of law and order were quick to condemn the Blacks when the rioting broke out in June. One reason for this was an incident involving a group of Blacks running an illegal gambling house in the city in May 1919. Following a police

raid, 14 Black men and three white women were arrested, and five police officers were injured as a result of a fight which broke out as the police sought to make arrests. The injuries to police officers give a clue to why they were so ready to publicly blame the riots on the Blacks, particularly when it is shown that on the first day of the riots on June 5, the police were the target for Black violent resistance. Five of the Blacks arrested for the gambling house incident were given 14 day sentences for police assault, while Williams was fined £25 for keeping the establishment and Tom Johnson and John Wesley were each fined £10 for assisting him. At the trial the Black defence alleged it was the police who did the fighting. ... One of the Black men, by name Jack Small, said there was no fighting done by the people in the house. It was all done by the police who started swinging their clubs about.(16)

Even before the rioting began then, there is ample evidence of friction between the Black community and the police, an undeclared state of war which was only overshadowed when the white crowd's aggressive stance against the Black population became so severe that Blacks were driven into police custody for their own protection, the alternative being leaving themselves open to attack. Despite the virulence of the white crowd's activities during the riots, the police views, when it came to the trials of those arrested in connection with the disturbances, remained the same; the Blacks initiated the violence.

> Detective Inspector Burgess said that with one exception in every case the coloured men were the aggressors ... in their defence several of the prisoners stated that they were actually in bed at the time of the disturbances and others said they were not in the neighbourhood when the fighting began. Others complained that they had been handled with unnecessary roughness by the police who made arrests indiscriminately. (17)

On the contrary, it would appear the police were discriminating in their arrest procedure - on the grounds of colour. The suggestion of police bias here can be supported by the fact that out of 29 Blacks arrested as a result of the race riots in June 1919, 17 were found guilty and 12 not guilty, or freed without trial. On the other hand, of the 36 whites charged, all were found guilty as charged, many being imprisoned. The activities of the police in Liverpool are in keeping with those of other regional forces in Britain when faced with anti-Black violence during 1919. Bias on the part of the police in Britain is

paralleled in the US race riots of the same period. Hence Neil Smelser's assessment of police activity in the US holds good for the riots in Britain also: "In race riots the police frequently stand idly by and let the violence run its course. In other cases justice is not enforced impartially."[18] If the police showed a degree of bias in their treatment of Blacks in this period, the courts apparently were not so consistently the same, although it will be shown later than the magistrates took a dim view of Black offenders, often ignoring pleas of self-defence completely. Continuing police bias against Blacks can be seen two years later in the account of his life written by Ernest Marke.

> On my arrival back at Liverpool I found that the race riot had stopped as I had expected... [This was 1921]. I'd been away two years but the colour prejudice was still intense. In fact, I found that even some members of the Liverpool police force had become so prejudiced against coloured men that their behaviour towards them had become nothing less than hooliganism. (19)

Marke was attacked by three out-of-uniform policemen and taken to a police station. He was charged with seven offences, including attempted murder of a police officer. Marke in fact had an unlicensed revolver in his possession, but this was his only offence. Indeed, far from shooting a policeman, he himself received a wound on his head, the result of a blow from a police truncheon. Speaking in his own defence, Marke convinced the court that the police allegations were false and he was acquitted. Indeed, an elderly white lady gave him £5 as he left the court to help him until he could find a job.

If the racist impulses of the Liverpool constabulary can be explained in terms of a communal white belief in Black lawlessness and violence, it is similarly true that the police force shared the common view that the main reason for the white resort to violence was the relationship between Black men and white women of the city. That this should be regarded as explanation enough for violence owes much to the in-built prejudices of the white community, which went back decades. In fact, the remarkable unanimity of white local, press, and police opinion on this issue strongly suggests that any Black man seen in the company of a white woman even before the rioting broke out, would have potentially beeen the subject of racial abuse and physical violence. Even the introduction to the police report to the local corporation watch committee, lost no time in blaming this sexual involvement between Black and white for the unrest.

> The Head Constable begs to report to the Watch Committee that for some time there has existed a feeling of animosity between the white and coloured population in this city. This feeling has probably been engendered by the arrogant and overbearing conduct of the negro population towards the white, and by the white women who live or cohabit with the Black men, boasting to the other women of the superior qualities of the negroes as compared with those of the white men. Since the Armistice the demobilisation of so many negroes into Liverpool has caused this feeling to develop more rapidly. (20)

Such a view was echoed in numerous press reports, although not many expressed their opinion in such racist terms as the Editor of the Liverpool Courier on June 11,

> A very natural public anger against some results of negro immigration is doubtless behind these racial outbreaks. A casual row between white and coloured fires the combustible material and mob law is invoked .... One of the chief reasons of popular anger behind the present disturbances lies in the fact that the average negro is nearer the animal than is the average white man, and that there are women in Liverpool who have no self-respect. (21)

A key clause in the above quotation is '..... a casual row between white and coloured fires the combustible material and mob law is invoked', for it clearly exemplifies the Rudé view of riot, that a minor incident often sparks off widescale unrest.

The wording of a Times report on June 10, although more temperate, shows that the feelings expressed above were by no means unusual.

> During the war the colony of coloured men in Liverpool, largely West Indians, increased until the men now number about 5,000. Many have married Liverpool women, and while it is admitted that some have made good husbands, the inter-marriage of Black men and white women, not to mention other relationships, has excited much feeling. (22)

Contemporary press reports and local records are the best source of wider public opinion at this time, particularly as it appeared in the form of readers' letters on the 'colour question' and one such leaves no room for misinterpretation. "Undoubtedly, these associationships - romantic enough in the case of Othello and Desdemona - are undesirable and harmful to the dignity of the white - that is to say, the dominant race".(23)

With so much contemporary evidence to this effect it is not surprising that

present day writers on the topic mention Black-White sexual relations as one of the leading factors in their analysis of the riots in Liverpool, and elsewhere.

> Throughout the 1919 riots sexual jealousy had been an open element in the response of the white mobs to the Negroes. By 1919 this by now traditional resentment was directed against the new black community. Since a majority of it was male, it was inevitable that some would turn to local women for companionship.... For long periods this sexual resentment remained inert and only came to the fore when economic and social distress projected the black community into the forefront of political controvery... Upon local Negroes a confused alliance of the unemployed, remnants of the armed forces and the fringe of urban criminal groups heaped their collective frustrations and tensions. (24)

This modern analysis suggests that the sex issue was simply the leading manifestation of a more general white dissatisfaction based on wider problems touching the very fabric of society, and it is clear that contemporary sources did appear rather to latch onto the sex issue as a ready explanation for the ferocity of the white violence. Other factors mentioned at the time were grievances, such as job competition, but what really made the white man's blood boil was the question of inter-racial sexual relationships.

> One theme dominated to the almost total exclusion of all others, and that was the association, in any form, of black men and white women. Since the establishment of black settlements in British ports, sexual relations of this type had been a constant source of racial tension. (25)

It is interesting to note in this connection that the main Black contemporary source, Ernest Marke's autobiography, does not mention this issue in his discussion of the riots.

> I am not an intellectual; I left school too young. But whenever I am approached and asked by an intellectual or researcher, what, in my opinion, was the cause of the 1919 race riot, I always say, 'Unemployment!' .... Unemployment usually leads to unrest and starvation ... The mobsters vented their feelings on the negro who happened to be the small minority and the underdog. 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. (26)

Marke was of course, writing this more than fifty years after the riots in Liverpool and it is likely that his memory of this period had been affected by various subsequent works on the subject of the riots which lay more stress on

economic factors playing a leading part in the outbreak of violence, a more Marxist analysis of events, in fact.[27] However, Marke does identify the role of the Black man as a scapegoat during the riots, suggesting that neither the employment or sex issues can provide total explanations for the violence. This was partially understood even in contemporary press reports, which considered other factors in the riots, Black aggression being one such already mentioned. Another was the presence of the white hooligan element in Liverpool. This suggestion cannot be ruled out of hand, since it is likely that some of the thousands of Liverpudlians who attacked Blacks and their houses did so simply for the thrill of mindless destruction. But hooligans are not so generally discriminating in the objects of their attack, yet of the 21 properties initially reported as being damaged on the nights of 8, 9, 10 June in the Liverpool police report, 15 were Black lodging houses and one a Black cafe, while other properties attacked were either next door to Black residences or had their premises damaged as the white crowd removed fences and other objects to use as missiles to attack the Blacks with.[28] What may be called the discriminating nature of the white crowds aggression is something which occupies a major role in Rudé's analysis of riot, and it brings the discussion round to the composition of the white crowd in Liverpool. Made up mainly of men between the ages of 18 to 30, it is likely that most had seen war service, either in the armed forces or the merchant navy. Contemporary police reports also speak of groups of women and children involved, so it would seem likely that the white rioters rather than mindless 'mobs' were in fact, a fair cross-section of the working classes in Liverpool, (a section of society which had borne the brunt of the sacrifices and losses incurred by the country during the war). In describing the make-up of the white crowd the purpose is not to attach a rationality to their actions which somehow 'justifies' the violence, but to suggest that perceived deprivation led not simply to uncontrolled aggression, and here the role of the Black community as a scapegoat emerges.

The wrecked properties were made objects of damages claims against the Corporation of Liverpool and were considered later in 1919 by the Watch committee. Claims ranged from the extensive to the minimal but all paint a picture of destruction on a wide scale. "82 Beaufort Street negroes house, tenant Christina Astley. House practically wrecked, furniture etc., carried onto the street and set on fire, amount of damage unknown".[29] This house

had been attacked by a white crowd on June 10 and on September 30 the Corporation surveyor assessed the damage to the property at £45, although in fact, the tenant had claimed £60. Almost all the claims for damages paid out however, were invariably somewhat less than had been claimed by the householder. Damage had been inflicted on the properties over the space of three days in June, a period when it would appear the police were powerless to protect the Black population and their houses to any sufficient degree. The fact that the Elder Dempster shipping company's Hostel for Black seamen was attacked and damaged on two successive days, 9 and 10 June, is indicative of this. In fact the degree to which the police were overrun, parallels the most severe rioting in the US, in Chicago, when order was only restored with the introduction of the militia in the city after four days. Rudé has pinpointed the role of the authorities as a significant feature in determining the success or failure of pre-industrial disputes,(30) and it is clear that the severe degree of lawlessness demonstrated during the riots in Liverpool helped convince the government that the only 'solution' to the 'problem' of racial unrest was a policy of repatriation, to send the Black communities from this country to their native lands. In terms of the enactment of this policy the riots were a 'success' for the white rioters, although of course their grievances went far deeper than the surface frustration which was displayed in the form of anti-Black riots.

Having established that Liverpool race riots were the most extensive and serious of the outbreaks so far considered in this thesis, it is worth considering the actual events in some detail. The riots in Liverpool can be divided into a number of phases, the first beginning on June 4, 1919, when a Black man was badly injured by a white gang.

> On the evening of the 4th instant a negro named John Johnston, 48 Nelson Street alleges he was attacked by five white men receiving a severe wound in the face requiring his removal to the Royal Southern Hospital. This negro can neither describe nor identify the men and the only reason he can give for the attack upon him is that he had refused to give the men a cigarette. The fact that he had received this wound spread very quickly amongst his race and somehow or other they conceived the idea that it had been caused by two Scandinavians, but there seems to be no justification for this suggestion. (31)

Despite the Head Constable's dismissive attitude towards the theory that

Johnston was attacked by Scandinavians, this was the commonly held view in the local press accounts of the origins of the rioting, the thought being that the following night's violence between Blacks and Scandinavians was a direct consequence of this incident, and drew force from the long-standing animosity between the two groups of seafarers,

> ... for some considerable time past there has been ill-feeling between Scandinavian, Danes and Russian Poles and Black Britishers, who are all in the seafaring line. The reason for this is [that] the Black man feels that his services were appreciated when he undertook risks on 'Q' ships and other dangerous callings to meet the requirements of war, while at the time the foreign element was naturally viewed with suspicion .... The cessation of hostilities however, has brought a swarm of Russian Poles, Danes, Scandinavians, etc. to Liverpool and other port towns, and the Black Briton finds that these men are given preference in engagements on board steamers now that there is no longer any danger to the country... (32)

This view given in the African Telegraph was echoed in the white local press, the similar wording being a point of note,

> There has been considerable ill feeling between the negro element and the Scandinavians, Danes and Russian Poles for some time. On Tuesday night there was a row in Upper Pitt Street with the result that a coloured man was stabbed, it is believed by a Scandinavian. (33)

The Head Constable's view that Scandinavians had not attacked Johnson and the conjecture that the succeeding night's violence was therefore a purely unprovoked attack on Scandinavians, was an instance of the police bias against the Black community of Liverpool. In this way the blame for the riots could be placed on them as the instigators of violence. It was as if the incident involving a small number of Blacks and Scandinavians on June 5 in some way justified the reduction of sections of Liverpool to virtual white 'mob' rule for three days, later in that week. The key to this blinkered attitude lies in the history of Black versus police confrontations in the months preceding the riot, and most immediately the Black aggression directed against the police as the latter sought to break up the fighting on June 5. On that evening, it would appear that an unidentified Black poured beer over a group of Scandinavians standing at a bar of a public house in Bailey Street. What followed, according to the Head Constable, was a series of incidents which demonstrated the unprovoked aggression of Liverpool's Black population, in a narrative to chill the hearts of the readers of his report.

When the customers were leaving the premises eight sailors were met in Bailey Street by a mob of negroes all armed with sticks, pieces of iron, knives and razors, and set upon by the negroes, who beat, kicked and cut and stabbed them unmercifully and brutally .... The negroes then marched in a body towards the Scandinavian Home at 33 Gt. George Square where, without any warning they attacked, knocked down and severely stabbed in the back, a sailor named Thomas Johanson ... [who] was later removed to the Royal Southern Hospital suffering from a wound 18 inches long in the back .... By now a crowd of whites assembled, mainly women and children attracted by the excitement and a small group of men. A number of police sergeants and constables arrived and dispersed the white crowd quietly.... [The Blacks however, resisted and attacked the police]. (34)

This quotation is given in detail as it illustrates the bias of the police in Liverpool very well. The actions of the Blacks are expressed in the most aggressive, violent terms. The whites in the shape of the Scandinavian seamen, the crowd of women and children, and the police, are portrayed on the contrary as helpless victims or innocent bystanders. Also the 'facts' as described above are by no means borne out when other accounts are taken into consideration. In fact, information appended to the Liverpool police report sent to the Colonial Office, itself contradicts the picture of Black aggression against unresisting whites. A list gave the names of those injured during this night of violence, which includes seven Black men; one, Alonza Carrington, had stab wounds to the back, while another, John Johnson, has razor wounds to the face. If the police report is to be believed, these wounds were either self-inflicted or the result of a frenzied attack on the Blacks by the group of white women and children who witnessed the violence. Of fourteen whites injured, eight were foreign born, and six were English. Among the latter were two who were only discovered to have wounds after they had been arrested by the police for rioting. The suggestion is that the violence of 5 June was not restricted to the Black community. Certainly the press reports of the incident portrayed it as an inter-racial dispute rather than a purely unprovoked Black assault.

Five persons are now in hospital as the result of a serious affray between negroes and Danes in the region of a public house near Gt. George Square last night. The police on interfering were subjected to desperate attacks, and several were injured. (35)

It does seem clear however, that the Black crowd did turn violently upon the police when the latter sought to intercede in the fighting and break up the two groups.

Such violent resistance to the police on the part of the Black community is not difficult to understand, given the high level of tension which existed between the two groups in the months preceding the outbreak of riots in June. It is also probable that many of the Blacks involved in this dispute had seen war service, in the merchant navy in particular, and as such were part of the wider community of ex-service personnel in Britain which became involved in riots all round the country during 1919 as part of the phenomenon of social upheaval which characterised the period following the end of the war.

Another apparent contradiction in the Head Constable's report lies in the fact that, despite the picture of Black violence and white submission painted, the one fatality of that night's rioting was a Black man, Charles Wootton. It was the police decision to raid nearby Black lodging houses in the wake of the disturbances detailed above which formed the backdrop to the fatal incident. Wootton was one of a number of Black men the police attempted to take into custody from 18 Upper Pitt Street - five Blacks were in fact detained at this house - but Wootton eluded them by escaping out the back door. It was once out in the street that Wootton was chased by a large crowd of whites, driven down to the dockside and forced into the water. The subsequent inquest could not determine how Wootton had been forced into the water, whether he was pushed in, or dived in to avoid the crowd at his heels. The first point which comes to mind in considering this fatal incident was the description of the crowd by the Head Constable, consisting of mainly women and children. The implication of this is that Wootton was in no danger from these 'weaker' elements in the community. It is clear that a large crowd of missile-throwing people (of whatever description) would be enough to make any individual fear for his or her life and run for safety. In fact press accounts of Wootton's death speak only of a white 'crowd' of 2-300 pursuing him, and there is no mention of this group being confined solely to women and children.(36) The explanation seems to be that the white crowd played the major part in this later phase of the riot on June 5, taking part in what was initially a dispute between Black and Scandinavian sailors, the police becoming involved as they sought to quell the disturbance. The long-standing and recently intensified white mistrust and disdain for the Black community living in their midst provides reason enough for the resort to riot and it was this which led to the death of Charles Wootton. "Wootton darted away through an entry when the two officers raided

18 Upper Pitt Street, he was chased by a crowd of 2-300 throwing missiles all the time".(37) At least one contemporary report suggested that Wootton's death rather than being culpable homicide, was in fact, murder,

> It is reported that a detective climbed down a ship's rope and was about to pull the man out of the water when a stone thrown from the middle of the crowd struck Wootton on the head and he sank. His body was later recovered by means of grappling irons. (38)

Wootton's fate in some ways is symbolic of the wider fortunes of the Black community in Liverpool in 1919, as the victim of a large white crowd, driven from his home, and unsuccessfully protected by the forces of law and order. Indeed, his name has been given to a modern day adult and further education centre in Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, and in June 1979 an article on the riots and the death of Wootton was printed by the centre. Although it contains a highly subjective description and assessment of the riots, it also provides valuable evidence that the disturbances of 1919 and their implications live on in the collective memory of the Black community in Liverpool, and as such provides valuable historical data as regards the riots in the city.

> Sixty years ago today, a guy from 18 Upper Pitt Street was killed, thrown into the Queen's Dock in Liverpool, by a gang of people. His name was Charles Wootton and he was 24 years of age, the people responsible for his death were white and he was Black. Had he been white he would not have died. (39)

The Wootton article also provides local background material found nowhere else,

> ... Charles Wootton lived as a lodger in Mrs. Gibson's house at No. 18 Upper Pitt Street. Mrs. Gibson was a Black Liverpudlian who had been widowed during the war and to make ends meet for her and her children, let the top half of the house to lodgers. (40)

The death of Wootton was the climax of an evening of inter-racial brutality and blood lust which augured badly for the future of Black and white relations in the city. After a few days of relative calm, the violence broke out again, and this time there was no doubt as to who were the aggressors, despite the police insistence on blaming the Blacks for first initiating the tide of violence by the attack (conducted by a small group evidently out for revenge for the

attack upon Johnson) upon the Scandinavian sailors.

For two days afterwards this unwarranted and unprecedented attack, the white residents showed a general hostility against the negroes, but there were no organised attacks made upon them until the night of the 8th instant when three negroes were stabbed in the neighbourhood of Mill Street. This is a considerable distance from the neighbourhood where the riot by the negroes originated, and the negroes attacked had nothing to do with the first riot, the majority of them being West Africans, whilst most of those who participated in the first attacks were West Indians. On the 9th and 10th instants a well organised gang consisting principally of youths and young men, soldiers and sailors, ages of most of them ranging from 18 to 30 years, ... commenced savagely attacking, beating and stabbing every negro they could find in the street, and many of the negroes had to be removed under police escort to Gt. George Street Fire Station for their own safety. When no more negroes were seen in the street these gangs began to attack the negroes' houses ... and in some cases they completely wrecked them... (41)

This bare factual report of the general events of three days disturbances in Liverpool for all its blandness cannot mask the fact that during this 72 hour period, the police of Liverpool surrendered control of the city to the white crowd, who, freed from the usual official restraint, were able to give full rein to their violent feelings towards the Black community as a whole. Indeed, the one police initiative, namely removing 700 Black men and their families (most presumably, white wives and mixed race children), to the local Bridewell, amounted to an admission of failure when faced with white violence. A table detailing the size of population per constable in a number of boroughs around the country was compiled for the Cardiff City Council Watch Committee in April 1919 and quoted in Neil Evans' article[42] on the South Wales race riots;

BOROUGH	POPULATION PER CONSTABLE
South Shields	885
North Shields	744
Southampton	730
Birkenhead	722
Middlesborough	713
Newport (Mon)	691
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	666
Sunderland	665
Cardiff	624
Hull	600
Bristol	578
Swansea	576
Glasgow	505
Liverpool	332

From this it seems clear that Liverpool, which witnessed some of the most severe rioting, had the most favourable ratio of police to population of any borough in the survey. Whereas South Shields with the least favourable, had much less severe racial disturbances. Such a comparison, while useful in suggesting that the police force in Liverpool were in the best position of any area to counter the threat to law and order posed by the rioting, cannot be taken too far, for it is clear that far greater numbers of white and Black rioters were involved in the riots in the city, and the violence was on a much larger scale than the dispute in South Shields which had a smaller Black settlement.

The issue of how far the police had the will to enforce law and order impartially during the riots goes far beyond the racial nature of the disturbances. The police themselves were part of the wider history of post-war social dislocation which characterised Britain in this period.

> During August Bank Holiday, the police themselves went on strike and their protest was only quashed after tanks and three battalions were moved into the city and a battleship and destroyers sailed up the river Mersey. This kind of over-reaction by the British government is explicable in terms of a general fear of the dislocative effects of the bloody and protracted war and the ideological alternative posed by the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia. (43)

The destruction and damage inflicted upon dozens of Black inhabited properties is indicative of the level of the violence which prevailed at this time. The press explanation for the white aggression was the involvement of the white hooligan element, taking advantage of the tense Black-white situation to enjoy themselves in an orgy of violence and destruction. One report summed up the contemporary attitude towards the events which had characterised these three days. "It is not very creditable to Liverpool that professional hooligans should be so quick to rise to their opportunities. The feud against the negroes had given this low class a great opportunity."[(44)] This assessment would perhaps ring true had the violence in mid-June been directed at the community as a whole, but it cannot be overlooked that it was Black people who were being attacked and beaten up, whose homes were being wrecked and their contents destroyed, and whose only refuge was police custody, or resorting to violence themselves; for it would be inaccurate to simply describe the Blacks as victims.

Half a dozen white men, including a soldier wearing the Mons ribbon, appeared at the City police court today, on various charges of insulting behaviour and with fighting with coloured men in the Gt. George district last night. One of the accused a youth of about eighteen years of age, headed a large crowd which was chasing a negro. Before the police could rescue the black man he was beaten severely about the head with the buckle end of a belt. Another youth was found trying to set fire to a coloured man's house in Stanhope Street. Stone throwing went on all evening. But three negroes who were attacked, pulled out knives to defend themselves, (author's emphasis) and the police had some difficulty in effecting their arrest. (45)

Yet Black resistance was sporadic and on an individual basis. Organised Black aggression began and ended with the attack upon the Scandinavian sailors. Resistance to police intervention however, remained a feature of Black behaviour.

