

L-R: barrister Kadri, defendant Frank Rapier, barrister Narayan and Paul Binns, one of four remaining defendants, celebrate Rapier's acquittal.



BRISTOL BREAKOUT!

JOHN SPOKES QC, leading prosecution barrister, was asleep, sprawled across his desk in the courtroom. His wig had slipped off. The jury had just spent their second night's deliberation in the Holiday Inn, and with ten of the 16 original defendants charged with riotous

assembly already set free, his case appeared to be collapsing.

"The Director of Public Prosecutions decided to have a show trial. It may have fallen a little flat on its face," commented a defence solicitor, waiting nervously for his client's fate to be decided.

The trial had been going on

for seven weeks. Upstairs in the jury room, some members had broken down and were openly weeping under the pressure. Downstairs in the cells, the remaining defendants were becoming increasingly edgy. Carlton Sharpe, the Rastaman who had worn his red, green and gold tam through the trial, was reading his Bible.

The defendants had been

shouting to each other through the cell door grilles. Now the grilles were blocked off and the atmosphere was suffocating. Defence counsel were considering a complaint to the judge. "They don't want me to breathe fresh air," defendant Frank Rapier had said to me two days earlier outside the court. "The police and the government don't want to take no responsibility for what happened in St Pauls. The scapegoats are me and the others."

"Do you find the defendant Franklyn Rapier guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, your honour."

The packed public gallery erupted. Then David Royal was found not guilty, and more eruptions, before the judge refused a request from Rapier's defence barrister Rudi Narayan to send the trial papers to the DPP to consider perjury charges against the police. The judge dismissed the jury, who might have reached a verdict on Doretta Maye, the only woman defendant, but were deadlocked over the others. It was finished, at least for now.

"If it happens again, we'll win," said one police officer in an unguarded moment.

Pressure is mounting for all charges against the remaining four defendants to be dropped. The prosecution can order a retrial for riot, can bring lesser charges, or let the past settle. Already leading defence counsel, supported amongst others by the West Indian Standing Conference, the Standing Conference of Pakistani Organisations and the Indian Workers Association of Great Britain have demanded no more trials.

Carlton Sharpe's barrister, Mr Kadri, commented: "What money the government has should be spent on amenities in the area. A retrial would not help, it would destroy any chances of a peaceful resolution."

This Friday, Ritchie Havens travels to Bristol to sing for the St Pauls United Defence Fund. "We are looking at this gig as the first opportunity to celebrate with the defendants, especially the four defendants who find themselves still on bail. It's a way of taking the stress off of them and showing them that the other people still care," said defence fund organiser Desmond Pierre.

Asked to sum it all up, musician Pierre added: "Endless pressure of pure pressure."

—TIM MALYON

Back to Africa movement gathers force

"WE WANT to be in our homeland and live with our own kind, because another kind is rejecting us and don't want us with them," reasoned Jah Bones, editor of the main Rasta paper in this country, *Voice of Rasta*. "I and I soul need Africa, I and I mind need Africa, is not just I and I flesh need Africa. I and I have to match up the spiritual and the practical."

Thunderous applause punctuated with shouts of "Jah-Rastafari" greeted his words as some 500 men, women and children crowded into Lambeth Town Hall for last week's International Rasta Repatriation Conference. 'Young lions' were in the majority. "Rasta give the youth identity," Jah Bones cried.

Practical reasoning and religious declamation mingled together beneath the red, gold

TIM MALYON reports from the International Rasta Repatriation Conference

For the Rasta, repatriation is "a must" — a burning desire to return to Africa, and more specifically to Shashamane, in Ethiopia, where Haile Selassie set aside land for West Indian Africans. Bob Marley visited there shortly before his death.

An embarrassed British High Commissioner in Jamaica is regularly heckled by Rastas demanding compensation for their ancestors' centuries of slavery, in order to pay for their 'return' to Ethiopia. If slave owners were handsomely compensated, why not the slaves?

"We wouldn't be here in the first place if they hadn't tampered with our lives," says a speaker from *Tree of Life*, one of the many Rasta

"We want to go somewhere
where we can get respect as
black people"

and green flags, and a thin veil of sweet-smelling smoke which wafted across the proceedings. Before the speaker's podium and all around the walls hung pictures of Haile Selassie, descendant of the ancient black lineage of David and Solomon, whose 89th birthday, or reincarnation, it was that day. Between speakers, free food was distributed and drummers pounded their skins on stage. The moved father of a boy dead in the New Cross fire danced out his grief to the assembled community.

organisations that have sprung up around the country. "This is the only way in which they can redeem that, by helping us return to our fatherland."

Clearly the repatriation call can have dangerous political consequences. It could draw off energy from the fight for the rights of black people who are here to stay — or play into the hands of white right-wing repatriation demands. The Same *Tree of Life* speaker covered this. "I don't like the word repatriation. I speak of Exodus, people who want to go

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