



Bandung File: Haiti
Channel 4 1986. Dir Christopher Spencer.
36min. Digital

Bandung File: Too Many Questions
Channel 4 1985. Dir David Cohen.
27min. Digital

Bandung File: Grunwick Strike
Channel 4 1987. Dir Christopher Spencer.
38min. Digital

Bandung File: Smile Jamaica
UK 1988. Dir Christopher Spencer.
52min. Digital

Total running time 163min

Constructed, Told, Spoken: A Counter-History of Britain on TV

Multiculturalism Goes Mainstream

Wed 4 Mar 20:30

On the Margins

Mon 9 Mar 21:00

Re-connecting the Diaspora

Wed 11 Mar 20:30

Multicultural TV in Europe + intro

Fri 13 Mar 18:00

The Revolution was Televised

Sun 15 Mar 18:40

Birthrights: Birth of New Talent

Tue 17 Mar 18:15

A Focus on *Skin* + intro by
season curator Xavier Alexandre Pillai

Mon 16 Mar 18:00

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Constructed, Told, Spoken: A Counter-History of Britain on TV

A Focus on the Bandung File

+ extended intro with Tariq Ali and film programmer Matthew Barrington in conversation

Bandung File replaced the magazine format with incisive reporting that spotlighted injustice across the globe. 'Too Many Questions' focuses on racist border policing. 'Smile Jamaica' and a profile of Haiti are detailed analyses captured in the aftermath of disasters. A later programme looks back at the Grunwick Strike.

Taking a taut, sometimes abrasive, though always immediate approach to a Black media perspective, the multicultural current affairs/documentary programme *Bandung File* was one of the conspicuous successes of early Channel 4.

Commissioned by Farrukh Dhondy, Channel 4's editor for multicultural programmes, in a determined move away from the earlier Channel 4 programmes for ethnic minorities (which had mixed showbiz and politics, with an Afro-Asian slant), the series was produced by Bandung Productions under the joint programme editorship of Tariq Ali and Darcus Howe.

The company took its name from the 1955 conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, which had been the meeting point for the leaders of the post-colonial, newly independent states of Africa and Asia. Following in the spirit of the original conference, both Bandung Productions and *Bandung File* were created to present the interests of the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities in Britain.

Bandung File filled the niche vacated by *Eastern Eye* (1982-85) and *Black on Black* (1982-85) – two series axed by Dhondy in an unpopular decision – and offered the concept of a multicultural, multi-ethnic style of journalism capable of engaging the culture and politics of the Third World.

The series' first three programmes, though varying in formats, presented the forceful, head-on style, often in the glare of controversy, of investigative journalism that the series became associated with. 'A License to Kill' (tx. 12/9/1985) reported on the racial murders of young Arabs by whites in France; 'Too Many Questions' (tx. 19/9/1985) looked for the first time at the British Immigration service at Heathrow and Dover, and showed how those seeking entry into the UK were treated by immigration officers; 'Till Death Us Do Part – Labour and the Black Vote' (tx. 26/9/1985) alleged that some of Labour deputy Roy Hattersley's Asian supporters in his Birmingham constituency had signed up fake members in an effort to secure his position as parliamentary candidate.

After some four-and-a-half successful years on air, the programme was brought to an unexpected close, reportedly in line with Channel 4's policy of resting 'tried and trusted strands' while they were still successes. *Bandung File* ended, in December 1989, with an edition characteristic of the programme's purpose: a profile of Egyptian novelist and poet Naguib Mahfouz, the only Arab ever to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

Tise Vahimagi, BFI Screenonline

Tariq Ali is a writer. He has written 50 books on politics and history as well as novels including the *Islam Quintet*. His latest bio, *You Can't Please All* has an account of *Bandung File* and related works. He is a longstanding editor of *New Left Review*.

Matthew Barrington is a film curator and researcher. He holds a PhD from Birkbeck, University of London. He has worked with the Essay Film Festival and the London Korean Film Festival. He curates film programmes for the Barbican Centre and runs the Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image.

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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