The main contemporary Black account of the Liverpool riots is of course, to be found in Ernest Marke's biography, "... a young West Indian friend and I went up to Brownlow Hill on a visit. We saw a mob about a dozen strong. They started chasing us the moment we were spotted".(46) Marke himself escaped by boarding a passing tram, but his friend was badly beaten. A few days later Marke too, was attacked and beaten up. Another account of the rioting from the Black viewpoint was given by a Jamaican, named Thomas Archer, (whose surname of course, is the same as that prominent Black Liverpudlian, J.R. Archer who was at this time Lord Mayor of the London Borough of Battersea) who was repatriated from Liverpool in the wake of the riots. The vessel on which he travelled, the S.S. Santille was the subject of much unrest and the Colonial Office subsequently made inquiries as to the grievances of those on board who were being returned to the West Indies. Archer, a ship's greaser, gave a graphic description of the riots, including an eye witness account of the drowning of Charles Wootton. Allowing for a number of inaccuracies, Archer's narrative must be given some consideration, written as it was only a few weeks after the events he was describing, in August 1919. The danger is that he was reporting hearsay, and not all of his comments can be taken at face value bearing in mind that he had just spent several weeks with a boat load of similarly repatriated Blacks. It is quite possible that Archer was giving expression to what had become a collective memory of the rioting, due to the interchanging of anecdotes and the piecing together of sequences of events, which no doubt, went on during the voyage back to the West Indies, and his

testimony is no less significant for this. Archer's account suggests that the police on the first night of the rioting rather than simply breaking up the crowd, began beating up the Blacks with their batons.

> This gave a rapid development to the fighting and every coloured was pursued and beaten by the whites. One coloured man who was only an eye witness of what was going on was chased by the police. He was grabbed from the police by the dock workers who threw him into the sea and started to stone him whenever he came to the surface of the water until he was killed.... I was occupying an upstairs building and was able to see everything that was going on. The disturbance continued to increase until every coloured boarding house to which entry could be gained was looted. The furnitures (sic) were taken and burnt in the open street. On the third day things grew so serious that myself and six other men that were living in the house which I occupied were notified to take refuge at the headquarters of the Police Department at Bridgewell (sic). We went and was (sic) kept there for two days. The disturbance then ceased a little and we were allowed to return to the house and remain indoor (sic) until further orders were given. After a few days detectives were sent to warn each coloured man to get ready to leave England. We did so and on the 27th June 1919 we were sent by rail from Liverpool to Cardiff where we embarked on the S.S. Santille for Barbadoes and thence to Jamaica. (47)

Archer's account, whatever its shortcomings does include valuable information regarding the regimentation of Liverpool's Black community during the riots, in many cases forced to take refuge in the Bridewell, marched through the streets in the middle of the night to avoid white crowds, and then shipped out of the country with only a few days' notice. It is not surprising that during both the voyage to the West Indies, and on the return to their homelands many repatriated Blacks demonstrated their displeasure at this state of affairs, both vocally and physically, (something which will be discussed in the following chapter). Archer also paints a picture of a community under siege, and indeed for a few days the Blacks in Liverpool lived in a state of undeclared warfare, perhaps only abated by the white rioters' conviction that Blacks were no longer such a threat to their social and economic position. The repatriation scheme was widely reported in the press, as was the fact that in one week 120 Black workers were sacked by the companies that employed them, under pressure from whites who would not work with them, and ex-servicemen's organisations who complained that Blacks should not be employed where whites could fill the positions.

> ... Last week there were under 120 black men employed in Liverpool and today the coloured men say that they are all out of work. Some are existing on the 28/- per week unemployment allowance, and others are going from day to day on credit. (48)

This working class opposition to Blacks is a clear indication of a continued psychology of racism among the lower orders based on beliefs ingrained from the late Victorian period.

> In several large factories, where Blacks had worked for years, the refusal of white workers to work alongside Blacks led to the dismissal of Black labourers ... the attitudes of the unions and white workers rather than the management, appear to have been decisive. (49)

One of the most controversial aspects of the policing of the riots in Liverpool was the removal of Blacks into protective custody. The sources do not indicate whether the first impetus towards this situation came from the Black population itself or from the local police authority. In fact this is less important than the implications of the mass evacuation of hundreds of Blacks from their homes. Whether the Blacks themselves fled into police protection, or the police removed this section of the community into safe keeping, one conclusion only can be reached; both sides recognised the fact that the forces of law and order could not provide adequate protection for Black people not only in the streets where they lived, but in their very homes. According to Archer's account he and the other Black lodgers in the house were given notice by the police to be ready to leave for the police Bridewell whence they were taken not long after. Contemporary newspaper accounts however, laid great emphasis on the fact that the detention was entirely voluntary.

> The negroes by the hundred have thrown themselves upon the mercy of the authorities. In dozens they presented themselves at the bridewell and yesterday there were between 600 and 700 black men safely housed at their own request in the main bridewell in Cheapside. 400 were marched through the streets by the police between 1 and 2 o'clock yesterday morning when all was quiet. (50)

The collection of so many Black men and their families in one place, however shortlived, (for many soon returned to their own homes) gave rise to the suggestion that this temporary arrangement should be regularised in the form of placing these people in a compound or camp pending the implementation of the repatriation scheme.

> An official from the Ministry of Labour visited the city yesterday to confer with the Lord Mayor and the Head Constable, and we understand that they resolved on a course of action which they hope will prove speedy and

effective. In all probability the negroes will be accommodated in one or more of the camps which were occupied by troops during the war until ..... [repatriation can take place] (51)

In the event no such provision was made, perhaps due to the realisation that it would be impossible to order people whose homes were in Liverpool to quit them for good and live in a camp until ships could be found to send them from this country. The position of native-born Black Liverpudlians in all this was also possibly a reason for the failure to implement the plan. Government and police authorities were not the only ones to consider the possibility of segregation, for the 'compound scheme' was nothing less than this. Indeed one former colonial resident proposed this solution to the racial troubles in Liverpool as early as June 6, 1919 in a letter to the press.

> Why not allocate these coloured men and their families to 'compounds'. Give each man a tally, to be produced when required by the police and enforce him to be in his compound at a certain time. Prohibit him from being served with liquor at any licensed house, but let him have his own canteen, and also be allowed to brew his own light ale etc. This is the way the native is treated in Capetown, Johannesburg, etc., and, if any killing is done, it is usually one of his own race who is the victim. (52)

That such extreme racist views found a platform in the local press is a reminder, if one were needed, of the inherent bias of the spokespeople of the white community in Liverpool.

There were however, a number of letters to the Liverpool corporation, expressing opinions more sympathetic to the position of the Black community. Predictably the religious element led the way,

> The presbytery of Liverpool has heard with sorrow and indignation of the racial riots, which it regards as a blot upon the fair name of the city, and a danger to the commonwealth at large. It records its protest against a state of feeling which is opposed to the principles of the Christian religion, has led to grave crime, and is calculated to hinder the progress of Christ's kingdom at home and abroad. (53)

The element of self-interest concerning the possible wider repercussions of the riots on the Black nations in the Empire discernible here, is more clearly in evidence in a letter also to the Watch Committee, this time from the African Trade section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. It addressed the case

of three businessmen from West Africa who had been attacked and robbed of hundreds of pounds by a white crowd while in a taxi in Russell Street on June 10, at the height of the rioting.

> The members of my committee view these riots with deep regret, more especially as a number of West Africans have, in their opinion, been ill-treated, and some of those arriving in, and passing through Liverpool on business have been molested. As this country is very largely dependent on West Africa for edible products, it is all the more unfortunate that Africans over here on business should be involved in these troubles. (54)

Despite this appeal, the Watch Committee decided that three businessmen from Accra, Thomas Nelson, Jacob Nelson and Corinth Cathline, who had been robbed of £264, £350 and £189 respectively, were not entitled to claim riot damages since the circumstances of the robbery (within a taxi) did not come under the provisions of the Riot (Damages) Act 1886. But the matter did not rest there. The decision was taken on July 15, and two weeks later the Watch Committee received a plea from the Under Secretary of State at the Colonial Office on behalf of the Colonial Secretary stating;

> .... in the interests of good relations between Europeans and Africans in West Africa, as well as on more general grounds, his lordship will be glad if the corporation would reconsider their decision not to grant compensation to the natives who appear to have suffered considerable pecuniary loss. (55)

Despite this intervention the committee stuck by their original decision. But it should be remembered that many claims for damages by Black tenants of property in Liverpool had received redress for their losses during the riots, so it is not likely that this decision was based on racial prejudice. Payments for damage done to property, however, was unlikely soon to remove the memory of the violence against them in the minds of the Black community in Liverpool, particularly when one aspect of the race riots, police bias, apparently outlasted the actual fighting. The trumped up charges against Ernest Marke in 1921 have been mentioned earlier, and there is also evidence that allegations of white attacks on Black people during 1920, were being ignored by the police authority.

> With reference to the man, Thomas Thomas, 2 Newton Street, mentioned in the letter [to the Lord Mayor from a Black spokesman J.A.D. Martyn] as having been robbed and beaten in Upper Parliament Street, on 2

October last by six white men, I have made enquiries here and find that he did not report the matter to the police.... Respecting the other allegations, in nearly all cases where disturbances take place between white men and coloured men, the latter are almost always the aggressors. (56)

It was the ascendancy of such attitudes which allowed for the establishment of the practice of registering all 'coloureds', including British subjects, in the port as aliens, requiring Black seamen to contact the police when arriving in port and having their fingerprints taken as part of a package of measures designed to control the numbers of Blacks in the city. Similar measures were implemented at a national level under the scope of the (Coloured) Aliens Restriction Order of 1920.

Black people in Liverpool and other ports had to carry documentary proof of identity, even though many had British nationality. If proof was not available, and sometimes even in cases where it was, blacks were registered as aliens. Blacks were subject to threats and victimisation, including the threat of imprisonment if a passport was not produced on demand. This situation effectively kept black seamen almost permanently out of work. (57)

An indication of the distress this caused is the ongoing debate in the Colonial Office regarding the plight of unemployed seamen in Liverpool during 1920, prompted by a petition from 73 distressed seamen asking for repatriation in April, and culminating in the police report quoted above in November, after which it was decided that no initiatives need be taken, bearing in mind the limited numbers involved. The daily struggle for survival of the Black community in Liverpool went on.

The race riots in Liverpool in June 1919 were some of the worst of that year, involving attacks on many Black people, and the widescale destruction of their homes. That so much of this criminal activity went on unchecked is an indication of the scale of the disturbances. That the police in Liverpool were unable to keep order in the city for three days, testifies to the fact that they were overwhelmed by the violence on the part of the white crowds. However, it emerges that even had they been able to deploy sufficient officers to prevent the violence, the will to prevent attacks on Blacks was not there. This was because of the widely held white belief that the Black population was to blame for the trouble which had broken out in the city. This has been illustrated from the highest police level, in the shape of the Head Constable's

statements on the riots, down to on-the-beat policemen who, when confronted with inter-racial antagonism, concentrated on the Blacks involved, taking them into custody because of the colour alone. It would be wrong however, to see the Liverpool events too much in isolation, for as the occurrence of a police strike only two months after the race riots serves to indicate, the unrest in this city owed much to the general feeling of social upheaval being witnessed in many areas of Britain, and indeed the world, in the post-war period. In one sense the severity of the race rioting may be linked to the degree of hardship and loss experienced by the people of the port of Liverpool during the war. Such a correlation cannot be taken too far, for it was the supposed economic threat posed by the Black community to the white population which precipitated the violence, against a background of more general long-standing racial animosity. With the emergence of such factors as a dual level of motivation behind the violence, (in the shape of immediate grievances and deeply entrenched belief systems), and a degree of police tolerance for the white rioters activities, the theory of riot developed by Rudé becomes important in the study of the Liverpool riots. The danger in detailing the history of the riots in Liverpool however, is to focus too consistently on the white crowds and the white police, reducing the Black population to the role of tragic victims. They were such, but not merely such. Blacks could, and did, fight back to protect themselves and their homes. Even when reduced to taking shelter at the police Bridewell, many Blacks made sure this was a purely temporary arrangement, soon returning to their homes in the city and ignoring pleas to remain indoors and going about their daily business as far as possible. The violence of those three days in June and the uneasy calm which undoubtedly preceded and succeeded it, reduced the Black community to state of virtual warefare with the enemy, potentially all around them.

Several delicate balancing acts are required in discussing the specifics of the racial riots in Liverpool. The first is to avoid reducing the Black community to the role of helpless victims in the face of white aggression, and the second is to regard the 1919 riots as part of the long term history of the Black population in the city, however much the tendency is to do otherwise, given the striking force and originality of the events of June that year.

NOTES

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33. Liverpool Echo June 6, 1919, p. 5.

34. Liverpool Watch Committee, June 17 1919.

35. Liverpool Echo, June 6, 1919, p. 5.

36. Liverpool Courier, June 11, p. 5. and Liverpool Echo June 6, 1919, p. 5, June 10, p. 4.

37. Liverpool Echo, June 10, 1919, p. 4.

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41. CO 318/352 Liverpool Police Report on riots, Nov. 1919.

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45. Ibid.

46. Marke, op. cit., p. 30.

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51. Liverpool Post and Mercury June 13, 1919, p. 3.

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56. CO 323/848 Liverpool Police Report, enclosed in a report from Ministry of Labour to CO, Nov. 1, 1920.

57. Law op. cit., p. 27.

CHAPTER EIGHT - REPATRIATION AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN THE WEST INDIES

One of the most significant developments of the larger scale riots of June 1919, beginning with the Liverpool disturbances, was the effect this wider unrest had on the government scheme of repatriation for Black colonials who had worked, or served in the forces in Britain during the war. In fact the government's repatriation scheme had been launched as early as February of that year by the Marine Department of the Board of Trade, in response to information received revealing the high level of unemployment in particular among Black seamen, at ports throughout the United Kingdom.(1) The scheme was in the main, directed at Black seamen who had come to Britain during the war, (those who had served in the Mercantile Marine in the pre-war years were taken to be domiciled here and would be entitled to out-of-work donation under the National Health Insurance Act of August 1918). Those who had come to Britain purely for war service would be granted 4 shillings a day maintenance money pending repatriation. Applications for the repatriation of any wives and children of these men would be considered by the authorities. This last aspect of the original plan was to come in for further discussion throughout the period of the working of the repatriation scheme, and will be dealt with below. Yet after the violence erupted in Liverpool and South Wales, no distinction was made between Black seamen of long residence in this country, and those who had come to aid the war effort. In this way there was no extra money forthcoming to enable Black people to uproot their homes and resettle in the West Indies and West Africa after a protracted stay in this country, should they desire to do so in the wake of the riots. This was one reason why so many people refused to take part in the scheme.

Repatriation was not simply a racial issue; white colonial munition workers were also sent home at the end of the war, but in practice race distinction prevailed. White colonials were given a £5 resettlement allowance from the outset - Black British subjects had to wait until they had been the victims of violent attack before this gratuity was offered them. Similarly, it is unlikely that lists of white munition workers who refused repatriation, (which of course, was a voluntary scheme), would be drawn up and circulated around the relevant authorities, (in the case of Black seamen this was the local Mercantile Marine offices), to prevent them moving on and receive maintenance allowance elsewhere. From April to June 1919 over 200 such Black seamen were listed as having refused repatriation from Manchester, South Shields,

Hull, London, Barry, Swansea, Liverpool and Cardiff, (over 100 alone from the last named place).[2] The reasons for so many refusals to the scheme, before the main outbreak of rioting, probably owed much to disinclination to returning to colonies whose authorities did not want them and had little to offer. Post-riot, many seamen continued to decline the offer of repatriation, owing to the feeling of grievance against the British authorities for allowing the riots to go largely unchecked, and for their disregard for the rights of Black people in this country, particularly after the part they had played in the war effort. The speed with which the sailings were organised and the consequent lack of consideration for the feelings of the Black seamen were also reasons for the failure in the bid to rid the ports of the presence of this group who were now regarded as a threat to public order.

As the riots were in full swing, the government set up an inter-departmental committee to consider the best method of implementing the repatriation scheme. The first meeting on June 19 at the Colonial Office was attended by representatives of that body, of the Board of Trade, Home Office, Local Government Board, India Office, Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Shipping. At this meeting it was recognised that there were great difficulties in persuading seamen to accept repatriation and a number of means for overcoming this reluctance were discussed. It was decided that local Repatriation Committees be set up at a number of ports, to aid the working of the scheme. A resettlement allowance of £5 was also to be introduced, with a further £1 voyage allowance. Unlike under the initial scheme the repatriation of white wives was declared a non-starter. This policy was later reversed, however. Another issue raised was that of the possibility of interning Black people prior to their repatriation, an issue which was also being discussed at ground level, in Liverpool at least. Although a reading of relevant government department papers suggests that this was for reasons of public order, the fact that it was considered reveals how far Black people were regarded as the troublemakers behind the riots. Their very presence among the white population was apparently considered as reason enough for violence...

(Mr. Grindle, Colonial Office) ... asked whether anything could be done in the way of interning these people. Mr. Scott (Home Office) replied that if they were willing to be interned, it could be done; but although the War Office

had placed a camp at Liverpool at the disposal of the local authorities for the purpose, when it came to be made available it was found that the men had gone back to their homes.' (3)

It was further decided to limit the £6 gratuity to Black British seamen. Chinese and Indian subjects were excluded, the latter because, as Mr. Baines of the India Office explained, '...they [Lascar seamen] were under Indian articles under which the shipowners were obliged to repatriate...'(4)

As a consequence of this initial meeting the Colonial Secretary Viscount Milner, issued a "Memorandum on the Repatriation of Coloured Men" on 23 June 1919, which gave the "official" response to the riots and the reasons behind the introduction of resettlement allowances.

> I am seriously concerned at the continued disturbances due to racial ill-feeling against coloured men in our large sea ports. These riots are serious enough from the point of view of the maintenance of order in this country, but they are even more serious in regard to their possible effect in the colonies... I have every reason to fear that when these men get back to their own colonies they might be tempted to revenge themselves on the white minorities there, unless we can do something to show that His Majesty's Government is not insensible to their complaints... I am convinced that if we wish to get rid of the coloured population whose presence here is causing so much trouble we must pay the expense of doing so ourselves. It will not be great.' (5) (author's emphasis)

Apart from this revealing conclusion, the Colonial Secretary's position regarding the necessity of the repatriation scheme appears diplomatic; recognising the Black population of Britain was the victim of white aggression. However, it is clear that rather than sympathising with the Black seamen, Milner's chief concern was the effect on the white minority in the colonies when these men were returned home. Such fear of a Black backlash is a continuous feature of Colonial Office discussion throughout the history of the repatriation scheme, and the arrival of returned seamen from Britain to the West Indian colonies in particular, was closely monitored, and with reason in some cases, as will be shown later.

The establishment of repatriation committees indicates the seriousness with which the government sought to implement the scheme. Committees were set

up in Hull, South Shields, Glasgow, Cardiff, Liverpool, London and Salford; all areas where there had been riots, and where there were of course, sizeable Black communities. The functions of these groups were detailed in a confidential letter from the Ministry of Shipping, (which, along with the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Labour and the Colonial Office helped administer the scheme), in June 1919 to the Colonial Office;

'These committees would have inter alia the following functions;-

1. To collect information as to the numbers, nationality and countries of origin of the coloured men in the port, together with information as to the state of employment and the numbers desiring to be repatriated.

2. To arrange for publicity to be given to any Government schemes of repatriation; to explain such schemes to representatives and other local individuals and bodies concerned, in the interests of good government and the coloured men themselves.

3. To endeavour to secure that any coloured men who have a genuine claim to reside in this country should be given reasonable opportunity of obtaining work.

4. To interview individual men and urge them on the advisability of accepting repatriation and point out the difficulties that they are likely to experience in obtaining work if they remain in this country...

The committee should include;- the Board of Trade Superintendent, the Manager of the Employment Exchange, and two representatives of the District Maritime Board ie, one each from the Shipping Federation Limited, and the National Sailor's and Firemen's Union...' (6)

The composition of the committee, totally excluding the representation of the Black seamen would inevitably be biased in favour of encouraging the repatriation of <u>all</u> these British subjects, especially in the case of the seamen's union representative. Especially bearing in mind the activities of numerous union officials who time and again during the riots interfered with the hiring of Black seamen in favour of their white members.

The difficulties of working this scheme at local level are revealed in a letter from the Superintendent of the Glasgow Mercantile Marine Office to the Ministry of Shipping...

Sir, I beg to report that on the receipt of your telegram I interviewed

about thirty West Africans and that only one is willing to go home per S.S. Batanga from Cardiff, sailing about noon on the 20th instant, I explained to them very fully the difficulty in arranging for their transport and urged them to accept your offer. I informed those receiving maintenance from me that it would be stopped on their refusal. I have also given the Labour Exchange the names of those receiving out of work donation through them. Many of the men are married and have wives and children in this country. A few have clothes in pawn in Liverpool and Glasgow and refuse to go home destitute and insist on their right to get work here. A few say they would go if they got more time to make their arrangements and got money to take their clothes out of pawn and some money to take their wives and children. (7)

This letter states most of the reasons behind the refusal of many men to take advantage of the scheme. Indeed, it was to be a constant feature of local committees' reports to central government to stress that the £6 allowance was not sufficient to allow many Black people to obtain the goods they had in pawn. Although the local committees could use their discretion to obtain the release of essential clothing for the men from pawn, deducting this from the gratuity, all this often meant was that these British subjects were returned to the colonies as destitute as they had been in this country.

The sailing of the above named vessel is mentioned in two reports in the Manchester Evening Chronicle in mid-June;

Marshalled by plain clothes policemen, between 60 and 70 negroes from West Africa marched from Gt. George Street police station, Liverpool to Harrington Docks at Southend this morning to board the Elder Dempster vessel Batango (sic) which sails this afternoon for Sierra Leone. On the way the vessel will call at Cardiff for other coloured men. Accommodation has been found on the vessel for 250 West Africans, who are to return to their own country after the racial rioting, but only 60 or 70 took advantage of the offer to return free. (8)

The following day the report was that only about ten West African seamen from Salford had agreed to join the vessel at Cardiff owing to the lack of notice given them (less than a day), and the difficulty they had in redeeming their belongings from pawn. At least one man refused to leave his white wife behind on any account. Even the limited number of coloured seamen who had agreed to be repatriated was reduced due to the conditions which faced them on arrival at the ship, as a letter reproduced in the Liverpool Echo describes;

For his good accommodation provide (sic) them to sailed in we beg to draw the attention of the public to the course of our refused (sic) to sail as announce (sic) by the Ministry of Shipping. When we get on board Batanga, the Hatch was open, and we all asked to get (Down below), (sic) instead of cargo, where there is nothing provide (sic) for sitting nor sleeping for a sailing of 250 men on a voyage of 2 to 3 weeks. Though we black, but we are not sleeped (sic) in the Coal Bunck before we black. That's the Ministry of Shipping rewards to the negroes who has been (sic) risk there lives for him to get the praised (sic) the honour and the Title he received in this war. (9)

On this occasion only 43 men were repatriated on the Batanga. That the conditions endured by the Black who accepted repatriation remained poor is clear from a report in the muckraking journal, John Bull in August 1919;

... it was resolved to convey them back to their own homes in batches as the opportunity arose. A good, wise notion - but of course it was bungled from the start. 200 men were taken from Cardiff to a ship at Plymouth. They were penniless, for the small sum promised to them was not paid. Worse still, they were hungry and were not fed. They were carried from Cardiff to Plymouth without a meal, and then, when they got aboard, all the staff was off duty, the captain was asleep, and there was no food at all for that ravenous crowd. (10)

It is clear that despite objections to the method of repatriation, the government was satisfied with the scheme which, after all, was intended to end the riots by sending home the Black men. The actual number of those repatriated is open to conjecture; at the Inter-departmental meeting on 30 July 1919, " .. it was reported that some 600 men had actually been repatriated and that the scheme was considered to be succesful, as apparently the situation was now quiet and there was no rioting...".(11) A further 225 men left Cardiff on 31 August 1919 on board the SS Ocra bound for the West Indies, while in the same month 45 men from Aden and the East left on the Telemachus.(12) A further 400 departed from the port of Cardiff in September.(13) Bearing in mind that repatriation continued on until 1921, (although the main scheme itself and the payment of the resettlement allowance and maintenance money pending repatriation was brought to a close in November 1919), the figure must be well above 1000. This number could be nearer 2,000 when it is considered that the Elder Dempster shipping company had repatriated 627 of their own West African sailors from Liverpool between February 1920 and August 1921, according to a report in West Africa which stated; "In all the company have repatriated 627 of their African seamen during the past 19 months, and every one of these has been given a free passage."(14)

An interesting contemporary account of the repatriation scheme as it worked at a local level in Liverpool is given in Ernest Marke's biography, Old Man Trouble,

> In order to ease the employment situation and race tension, government sponsored meetings for negroes were held with lots of propaganda stuff: "British Guiana, the land of opportunity, gold in abundance and diamonds in various sizes for all those who are not afraid of work." I attended one of these meetings. A free passage with £6 cash was being offered to anyone who would like to "jump at this great opportunity". We were told that all those who wanted this chance would have to accept it now as the offer would never be repeated. All I had to do was fill in the form and I would soon be in a land where the streets were paved with gold and diamonds. Naturally I fell for it hook, line and sinker, fool that I was. Shortly after I was in Georgetown, British Guiana, where I soon discovered that I'd jumped from the frying pan straight into the flaming fire. (15)

Far from the easy riches promised by government propaganda, Marke found himself cutting sugar cane and did not remain in British Guiana for long. His account is interesting since it appears in contradiction to the policy of returning coloured men to their own home countries. Marke was a West African, born in Sierra Leone, and here he was being sent out to British Guiana. There was a case of eight West Africans being sent out to the West Indies in error on board the SS Ocra, but they were soon sent on from Jamaica to West Africa.

> It would appear that these men have misled the authorities in regard to their nationality. The SS Voronej is conveying the 1st battalion of the West India Regiment from Jamaica to Sierra Leone, and it is suggested that the 8 coloured seamen in question should be sent back by this opportunity. (16)

It may be the case however, that Marke took part in a special scheme, (since in the directions regarding the establishment of local repatriation committees, mention is made of giving publicity to any government "schemes", for repatriation). It must be added, however, that no reference was made to any such special schemes in the government records on repatriation, and indeed, it appears that the process as it applied to West Africans such as Marke, was enforced more strictly than it was applied to West Indians. On 13 August 1919 the Marine Office of the Board of Trade wrote to all Mercantile Marine Offices informing them that,

> ... all West Africans in this country drawing maintenance pending repatriation have recently been given a definite offer of repatriation. The

majority of them refused. The Superintendent should therefore note that no West African applying for repatriation and maintenance pending repatriation is in future to be considered eligible for maintenance pending repatriation, unless he can show that he was not in the UK during July and the first week of August, when a general offer of repatriation to West Africa was made to West Africans in this country. (17)

To reinforce this, names of men who had refused the offer of repatriation were still being circulated around the various Mercantile Marine offices, (a process only discontinued in November 1919, with the ending of the main scheme).(18)

One of the most revealing aspects of the repatriation scheme was the question of the position of white wives. For, the government's various stances on this issue suggest that feelings of the Black seamen and their families came a very poor third to their concern for public order, and the expulsion of Blacks as the cause of the unrest. The decision not to pay for the repatriation of white wives and families encouraged many men to refuse the offer, as has been mentioned earlier. However, it is similarly clear that some men were actually pressed to return home leaving their families behind. One distressing case was reported by the Superintendent at Birstol, to the Board of Trade in August 1919 concerning the case of Theophilus Savis, a Jamaican with a white wife and five children;

He is most unfortunate, but I have explained it repeatedly to him that his wife and family cannot be granted repatriation. He is clearly in a bad way as he cannot find work of any kind, afloat or ashore, nobody will employ him. At the same time I take it the Board would not desire me to pay him MPR [maintenance pending repatriation] , in view of all the circumstances. If he got it, it is questionable if he would go when provision is made, and as he has a white wife and family his cause seems rather one for the Guardians [the Board of Guardians who administered the Poor Law] . (19)

The official view (as expressed at the inter-departmental meeting on 30 July 1919 was;

... that coloured men with white wives should not be repatriated for obvious reasons (author's emphasis) and that in so far as coloured men are married to other than white women, that these men would be repatriated with their wives, as, and when, suitable accommodation was available; the Ministry of Shipping to notify the committees with respect to the availability of such accommodation. (20)

By 1 September however, the position had changed back to that of the scheme

pre-riot, namely repatriation for white wives and families was to be considered and granted on receipt of proof that the coloured seaman was in fact, from the colony to which he wished to return.

> The Board [of Trade] trust that the Ministry of Shipping will be able to provide repatriation in due course for the white and coloured wives and children of West Indian coloured seamen, and for the white wives and children of coloured seamen belonging to places outside the British Empire, as well as the coloured wives and children of coloured seamen proceeding to any destination. (21)

By 15 September, the Marine Department of the Board of Trade were forwarding names of West Indian seamen with white families to the Colonial Office to ascertain the veracity of the claims to West Indian birth pending their repatriation. During October and November 1919 the Colonial Office received numerous applications from local Maritime Marine Offices for the repatriation of Black seamen and their families, and this time the application of Theophilus Savis and his family met with no objection from the Colonial Office as long as a marriage certificate could be provided, and his wife informed of the poor conditions in the West Indies.(22) In all cases this took the form of a 'warning' regarding the probable position of a white wife of a coloured man in the colonies. It is true that economically conditions were worse than those in Britain at this time, (a state of affairs which will be discussed later in this chapter), but it is equally clear that the main focus of such a warning would dwell on the hostile reception a 'mixed marriage' could receive, and it is a fact that many Black people (notably Marcus Garvey), opposed marriage between the two races. Although this may have been an over-reaction, (based perhaps on the white British attitude to Black-white marriages and other relations in this country), it may have been the reason for the authorities' insistence on the production of a marriage certificate. The case of Norton James and the woman he had lived with for three and a half years was an illustration of this. James had met Saida Battersby, who was from County Down, when she was in service in a Cardiff boarding house. Although they had one child, Norton junior, and Saida was 8 months pregnant, the Colonial Office refused them permission to be repatriated.

> ... His Lordship [the Colonial Secretary] considers it would be useless to consult the Colonial Government regarding the question of her admission to St. Lucia : and I am to suggest that her application for a passage should be refused forthwith. (23)

An interesting case of repatriating a Black Briton and his wife and family was that of Charles Edward Slaven, aged 66, born in Antigua, who wished to be repatriated in January 1920 along with his white wife, Ada Louisa Slaven, aged 50, from Bayswater, with their two children Edie (23) and Albert (16). The couple had married in 1895. The Colonial Office had no objections to paying for their repatriation since Mrs. Slaven had been made ... ' .. thoroughly aware of the conditions of life in a black colony and warned accordingly ....'.(24) The fact that this Black person had been living peaceably in London with his wife and family for twenty five years is not considered worthy of mention in the correspondence on his case between the Board of Trade and the Colonial Office. This direct evidence of the existence of a deep-rooted Black community in Britain meant little to officialdom in comparison to the recent riots between Black and white, and the desire to be rid of the 'problem' of the Black presence, through the repatriation scheme. The whole issue of Black seamen and their white wives is a significant one for the wider background of Black settlement in this period, suggesting as it does that a significant number of Black men far from being transitory visitors to these shores, had settled homes and relationships. When the repatriation programme was begun to be wound down, it was decided in January 1920 not to take on any new cases of Black seamen with white families. The main reason for the ending of this policy was made clear,

> ... since the arrangement has been in operation, strong representations have been received from several of the Colonial Governments concerned as to the hardship and degradation to which such women are exposed, and that one of the women sent out to Jamaica under the scheme has already appealed to be sent back to this country. (25)

The woman in question was Lottie Bryan from Sheffield, who had been repatriated in September 1919 to Jamaica with her husband, Charles Bryan. The reason for her desire to return to Britain was due to his neglecting her. "Since my arrival in Jamaica, I have found out that he has several children already, and that on account of the parents of these children he is deserting me".(26) The covering letter from the authorities at Kingston revealed that Bryan, although employed with the Jamaican Government Railway, earned only 30/- a week and could not afford the fare to send his wife back to Britain. During the war he had been employed in a munition factory at Sheffield. He

and his wife had married in June 1918. This case is, however, the only one of a white wife wishing to return home to Britain after accompanying her husband to the colonies, which is in government records of the period. Indeed, a limited number of Black men and their white wives and families continued to be repatriated to the West Indian colonies throughout 1920, and on into 1921. In July 1921 a despatch from Trinidad to the Colonial Office spoke of 18 West Indian seamen who had been repatriated from England on the SS Oranje Nassau, and who arrived at Port of Spain on 5 June 1921. Although no names are listed, it is mentioned that one had his wife with him, and another his wife and two children.(27) The fact that repatriation was still going on almost two years after the race riots in Britain, perhaps owed much to the continuing distress among Black British seamen remaining in this country. This number was in fact, being constantly augmented by new arrivals, as the government's inter-departmental committee recognised as early as November 1919.

> It appears that coloured seamen signed on abroad to replace gaps in a British crew are signed on with few exceptions for the single voyage only. These men are discharged on arrival in the UK and British crews are signed on. The reasons for this are that, in the first place British sailors will not work in a mixed crew and in the second place that where the same wage is paid, owners prefer to sign on British seamen. (author's emphasis) There is therefore an increasing number of these coloured seamen in the country. After some discussion the following resolution was put forward, "prompt steps should be taken whereby all coloured men be compelled to sign articles framed under provisions similar to those of Chapter 60, Section 25 of the Merchant Shipping Act as is the case of Lascars, ensuring an out and home voyage from the port of embarkation. (28)

That this government body could make a distinction between 'coloured seamen' and 'British crews' clearly indicates the degree of in-built racism in British society, which in practice equated 'British' with 'white'. Nothing however, was done to enact any legislation on this issue, despite its being raised on every subsequent occasion when the problem of destitute seamen in this country was put before the government. The continued distress of Black seamen in Britain has been mentioned in the chapter on the London riots, and this state of affairs was mirrored in Glasgow and Liverpool.

A letter from the Glasgow branch of the Charity Organisation Society to the Scottish Health Board which was forwarded to the Colonial Office revealed the state of affairs there in the months after the ending of the main phase of the repatriation scheme.

... there are over 100 unemployed coloured men in Glasgow, and two-thirds of them are destitute. As you are aware the Government offered to repatriate them but most of them refused the offer on the ground, that they have nothing to go back to and that having served us during the war we should not send them away penniless when peace came. Even the offer of £1 on embarkation and £5 on debarkation has not induced many of them to desire repatriation. Many of them have pawned their belongings and if they were repatriated some of them would have to leave behind about £20 worth of unredeemed belongings. Even in the case of those who are willing to be repatriated considerable delay has occurred in arranging shipping. The Board of Trade officials in Glasgow have done everything in their power to get them away or get employment but during the past six months not more than half a dozen coloured men got employment from Glasgow, while ships that came in with Black crews left many of them behind. The result is that the numbers are gradually increasing. Apart from humanitarian considerations, the presence of so many discontended and semi-starved men is a positive danger. (29)

The Colonial Office response was to dwell on the fact that the destitute seamen had refused repatriation and repeat that the government had under its consideration the possibility of legislating to secure the employment of other Black seamen on the same terms as Indian seamen (i.e. signed on for the return journey alone). The fate of these Black British subjects destitute in Glasgow is unclear. However, there is a suggestion that they were temporarily relieved by the Scottish Advisory Committee of the National Relief Fund, (which sought to aid ex-servicemen). Their long-term fate was unlikely to be very hopeful however. In Liverpool it appeared that there were around 150 unemployed Black British seamen. As in Glasgow most of them were West Africans. This preponderance of West Africans to West Indians was perhaps due to the fact that, as has been mentioned above, repatriation to West Africa was more strictly administered. It was in fact the case that no white wives of West African seamen could be repatriated there. A further factor to the disadvantage of West African seamen in Liverpool was the corrupt activity of the overseer for the Elder Dempster shipping line, a coloured man named Andrew Neizer. It was alleged he accepted money from stowaways from West Africa to find them ships, making it even more difficult for those Black seamen stranded in Liverpool to find jobs. Perhaps because of this practice, (and of course the refusal of the white unions to allow the employment of coloured seamen), an organisation entitled the National African Sailors' and Firemen's Union was established by Mr. Ezenwaegbu in Liverpool. Such a body must have been short-lived however, for apart from the allegation by it against

the Elder Dempster overseer in a Liverpool police report to the Colonial Office in November 1920, nothing else is known of it.(30) The existence of such an illegal trade involving stowaways from West Africa led to the Ministry of Labour (who passed the information on to the Colonial Office for action to be taken against this practice in the West African colonies), to react to the problem of destitute coloured seamen in Liverpool thus,

> The [ir]enquiries appeared to establish that numbers were not sufficiently great to justify the department taking steps to formulate a further scheme for their repatriation. In coming to this decision the Department were further influenced by the fact that many of these men are seafarers who sign on merely for the round trip and have no intention of remaining overseas. (31)

It may be seen from the above paragraph that the repatriation scheme had left unsolved the problem of destitute coloured seamen in this country. It was a voluntary process which did nothing for those who could not, or would not, return to the colonies. Indeed, even among those who took part in the schemes, many returned to the West Indies, in particular, with a sense of grievance against Britain, its government, and its residents, which overspilled into violence at a very sensitive time in the history of British rule in the West Indies.

The background to the unrest which took place in Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago and Belize during 1919 was a combination of severe economic depression and the awakening of a sense of Black solidarity - both of which owed much to the aftermath of the First World War, and the social dislocation which accompanied it. The introduction into this situation of hundreds of repatriated seamen in the wake of the violence in Britain, could only add to the growing sense of disquiet which spread throughout the region, including areas where no violence actually broke out.

Viewed from the angle of the consequences of the repatriation scheme, the unrest which occurred en route to the West Indies on the SS Santille and SS Ocra suggest that anger and confusion lay behind the violence. On the Santille, which departed from Cardiff on 27 June with 147 men on board, the seamen wrecked the ships' fittings and destroyed food rations. On their arrival in Barbados they besieged the treasury for their £5 gratuity, and for

maintenance payments pending their dispersement around the various West Islands.(32) During July the Colonial Office was applied to for aid in reclaiming money for property lost in the riots, (principally involving the Cardiff rioting). One man, Eric Bourne claimed he had lost over £36 worth of property.(33) Subsequently at least 12 men were reimbursed by the Cardiff local authorities. More severe disturbances occurred on the SS Ocra which left from Cardiff with 225 Black seamen bound for the West Indies.

> The situation on board is and has been exceedingly critical since the ship sailed from Cardiff on 10 September and one death has already taken place owing to mutinies. The civilians on board are doing their utmost to cause unrest among the troops. (34)

It appears that it was the imprisoned soldiers on the Ocra who turned to violence, but that the seamen had been inciting the mutiny. On arrival in Jamaica a number of men petitioned the Acting Governor in the hopes of gaining redress for property lost in the riots, and objecting to deductions being made from their £5 gratuity for the redeeming of goods they had in pawn in Britain. There was a disturbance at Kingston, Jamaica, on 10 October involving a number of the repatriated seamen off the Ocra, as a result of which 15 arrests were made. The victims of the violence were white residents, and particularly white seamen in the town. The fears then, expressed by various quarters about the possibility of violence on the return of the repatriated seamen, had been proven. The similarities of this disturbance to the riots in Britain is clear, only the positions regarding Black and white were reversed: again the economic issue was paramount. The riot began after the seamen assembled at the Immigration office as they did daily. As the police began to disperse the crowd some Black seamen left and started trouble further up the town, attacking and beating a number of white sailors, looting a shop and similarly attacking the shop owner and his two sons. Of the men arrested, 11 were found guilty, all receiving prison sentences; four being given 12 months hard labour each. The Colonial office view on this incident is revealing,

> The repatriated seamen have been troublesome in Jamaica. It was however, impossible to retain them in this country, where they had been more troublesome still and had given rise to serious riots at Cardiff, Newport and Liverpool. (35)

It is clear that Black British seamen were officially regarded as troublemakers, and the prevailing view was that it was better they resort to violence in the West Indies rather than in Britain. Such a biased and cynical viewpoint has parallels with the discussions on the question of immigration control in the 1960's. That the repatriated seamen had real grievances is clear from the fact noted above, that at least 12 men received payment for property lost or damaged during the rioting in Cardiff. Similarly, the confusion arising over what payments were due them on arrival in the West Indies could easily lead to frustration among men who already had a grievance against the British authorities for the violence directed against them in the riots. That there was some realisation of this state of affairs is clear, but the solution suggested appeared to be foisting the seamen off, rather than meeting their frustrations head on.

> They appear to be cherishing a grievance that their patriotic services in the Mercantile Marine during the war have been entirely disregarded, and they contend that they have been repatriated in undeserved disgrace without means to support themselves, and without facilities to obtain employment. I need hardly say that since the arrival of the men in Jamaica, no efforts have been spared by this Government to obtain work for them, not only in the press and by letters addressed to the Shipping Companies and other employees of this class of workman. It has however, not been possible to find employment for all these men, and I am now considering whether, having regard to the exceptional circumstances, this Government should be at the expense of providing the deportees (sic) with free passages to Cuba, Panama or other ports where there is more probability of their being able to find work. (36)

Apart from the incidents on board ships returning Black seamen to their homelands, various incidents of unrest, other than the disturbance in Jamaica in October, occurred to further cause concern to the British authorities. The reasons for these were many;

> It is quite true that racial feeling is rising in the West Indies as elsewhere. The causes are many - the participation of coloured men in the war - slights and insults received by them mainly from Dominion troops on account of their colour - the USA race troubles - Liverpool and Cardiff riots, and in addition the general unrest all over the world. I think the trouble is a fact to be faced, and that there is no special remedy for it. We can provide against disorder, improve conditions, and be careful over questions of race, but nothing we can do will alter the fact that the black man has begun to think, and feel himself as good as the white. (37)

This memorandum by the Assistant Under Secretary at the Home Office serves to highlight the oversimplified official view of the disturbances, as primarily

due to racial considerations. It is clear however, that, as in the case of the British riots, racial issues formed more of a general background to the unrest. War Service was indeed a motivating factor in the violence, both in the slights Black servicemen had received from white officers, and also in relation to producing trained men ready to react aggressively to any pressures placed on them. The unrest around the world referred to in this extract simply as a symptom of racial disorder, was also a product of the immediate post-war period, and owed more to the social and economic pressures the sudden return to peacetime conditions caused.

The direct influence of the return of Black seamen on West Indian unrest can be seen in an earlier disturbance in Kingston in July 1919.

> On the night of the 18th July there was a disturbance by the hooligan element of Kingston in which were included some ex-BWIR men and sailors ... whose slogan it is reported was, "kill the whites". This disturbance was subsequently stated to be due to the treatment which had been received by sailors at Cardiff and Liverpool. (38)

The role played by demobilised men of the BWIR in the riot at Belize, British Honduras on 22 July 1919 is revealing of how far service overseas had increased the feeling of the injustice of white worldwide domination. Disorders at Taranto, Italy had led to the repatriation of many men to the West Indies, and their treatment overseas, including being made to do labour battalion duties, has almost inevitably engendered a feeling of dissatisfaction, which meant that when, (as was the case with the repatriated Black seamen), there were delays in receiving war gratuities, unrest was an almost inevitable result.(39) A close watch was kept on the activities of the returned men and the Colonial Office inquired of the various colonial governors as to the existence of the Carribbean League,(40) (an organisation formed in Italy by between 50 to 60 BWIR sergeants, but broken up by white officers), in their localities. Although there was no evidence of its continued existence, the organised nature of the disturbance at Belize was commented upon in the confidential Colonial Office report on the riot (something which was not a new phenomenon in the conduct of riots : neither was the spreading of the unrest from a small beginning to greater violence).

> The riot was started by a few [between 7 and 11] of the recently returned soldiers of the British Honduras Contingent who, armed with sticks

and, acting under a leader, and by orders given verbally and by whistle, marched rapidly through the streets from shop to shop, breaking the glass show windows of the shops, but at first without plundering any of the contents. The men were rapidly joined by other returned soldiers and by scores of civilians, until they numbered several hundred ... In the course of the night white persons who encountered the rioters were attacked and beaten. The crowd in the main streets in which the rioting took place ... was established to have been from 3,000 to 4,000 persons. (41)

The causes of the riot were officially said to be: racial antipathy, the feeling amongst returned ex-servicemen that they had been discriminated against on active service, and the belief that Belize storekeepers were profiteering. The Commissioners of Inquiry found no substance to the latter two causes, the former was attributed to deliberate efforts by agitators to stir up trouble, including the dissemination of 'obnoxious' literature.(42) Interestingly, this issue was taken up a few days before the riot occurred, in a local newspaper, the Belize Independent, a report which also revealed that news of the race riots in Britain again played a part in the increasing racial tension on the island.

The Hon. R. Walker, in the capacity of Acting Governor, a few months ago sought fit to suppress the Negro World, an American publication, in the interest of the negro. Mr. Walter was of the opinion that the paper was likely to cause racial hatred between white and black. According to the following clippings from an English paper it will be seen that there is a growing prejudice against colour in the United Kingdom which, if not adjusted by the Home Authorities will prove a great problem in time: -"Bloodshed and death have attended grave racial riots between coloured men and white, which, beginning in Liverpool a little more than a week ago, have now extended to the seaports of Wales. Grave disorders occurred in Cardiff, where two white men, an Arab, and an unknown coloured seaman died from wounds, and 30 other people, two policemen among them, were injured. While the Cardiff riot was at its height, similar disturbances were taking place at Barry six miles away, and here another local resident was killed. At both ports, infuriated crowds hunted every negro from pillar to post, wrecked and fired their lodging houses, and destroyed the furniture. (43)

Further trouble at Belize was forestalled by the landing of a party of 100 men from the HMS Constance on 24 July,(44) and this calling in of troops to enforce order was to be a feature of numerous incidents of unrest throughout the Caribbean, as of course, it was during the riots and other forms of social unrest in Britain throughout 1919. Other riots in the West Indies although not directly linked to the return of repatriated seamen from Britain in the wake of the anti-Black riots are worth mentioning as further examples of how the economic and social pressures of the post-war period in the West Indies as

elsewhere, led to the outbreak of violence.

In December 1919 it was the turn of Trinidad to witness violence, this time as a result of a strike among stevedores (dock workers) at Port of Spain, when the strikers invaded shipping offices and demonstrated in the streets. Again the spectre of Black agitators encouraging violence was raised by the local Governor in a telegram to the Colonial Office.

> The strike was fomented by agitators who are endeavouring to excite racial hatred. Concessions to stevedores has [have?] led to demands and threats from other workmen in the town and country which may result in further disturbances. (45)

Blaming 'outside influences' for social unrest was a well-established official response in times of stress as a way of diverting attention away from the real grievances, which in this case were clearly economic. Further disturbances occurred later in the month in Trinidad and in between times violence spread to Scarboro', Tobago. Incidents there included an attack on the wireless station, and the police firing upon the rioters, killing one man. The fact that the stevedores won the concessions they had been seeking; namely a shorter working week and increased rates of pay, owed much to the realisation among the British authorities that the economic situation in the colonies was the main factor in the unrest occurring throughout the region and moreover, that the people had a legitimate grievance.

> We are now confronted with serious unrest in Trinidad and with the danger that this condition may spread to neighbouring colonies, and particularly Barbados where industrial conditions are far from satisfactory. But since the disturbances in July in British Honduras, the cause of these troubles have more clearly appeared. Owing to the valuable initiative shown by Mr. Allen in May last we are now in possession of a mass of information about labour conditions in the West Indies from which it emerges that, while the cost of living is more than doubled, wages have increased decidedly less than one half. The existing standard of living for the labourers is much below the standard prevailing in Cuba and San Domingo. No doubt racial feeling has played a considerable part in the troubles. Discontented individuals returning from the BWIR have been active in provoking disturbances... but the predominant cause ... is economic. The labourer is badly paid and short of clothes and cash, and he sees the planters with sugar trebled in price, making more money than they know how to spend. Evidently this position tends to exaggeration of the racial factor in the business. (46)

This is not to say however, that the British authorities viewed the racial factor

with complacence. Indeed, the issue received most serious consideration by both the local Governors and the Colonial Office. Apart from the suppression of the Negro World, the newspaper of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, from the United States, in Trinidad and British Guiana in June 1919, the movements of FEM Hercules of the Society of Peoples of African Origin were closely followed.(47) He was on a tour of the West Indies, holding meetings and circulating copies of the African Telegraph. On his arrival in Jamaica on 5 July Hercules was interviewed by the Acting Governor, who similarly "hinted" to the local press that they should not carry reports of his meetings, his telegrams were also monitored.(48) That the Governor had some grounds to fear Hercules' activities can perhaps be intimated by the fact that soon after his addressing the men of the Jamaican Government Railway workshop, a strike broke out there. An intellegence report on Hercules gave the Colonial Office cause for concern.

> One of my informants, who was rather closely in touch with what was going on, told me that though Hercules is careful what he says in public, in private he is inciting the negroes to take matters into their own hands. He is reported to be collecting money from the negroes, partly for the support of his paper, the African Telegraph and partly for some kind of mission work, but it is thought that this money does not all reach its destination. He further represents himself to be a member of a Methodist organisation in the East End of London, but enquiries show that he is unknown there. He is therefore probably collecting money under false pretences. (49)

Hercules was to be joined on his tour of the West Indies by John Eldred Taylor,(50) but in the event they were both prevented from landing in Trinidad, then in a state of flux caused by the recent unrest.

> There was nothing seditious in the speeches he (Hercules) delivered during his previous visit to the colony, but in view of the excitement prevailing, I consider the public safety would be endangered if he were allowed to carry on racial propaganda at the present time. Person named will probably appeal to you. For the same reason I propose to forbid [the] landing of Taylor ... (51)

Similar watchfulness was displayed by the various local governments during the visit of Marcus Garvey to the Carribbean in 1921. In fact during the previous year Barbados, Grenada, the Leeward Islands, St. Lucia and St. Vincent, all enacted seditious publications ordinances, no doubt in part aimed at the suppression of Garvey's Negro World. The fact that there were local

branches of the UNIA in various West Indian islands was enough to make this visit an apparent threat to public order, and the Governors of Bermuda and British Guiana voiced their opposition to the possibility of Garvey visiting their islands. Garvey for his part disavowed having any intention of stirring up racial unrest. He told the Governor of British Honduras, "We have absolutely no political interference, we are only interested in the moral, social, and educational development of the people."(52) In focusing on the activities of these two West Indian born Black figures the West Indian authorities demonstrated how seriously they viewed the 'threat' of Black political awakening in the area in this period.

The two years which had elapsed since the riots and the subsequent repatriation of Black seamen to the West Indies had thrown up a number of pressing issues for Colonial governments to deal with. The fact that there was official recognition of the real economic grievances of the people of these islands suggests that the return of these men, and the ex-BWIR soldiers, had some positive effects on the local Governors and central Government, if only by provoking a response by their direct action. The result was a directive issued to all Governors from Viscount Milner.

> Facts at my disposal indicate that increases in wages in the West Indies have not generally kept pace with the increase in the cost of living and that this is one of the chief causes of widespread unrest. Please consider what attitude you will adopt in the event of its becoming necessary to intervene in strikes or labour troubles. I suggest subject to your concurrence that when intervention is necessary, you should use your influence in favour of increases in labourers' wages up to a level at least sufficient to admit of [the] pre-war standard of living. You should if you agree take suitable opportunities of informing employers privately that this is the course which the Colonial Government proposes to follow and if you like, you may say that such increases should in my opinion, be given without waiting for serious agitation. (53)

The repatriation scheme enacted in 1919, although born out of the riots that summer can be viewed in the wider context of the history of Black political awakening in the West Indies. Although voluntary, the scheme, by its very existence offered little hope to those who refused it. Emanating from central government, the attitudes behind it were shared by the colonial governments.

Only with the direct action of dissatisfied repatriated seamen and soldiers did anything positive arise from the whole episode, with the tardy realisation that the cost of living was far outstripping wage rates in the West Indies. The political position of the Black population however, remained weak, despite the mobilising effect of radical Black activists, since the British authorities, while willing to act to improve the economic situation were not at this stage, prepared to offer the native population a real say in government.

In terms of the purely British situation repatriation was a successful short-term policy because it signalled an end to the rioting. The subsequent plight of distressed coloured seamen was viewed in the context of a numbers game. Destitution could be allowed to prevail among these men, since they no longer existed in such numbers as to constitute a 'problem', requiring a central government scheme to help them out of the country. Instead, they were to be regimented along with 'aliens' while they remained in this country, a state of affairs which was to prevail for many years to come.

NOTES

1. MT 4/761 Marine Department, Board of Trade to all local Mercantile Marine Offices, February 17 1919.

2. MT 4/761 Marine Dept., Board of Trade, to all Mercantile Marine Offices, April 14 1919.

3. CO 323/814 275-278 Conference on the Repatriation of Coloured Men, June 19 1919.

4. Ibid.

5. CO 323/814 282-283 Viscount Milner, "Memorandum on the Repatriation of Coloured Men", June 23 1919.

6. CO 323/814 481-482 Ministry of Shipping to CO, July 1919.

7. CO 323/814 274 Copy of Letter from Glasgow Mercantile Marine Office to Ministry of Shipping, June 19 1919.

8. The Evening Chronicle (Manchester), June 18 1919, p.5.

9. The Liverpool Echo June 20 1919, p.7.

10. John Bull (London) 16 No. 687 (August 1 1919) n.p.

11. CO 323/815 604-606 Repatriation of Coloured Labourers : Report of Inter-departmental Meeting July 30 1919.

12. CO 323/815 668 Ministry of Shipping to CO re repatriation of coloured men to the East August 13 1919.

13. Western Mail (Cardiff) September 11 1919, p.6.

14. West Africa (London), Vol. 5 No. 237 (August 13 1921), p.845.

15. Ernest Marke Old Man Trouble (London, 1974), pp.33-34.

16. CO 318/352 Min. of Shipping to CO, October 20 1919.

17. MT 4/761 Marine Dept. Board of Trade to all Mercantile Marine Offices, August 13 1919.

18. MT 4/756 Marine Dept. Board of Trade to all Mercantile Marine Offices Nov. 24 1919.

19. MT 4/756 Board of Trade to CO, August 8 1919.

20. CO 323/815 604-606 CO Memorandum on the Repatriation of white wives of coloured men, July 31 1919.

21. MT 4/760 Board of Trade to Min. of Shipping, Sept. 1 1919.

22. CO 318/350 Board of Trade to CO, Oct. 21 1919.

23. CO 318/350 CO to Board of Trade, Nov. 8 1919.

24. CO 318/350 Board of Trade to CO January 1920.

25. CO 318/350 CO to Board of Trade, January 14 1920.

26. CO 318/349 Enclosure in Jamaica Despatch No. 581 to CO, Nov. 15 1919.

27. CO 318/364 CO Memorandum on repatriation of distressed seamen, July 2 1921.

28. CO 323/817 236-238 Min. of Labour to CO Nov. 7 1919.

29. CO 323/843 CO Memorandum on destitute seamen in Glasgow, Feb. 14 1920.

30. CO 323/848 L. Everett, Asst. Chief Inspector of Liverpool, report on coloured men in the city, to CO, Nov. 1 1920.

31. CO 323/848 Min. of Labour to CO, Nov. 7 1920.

32. CO 318/349 Governor of Barbados to CO, July 18 1919.

33. CO 318/349 Eric Bourne to CO July 23 1919.

34. CO 318/848 Governor of Barbados to CO, Sept. 25 1919.

35. CO 137/734 CO Memorandum on unrest in Jamaica, Nov. 3 1919.

36. CO 318/349 Governor of Jamaica to CO, Oct. 3 1919.

37. CO 318/352 Memorandum by Mr. Grindle, Asst. Under Sec., CO, October 7 1919.

38. CO 137/733 Confidential despatch from Acting Governor Johnstone of Jamaica to CO, August 14 1919.

39. W.F. Elkins "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean : The Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy" Science and Society 34 No. 1 (Spring, 1970).

40. CO 318/349 CO Memo. on enquiries to Colonial Governors on the Caribbean League, July 18 1919.

41. CO 884/13 Colonial Office report on the riot in Belize, April 1920.

42. CO 123/296 Report on rioting in British Honduras to CO, Oct. 21 1919.

43. CO 123/296 Extract from the Belize Independent, July 16 1919, Exhibit 4 in Commission of Enquiry Report on the riot in Belize, Oct. 21 1919.

44. CO 884/13 Confidential CO report on riot in Belize April 1920.

45. CO 295/523 Governor Chancellor of Trinidad to CO Dec. 6 1919.

46. CO 318/352 CO Memo. on Labour Unrest and the Wages question in Trinidad, December 1919.

47. CO 295/521 Confidential Report from Acting Governor of Trinidad to CO, June 18 1919.

48. Confidential Despatch from Acting Governor of Jamaica to CO August 14 1919.

49. CO 318/352 Confidential Report on F.E.M. Hercules from the Director of Intelligence to the CO, August 14 1919.

50. Ian Duffield "John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria" African Affairs 70, (1971), p. 264.

51. CO 318/349 Governor of Trinidad to CO, Dec. 17 1919, (Telegram).

52. CO 318/364 Governor of British Honduras to CO, July 14 1919.

53. CO 318/352 Sec. of State to all West Indian Colonies, Dec. 16 1919.

CHAPTER NINE - THE CARDIFF RACE RIOTS

The race riots which took place in Cardiff in June 1919 were the most serious of the racial disturbances which occurred in Britain throughout that year. Three people were killed, dozens hospitalised, and over £3000 worth of damage inflicted on property in the city. Behind these dramatic figures lies a history of well-documented tension between the races over issues such as housing, jobs, and mixed marriages. This chapter aims to outline the background to the rioting, before discussing the particular significance of the violence itself. By highlighting various elements in the clashes it is hoped to illustrate the major motivating factors behind the white aggression, and the Black reaction to this. The policing of the riot will also be discussed, particularly in the light of subsequent reports by the city's Chief Constable on the subject. The racial situation in the city in the aftermath of the riots will also be considered. The suggestion is that the violence of 1919 although never repeated, was not an isolated incident, but part of a deeply felt white resistance to a 'settled' Black presence in the city.

The riots of 1919 were not the first examples of racial violence to occur in Cardiff. Disturbances took place as early as the 1870s. By mentioning earlier incidents an insight can be given into the nature and development of the Black community in the city, owing its presence almost exclusively to the seafaring traditions of the town. Cardiff had become established as the leading British port for the tramp steamer trade by the last quarter of the 19th century, drawing on its traditions as a coaling centre.(1) The mainstays of this type of vessel were the firemen, whose job was to ensure the vessel was coaled to a level sufficient to ensure enough steam pressure was created to power the engines. Both the nature of the work, and the type of ship involved, (tramp steamers did not ply nominated trading routes, but went to whichever port offered a profitable cargo, thus making for an insecure and uncertain future for its crew), were hardly an attractive proposition, and as the least sought after ships, and jobs therein, they became established as the province of foreign and Black British sailors.

> Both the new rating of fireman and the tramp steamer were shunned by white European labour, and it was with these that colonial labour quickly became identified. (2)

Cardiff's position as the centre of the tramp steamer industry therefore soon

led to the establishment of a Black settlement around the Bute Town dock area of the city : but this fact did not inevitably lead to violence. The cosmopolitan nature of the city was remarked upon, but considered as a by-product of an expanding port town. The growing foreign (including Asian) and Black British communities however, did provide a source of competition for the white seafaring population, and with the exploitation of this lower-paid group by the shipowners, friction between the two sides did develop.

> In 1879 there was a serious conflict between Greeks and Negroes which resulted in a number of stabbings .... In 1880 there was a serious disturbance between British and coloured seamen which resulted in a coloured seaman being seriously wounded. (3)

The problem was compounded by the growth of unionisation in the shipping industry, since the NSFU began as it meant to continue by stressing the employment of cheaper foreign and Black British labour as the major factor in keeping white British sailors rates of pay down. The nature of the merchant shipping industry has been discussed in detail elsewhere in this thesis, and it is sufficient to say that for various reasons, including the long absences from this country incurred by seamen, unionisation remained at a low-level for many years to come, and shipowners continued to exploit this fact, as wage under-cutting went on unchecked. At the beginning of the 20th century, "The main culprits were the Greeks, who were undercutting everybody else, including the Arabs and the Negroes; in 1903 this resulted in a free-for-all between 300 Greeks and Negroes."(4)

The main outbreak of racial violence prior to 1919 did not, however, involve Cardiff's Black community. It began as a result of the National Seaman's Strike of 1911. This was an attempt by the NSFU to establish a national wage rate at an increased level. Cardiff's port was one of many brought to a standstill by the strike (which ultimately proved successful, although this was to be shortlived). The only group to break the united front of seamen was the Chinese, upon whom the wrath of the white seamen was turned. Yet, the violence which followed owed as much to racial ignorance and intolerance, as to an employment grievance. The main target for the sailor's anger was not Chinese sailors but laundry keepers who had become established in the city. The significance of these violent attacks, which left 21 out of 22 Chinese

laundries damaged and their inhabitants roughly treated,[5] for the later aggression directed at the Black community in 1919, cannot be overstressed; the example of a racial scapegoat had been clearly and most forcefully established. The NSFU leader in Cardiff at this time was Captain Tupper, and his reminiscences of this incident are revealing of a common white attitude to the Chinese settlement in the city, dwelling as he did upon the 'sinister' use of young white laundry maids in these businesses, a theme common to press, police and religious reports on the mainly male Chinese population.

> Men of the Welsh laundries came to me with yarns about the washing establishments run by the yellow man and when my chaps heard of it something had to be done .... A good many of the dives caught fire that day ... and quite a lot of Chinamen got hurt .... England's conscience wasn't bothered anyway. I received thousands of letters - many from the church - blessing us for this bit of riot. (6)

The 1911 strike had grave consequences for the employment prospects of Black seamen;

> After the strike, racial tension centred on the Negroes. They had been loyal to the union, but after the strike they complained that owners were discriminating against them .... The union might support the coloured men, but to a large extent their plight was an outcome of the union's success. With one established rate, it was now no more expensive to use British seamen than to use foreigners, and the trend of the two previous decades was reversed, (7)

This quotation, while explaining the state of affairs which was to prevail in Cardiff until war shortages forced shipowners to crew their vessels with increasing numbers of Black seamen, also falls into the pitfall of identifying Black sailors with foreign seamen, which of course, the majority were not, although there were some foreign Black sailors in Cardiff, such as Portuguese subjects from the Cape Verde islands. Only a few months after the 1911 strike there were reportedly 850 seamen out of work in Cardiff, of whom 250 were Blacks. Demonstrations against this situation led to a police baton charge on 200 Blacks in 1912, violence never being far away when seamen's grievances were being discussed. This fact was overlooked when the police authorities came to consider the Black role in the riots of 1919.

Racial issues had become very much inter-twined with economic problems in

Cardiff, and even during the war the NSFU campaigned against the increased employment of Chinese sailors on British vessels, but this proved ineffective, partly because the union had concluded a non-strike agreement for the duration of the war.

At the cessation of hostilities the status quo returned to the shipping industry, with one vital, and potentially explosive, difference; thousands of white sailors were being demobilised into an industry which had been increasingly manned by Black seamen. In this situation something had to give, and with the continuing background of agitation against Chinese sailors it should come as no surprise to find that the violent exclusion of Black seamen was the solution attempted by Cardiff's white seafaring population. Hostility to 'foreigners' is of course, something which has been established as a leading feature in Rudé's analysis of riot, and is something which has emerged as a recurring factor in the race riots of 1919. This is not to suggest that the race rioting in the city was due to employment competition pure and simple. Other issues were certainly involved, notably the influence of example; the severe race riots that had broken out in Liverpool on June 6 were heavily reported in the South Wales press in the days leading up to the Cardiff outbreak of June 11, and only 12 miles away less severe rioting had occurred in Newport, directed at that town's small Black population the day after the initial violence in Liverpool. A further factor worth mentioning in the riots in Cardiff is the feeling among white merchant seamen that <u>their</u> part in the war effort was being overlooked as press attention was focused on the exploits of whites in the army and the Royal Navy. Ironically a similar grievance was voiced by Black victims of the riots who felt their war efforts were being forgotten or ignored. This common feeling, rather than creating a bond among Black and white in the merchant service resulted in the opposite, as both sides saw only the injustice of their own situation. Captain Tupper, the NSFU delegate at Cardiff, recalled the anxiety of the period, while totally omitting any mention of the race riots either in Cardiff or elsewhere in Britain in 1919, no doubt to create an atmosphere of harmony in his reminiscences of the period which was not there in reality.

I say it is a miracle 1919 did not produce a revolution amongst the seamen who had given themselves so whole-heartedly to their country, only to

find themselves almost at once ... exploited and forgotten ... We leaders of the seamen know how close we were to chaotic anarchy in those days after the war. (8)

Racial tension was apparent in Cardiff in the lead-up to the outbreak of the riots. Two Blacks named George Edison and Ahmed Elmi were charged with the malicious wounding of a Scandinavian seaman, Karl Olsen on November 30 1918. Both men were, however, found not guilty at a hearing at the Quarter Sessions in January 1919.(9) A more serious incident took place only a month before the riots broke out, in May 1919. This involved Black British and white American sailors in Frederick Street, Bute Town. As a result of the fracas three Blacks; Henry Gainer, John Davies and Robert Wilson were charged with attempted murder, four shots being fired by the Blacks at the American sailors. "The trouble it was alleged by the prosecution, was brought about by Davies in company with two other negroes, brushing deliberately against the Americans on the pavement."(10) By the time the case reached the Assizes in July 1919 Gainer had been freed, while Davies was cleared of the attempted murder charge, but he was found guilty of shooting with intent to maim one of the Americans, John Sang, and was sentenced to three years imprisonment. Wilson was found guilty of shooting with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm and was given a heavy five year sentence. This case illustrates the degree of racial antipathy in evidence in Cardiff in the period immediately preceding the riots. The significance of the part played by US servicemen on this occasion should not be overlooked, in the first instance for highlighting the link between this and other incidents of post-war social unrest in Britain, in which servicemen of varying nationalities were involved. This case also demonstrates U.S. service mistrust of the freer, non-segregated British system, something which re-emerged in the course of the riots themselves.

His chief failing is his fondness for white women, and American naval officers stationed at the American naval base at Cardiff have often expressed their disgust at the laxity of the British law in this connection. (11)

The impression given in the above quotation is that perhaps the American system was no bad thing, in view of the racial violence which was taking place, and indeed, it is demonstrated again and again in press reports of the Cardiff riots that the common white view was that in displaying 'his fondness

for white women', the Black man was asking for trouble, and white violence was only to be expected on this issue. The strength of this feeling of sexual revulsion as a motivating factor in the riots shows how misplaced would be the notion that the rioting was a one-off affair arising from the peculiar immediate post-war situation. For, as has been shown above, the white fear of inter-racial sexual relations was one of the leading factors in the violence directed against the Chinese community eight years earlier, in the 1911 disturbance. It is not without significance, then, to discover that the initial incident which sparked off four days of riots in Cardiff involved a dispute between a white crowd and a group of Black men who had just returned to the city after a days carriage excursion with their white wives. The presence of these carriages had attracted a hostile white crowd and soon the two groups were facing each other from either side of Canal Parade Bridge.

> At this stage the coloured men rushed towards the white men and fired several revolver shots. The white men retaliated by stone-throwing. Additional police arrived and dispersed the combatants some of whom proceeded in the direction of Custom House Street where more firing from revolvers took place and a coloured man received a wound in the abdomen. The area of disturbance extended to Caroline Street in the north and to the upper portion of Bute Town in the south and a series of affrays took place. Firearms, razors, knives and sticks were used freely by the coloured men and the whites appeared to be using only their fists and throwing stones. (12)

This police report was compiled a month after the outbreak of violence and does little to convey the disorganised nature of the conflict, with running battles taking the disorder through the streets of Cardiff. It also puts the blame for the escalation of the violence on the Blacks who were allegedly heavily armed, the presumption being that this group were always ready for violence. The baiting of the Black men and their white wives is dismissed as insignificant, and the fact that a Black man was wounded in the abdomen by a knife wound appears to contradict the statement that the whites only used their fists or threw stones at the Blacks. These initial disturbances did not take place in the Bute Town proper area of the city, but in the centre of Cardiff - in the streets above the Bute Town area. It was only after the violence had become established that the white mobs attempted to attack the area of longer established Black settlement on the dock side. The fact that Black people had settled outwith what had become their defined 'area' (and was to become increasingly identified as such as the fighting continued) was

due to the great increase in the Black community due to the demand for their services during the war, but this territorial issue itself played a part in the riots.

> In Cardiff the expansion of the black community was taking place largely in the north of Butetown in an area which had, since the 19th century been a centre of Irish settlement. By 1919 the Irish were achieving some respectability; a small middle class was growing ... possibly the incursions of the coloured community seemed to threaten their position. Certainly a third of the whites arrested during the riots had Irish names. (13)

While disagreeing with the figure regarding the proportion of Irish involved in the riots, it is true that four of the eighteen whites arrested for their part in the riot had Irish surnames, while one of the three men killed, John Donovan also was described in the press as an Irishman. This is not sufficient evidence, perhaps, to indicate an 'Irish plot' to rid their area of Blacks, but enough to suggest that those with Irish backgrounds did play a part in the violence. The expansion of the Black community outwith the port area of the town and the increased tension this caused with elements of the white population bears similarities to the pattern of events leading up to the riots in the United States in the same period, particularly those in Northern cities such as Washington and Chicago.

As the riots continued in the three days succeeding the initial incident mentioned above, the white mobs, the police, and the Black community alike began to recognise the immediate Bute Town area as increasingly the 'Black quarter' or in more derogatory terms, 'nigger town'. One June 12, the day of the most serious rioting, "Attempts were frequently made by the crowd to reach Bute Town but they were thwarted by the police."[14] The notion that Bute Town was the Blacks' own territory owed much to the fact that they no longer felt safe elsewhere in the city. In fact, during the 1930's and 1940's Bute Town remained the main area of Black settlement, described by one commentator as, " ... a ghetto. Its people were more segregated than the black population of Liverpool and London ...".[15] Perhaps because of this enforced concentration local history holds that the inhabitants of Bute Town - of all races - lived peacefully among themselves.

> One of the results of the conflicts was that the majority of the coloured population remained below the railway bridge that separated Butetown from central Cardiff where physical and mental barriers increased the sense of segregation. Any reputation for racial harmony in Cardiff must

rest in Butetown itself where, for the most part, people were able to live side by side without any further outbursts of violence of this nature ... Opinion about the riots in Butetown seems to have been that it was those above the bridge who caused the trouble. (16)

Although the riots soon came to focus on the older established coloured communities on the dockside, the part played by the supposed threat to white areas of the city by Black settlement has to be taken into account in considering the reasons behind the rioting. If large sections of the white population were prepared to fight to keep their areas white, then it is not surprising that Blacks, driven into a small section of the city should be prepared to use violence to protect their homes. A local newspaper reporter visited Bute Town as it lay under siege during the riots to obtain the views of its inhabitants, whose righteous anger and determination to defend their community, emerge despite the biased handling of the report.

I talked with intelligent natives (author's emphasis) of the Bermudas and West Africa, known to me to have made their homes in Cardiff for many years. They were unanimous in advising their compatriots to remain in their recognised area. 'It will be hell let loose, as your people say, if the mob comes into our streets. There are men among us that nothing can restrain if we are attacked. We are ready to obey the white man's laws, but if we are unprotected from hooligan rioters who can blame us for trying to protect ourselves?'(17)

The implication of this passage is that Blacks felt that they had been let down by the Government in the first instance, and by the police in the second, for not effectively protecting them from the mobs. It is clear too, that both these bodies, Government and police, blamed the Blacks primarily for the violence. A report by Cardiff's Chief Constable to the Government can be quoted in this context.

There is a readiness on the part of the coloured race to use firearms, razors and knives immediately a brawl commences and that unlawful and highly dangerous practice unquestionably generated the intense anger of a section of the white population against coloured men. (18)

The Colonial Office conclusion regarding the riots in Cardiff was simply an echo of the Chief Constable's view, "It seems that white men are usually the aggressors, but that the coloured men are the first to use arms."(19) While it would be wrong to dismiss totally this allegation on the grounds that Black men had little option but to resort to violence in their own defence when

faced by mobs hundreds strong, it is also worth stressing that the Blacks were no shrinking violets - years of armed service overseas had made for very tough individuals. Black resort to arms therefore, was neither simply mindless violence on the one hand, nor the result of mass attack and the consequent threat to life, on the other.

The evidence of local press reports does seem to suggest that most of the shooting incidents in the race riots as a whole were due to this latter cause, namely, the threat to life, and Cardiff is no exception to this. An example of this can be found in the case of Ali Abdul (20) who was charged with shooting at persons unknown, and with police assault in Homfray Street on June 12, the second day of the rioting in Cardiff. Abdul was found firing his revolver towards a crowd of 200 whites as they chased him. He then ran away from the mob but a police constable caught him and arrested him and as he did so, Abdul kicked and bit him. He was found not guilty of the shooting charge, but guilty of police assault,

> His lordship said he had come to the conclusion that the prisoner was in danger of his life from a hostile crowd, and as he had been in custody for one month, sentenced him to four days imprisonment, which meant his immediate release. (20)

At the same court session three other Blacks were found not guilty of shooting at persons unknown. One of these however, Mohamed Ali, was found guilty of shooting at the police under great excitement. Ali was trapped in a house which was being stoned by a white mob, but as the police entered by the stairs he fired down at them, presumably fearing that his home was being invaded by the mob. The judge, however, concentrated on the attack upon the police, commenting that the "... prisoner and his race should realise that the police were their friends and he passed sentence of six months hard labour."[21] An even longer sentence was passed on Mohamed Khaid who was charged with shooting at a policeman with intent to murder. The magistrate pointed out that Khaid was not being pursued by a crowd at the time when he fired his revolver and gave him a fifteen months term of imprisonment. Khaid however, did not complete his sentence, for he died in HM Prison, Cardiff in May 1920, ten months after this trial at Glamorgan Assizes in Swansea. The cause of his death however, is not recorded.[22]

The most serious offences in this connection involved eleven Black men charged with the murder of John Donovan, and with shooting at other persons unknown during an attack on their lodging house in Millicent Street on June 12. Donovan was not the first fatality of the Cardiff riots. On June 11 Harold Smart, a white youth aged eighteen, had approached a policeman and told him that he had just been slashed in the throat by a Black man. He died early the next morning, but no one was ever arrested for causing his death, and no witnesses to the incident came forward. Donovan's death from a bullet wound to the heart was, however, witnessed by the white mob with whom he was attacking the Black boarding house. Several of the newspaper reports on the incident, in which two other whites were wounded, mention that the crowd contained a strong element of ex-servicemen, including white colonials. Donovan in fact, was wearing his Mons service ribbon when he was shot. The leading role played by ex-servicemen in the unrest in Cardiff will be discussed later. Suffice it to say at this stage that the crowd included experienced fighting men, and the besieged Blacks were at this stage in fear of their lives. The attack continued despite the fatal wound received by Donovan. Furniture was broken up and used as weapons, and the house was set alight with the Blacks still inside. The fire brigade soon quenched the flames and police succeeded in removing the inhabitants of the house into protective custody. Two of the eleven Black inhabitants of the house in Millicent Street were released soon after the incident through lack of evidence. The others faced trial at the Glamorgan assizes in July, on the charge of murder and shooting at persons unknown.

> Police evidence showed that if the crowd had been able to get hold of the prisoners that night they would have killed them. The judge said that the question was, 'Were the prisoners justified in doing what they did in the circumstances?' (23)

Given this evidence the jury found all the men not guilty, no doubt concluding that the trapped Black men had no option but to open fire on their attackers.

The number of Black men who carried arms during the riots was obviously considerable, the suggestion being that Blacks feared violent attack and that many were prepared to meet assault with fire when the need arose. The use of weapons as a means of self-defence can be further explored by a

consideration of the events of an incident which occurred, again on June 12, at a house in 264 Bute Street in which one Black man, Mahomed Abdullah, died as a result of a skull fracture and four others also received similar injuries, three Blacks and one white. At Abdullah's inquest the five white men charged with causing his death hinted that it was when Abdullah was being taken from the house that he received the fatal blow with a blunt instrument, which the coroner had established as the cause of death. In support of this suggestion Mrs. Mabel Emma Ali, the white wife of the owner of the Black boarding house said that she "saw a police baton strike Abdullah's head - but the blow was meant for the crowd."(24) Certainly the number of head injuries received during this incident would seem to indicate that the free use of batons had been employed by the police. Significantly, four Blacks including Abdullah had skull fractures, while only one white was so injured - yet it was the Black inhabitants of the house who were being attacked by the white crowd. The suggestion of police bias cannot be ruled out in this episode, and indeed, in the whole police policy for dealing with the riots in Cardiff. It is clear from the affrays in which Donovan and Abdullah lost their lives that the white crowds heavily outnumbered the Blacks who were penned in the houses in Millicent Street and Bute Street. Yet, in the first instance eleven Blacks were arrested and no whites, while in the second, there is evidence to suggest that the police used excessive force, primarily against the Blacks, to quell the disturbance. Given this evidence, the Blacks' resort to arms is more understandable, even if it cannot be excused.

The remaining major incident involving the use of firearms by the Black community during the riots also resulted in the heaviest sentence imposed on an individual as a direct consequence of the riots. Ivor Gabriel Landsman (21) was found guilty of shooting at three policemen with intent to maim on June 12 (the day of the worst disturbances) "After a crowd of Blacks refused the advice of the police to disperse and return to their homes."(25) It appears that the court refused to take into account the mitigating circumstances of the severe rioting going on at the time, giving Landsman three years hard labour for his offence, the implication being that the crime was the more serious for Landsman's disregard for the authority of the police, since this sentence is far heavier than others handed out to Blacks similarly convicted of shooting at

the police. Landsman in fact had maintained his innocence throughout, and collapsed on hearing his sentence.

The police strategy throughout the riots apparently was to focus on the Black community as the more serious threat to public order. Police advice to remain indoors was supplemented by the use of cordons thrown up at cross entrances to streets in which Black people lived, not as one might suppose to protect this community, but for fear of the damages the Blacks could inflict should the white mob enter the Bute Town area.

> Attempts were frequently made by the crowd to reach Bute Town but they were thwarted by the police. If the crowd had overpowered the police and got through, the result would have been disastrous as the Black population would have probably fought with desperation and inflicted great loss of life. (26)

The Chief Constable also deployed troops around the Bute Town area to support the police, and indeed, after the severe rioting of June 11 and 12 only minor incidents occurred on June 13 and 14. It appears, then, that the police tactics were successful in suppressing disorder as the level of violence diminished and by June 15 had ceased. Peace, however, was achieved heavily at the expense of the Black community in Cardiff, who were more or less barricaded into what became their own ghetto. The fact that white crowds had initiated the riots in Cardiff was apparently regarded as less important than the free rein the violence gave the Black men to indulge their 'natural' aggressive tendencies. Moreover, the argument ran, the white crowds had valid reasons for their actions, namely, the unemployment situation in the merchant shipping trade and the association of Black men with white women. Even those newspapers that demonstrated a degree of sympathy for the Black population's plight in Cardiff could not totally vindicate that community.

> The riots that have taken place are a disgrace to the whole community: and every symptom of disorder of this character must be suppressed, however drastic and energetic the means employed necessarily have to be. There is no reason at all which justifies a crowd interfering with the Blacks, who - whatever may be the doings of individuals - are as a body, peaceable and altogether well-behaved, and have been throughout the years.... Whatever be alleged in the way of wrongdoing on the part of the black men, that is for the authorities to deal with. Public order does not depend upon disorder. (27)

A problem not so far dealt with is the nationality of the men being attacked by the white mobs and described as 'Blacks'. The press reports of the period use a confusing array of terms, the accuracy of which can be questioned. But it is clear that Black people from many countries had settled in Cardiff from the late 19th century, and in greatly increased numbers during the war, as has been mentioned earlier. The place of birth of individuals involved in the riots are not given in the press reports or the available police records for the period, descriptions are no more specific than 'Arabs'; 'coloured men'; and 'black men'. Only Somalis were on occasion more precisely identified. The majority of those arrested had Muslim names. Photographs in police records of Blacks arrested in the riots show that most described in other contemporary sources as 'Arabs' were very dark skinned, and would certainly have been regarded as 'Negroes' by most whites. This is not to say that these men were not from Arab countries, eg, Aden, but it does suggest that an attempt to divide the Black community of Cardiff into categories would be a difficult and in a sense, worthless exercise, because it is clear that the white mob, and the white community as a whole, made no such distinction : all Blacks were fair game for attack in the eyes of the white rioters.

There is also evidence to suggest that the Black community regarded themselves as one. At the funeral of Mahomed Abdullah several hundred "negroes of all types"[28] were in attendance, although only thirteen members of the Muslim faith were reported to have been at the graveside. Significantly, the coffin was draped in a Union Jack, for, not only were the Black community united in being victims of attack, most of them were also British subjects.

> A meeting was held at Cardiff docks yesterday [Friday, June 13] of Arabs, Somalis, Egyptians, West Indians and other coloured races, to protest against the treatment to which they are being subjected. It was pointed out that they had done nothing to originate the disturbances.... They claim that as British subjects they are entitled to protection, and a resolution was passed calling upon the Government to take measures with this end. (29)

The holding of mass meetings as a form of Black protest was a feature of the riots in Cardiff, perhaps owing something to the large number of Black men resident in the city; estimates at the time ranged from 1,000 to 2,000. The organising ability of one Black individual, Dr. Rufus Fennell, also should be

highlighted in aiding the voices of ordinary Black people to be heard.

> Rufus Fennell was a West Indian, medically trained in the United States, but not qualified in Britain where he was working as a dentist. He had much medical experience in 314 days spent in the trenches where whe was wounded three times and he attended thousands of British soldiers. He had been living in Pontypridd but came to Cardiff during the riots and quickly assumed leadership of the coloured community. (30)

A few days after this initial meeting Rufus Fennell presided over another meeting of members of Cardiff's Black community on Monday June 16 when the threat of further rioting had by no means disappeared. It is clear from these meetings that Fennell, while forcefully stating the grievances of the Black community, trusted in the British authorities, and the British population at large, to defuse the situation and recognise the worth of the Black community as part of their Christian duty.

> "I swear so help me God, our watchword 'within the law to abide'." This was the solemn oath taken by a gathering of coloured men at the Angelina Street mission room, Cardiff, on Monday. Dr. Rufus E. Fennell, Pontypridd, who presided, announced that the meeting was representative of 'all the sons of Ham', there being present four types of negro races - namely Africans, West Indians, Arabians, and Portuguese subjects. (31)

Fennell's role as spokesman for the Cardiff Black population went beyond holding meetings and advising his hearers to keep within the law. He also headed a deputation of Blacks which attended a session of the Parliamentary Committee of Cardiff City Council on June 30 1919, at which he,

> ... pointed out the critical position of the majority of the coloured population in Cardiff and he ... urged the committee to approach the proper Government department to repatriate these men and their families. (32)

It is interesting to note that Fennell, although presumably in close personal contact with Cardiff's Black population, believed that the solution to the problem of rioting in the city was repatriation, when it has been shown that before, during, and after the riots, the majority of Black men did not wish to return to their home countries, for reasons which have been discussed elsewhere in this thesis. Fennell's view (which of course, did mention the return of the Black men's families) could have been based on a pessimistic evaluation of the probability of Black seamen gaining future employment in a depressed industry in which racist policies were deeply entrenched. The City

Council took no action after the meeting with Fennell, the Chief Constable informing them that he was personally in touch with the Home Office regarding this issue, and was awaiting instructions. The lack of sympathy for Fennell's campaign suggested here is further supported by the Chief Constable's actions in the wake of Fennell's trip to London to lay the Black population's position before the Government, supported by a Cardiff M.P., Sir William Seager. On July 19 a report appeared in the Western Mail to the effect that Fennell had been arrested in London on the orders of the Chief Constable of Cardiff. The charge was that he had obtained money on false pretences, arising from an alleged payment of a return fare to a coloured man who was sent to Plymouth from Cardiff for repatriation. He returned to Cardiff saying that someone in the city owed him some money.(33) The case, peculiar in itself, was significant for several reasons. In the first instance it demonstrates the leading role played by Fennell in the running of the repatriation scheme in Cardiff. His role, even if unofficial, was obviously recognised by the local repatriation committee, hence his access to funds to enable Black men to reach ports from which repatriation ships were leaving. More sinisterly, the charge and the conduct of the case would seem to indicate that the Chief Constable of Cardiff was 'out to get' Fennell, presumably for his high profile defence of the Black community - in other words he was stirring up trouble at what was a sensitive time. At the court case which followed his arrest Fennell's defence lawyer pinpointed a number of facts which support the theory that he was being victimised. Dr. Fennell had been detained in custody some time in London before being brought to trial in Cardiff, even though the alleged offence involved only £2. His lawyer stated that there, "Was a good deal at the back of the case".(34) The police had obtained a week's remand in the case, then opposed Fennell's application for bail, saying that he had had no fixed abode since 1915. His lawyer eventually obtained bail for Fennell by describing his good character and stating that a substantial amount of money could be produced for bail; in fact two sureties of £25 were demanded before Fennell was released. The following week Fennell was acquitted of the charge of intent to defraud at Cardiff City Police court on the grounds that there was no proof that he had intended to steal the money. It is hardly surprising to discover however, that the Magistrate supported the police action in bringing Fennell to trail. "The case was a peculiar one, but the police were right to bring the charges",(35)

since Fennell had not repaid until two days later the £2 for a fare to Devenport for a man who was to be repatriated but who returned to Cardiff. Despite this untoward interruption Dr. Fennell did not cease his campaign on behalf of Cardiff's Black population. In fact, less than a week after his acquittal, Dr. Fennell returned to London to visit the Colonial Office with his views on the shortcomings in the operation of the repatriation scheme. His complaints included the fact that some men were being sent home before their losses from the riots were made good; others were still owed back pay, and finally, the police should not be in charge of the operation of taking the men to their ships. He volunteered to do this task himself. He also mentioned that he would be petitioning both the King, and the Prime Minister on this issue. The view of Mr. Cooke, the Colonial Office spokesman who interviewed Dr. Fennell is worth quoting here as giving an insight into the prevalent attitudes among those involved in the administration of the repatriation scheme. "I found him tractable and quite reasonable, for a native,"(36) (author's emphasis).

Interestingly, there was an element within the Colonial Office which accepted Fennell's views on the background to the violence in Cardiff; the riots however, were a fait accompli. The only issue of concern to the Colonial Office was the smooth running of the repatriation scheme, as the conclusion of this unsigned memorandum suggests.

> I was spending some leave at Cardiff recently and ventured to make some casual enquiries about these riots, and I gathered (although how much importance is to be attached to this sort of gossip I do not know) that the inhabitants agree with Dr. Fennell in blaming the Americans [as he did in his visit to the Colonial Office] and other 'foreigners' such as Australian soldiers, for the riots; but I suppose that no one dare say so officially, or in the newspapers ... I don't think it would be politic to suggest the withdrawal of police supervision. Dr. Fennell probably fails to realise what would happen if a number of Black men guided by another Black man arrived by train say in Liverpool or Cardiff for shipment and met perhaps an American soldier or sailor on the platform. It is quite a different thing if they are guided to their destination by a plain clothes policeman or two. (37)

Evidence of the role of American and white colonial servicemen in the riots and in the lead up to the main violence has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, but the Colonial Office memorandum is the sole instance of 'official'

recognition of this fact. Nothing is known of Dr. Fennell after this visit to the Colonial Office. Perhaps he considered his job completed as the repatriation scheme got into full swing, and the threat of fresh outbreaks of rioting receded.

Having mentioned the role of American and colonial servicemen in the rioting, it is appropriate at this point to consider the data provided by the arrests and trial of thirty-nine men and women for their alleged part in the violence in Cardiff. Following the model of Rudé, an analysis of the make-up of the crowd provides a means of avoiding the pitfall of viewing the rioters as a faceless, aimless, 'mob'.(38) The first significant point to emerge from the figures is that although it is clear that the Blacks were almost always the victims in a series of white mob attacks, more of the former were arrested; twenty one Blacks to eighteen whites. This was largely a result of the differing attitudes the police held towards the two groups - even when they were literally fighting for their lives, as was the case at 52 Millicent Street on June 12 when eleven Blacks were arrested and charged, and although they were all subsequently found not guilty, the shooting and murder charges levelled at them were extremely serious. Indeed all the charges concerning Black people were relatively serious, most involving shooting and arms offences and police assault. The whites on the other hand were slow to be arrested, the police attitude being one of tolerance, arrest being only used as a last resort on persistent offenders in the riots.

> During the disturbances the police observed certain white British subjects taking an active part in inciting the leading the crowds. Ten were subsequently arrested and charged with riot. (39)

The court cases involving those who took part in the race rioting were more equitable than the police methods which had resulted in the arrests (with a few glaring exceptions). All eighteen white offenders were found guilty, but in comparison with the charges against the Blacks their offences were generally of a more minor nature. The exceptions to this were six of the whites who were initially charged with the murder of Mahomed Abdullah - but this charge was soon dropped for lack of evidence. The ten whites mentioned above were found guilty of riotous assembly and some of these were additionally convicted of assault, two receiving twenty month sentences, four

eighteen months, the others terms ranging from nine to two months. Apart from this major trial, the eight other whites received relatively lenient sentences from the courts, some for apparently serious offences. The most glaring example of this in comparison with the sentences meted out to Black offenders is the case of John Flynn Marden, aged fifty four, who was charged with kicking a policeman and threatening him with a knife. Despite his sixty-one previous convictions he received only one month's imprisonment. This was in stark contrast to the six month sentence imposed on Mohamed Abouki the same day for striking a policeman with a stick. Abouki himself walked with a limp, "The result he said of a blow from a police truncheon."(40) This instance of apparent racial bias on the part of the courts should not be taken as typical. It is possible that the magistrate on this, the first day of hearings as a result of the racial riots, was acting according to an in-built bias, which, as the court proceedings progressed, became less notable. It is a fact that judges began to take into account mitigating circumstances in terms of violence as a means of self-defence in the cases of some of the Black defendents, and this will be discussed below. Five whites were merely given fines for their roles in the rioting, offences ranging from police assault to window breaking and using bad language. The remaining two were found guilty and then discharged. The first, James Power was convicted of drunkeness, while Agnes Devenish, the only woman arrested in connection with the riots in Cardiff, was released after being found guilty of brandishing a razor and using offensive language.

The number of Blacks found not guilty of the offences levelled at them as a result of the riots would seem to indicate that the police evidence against them was rather less than watertight. Of the twenty one men charged, fourteen were found not guilty. Also of significance is the fact that all the Blacks (with the exception of Abouki) were charged with shooting or arms offences, suggesting that the police (understandably from a law and order point of view) focused their attention on Black men armed with revolvers, ignoring the mass of white rioters. However, in many cases these armed Blacks were using their weapons in self-defence. The difference this made, if not recognised by the police, was so in the courts, hence the majority of not guilty verdicts. In all cases where Blacks were discharged the fact that they were under threat when they used their weapons was the reason for their release. Conversely, where there was no evidence of a threat to life, the

courts came down hard, commenting on the challenge to law and order this suggested. The most severe example of this was the case of Ivor Gabriel Landsman, who was convicted of shooting at three policemen with intent to maim, as has been described earlier, and who was given three years hard labour. Other cases, also previously discussed, included that of Mohamed Khaid who was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment for shooting with intent. Khaid was convicted on the same day as Ali Abdul, who was found not guilty of shooting at persons unknown, on the grounds that he was "In danger of his life from a hostile crowd."(41) The judge, Commissioner McCall, in passing sentence on Khaid made the point that, unlike Abdul, he was not being pursued by a crowd when he fired his revolver. Another case highlighting the weight placed on the element of self-defence in the sentences given to Black men, was that of Mohamed Ali who was cleared of shooting at persons unknown, but was convicted of shooting under great excitement and given a six months' sentence - considerably less than Khaid. The two final cases involving Blacks were those of Hassan Ali and Tom Dixon. Ali was convicted of police assault while armed with a revolver and knife and was given two months hard labour. Dixon was fined £5 for possessing an unlicensed revolver and twenty-five rounds of ammunition.

Having discussed the sentences given to the thirty-nine people arrested for their part in the riots, it is also worth looking at the implications of other information supplied by press and police reports of their cases. For, in many cases both the age and occupations of these people were given, and while not suggesting these give a general picture of the composition of the two sides, they do provide an insight into groups of people of whom very little is known elsewhere. Of the eighteen whites charged, the occupations of eleven were given in the press reports of the period. Of this number, four were listed as soldiers, and one was a sailor. The presence of so many servicemen (John Donovan who was a soldier, also can be added to this figure) is significant, suggesting as it does the deep sense of frustration felt by the returning troops : frustration at the high unemployment and housing difficulties which faced them on their return. In this sense, the white crowd's misplaced fury at Blacks for 'not doing their bit' in the war, was, in effect, a plea for official recognition of the great efforts by ordinary servicemen (white, it must be said), in the shape of better conditions for the labouring classes in Britain.

Although this may appear to be reading too much into the presence of a significant element of service personnel in the race rioting in Cardiff, it is worth reiterating that Black servicemen returning to the West Indies reacted in the same violent manner when faced with delays in receiving their war gratuities, and given the depressed conditions of these islands, which offered little hope for economic advancement on demobilisation. The other occupations of white men involved in the rioting also would seem to place them firmly in the unskilled working class: two were dock labourers and two others common labourers, while another was a coal trimmer. The only skilled man convicted of rioting offences was a marine engineer named Sidney Blashill, who was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment, one of the heavier sentences given a white, the implication being that he was a ringleader of the violence. It is worth noting that four of the white civilians arrested were involved in dock and shipping work which brought them into close contact with the Black community of Cardiff, which as has been shown earlier, primarily made its livelihood through seafaring, and providing services for Black sailors ashore. One particular individual among the white rioters is worth focusing on : James Rees (27), who was a colonial soldier from New Zealand and who was sentenced to eighteen months hard labour for assaulting a Black named Housson Hassan on Saturday June 14, the last day of the riots.(42) The fact that one white colonial serviceman was convicted for his part in the rioting would mean little in itself, but the evidence of both local newspaper reports and Colonial Office records support the conclusion that this category of white servicemen were strong supporters of their white British counterparts. In fact, their actions can be viewed as more clearly racist than those of the local whites, since any economic competition would be purely transitory. One must bear in mind the existence of segregationist practices in parts of the British Empire, including South Africa and Canada, the latter influenced by the prevailing attitudes in the United States. The part played by US navy personnel in stirring up racial antagonism has, of course, already been noted. Rees, the soldier from New Zealand had in fact, a previous conviction under the name of Moses Rees, but what his offence was is not given.(43) Two of the other whites had previous convictions also, John Flynn Marden had sixty-one and Patrick Linahan had thirty-nine, and while this is not proof that established crime was involved in the rioting, it does suggest that a number of these men were prepared for trouble, whatever

the issue at stake. A reading of the press for the riots generally gives the impression that the whites involved in the violence were thoughtless youths bent on causing havoc rather than anything more serious. In Cardiff however, the emphasis was different, not solely due to the fierce level of fighting which was taking place, but also because of the noticeable element of service and ex-servicemen who could not be discounted as the rough, thoughtless, element of Cardiff's white population. Certainly, the evidence on the whites arrested during the riots suggests that the age groups of those involved was not limited to youths and young men. The ages of fifteen of the eighteen whites arrested were given in the press, and these ranged from eighteen to fifty four, with eight of the fifteen being aged over twenty five; hardly evidence of youthful folly. However, the Cardiff press, in common with the press at the other riot centres looked no further than surface sexual and economic issues in explaining why whites of varying ages were attacking the Black population of the city.

Information on the occupations of the twenty one Blacks arrested as a result of the rioting is less forthcoming. The assumption perhaps then as now, is that they were sailors, although evidence of this is limited. One press report does list the occupations of the nine Blacks tried and subsequently acquitted of the murder of John Donovan; eight were ships' firemen and one, John Abdullah, was a storekeeper.(44) The other Black men whose occupation was given was Mohamed Ali, who was described as a fireman and boarding-house master. The ages of seventeen of the Blacks were given and, if it is accepted that the majority of these men were involved in the seafaring trade, it can be of no surprise to discover that the majority (twelve out of seventeen) were young men, (under 25) bearing in mind that Black sailors usually were firemen, an arduous and physically demanding job, more suited to younger men.

The press information on the Blacks involved in the riot, although scanty, does appear to support the recognised picture of the settlement as a whole in Cardiff during the riots. But by looking at another source, namely, Colonial Office papers, more direct evidence of the economic plight of the community, confined as it was to the seafaring and service industries, can be obtained. The operation of a colour bar at many of Britain's ports has been

detailed elsewhere in this thesis, and Cardiff was no exception. Only a month after the Armistice a letter was sent from William Samuels, of British Guiana, to the Colonial Office from an address in Sophia Street in the heart of Bute Town, describing the situation at the port for the Black community.

> Every morning we go down to shipping offices (sic) to find ourselves work as to make an honest bread and are bluntly refused on account of our colour. Whereas foreigners of all nationality (sic) get the preference. This is not only in Cardiff but throughout the United Kingdom. (45)

The Colonial Office reaction to this letter was to get in touch with the Board of Trade asking them to make arrangements for Samuel's repatriation to British Guiana at that colony's expense as a 'distressed British seaman'. Only as an afterthought is the possibility of finding him a ship mentioned, the official view being acceptance of the situation at Cardiff: "It is not likely to be any easier to obtain employment for coloured seamen now than it has been during the war."(46)

If this letter from Samuels is indicative of the state of things in late 1918, then the plight of Black sailors in the post-riot period was even more dire. Even although violence had receded in June 1919, due to a combination of the use of a massive police presence in the affected areas (which no doubt had a deterrent effect after a few days, on even the most determined troublemakers), and the fact that the white rioters had succeeded in restoring the racial status quo as they perceived it to exist in Cardiff, the economic situation facing the Black community was, if anything, more serious, particularly during the coal strike of 1921 which left the port of Cardiff virtually paralysed. Interestingly, the main source detailing the continuing economic plight of the Blacks in Cardiff is a letter from the local NSFU delegate Mr. Henson, to the Colonial Office, in which he asks the CO to make a donation of £3,000 to £4,000 towards the Lord Mayor's Appeal Fund being set up in Cardiff to support the 900 destitute Black sailors in Cardiff, by making a payment of 10/- or 12/- per week to boarding-house masters to keep them. Most of the destitute men hailed from the West Indies and West Africa, according to Mr. Henson's report, and their condition was due to their being, in most cases, ineligible for unemployment benefit.

> Many of these men have been out of employment for from six to

twelve months and are at present compelled to sleep out in the fields or to obtain food wherever they can. (47)

A significant aspect of this letter is the apparent concern for the destitute Black sailors demonstrated by a seaman's union official. This is out of step with the numerous instances of colour bias shown by union representatives throughout this thesis. However, it is clear from Mr. Henson's subsequent meeting with CO officials that his and presumably the NSFU executive's main concern (since he brought a covering letter from the ailing NSFU president, Havelock Wilson) was for the wider implications of the dire unemployment problem facing the Blacks.

Mr. Henson explained that ... unless something could be done quickly to relieve them, serious consequences were to be feared .... Incidentally, Mr. Henson favours our proposal that the Merchant Shipping Act should be amended so as to cast liability for repatriation on the shipowner .... (48)

This latter reference was to a proposal that Black sailors be signed on for return voyages only, to ease the unemployment situation in Britain. This also would be advantageous to the Colonial Office, removing the burden of the cost of repatriation from the Colonial governments and on to the shipping companies. A further conclusion which can be drawn from Mr. Henson's views is that while some concern for the unemployment situation of Blacks is voiced, there is no suggestion that the union was about to alter its unbending attitu de towards this group of seamen, for example by campaigning for the introduction of quotas, whereby ships would have to carry a percentage of Black British sailors. Similar examples of union window dressing can be found in 1919 itself;

In September the Trade Union Congress passed a resolution condemning the employment of Asiatic labour, and demanding that preference be given, first to British white, and then to British coloured, labour. We [the NSFU] started propaganda - British in British ships. But we gained no satisfaction. (49)

This quotation hints at one reason why, even had the union genuinely wanted to ease the pressures of employment on Black seamen, little could have been achieved - the NSFU remained a weak organisation in the face of the multi-million pound Shipping Federation, its power base in the hands of an ageing demagogue who could little resist the downward pressure placed on wage

rates as the post-war slump in shipping became a confirmed trend, and who could not forget his own triumph of gaining official recognition of the NSFU after the 1911 National Strike, however much this can be seen as a pyrrhic victory.(50) Another example of union double-speak can be found during the Cardiff rioting, in the shape of a resolution passed by the railway workers:

> The Cardiff (No. 7) Branch of the NUR passed a resolution viewing with alarm the serious state of affairs prevailing in this and other seaport towns, and calling upon the Government to 'do their duty by the coloured men in this country and send them back to their homeland'. (51)

The assumption here is that Black Britons were desperate to return to the colonies and quit established homes and relationships in this country.

Why the problem of destitute Black seamen in Cardiff had reached such a peak in 1921 can be put down to the ongoing coal dispute which had badly affected the already declining merchant shipping industry. Further details of the impoverished conditions of the Black population in Cardiff were supplied by the Cardiff branch of the King George's Fund for seamen to its London headquarters in a plea for extra funds in June 1921. The fund began by supplying figures of the different nationalities in distress in Cardiff;

Indians, Arabs, Somalis, etc.	- 710
West Indians	- 250
West Africans	- 150

> It is considered that these distresssed coloured seamen constitute a very serious danger to the public peace and the Chief Constable of Cardiff has warned the Lord Mayor that rioting must be expected at any time if steps are not promptly taken to do something to ameliorate the condition of these men. (52)

This letter went on to reveal that 639 Black sailors had been maintained, some for up to five months without payment, by local boarding-house keepers, who now were threatened with bankruptcy, and some of whom had notified the Mayor that they intended turning their lodgers out within the next week. The only other form of relief available to destitute seamen (both Black and white) was the Seaman's Institute, which had been providing between 3,000 and 4,000 meals weekly for 280 - 300 men at a cost of over £70 per week, and which also allowed 180 men to sleep on the Institute floor at night, but which was now in debt for £260.(53)

The lack of an immediate Government response to the situation in Cardiff prompted the following resolution from a meeting of coloured seamen's boarding-house keepers,

> ... in view of the Government's delay in assisting the uninsurable unemployed seamen of whom there are 1500. We jointly and severally agree to day to refuse bed or food to any of these men, to refer them to the Lord Mayor of this city. These men who served this country in their need must have food and shelter and at once. We trust you will take immediate and appropriate action. Surely a few thousands to these men would favourably compare with the ten millions the Government are prepared to give miners. (54)

Despite this plea the CO remained largely unmoved. The only solution the Colonial Secretary had to offer was to suggest that any men who desired repatriation to their home country apply to the department. How the immediate problem of hundreds of Black destitute seamen suddenly thrown out into the streets was overcome is not clear. A cheque for £500 was presented to the Lord Mayor's fund by the King George's fund for sailors, but it was not to be used to pay off the indebted boarding-house keepers since this was not within the scope of the latter fund.(55) Perhaps alternative funding was found to compensate these men, but it is clear that any improvement was marginal, for only two months later six Black men were petitioning the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, regarding their difficulties in finding employment. The letter was sent from Angelina Street in Cardiff's dock area by B.H. Mason on behalf of himself and five other Black men.

> The present state of affairs cannot continue in this neighbourhood much longer as our people are at the point of starvation, and we appeal to the crown as our duty to do so, seeing that we are British subjects irrespective of colour, so we want to be treated as such .... We don't want hospitality, we want work, then if it cannot be found here then transit us, and ours (sic) to our various countries, that we may develop our conditions and standards of life to suit ourselves ... I want it to be made plain that Black British subjects should be considered first and foremost to foreigners. (56)

The themes set out in this letter are familiar ones by now - insistence upon their rights as British subjects; protests against the conditions suffered by Blacks in this country; and the desire to be repatriated, but only if jobs cannot be obtained for them in this country, which they could be if Black Britons were given favour over white foreigners. If the arguments put

forward had been heard before, so too, was the response from the CO, suggesting to the Prime Minister's Private Secretary, Miss Frances Stevenson, who was dealing with the case, that she refer the men to the local Mercantile Marine Office in Cardiff to set the repatriation process in train. From 1919 to 1921 the Colonial Office's and indeed, the Government as a whole's response to the plight of Black seamen was negative; if Black people complained of conditions in this country they could be helped to return home. Nothing was to be done for Blacks wishing to remain in the United Kingdom, for although British in name, this meant little in practice. The implication was that Black Britons were all very well in their place, but that place was not in Britain (except in war time emergencies). Such neglect of a growing section of the community amounted to a lack of vision on the part of the authorities which added up to an admission of the almost unavoidable conclusion that they were not wanted.

The race riots in Cardiff were the most serious outbreaks of their kind to take place in Britain in 1919. Claims for damage done to property during the conflicts reached over £7,700 but were settled at £3,112.[57] There were three fatalities, and dozens of arrests and injuries. But the disturbances in the city went much beyond stark figures. The memories of four nights of violence remained strong, and among the immediate consequences of the riots was the enforced restriction of the Black population firmly in the confines of the dock area known as Bute Town. Continuing in the background to the headline grabbing unrest was the unemployment problem among the Black community, an issue which did not go away, despite the operation of the repatriation scheme, but in fact, became more acute as the wartime boom in merchant shipping became a distant memory. Inter-racial sexual relations too, remained an issue, as mixed race families would not simply disappear from the city, and neither did the threat of violence between the races, as the passages discussing the destitution of Black seamen in 1921 have shown.

The suggestion that men trained to react aggressively, having vented their frustrations on the city's Black community, had now released the tension that had been building up since peace was declared, is worth considering in

relation to the cessation of the violence. So is the idea that the demobilisation and repatriation of white colonial soldiers played a part in reducing inter-racial friction. Whatever the reason, the widescale rioting which broke out in June 1919 did abate, and was never repeated. The memories and the unemployment situation faced by Cardiff's Black community however, lingered on.

NOTES

1. For discussions of the origins of the tramp steamer trade in Cardiff see Neil Evans, "The South Wales Race Riots of 1919", Llafur 3 (Spring 1980), p.5, and Kenneth Little, Negroes in Britain (London, 1972), p.57.

2. Harris Joshua et al., To Ride the Storm (London, 1983), p.15.

3. M.J. Daunton, "Jack Ashore : Seamen in Cardiff before 1914", Welsh History Review 9 (1978), p.191.

4. Ibid., p.192.

5. Joshua op. cit., p.18.

6. Captain Edward Tupper, Seaman's Torch - The Life Story of Captain Edward Tupper (London, 1938), pp. 50-51.

7. Daunton, "Jack Ashore", p.194.

8. Tupper, "Seaman's Torch", p.241.

9. Glamorgan Record Office, Glamorgan Police Records, D/D Con/C Fingerprint Books, 1918-1921, n.p.

10. Cardiff Times and South Wales Weekly News, July 19, 1919, p.8.

11. Times, June 13 1919, p.9.

12. David Williams, Chief Constable of Cardiff, Report to Cardiff Watch Committee on Colour Riots, July 9 1919, reprinted in South Wales Police Magazine, (Winter, 1970), p.6.

13. Evans, "South Wales Riots", p.23.

14. Williams, "Report on Colour Riots", p.8.

15. Evans, "Regulating the Reserve Army : Arabs, Blacks and the Local State in Cardiff, 1919-1945", Immigrants and Minorities 4 (July 1985), p.69.

16. Catherine Evans et. al., Below the Bridge - A Photo-historical Survey of Cardiff's Docklands to 1983 (Cardiff, 1984), p.44.

17. South Wales Daily News, June 14, 1919, p.5.

18. PRO CO 323/816/331-335 Chief Constable of Cardiff, Secret Report to Director of Intelligence, 9 October 1919.

19. CO 323/816/330 Report on Cardiff Racial Riots.

20. South Wales Evening Express, July 17 1919, p.1.

21. Ibid.

22. Glamorgan Police Records, D/D Con/C (1918-1921).

23. (Cardiff) Western Mail, July 17 1919, p.7.

24. Western Mail, July 11, 1919, p.6.

25. Western Mail, July 17, 1919, p.7.

26. Williams, "Report on Colour Riots", p.8.

27. South Wales News, June 14, 1919, p.4.

28. Western Mail, June 19, 1919, p.7.

29. South Wales Echo, June 14, 1919, p.1.

30. Evans, "South Wales Riots", p.20.

31. Cardiff Times and South Wales Weekly News, June 21, 1919, p.8.

32. Cardiff Central Library, City of Cardiff Minutes, June 30, 1919, p.364.

33. Western Mail, July 19, 1919, p.8.

34. Ibid.

35. South Wales Evening Express, July 26 1919, n.p.

36. CO 323/815/610 Report of visit by Dr. Fennell to Colonial Office, July 30, 1919.

37. CO 323/815/613 Memorandum on Cardiff Riots, August 1919.

38. George Rudé The Crowd in History (New York, 1984), pp.10-11.

39. Williams, "Report on Colour Riots", p.8.

40. Cardiff Times and South Wales Weekly News, June 14, 1919, p.1.

41. South Wales Evening Express, July 21, 1919, p.1.

42. Western Mail, July 19, 1919, p.8.

43. Glamorgan Police Records, D/D Con/C (1918-1921).

44. South Wales Evening Express, July 16, p.6.

45. CO 111/621 William Samuels to the Colonial Office, December 30, 1918.

46. CO 111/621 Colonial Office report on Samuel's letter, January 1920.

47. CO 328/878 J.Henson to Colonial Office, May 1921.

48. CO 328/878 CO Memorandum on meeting with J.Henson, 27 May 1921.

49. Tupper, "Seaman's Torch", p.242.

50. F. J. Lindop, "A History of Seaman's Trade Unionism to 1929", unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1972, n.p.

51. Western Mail, June 1, 1919, p.6.

52. CO 323/879 Letter from Mr. Bosanquet, King George's Fund for Seamen to its Head Office, June 19 1921.

53. Ibid.

54. CO 323/879 Telegram from Secretary, Cardiff Branch of NSFU and Chaplain of Seamen's Mission to CO June 1921.

55. See note 52 above.

56. CO 323/885 Letter from B.H. Mason to Prime Minister, August 8, 1921.

57. City of Cardiff Watch Committee Minutes, November 1918 - November 1919, p.522.

CHAPTER TEN - NEWPORT AND BARRY

The rioting in other parts of South Wales did not reach the same scale as the violence described in the preceding chapter relating to Cardiff. There were, however, a number of interesting issues raised by the riots at Newport and Barry which are worth consideration on their own. An example of this can be taken from the close proximity of the Newport outbreak with the more major disturbance in Liverpool, and the parallel outbreaks of violence in Cardiff and her sister port, Barry. The geographical location of Cardiff to these smaller Welsh ports (Barry is only ten miles from Cardiff and Newport twelve) is of course, a major factor in the background to the lesser South Wales disturbances, and examples of the influence of events in Cardiff are not difficult to discover. These should not however, serve to reduce the rioting at Newport and Barry to mere sideshows to the main event - they were not in fact, perceived as such at the time. Although the Black communities of these towns were much smaller than the Cardiff settlement, this did not prevent twenty-six Blacks being arrested during the Newport incidents, nor the death, by violent means, of a white ex-soldier during a fierce racial set-to in Barry. This killing of a recently demobilised soldier should also serve to indicate that the riots in these two towns are part of the more general picture of nationwide racial violence and social protest which has been built up in this thesis, with issues such as post-war dislocation and white male sexual jealousy again apparent. This is not to suggest that there were no local issues involved; in Newport there is evidence that housing and local business competition played a part in the violence. Meanwhile an alleged incident at Barry, involving an attack by a white crowd upon a Black man's funeral, had reverberations not simply at national level among Government circles, but worldwide.

In common with many other British ports the Black settlements in Newport and Barry had grown considerably during the war, although there is no suggestion that the war alone accounted for a considerable Black presence in these two ports. It is likely that parallel (if more limited) communities became established in Newport and Barry at the time of Black settlement in Cardiff, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, although little research has been done into these communities in comparison with the larger settlement.[1] There is evidence however, to support the conclusion that this growing Black population was facing an increasingly insecure future in the

shipping industry, a common fate shared with other Blacks in Britain's ports in the period from the Armistice to the outbreak of the most severe racial violence in June 1919. As the Colonial Office put it;

> We have received from New York, Glasgow, South Shields and Barry Dock, temperate and well-written representations from coloured men seamen, mostly, but not exclusively negroes, complaining of their difficulty in getting a ship owing to the preference of masters for white foreigners over coloured British subjects and also the attitude of the seamen's union. The Board of Trade confirm the difficulty and have made arrangements to repatriate coloured seamen and give them a maintenance allowance in the interval. (2)

One of the appeals to the Colonial Office which prompted these comments was sent on behalf of two hundred Black seamen at Newport in April 1919 by William Clark, resident at 3 George Street, a Black boarding house which was to come under white attack during the rioting six weeks later. (Clark's letter was more temperate than well-written).

> Sir, we are all seagoing men and now it comes to a final conclusion that all owing to the men who is in charge of the Shipping Department. In this post would not even try and assist us in giving us a job so as to earn our bread for we are all Britishers too dont matter the colour and so see when they be any ships to be signed they call for white Britishers and if they be not sufficient white to complete the ships instead of giving the coloured men a chance they take foreigners. Sir that is not lawful and right for the[y] do us out of our bread for foreign subjects for some of us has served our King both land and sea and now all is over they cast us out as wild bird [s] and previous we have been many a times and ask to see the superintendent and they would not allow us to see him so I appeal to you for assistance. (3)

The Colonial Office reply was not so much standard as identical in this case. One letter with suitable spaces for the appropriate names and dates was used to reply to pleas from Black seamen in Newport, Barry and Glasgow, stressing the fact that while the Colonial Secretary had no power to find them jobs, he recognised their difficulties and referred them to the Board of Trade scheme by which Black seamen could be repatriated and given 4 shillings per day as maintenance pending repatriation. The claim by Black sailors at Newport that they were being refused access to the local superintendent to lay their grievances before him was noted in a memorandum, but not considered significant enough to merit any further enquiry. Indeed, the implication of the set reply to the various port towns was that the Colonial Office viewed

the whole problem of Black unemployed seamen with complacency, as the letter's conclusion further suggests; "Lord Milner thinks that the arrangements which the Board of Trade have devised for meeting the present emergency will relieve the difficulties from which you are suffering".(4) Events were to prove otherwise and shock the Colonial Office into concerted action in the wake of the June riots.

If the Colonial Office records provide evidence of Black unemployment being an issue in the pre-riot period, in Newport at least, there is also evidence in the local press to suggest that racial violence too, was not a new phenomenon. During the riots it was reported that;

> Trouble has been brewing in this quarter for some time. It will be remembered that a year or so ago, a number of American sailors and coloured men were concerned in a 'mêlée', and no secret has been made of the ill-feeling which many people feel towards the coloured men on account of their being seen so often in the company of white women. (5)

This extract, as well as raising the important inter-racial sex issue, also reveals that American sailors played a part in increasing the tension between the two communities in the port, by their violent reaction to this fact of British life. Similar occurrences have been noted in the preceding chapter on Cardiff, but it is worth noting at this stage that there is no evidence of white British colonial serviceman involvement in the riots, either in Newport or Barry, a point of divergence from the larger port. The role of local service and ex-servicemen is clear however. It re-emerges in the Newport disturbances of 1920 and 1921, in one of which there is again evidence of American sailors fighting with Blacks, suggesting that there was a sustained level of violent hostility between these two elements of the seafaring community there.

The rioting at Newport broke out on Friday June 6, the night after the initial day's violence in Liverpool. Although there is no specific mention of the latter event in inciting the violence, the indirect influence of Liverpool cannot be ignored. For example, the Friday June 6th evening issue of the Monmouthshire Evening Post(6) led with an article on the Liverpool riots. Only a few hours later rioting erupted in the streets of Newport. The actual incident which started the rioting was the alleged insult levelled at a white woman by a Black man in the George Street area of the town. The Black was

then said to have been struck by a white soldier standing near by. This then developed into a free-for-all as Blacks and whites joined in on their respective sides. While all the local newspapers carried this account of the outbreak of the violence, none actually identify the soldier who allegedly interposed on the white woman's behalf. It is left to The Times[7] account to identify William Haley as the assailant, although this is not supported by any evidence given at the subsequent trial of Haley and other whites charged with rioting offences. A press report of the initial incident suggests two reasons why the rioting broke out, the first social, the second racial;

> From enquiries made in the vicinty - apart from official police information - it is not clear what caused the row. There is no apparent immediate cause, but the suggestion is made that it is because coloured men are able to secure houses while other people cannot ....

Later in the same report however, the common press account was aired,

> Another story is that a young lady was walking down Commercial Street when a a black man put his arm around her. A soldier who was in the shooting gallery opposite, immediately went to the man and knocked him down. This proved a spark which culminated in a blaze. Immediately a crowd assembled, blacks and whites, and the former took refuge in numbers three and four George Street. Then the wrecking of the houses commenced. (8)

It was this second version of the background to the fighting which received most press coverage in the Newport riots. Such a story, even if basically accurate, bears all the hallmarks of stereotyping, and indeed, in focusing on the sexual issue, the press were pursuing a common enough theme. The most significant point here, is that all other issues, social and economic were given very little attention in the contemporary press accounts. In precipitating the violence the story of a Black man abusing a white woman is firmly in keeping with Neil Smelser's analysis of collective behaviour. "Many racial outbursts have originated in the report - true or false - that one of the groups in question has committed some act which is in keeping with its threatening character".[9]

The street fighting which had broken out in George Street soon developed into a full-scale white attack on the two Black boarding houses situated at three and four George Street. These residences were badly damaged, the furnishings removed and burnt in the street, and the doors and windows broken. The six or seven policemen in the area were powerless to disperse

the white crowd, as were the group of Blacks who had sought refuge in the boarding houses.

> The angry crowd then surged around the corner to Commercial Road and smashed a restaurant owned by a Black man named Delgrada. From here the crowd moved on to Ruperra Street, where a Chinese laundry and an Arab boarding house were attacked. For two hours the rioters had everything their own way, it taking all that time for a body of police of suitable strength to appear on the scene. It was shortly before midnight when the Blacks, armed with sticks and iron bars, charged the crowd, and it was at this juncture that several persons were injured... In the charge, over twenty black men were arrested and several 'whites' were also taken into custody. (10)

This quotation suggests that the hard-pressed police, rather than focusing their attention on the white attackers, turned upon the Black men whose only offence appeared to have been an attempt to clear whites away by charging at them. An interesting aspect of the Black population's role in the disturbances is the fact that few, if any of them, were heavily armed, unlike many of their counterparts elsewhere during the riots. The firing of a revolver is mentioned in one account, but by which side is not specified.(11) Indeed, it seems that the Blacks were more completely the victims of white aggression than at almost any other location during the 1919 race riots in Britain. As a consequence of the Friday night's disturbances a special court was convened on the Saturday morning at which twenty-eight men arrested the preceding evening (of which at least twenty-two were Blacks) were charged with police assault, wilful damage and breaches of the peace. It was clear at this trial which side had been on the receiving end of the fighting, "The coloured men all looked as if they had been in the thick of it, some had their heads bandaged, others only had the remains of shirts."(12) Despite the fact that the Blacks were only charged with riotous assembly offences, they were not only remanded in custody, but taken to prison in chains.(13) The police bias which had led to their arrest was evidently being continued by the courts. Further evidence of this can be taken from the court explanation as to why bail was refused the Black defendents on June 21 while whites arrested during the riots were granted the same on June 16. "The Chairman of the police court said there was a difference between the Blacks and the whites. The whites had their homes here."(14) It is a moot point as to whether men resident in boarding houses, who had been sailing from Britain for years could

could be described as having 'homes' here, perhaps it is safer to say that many whites did not want them to have homes here. The Blacks were eventually given bail on June 24, after seventeen days in custody. A security of £2,400 was undertaken by John Davies, owner of one of the properties attacked during the riots, who had in fact fled from the white mob as they sought him and his white wife. Davies was one of those charged with riotous assembly, and as a non-white owner of property (and married to a white woman) he was a prime target for white attack, providing as he did a twin threat to their way of life, in the minds of the white crowds. The fact that of twenty-three Blacks charged with offences arising from the riots only two were, in fact, imprisoned, does something to restore the balance of the court's attitude to the two sides involved in the violence, but it cannot mask the fact that proportionally, far more Blacks were arrested, found guilty, and imprisoned, than whites. These figures support the notion that official bias is a strong element in the history of the riots at Newport.

The court proceedings which followed the rioting will be discussed in more detail below, but at this stage it is worth looking at the further incidents of racial violence which succeeded the initial dispute of June 6. The following night unrest again broke out, despite the presence of mounted police. Two Black boarding houses in Ruperra Street were the main targets for attack from stone throwing mobs, and at least one policeman was struck by a stone. The Chief Constable of Newport, Charles Gower, ordered that a baton charge be employed to clear the crowd. "Some thirty officers drew their truncheons and heads down, swept along Ruperra Street. The crowd fled."(15) Once again although it was clear who was doing the attacking, few whites (only two) were arrested. No further Blacks were taken into custody, perhaps due to their passivity in the face of stone-throwing whites. As a result of the disturbances on the Saturday night, one police sergeant and three civilians were injured. On the following night crowds were prevented from loitering in the riot zone by police, but the Monday night witnessed the return of violence, although on a more limited scale. This was no more in fact, than a "lively little scrap" in Ruperra Street between groups of Blacks and whites. The rumour was that the Blacks involved in this incident had travelled to Newport from Cardiff, but there is no corroboration of this.(16) This is the

sole account of the concluding incident of racial rioting in Newport in 1919, but even the suggestion that Cardiff Blacks were involved in it is interesting, an indication perhaps that Blacks were willing to travel (albeit only twelve miles) to aid their fellow Blacks. Two days later the Black residents of Cardiff had their own racial incidents to contend with.

It has been mentioned that twenty-six Blacks were charged with offences arising from the riots at Newport. Of these one, Percy White, is exceptional. A soldier serving with the local Monmouthshire Regiment, he was convicted of riotous assembly, the difference being that his actions were directed against the Black community. White, in fact, was tried last of all the defendants charged with rioting offences because he had broken his bail conditions by not attending his hearing the previous day. In his own defence White said he had just followed the crowd on June 6, but evidence was given that he had been seen throwing himself at a door in George Street to break it down. Described as one of the ringleaders of the white mob, he was given three months hard labour for his offence, but no extra punishment was given for his failure to comply with his bail conditions, the court deciding on leniency for this offence.[17] This strange case formed part of the Chief Constable's report to the Government on the race riots, and based partly on the evidence of this trial his attitude was to play down the racial element in the rioting.

> These riots were described as 'colour feuds' but personally I never attached much importance to the suggestions of racial feeling. It appeared to me to be an opportunity for sheer hooliganism and disorder on the part of the undesirable section of the residents of the town, and it is noticeable that the majority of white persons charged in connection with the disturbances were Irish. There was certainly an organised attack on houses inhabited by coloured men but is a singular circumstance that one of the offenders was himself a black man. (18)

This extract from the Chief Constable's Report is a prime example of playing down the real issues raised by the racial riots. There is no mention of employment and housing competition as factors in the white mob's attacks upon the Black population of the town. The rioters are dismissed as young hooligans, and the racist implication that Irish residents were hooligans, is regarded as an explanation in itself. It is true that three of the nine white

people arrested (one woman and eight men) did have Irish surnames, but the mere presence of an Irish element does not somehow remove racial overtones from the violence. It has been shown in the preceding chapter relating to Cardiff that the Irish population could perceive their social and housing positions as threatened by Black settlement in what they viewed as 'their' area, and it is quite possible that this is what happened in Newport also as those on a slightly more secure economic footing sought to quash any imagined threat to their position by Black encroachment. The comments relating to the role of Percy White in the rioting are particularly revealing of the simplistic analysis of the events on the part of the Chief Constable. In this way the admission that 'there was an organised attack on houses inhabited by coloured men' is not expanded, and is immediately followed by mention of White's case, as if one was counter-acted by the other.

All the Blacks arrested for their part in the Newport disturbances were taken into custody after the same incident; namely the Black charge towards the white crowd which had gathered outside the Black boarding houses at three and four George Street on June 6, (Percy White of course, was part of the white mob making the attack). The white rioters on the other hand were arrested over a period of several days; during the rioting on June 6 and 7, one on June 11, and the final two on June 13. The implication of this is that the police were concentrating on the ringleaders of the whites: taking their time to identify the eight men and one woman who were finally arrested. The press reports at the time highlighted one man in particular as being prominent in the rioting, Gordon Maskell. "Maskell continually incited the crowd and took a leading part in attacking three and four George street and three Commercial road and then urged 'Now for the Chinese' and the laundry was wrecked."(19) When charged at the police station with rioting offences Maskell, aged thirty, explained his actions, "I did it for the benefit of the seamen of whom I am one, and cannot get a job because of these niggers being here, and we intend to take the law into our own hands."(20) Maskell's viewpoint was evidently shared by manyothers in the town, and it is significant that this avowed ringleader was a sailor. Maskell was given the joint heaviest sentence meted out to a white for his part in the riot: three months hard labour. Others however, whose offences seemed equally serious, were found not guilty. One of these was Jerry Shea who was arrested for two separate offences allegedly

occuring on June 6 and 7. Shea was a well-known local sportsman (an indication perhaps, of how male machismo was involved in the crowd mentality), a rugby footballer with Pill Harriers and a noted boxer. He, along with Harriers teammate, William Haley, and Mrs Mary Sheedy were charged with attacking the residence of John Davies, a Black man and his white wife. Shea allegedly broke the door down with a chopper, but Davies was able to flee from the crowd. Shea was found not guilty of attacking the house and attempting to set it alight. Haley and Mrs Sheedy were convicted however, the former being bound over for twelve months on a £20 surety, while Mrs. Sheedy was sentenced to three months hard labour, and it is clear that the courts viewed her conduct with severity. The motivations behind her actions are not hard to discover: suspicion and jealousy of the white wives of the Black men. "One witness named Martiniaz said that the woman prisoner shouted at her, 'You ought to be burnt, because you are a Black man's wife'."[21] Two other whites, William Watts and James Daley were discharged due to lack of evidence, while Shea was found not guilty of riotous assembly but was merely bound over for twelve months. The other white arrested for his part in the riots was William Ryan who was convicted on rioting and assault offences and was given two months imprisonment. Given the apparent reluctance on the part of the police to arrest all but persistent or serious offenders, it appears that the courts, in convicting only five out of nine offenders, and imprisoning but three of these, acted with considerable restraint given the seriousness of the disturbances which had occured. Perhaps the courts were influenced by the fact that rioting had abated of its own accord, and the threat to public order was no longer acute. A further reason for the relatively light sentences given is due to the degree of sympathy felt by the court towards the white crowd's feelings - if not in their manner of expressing it. The statement of the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions is worth quoting.

> The black men who were concerned in the affair were subjects of his majesty the king, as the persons then before them were, and were equally entitled to the protection of the law. He could understand and sympathise with the feeling of the white men when they saw white women associating with black men, but the white men had no right to take the law into their own hands... (22)

The magistrate's view provides direct evidence of continuing themes in the

instance of riot dating from 18th century outbursts which prompted George Rude to comment; "There were occasions ... when magistrates not only were cautious and timid in summoning troops, but openly or secretly sympathised with the rioters cause".(23)

The twenty three Blacks who were ultimately charged with rioting appeared the same day as the whites, and it is clear that an element of continuity was demonstrated in the court attitudes to both sets of rioters. Seven of the Black men could not be positively identified and were released. The remaining sixteen were found guilty of riotous assembly and were each bound over for a year. The court attitude apparently was to play down the potential seriousness of the whole episode, and it is true that there were, for example, no serious injuries arising from the disturbance, but again, as has been the case elsewhere in this thesis, the basic injustice of the violence directed against Newport's Black community is nowhere commented on, if in fact it was recognised as such by the general public, which is open to doubt. Another Black, Tom Savage, was charged with police assault for an attack on a police constable on June 6. Convicted of the offence, he was given one month's imprisonment. Savage himself was the victim of an assault during the rioting. The evidence for this emerging during the inquest on June 7, into the death of Savage's brother, a marine fireman, aged thirty-one.

> Thomas Savage, a brother of the deceased and a native of Sierra Leone, said in answer to the coroner there were five brothers, and they were all known as 'Tom Savage'. His brother was a fireman and when he was paid off told witness that he had a severe pain in the chest. Witness walked with difficulty, and in answer to the coroner said he had been injured in the riot on the previous night, and had sustained a blow on the head. Sergeant Jenkins said the man was in custody... (24)

A formal verdict was returned on Savage, who, it was discovered, had a weak heart, and an abscess in his liver which had burst, causing his death.

The above report reveals that Savage was from Sierra Leone and this information is in direct contradiction to the assertion of the Chief Constable that:

> A number of West Indian natives (sic) and eight white men were

charged with rioting at the Quarter Sessions and whereas a number of whites received various terms of imprisonment, only one West Indian was sent to prison and that for an assault on a police constable. (25)

It is probable that Savage was not the only Black arrested who came from Sierra Leone. Indeed, a letter from Mr. Christopher Fyfe, the leading authority on the history of Sierra Leone, to the author suggested that of the twenty three surnames of Blacks charged that were supplied him seven, including Savage, were to be commonly found in Sierra Leone.(26)

A specifically local element which emerged from the rioting in Newport was a series of letters to Newport's daily newspaper, the South Wales Argus, which are worth considering, supplying as they do, an all too rare direct insight into the two communities' attitudes at the time of the riots. The opening shot was fired on Friday June 13, a week after the first day of the rioting in the town, by an individual who signed himself, 'Anti-black'.

The system in this country is generally to inflict terms of imprisonment or to extract a fine from those who may be convicted of breaking the law. A native fears neither of these punishments but what he does dislike is a few strokes of the lash, and I think if this kind of punishment were judiciously meted out, the crime among the native population would considerably decrease... As long as we treat the black man on equal terms to the white man we shall have trouble. (27)

He concluded with a number of suggestions as to how Blacks in Newport could effectively be segregated, including, forcing them to sit in the rear of trams, and to place under arrest any Black men and white women found in each other's company. In other words, 'Anti-black' wished no less than the introduction of a segregationist system on Southern American or South African lines. The response to this racist missive was immediate, and, it must be said, typical. The following two letters appeared answering his accusations, one from a 'Barbados Negro' stressing the difference between Black West Indians and natives of West Africa, and blaming the latter for the racial friction currently taking place in Britain. "There is as much difference between West Indians and West Africans as chalk and cheese... We are accustomed to living in houses in the West [Indies] not grass huts; neither did

we come to England to learn the use of a knife and fork."[28] The debate regarding the differences between West Indian and West Africans was a common one and was to continue down to the 1930's at least, when it was a contentious topic among West African and West Indian student groups in Britain, and the divisive effect of such discussion among the Black community is not hard to discover.[29] The other letter which appeared in the June 14 issue of the Argus came from Trevor Griffiths, who defended the Black community along traditional Christian missionary, paternalistic, lines;

> Treat these men as fellow British citizens, as fellow human beings. If, indeed, their customs and ways of life are inferior to our own, let us give them the opportunity of learning a better way by free association with ourselves. But don't let us be guided by the anti-Christian sentiments of 'Anti-black'. (30)

A few days later a letter in the same vein was printed. The stress however, was not laid upon what whites could teach the Black population, but what could be learned from them by a true appreciation of their qualities.

> Nobody who had the delight of listening to the recent performance by the Choral Society of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's 'Hiawatha' will treat seriously the suggestion of the inevitable and universal inferiority of our black-skinned brethren from other parts of our Empire. Unfortunately, it is evident from the present agitation that there are many who, through no virtue of their own were born 'pale-faces' of whom it must be said that their skins are the whitest part of them. (31)

Even the attempt at 'toleration' contained in Haddon's letter cannot escape a racist taint. His view appeared to have been that Black 'civilisation', here in the form of Coleridge-Taylor's work, could only be measured in terms of its degree of conformity to white notions of worth. A double-standard which Coleridge-Taylor himself was made aware of. "The great praise for the Hiawatha trilogy little affected Coleridge-Taylor, but in other ways did him harm. The opinion was suggested by some that 'people of negro blood did not develop beyond a certain point'."[32] In one sense Haddon's attitudes are more of an indicator of contemporary white racist attitudes than the riots, since he was attempting to express an 'enlightened' British viewpoint in relation to Black people in this country. As for 'anti-black', a further letter, printed in tandem with Haddon's, showed that his bigoted outlook had been in

no way amended by the press discussion on the Black community. "Experience has taught me that the only possible treatment for the native must be on the principle that the white man is the master and the black man the servant".(33)

A further letter on the Black settlement in Britain appeared in the South Wales Argus. Written by a West Indian named Henry Pothemont, it provides evidence of an 'educated' Black's analysis of the problems of the Black seafaring community, and is unusual to the extent that it looks beneath the surface of increased sexual tension in the ports, although once again, the antipathy between some West Indians and their West African counter-parts is exhibited.

> Prior to the Great War, the coloured men who went to sea, and who made their homes in this country, were mostly British West Indians, ... There were also a few West Africans, from the Sierra Leone district, who were mostly employed in ships in the African trade. These men were generally well-behaved, and loyal subjects, and there was no friction between them and the people of this country.
>
> But the outbreak of the war in 1914 brought a great change. British seamen who were reservists were called up and others volunteered for the army and navy in thousands. Several thousand of the alien seamen who were serving in our ships were removed therefrom. Thus was created a great shortage of men for the merchant service, mostly sailors and firemen, and coloured men were welcomed to fill the gap. And this is just where the trouble lies. Arabs (mostly Somalis) poured into the country, so did West Africans. These later importations were attracted by the good wages offering, and to them it was absolute wealth. They did not man our ships for love of England... (34)

Up to this point Pothemont's description of events is both informative and reasoned. Although he does tend to create a class barrier between 'uncouth' late-comers and 'established' black residents. However, from here he descends to conclusions no less racist than those expressed by 'Anti-black'.

> These men have only a thin veneer of civilisation and are not far removed from Simon-pure savage and so friction began... Whenever any of these lowest human types of humanity were ashore they would dress up in style, with money in their pockets... (35)

The reason for the riots, he concluded, was the ill-feeling developed among

the white population as these Blacks paraded around the streets with 'low white women'. The solution he suggested was to repatriate any Black who could not prove pre-war residence in Britain. Even this did not go far enough however, for the Government whose analysis was apparently less considered that that of Pothemont - Blacks were a public order problem, and as such they all were to be encouraged to leave this country through the repatriation scheme.

The Black population of Newport was by no means eradicated by the introduction of paid repatriation, and with the Black presence remained the inter-racial tension which had exploded into violence in June 1919. Unrest did not end there, despite the Chief Constable's complacency in October of that year; "There is still a number of black men residing in this town, and I have not heard of any feeling being shown against them since the regrettable occurences referred to above."(36) On the night of June 2 1920 a racial incident occured which demonstrated that sexual and economic tensions had by no means evaporated. "The trouble arose in Ruperra Street, off Commercial Road, and it appears that it began over a dispute between black men and sailors with a reference to a white woman."(37)

Windows of a Black lodging house were smashed and one white was arrested for attacking a Black named Olen Hersin. The white denied the charge, and other whites claimed they were only by-standers and the fight had been caused by an American sailor baiting the Blacks. In the event, the magistrate dropped the charges against the white. An interesting aspect of this dispute, which must have been severe, since it lasted a couple of hours and necessitated the use of a 'special detachment' of police to quell the fighting, was the fact it was 'Arabs' who were the victims of the white mob. It was notable during the 1919 riots that Muslims were involved only on the periphery of the violence, when a Muslim boarding house was attacked as the white crowd rampaged through the 'coloured quarter' of the town. In 1920 however, and in 1921, it was this section of the Black community who came under attack.

In March 1921 an interesting sequence of events was triggered off by the unsuccessful attempt of another Black named Hersin, this time Arten Hersin

(although it is possible that this was the same man, newspaper reporting being what it is) to sign on for a ship at the local shipping office. Hersin had been unable to obtain a berth for eleven months and he reacted violently to his refusal by the local NSFU official, Thomas Powell, to hire him, pushing his discharge book in Powell's face, and, during an ensuing struggle, taking a bite out of his chin. In his defence Hersin said Powell frequently asked him for drinks, and when he refused Powell had told him to clear out. Powell predictably, denied this accusation, and Hersin was fined £5 for the assault. The day after this incident, however, a larger scale disturbance occured at the Shipping Office.

> The incident is said to have occured from the fact that an Arab, who has been ashore for a long time, has been summoned for an assault on Mr. Tom Powell, one of the delegates of the National Sailors and Fireman's Union. The fact that this man will have to appear before the local magistrates to-day seems to have upset a party of about thirty Arabs, who used sticks and mineral water bottles on the white men. About one hundred white men joined in the melee and some of them managed to get the sticks from the Arabs and used them as weapons. (38)

Six Muslims and one white were injured in the fracas, but none was detained in hospital. The number of Muslim injured however, would suggest that it was they, rather than the whites who were the underdogs in the fighting. One white, Joseph McCarthy, was fined ten shillings for being drunk and disorderly, after a breach of the peace charge failed.

These later disputes demonstrate how far the economic survival of the Black community remained tied to the state of the merchant shipping industry, and as that trade continued to decline, racial tension remained high, particularly at the meeting point for both groups of seamen - the Shipping Office. In October of 1921 the competition for jobs was so severe that a fight ensued when a group of Muslim seamen from Cardiff arrived at the Newport Shipping Office seeking work on a steamer leaving the port. "The men at Newport, many of whom have been unemployed for several months, and are in a state of destitution, took exception to the conduct of the Cardiff Arabs and altercations followed".(39) It was estimated that ten 'Arabs' on each side were involved, a number of whom were later taken to Pill police station, but later released without charge. One Muslim from Cardiff, Mohamed Ali, was

later charged with possessing an unlicensed revolver and fined £5. This dispute highlights the desperation of the Black community, not only in Newport, but Cardiff also, and the pressures which they came under in seeking jobs in an industry which could well survive without them. There is a parallel to be drawn between this incident and the assertion in the letters to the press mentioned above from two West Indians, that they should not be confused with 'savages' from West Africa. The employment position in the shipping industry was such that racial fractionalisation, like divisions between the rival seamen's unions perpetuated the weakness in the seamen's collective voice, to the advantage of shipping companies. In other words, what was primarily an economic issue came to be considered in terms of racial and intra-racial conflict. An understandable reaction in view of the fact that seamen, Black and white, were in no position to tackle their real grievances at source.

Having examined the Newport riots and their repercussions in detail it is now time to turn to the events at Barry, and here too, issues of some significance emerge. The most noticeable divergence between the riots at Newport and Barry is that, in the latter a fatality occured. In Newport, as has been mentioned, there were no serious injuries reported, yet in Barry, where rioting was on a more limited scale. A white man named Frederick Longman was killed as a result of a fight between him and a French West Indian named Charles Emmanuel. Although this was by no means the only incident of note to occur during the violence in Barry, it was the starting point for the wider large-scale disturbances which have come to characterise the 1919 race rioting in general, and as the initiating factor, it is worth considering in detail. Again, the local press is the main source of information for the incident, although of course, the degree of objectivity it contains is open to question. This is particularly evident in the initial report of the incident, which appeared two days after the fatality, in the weekly Barry Dock News. No adjective was spared;

> A horrible tragedy occured at Cadoxton, Barry, on Wednesday night last. Frederick William Longman, better known as 'skanny' Longman, age about thirty, a dock labourer ... was returning home just before ten o'clock, when he was waylaid near his own house by two negro seamen, one of whom, the alleged murderer, seized him by the throat, pinned him against the wall,

> and taking out a large, sharp, pocket knife, cut him a terrible gash about four inches in length, in the region of the heart, and the unfortunate man died in a few minutes ..... The shocking tragedy gave rise to great excitement in the streets, and crowds of many hundreds of people made for the streets in which the negro sailors live, and several times up till midnight, the scenes of indignation and cries of revenge were very threatening, but happily the infuriated crowds were magnificently handled to restraint by the ... police. (40)

If this report were to be taken at face value it would seem the whole night's disturbances could be blamed on the totally unprovoked aggression of a Black man upon an innocent white man, which in turn, led to the understandable wrath of the white crowd, which however, was controlled in the most proper manner by an heroic police force. While indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the police at Barry were largely successful in restraining the white crowd from the excesses in which it was able to indulge elsewhere, the other two premises on which this description turns are by no means as clear cut, for on the one hand, even the white jury which tried Emmanuel did not believe his attack upon Longman was unprovoked, hence his conviction was for manslaughter and not murder. While the second, that the white crowd's anger was justified was based more on the lynching 'eye-for-an-eye' attitude, than on the notion of justice.

As the court case developed it became clear that the incident involving the two men was by no means the unprovoked attack portrayed above. When cautioned, Emmanuel had stated,

> I defend myself with a pocket knife. I was coming down the street for a little walk, after signing on and this man (deceased) said 'Why don't you go in your own street?', I say 'Behave yourself'. By the time I turn around to him, I speak to one coloured woman, and he came behind me, and hit me one clout in the eye. Three more men hit me, one with a poker, and I defend myself with knife. I run away shouting murder. (41)

Emmanuel was taken into police custody by a policeman about 9.30 p.m. on 11 June, as he ran away from the scene of the fight, pursued by a crowd of whites. The policeman who arrested him noted that he seemed to be pleased taken out of the hands of the pursuing crowd, which was hardly surprising given the circumstances. It seems evident that Emmanuel was apparently well-able to take care of himself in a fight, but he had been both verbally and physically abused by Longman who, evidently, was hostile to the Black

community. Longman too, was a tough customer, having twenty convictions behind him for offences including police assault and disorderly conduct. He had joined up in 1914 however, and had only recently been discharged after four-and-a-half years' service with the Royal Field Artillery. In fact, his funeral was paid for by the Discharged Sailor's and Soldier's Associations. It may be concluded that Longman was an archetype for the white mobs during the riots. Emmanuel's history too, was a common one: known to the Barry authorities for at least seven years, he had presumably served in the merchant service throughout the war. His occasion for visiting the street in which Longman stayed was to pay a call on some of the Blacks who lived there. Longman lived at 25 Beverley Street, next door to a Black boarding house at number 23, and another Black couple named Richards lived at number 17. The husband was at sea at the time of the incident but the Black woman, Louisa Richards, gave evidence in Emmanuel's defence at the time of his trial, to the effect that Longman first insulted, then struck Emmanuel, who then closed with him in a struggle before being struck by two other men, one with his fists and the other with a poker. These two whites, named Yeoman and Hopkins, understandably gave an alternative view of events - claiming that they only went to Longman's assistance after Emmanuel had got him pinned against a wall, and as soon as they arrived on the scene, the accused pulled out his knife and tried to stab them before lunging at Longman and stabbing him. Hopkins further alleged that he had only glanced Emmanuel with a poker, after the stabbing. When Emmanuel took the stand himself he declared that the poker had been used on him before the knife was taken from his pocket, but it is clear that the well-established white stereotyped view of Blacks as inherently violent, was an outside consideration in a press account that,

> The alleged murderer came from Manchester, a fortnight ago, having given evidence at Assizes thereat in a stabbing case from Barrow-in-Furness, in which a number of coloured men were concerned. (42).

The incident to which this referred had taken place on January 22 1919 on board the SS Salient in Barrow docks and involved two ships' firemen, John Alabara, a West African, and a Jamaican, Canute Taylor. Taylor had shot Alabara in the head after a long history of bullying and goading by the other

man, and as a direct result of a hand-to-hand struggle. Alabara did not die instantly but lay in a serious condition until March 2, hence the case dragged on for four months. Emmanuel's evidence was to the effect that Alabara was drunk and had asked Taylor to fight. In the event, Taylor was found not guilty of manslaughter, there being no evidence that he had deliverately fired at Alabara. (43) This case was hardly proof of an innate tendency to violence among Black people in general. Rather it was the story of a victim standing up to a recognised bully, with a gun it is true, but without any proved intent to murder. Yet, by 'economising with the truth' the local South Wales press report implied that Emmanuel, and Black people in general, were prone to violence. Added to this were the mass disturbances which the death of Longman produced. The fact that it was white crowds who were threatening the peace was, however, overlooked. In summing up the case the judge's allusion to the riots was purely in terms of the disruption they had caused.

> ... The case was more than usually anxious because, unfortunately, there were introduced into it some of the associations of those deplorable black and white riots which had shocked the consciences of all thinking people, The jury would have to consider whether the accused went into the affray with a deadly weapon for the purpose of using it, or whether he used the knife in the heat of passion, in which case it would be manslaughter, or did he use it in self-defence? (44)

The jury took 25 minutes to decide that Emmanuel was guilty of manslaughter. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment - the most severe sentence handed out to anyone as a direct result of the race rioting in 1919.

It has been stated that the death of Longman acted as a catalyst for rioting to break out in the Cadoxton area of Barry where the Black community of the town lived, and indeed, the rioters were soon on the streets, attacking houses where Blacks lived, with stones, and chasing any Blacks in sight. One such was Ernest Jackman, a Black shipwright who lived in Tredegar Street, Cardiff, but on the night of June 11 was lodging at 23 Beverley Street (next door to Longman's house). He was eating his supper when he heard the crowd outside and the landlady advised him to leave the house, which he did, table knife still in hand. The crowd began to chase him and he attempted to seek refuge in the doorway of a house in nearby Robin's Lane. Here, a white, John

Goldworthy, refused him entry, and indeed, tried to catch him for the crowd. A fight ensued with the result that Goldworthy received a gash on the head. Jackman admitted pulling Goldworthy from the door in an attempt to gain entry to the house, but denied striking him, claiming that one of a hail of stones from the crowd which were pursuing him had struck the victim. The doctor who treated Goldworthy agreed that this could have been possible. Although initially charged with grievous bodily harm, Jackman, was convicted of a lesser wounding charge at the Glamorgan Quarter Sessions. The Magistrate, however, took a charitable view of the offence, influenced perhaps by the events surrounding the indident and the fact Jackman was a tradesman, and not a 'mere' seaman. "The Chairman said as defendent was a respectable man they did not want to make a criminal of him, and therefore, bound him over for twelve months". (45)

A number of whites were arrested for their part in the violence which continued for several hours on the night of June 11. Two men, Tim Hooley and Eli Duffy, were charged with inciting the mob to riot and with criminal damage. The surnames of these men again suggest that those of Irish descent were involved in the rioting at this third centre of disturbance in South Wales. Both these men were remanded for a week and the repercussions of their actions, in particular their attack on a house in Foster Street, will be discussed below. Other white offenders were dealt with on the spot. Percy Hewings, for rioting in Laura Street, and Isaac Parker, for inciting to riot, were bound over for twelve months each for their offences. "Described as a very serious offence ... Sidney Taylor, a young man living at Cadoxton, appeared on a charge of assaulting the police and inciting a riot in Weston Square, Cadoxton on June 11". (46) Taylor was among a crowd of rioters and seeing Hooley and Duffy being arrested, shouted for the crowd to rescue them. He then picked up a stone and threw it at a police constable, striking him in the abdomen. He was then arrested. Taylor was imprisoned for two months for police assault and placed under probation for twelve months for inciting the crowd to riot.

Despite the strong policing implied by these arrests, and by the press accounts of the time, violence broke out again on June 12, this time the wrath of a white mob fifty strong was directed at a chip shop run by a white

woman and her Black husband.

It appears that about fifty workmen early in the afternoon went to a fish and chip shop in Holton Road, which is kept by a woman whose husband is a negro. The latter was on the premises but remained in hiding. A large crowd gathered on the scene, but the police had been sent for and formed a cordon. They prevented the workmen from entering the premises and carrying out their threats of molesting the coloured man. (47)

Again, there is evidence to suggest that the police intervention was decisive. However, this did not stop damage being done to the premises, and one white, Jeremiah McCarthy, was charged with criminal damage and incitement to riot. He was convicted of both offences and was ordered to pay £5 costs for the damage to the shop door, and was bound over for twelve months for the rioting charge. The repercussions of this incident can be traced in a letter from the Black victim of this attack, James Gillespie, to the Prime Minister in 1919, appealing for Lloyd George's intervention to help him to leave the country;

Sir, I am a native of Jamaica, British West Indies, been a seaman by profession sailing out of Barry Dock from 1896 till 1917, when I stoped(sic) ashore to go in Government work from the 29th of September 1917 to the 1st of June 1918, the work was finished (Granaries). I started a little business in the refreshment department (fish and chips) till the last racial riot 12th of June 1919 when my home was destroyed by the rioters. I applied for repatriation for myself and my family several times, to the Home Office, Colonial Office, and the West Indian Committee. I filled a form in, like wise a letter from my creditors giving me permission to leave the country. (48)

The letter continued by stating that all Gillespie wanted was a passage to Jamaica with his family, he did not ask for compensation, although he had lost £227 due to the riots, and was currently living on 26 shillings weekly out-of-work donation, supplemented by money raised from pawning his furniture. This account is direct evidence of how the riots actively drove Black people (including those of long residence such as Gillespie) from this country. His case is also illustrative of how Black small businesses were a particular target for attack by white mobs who feared a challenge to their economic position by comparative Black prosperity. Gillespie's own account suggests that the damage done to his premises was more severe than press reports intimated. It appears that the delay in repatriating Gillespie was due to his refusal to

leave his family behind, for the Colonial Office response on receiving a copy of this letter was to state, " ... there is no objection to the white wife and step-child of the seaman James Gillespie accompanying him on his repatriation." (49)

Apart from Emmanuel and Jackman, three other Blacks were arrested during the riots, for possessing loaded revolvers without licences, on June 12.

> Defendants pleaded they were very sorry to appear in a police court ... They had heard that a massed attack was being launched on them and had slipped a revolver into their pockets to protect themselves with. The presiding magistrate, Dr. Howell Rees, said the negroes' duty was to carry out the regulations of this country. They would be dealt with more severely, as they were getting serious. (50)

The lack of sympathy and understanding here displayed is typical of the working of the judicial system in most cases involving Blacks charged with offences arising from the race riots.

The final case to be dealt with regarding the Barry riots involved the seemingly minor offence of window breaking levelled at Eli Duffy and Tim Hooley, but from this case a convoluted series of rumours and counter-rumours developed which reached across the world, an ideal indication of how far the news of the race riots in Britain had a global significance at a time when Black people worldwide were turning to Pan-Africanism as a means of liberation and unified resistance to white domination. The starting point for this was the allegation which appeared in the radical Trinidad newspaper, the Argos on July 17 1919 which stated that, "a white mob in Cardiff had attacked a black man's funeral, cut off the corpse's head, and used it as a football". (51) The report of this alleged atrocity was printed to coincide with the arrival of repatriated seamen from Britain in the wake of the riots, and the subsequent heightened racial tension this caused in Trinidad was enough to move Governor Gordon to inform the Colonial Office that,

> ... A very strong feeling of antipathy has recently manifested itself in this colony ... it has been accentuated by the recent arrival, on the 17th instant, by the SS Santille of a number of men who had been concerned in the Cardiff riots and by the publication in the Argos newspaper of alleged acts of ill-treatment of the blacks in the United Kingdom. (52)

The subsequent unrest in Trinidad and elsewhere in the West Indies has been discussed in the chapter on repatriation, hence suffice it to say here that the Colonial Office was so awake to the possibilities of unrest in the colonies that it carried out an investigation into these allegations of white atrocities during the riots, asking the Chief Constables of Newport and Cardiff if there was any substance to this rumour. Charles Gower, Chief Constable of Newport was emphatic, if ill-informed in his conclusion,

> It is hardly necessary to say that there is not the slightest foundation for the suggestions made in the extract from the Argos of Barbadoes (sic), and therefore I have been unable to obtain any cuttings repudiating or denying an allegation which has not to my knowledge ever been heard of before. (53).

The Chief Constable of Cardiff, David Williams, did however, have information regarding this incident,

> With regard to the allegations made of the funeral of a West Indian being stopped, the coffin smashed, and the head severed from the dead body therein, I find it untrue, but the following incident took place which could lend itself to gross exaggeration. A coloured man named Peter Johnson died of a heart disease at number 54 Loudon Square, Cardiff, on the early morning of 10 June 1919, the day previous his body was conveyed to number 1 Foster Street, Cadoxton, Barry, near Cardiff, a house frequented by coloured men, preparatory to his burial. While the corpse was lying at this address the house was attacked by rioters, who were unaware that the dead body was there, and the windows were broken. The corpse was not in any way interfered with by the crowd and the funeral took place a few days later in an orderly and seemly manner. (54).

This report prompted discussions in the Colonial Office as to whether a statement should be prepared for publication which could be used by Colonial governments to contradict exaggerated reports circulating among the local populations, but there is no evidence of this move being taken. The actual incident which gave rise to the allegation of white atrocity at Barry was the stone throwing episode alluded to above.

> A serious charge of rioting in Foster Street and Laura Street, Cadoxton, was made against Tim Hooley and Eli Duffy. Inspector R. H. Thomas said owing to the 'coloured trouble' there was a big crowd in Foster Street on the 11 of June at 11p.m. He saw defendants with stones and sticks in their hands, and they were mingling with the crowd. He gave chase, and they threw stones at windows as they ran, breaking them. (55).

After a week's remand the two men, who were shoe-blacks, appeared at the local police court charged with incitement to riot and wilful damage to numbers 1 and 2 Foster Street. These houses were described as the premises of a butcher, whose windows were smashed, but it is unclear whether the proprietor was a Black. Both men were fined £2 for the offence plus 25 shillings damages and were bound over for twelve months for the rioting charge.

The significance of this whole episode is to highlight the global importance of the riots in Barry and elsewhere in Britain during 1919. The fact that this incident was blown out of all proportion similarly demonstrates the depth of feeling aroused in the Black community returning to the West Indies after the rioting. That their anger was shared by the wider Black world is clear from the Argos article, and from a reference to the incident in a speech by Marcus Garvey to a U.N.I.A. meeting at Carnegie Hall, in New York later in the year, in which he stated,

> We fought, and after the battle what was done to us? They mobbed us in Liverpool, in London and Manchester. The English (sic) in Wales stopped the funeral procession of the West Indian negro, smashed the coffin, cut off the head of the dead man and made a football of it (cries of shame). The British did that in Great Britain. (56)

That Garvey had heard of this story is almost certainly due to the Argos report, and the significance of this link between the radical Black press in the West Indies and the United States cannot be overstressed, and in fact Garvey was to go to the West Indies during 1922 to visit local branches of the U.N.I.A., much to the alarm of the Colonial Office.

After the incidents of June 11 and 12 in Barry there were no further outbreaks of racial violence. No doubt the previously mentioned active policing of the town played a part in this, as did the arrival of 300 soldiers from the Duke of Westminster Regiment on the morning of Saturday, June 13. The former was not only frequently mentioned in the local press accounts of the riots, but also in a letter from a spokesman for the Black community, named R.E. Vanloo, to the police authorities, which was not surprisingly, released to the press;

> We, the coloured men of Barry Docks, thank you for the protection extended to us by your admirable tact and foresight in dealing with the mob, by which life and property have been saved, and we are very glad that we had not to fight. We are also thankful for the sympathy shown us by other societies in the district, and we will be thankful to you for your assistance to cause the Government to adopt a plan as soon as possible to send us home, for we know we are not wanted here. (57)

The vigorous policing here described included the use of cordons and a policy of arresting identified ringleaders, before they led the crowd beyond manageable proportions - hence the number of charges of incitement to riot. The use of a strong police presence also led to the arrest of both Emmanuel and Jackman as they were being pursued by angry white crowds. Had they not been taken into custody so promptly their fate is not hard to guess.

The riots in Newport and Barry should not be viewed simply as by-products of the larger scale disturbances at Cardiff, although a number of links with the major port in South Wales have been mentioned. Both these towns, although having more limited Black communities were the scenes of the same kind of mass white attacks that have been witnessed in numerous other ports in Britain during 1919. The common themes of sexual, employment and housing competition again emerge in the Newport disturbances, although in the case of Barry these remained below the surface - the only indication of a deeper cause for the rioting here is the obvious dislike for Black men displayed by the recently-demobilised Longman in his abuse of Charles Emmanuel who, however, had also seen war service in the merchant navy, a fact unknown or considered as unimportant by Longman. It is clear that the local South Wales press looked no further than the death of Longman as a cause (or should it be justification?) for the white crowd's violent attacks upon the town's Black population. The coupling of these two towns should not be taken too far since the conduct of events in both localities differed. One example of this is the police attitudes. In Newport, where the police were heavily outnumbered in the initial stages, the policy pursued was the mass arrest of Blacks, who were quite clearly the victims of the riots. In Barry, the police apparently sought to quell the riots before they escalated even further, by arresting white men who were in the process of inciting the crowds to violence. The further outbreaks of racial violence in Newport in 1920 and 1921 are salutary

reminders that the riots of 1919 should not be viewed as one-off affairs, and indeed, the evidence of deeply entrenched racial prejudice is clear from the letters to the local press mentioned earlier. The revelation of an established 'pattern' of racial riot over a commonly perceived set of grievances bears a clear resemblance to earlier forms of riot discussed by Rude. It would be fair to say that the real clue to the continued racial disquiet in Newport lay in the depressed situation in the merchant shipping industry, and it is not without significance that the 1920 and 1921 incidents took place in and around the Shipping Office, as Black sailors vainly sought employment. The rioting in Barry turned on the incident which led to the violent death of Longman, and it is clear that both he and Emmanuel were not averse to resorting to violence to express their distrust of each other - a state of affairs which owed much to both being involved in war service. In saying this, one is not simply drawing a conclusion from the history of the riots in Barry, or in South Wales as a whole, but with regard to the race rioting and other forms of social protest enacted throughout Britain in 1919. This is not to set Barry up as a microcosm for the whole of Great Britain, there are too many local issues involved for that. Yet it is clear that, looked at from whatever starting point, the race riots did occur in a spate (peaking in June) in the main during 1919, the year after the end of the greatest disruption the world had witnessed up to that time.

NOTES

1. For discussions of the history of the Black settlement in South Wales see Neil Evans, "The South Wales Race Riots of 1919", Llafur 3 (Spring 1980), and Kenneth Little, Negroes in Britain (London, 1972), pp. 57-81 passim.

2. CO 323/818/416 Memorandum on coloured seamen in Britain, May 2 1919.

3. CO 323/818/417-8 Letter from William Clark to CO, April 19 1919.

4. CO 323/818/419 Draft CO reply to Clark, May 1919.

5. South Wales Argus (Newport) June 7 1919, p.4.

6. Monmouthshire Evening Post June 6 1919, p.1.

7. Times June 17 1919, p.9.

8. South Wales Argus June 7 1919, p.4.

9. Neil J. Smelser Theory of Collective Behaviour (London, 1962), p.249.

10. Mon. Evening Post June 7, 1919, p.10.

11. S. Wales Evening Express June 7 1919, p.1.

12. S. Wales Argus, June 10 1919, p.3.

13. Mon. Evening Post June 7 1919, p.10.

14. Ibid., June 21 1919, n.p.

15. Ibid., June 10 1919, p.7.

16. Ibid.

17. S. Wales Argus July 5 1919, p.4.

18. CO 318/352 Chief Constable of Newport, Report on Race Riots, October 7 1919.

19. Mon. Evening Post June 21 1919, n.p.

20. Cardiff Western Mail July 3 1919, p.6.

21. Times June 17 1919, p.9.

22. Mon. Evening Post July 4 1919, p.14.

23. George Rudé The Crowd in History (New York, 1964), p.263.

24. Mon. Evening Post June 7 1919, p.3.

25. CO 318/352 Chief Constable of Newport's report on the race riot in the town.

26. Letter to the author from Mr. Christopher Fyfe, University of Edinburgh, December 5 1986.

27. S. Wales Argus June 13 1919, p.3.

28. Ibid., June 14 1919, p.4.

29. The longevity of such divisions are discussed in The Keys, (London) reprinted in one vol . (New York, 1976), 2 No. 2 (Oct. - Dec., 1934) p.22, 4 No. 2 (Oct. - Dec. 1936), p.16.

30. S. Wales Argus June 14 1919, p.4.

31. Ibid., June 17 1919, p.6.

32. W.C. Berwick Sayers Samuel Coleridge-Taylor - Musician. His Life and Letters (London, 1915), p.105.

33. S. Wales Argus June 17 1919, p.6.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. CO 318/352 Newport Chief Constable's Report, October 7 1919.

37. Cardiff Western Mail June 3 1919, p.5.

38. Ibid., March 11 1921, p.8.

39. Ibid., October 7 1921, p. 10

40. Barry Dock News June 13 1919, p.3.

41. Ibid., June 20 1919, p.3.

42. Ibid., June 13 1919, p.5.

43. North Western Daily Mail (Barrow-in-Furness), May 23 1919, n.p.

44. Barry Dock News July 25 1919, p.5.

45. Cardiff Western Mail July 2 1919, p.2.

46. Barry Dock News, June 20 1919, p.2.

47. Cardiff Western Mail, June 13 1919, n.p.

48. CO 318/350 Letter from James Gillespie to Prime Minister, October 24 1919.

49. CO 318/350 CO to Board of Trade November 7 1919.

50. Barry Dock News June 20 1919, p.2.

51. Tony Martin "Revolutionary Upheaval in Trinidad; Views from British and American Sources" Journal of Negro History 58 No. 3 (July 1973), p. 318.

52. CO 295/521 Gordon, Acting Governor of Trinidad to CO, July 29 1919.

53. CO 318/352 Chief Constable of Newport, October 7 1919.

54. CO 323/816/331-335 Chief Constable of Cardiff, Secret Report to Director of Intelligence, October 9 1919.

55. Barry Dock News June 20 1919, p.2.

56. Robert A. Hill (ed.) The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Vol. 1 (Los Angeles, 1983), p. 501.

57. Barry Dock News July 4 1919, p.3.

CONCLUSION

Britain's 'race riots' were much more than simply racially inspired. They were also more than 'riots' in the negative sense of mindless 'mob' violence. What the massive anti-Black unrest during 1919 displayed was the deep sense of disquiet in British society in this immediate post-war period. Social and economic pressures came together in a way which made violence a not unexpected reaction. The dislocative effects of four and a half years of total warfare has been stressed time and time again as a factor in the outbreak of the race riots, and it is clear that this element was present in many other instances of riot and social protest in Britain during 1919. Feelings of disappointment, unequal sacrifice, and pent-up aggression came into play, not simply during the race riots, but in the Luton Peace riot and in various riots, principally by Canadian troops marooned in this country due to the lack of shipping to take them home. The shortage in shipping was, of course, a factor in the outbreak of the race riots, since most Blacks in Britain were employed in this field. The growing unemployment in this industry in the post-war period caused not only increased hardship for Black and white alike, but an increase in tension between these two sections of the community.

The position of the seamen's union organisation at this time had a crucial role to play in the outbreak of the riots. The weakness of the NSFU at this time meant that little could be done to negotiate a better position for men who were being thrown out of work after years of dedicated war service. It also meant that when push came to pull the union representatives came down heavily on the side of their majority white membership, at the expense of Black British members. This has been shown very clearly in the shape of the imposition of a 'colour bar' at Britain's sea ports, most forcefully in the events leading up to the South Shields riot, when the Muslim stokehold crew of a ship was replaced by an all-white crew by an NSFU official.

The sense in which the riots of 1919 can be considered as a form, not simply of general social protest, but as an attempt to restore the status quo ante in

the shipping industry (as it was perceived by white sailors), to a time of full and regular employment, with no Black competition for jobs, brings the issue round to that of riot as a continuing historical process. A consideration of the modern theory of riot, particularly as it is set forth by George Rudé, has shown that, far from being a negative outburst, the rioting of 1919 can be viewed as a continuation of the 'collective bargaining by riot',(1) identified by Eric Hobsbawm, in relation to the 18th century riots. Far from being overtaken by strike activity and other forms of organised social protest, riot still had a role to play as a 'legitimate' form of social expression. One of the most clear indications of the longevity of riot as a form of socio-economic protest emerges from a consideration of the race riots from the Marxist standpoint of Rudé and Hobsbawm. Both stress that riots in the 18th century were ultimately - despite the outward signs of aggression against, for example, 'foreigners' in the district - directed against the ruling classes. This is also the case in regard to the 1919 race riots, which, although targeted at Black seamen and other Black economic competitors, were in essence, protests against the shipowners, who controlled their wage rates, and as such, their livelihood. In this sense, division within the seagoing population along racial lines did not help the cause of seamen,it did however, work to the advantage of shipping magnates. In 1919 intra-class struggle had replaced the class struggle which characterised the social protests of the 18th century.

The position of the Black community during the race riots was not simply that of unwilling victims. They too, were part of the wider feeling of social upheaval which characterised the immediate post-war period. Although well-used to the inherently racist attitudes which had permeated much of British society for decades, the virulence of the attacks upon them came as something of a shock, and one to which they reacted, on occasion, with equal violence. War service had created a body of trained men ready to use aggression when put under threat, not simply in the white community, but among the Black also. The feeling among thousands of white ex-servicemen that their war service had not been truly appreciated, was shared by the Black population in Britain - with even more justification bearing in mind the violent white attacks upon them during 1919.

An intensified desire to assert their position was a characteristic of Black communities worldwide in the wake of World War One. The parallels between the British race rioting and the defence of their rights and property by Blacks in the United States have been highlighted in this work, as has the direct link between the British riots and unrest in the West Indies in the wake of the repatriation of Black Britons to the colonies. While comparisons in each of these instances are not absolute, they are valuable additions to the picture of worldwide social upheaval and awakening which emerged as the Armistice began to take effect. Mention of Black struggle and resistance in the US and the West Indies acts as a reminder that the riots in Britain too, were not simply a negative period in the history of Blacks in this country. Made the scapegoats for wider frustrations, Blacks defended their position within British society against the twin threats of white crowds and the British authorities.

I.E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Machine Breakers" Past and Present I (1952) p.66

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