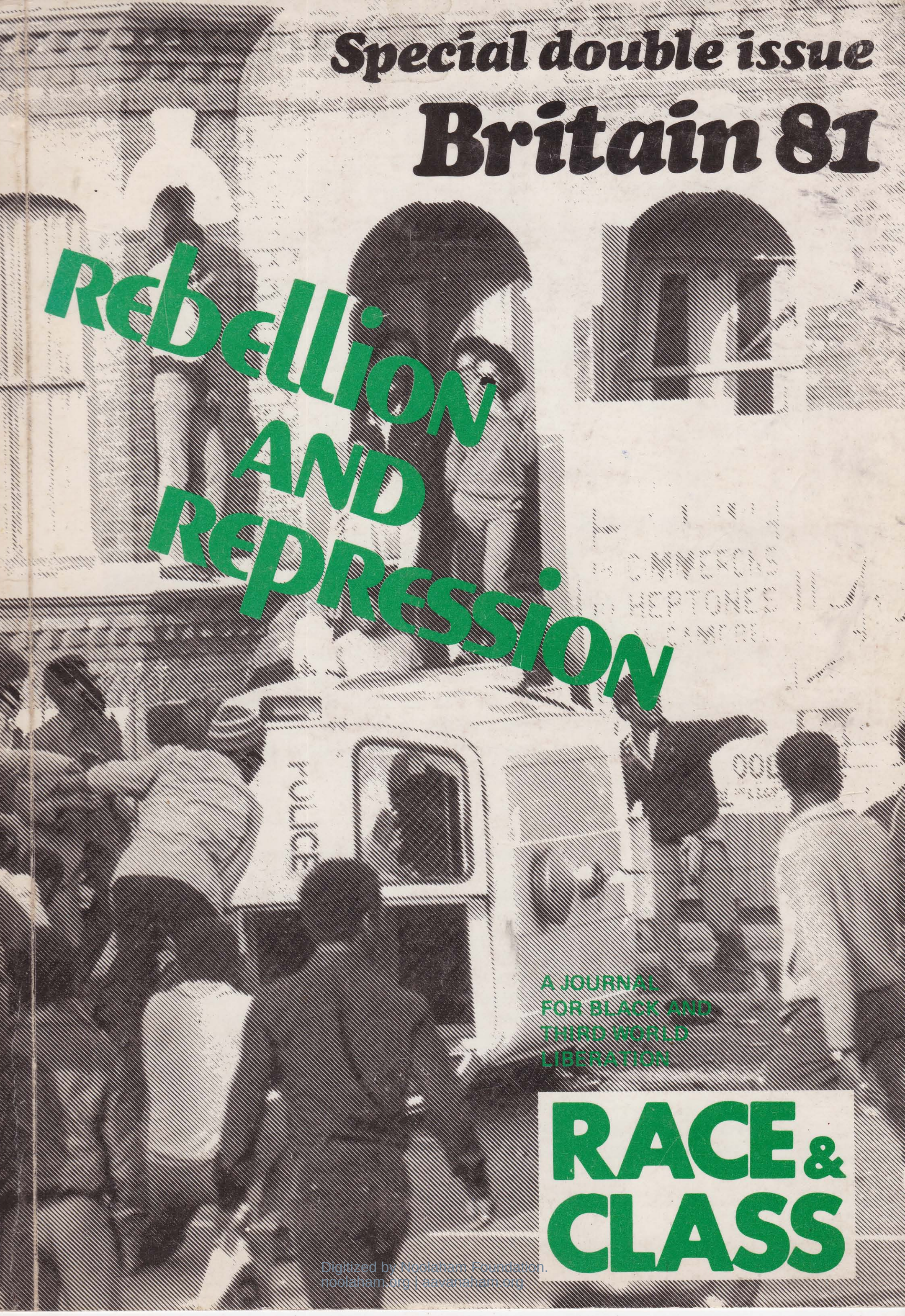
Special double issue

Britain 81

Rebellion and Repression



A JOURNAL FOR BLACK AND THIRD WORLD LIBERATION

RACE & CLASS

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions, correspondence and books for review should be sent to the Editor at the Institute of Race Relations, 247-9 Pentonville Road, London N1, England. The Institute of Race Relations and the Transnational Institute are precluded from expressing a corporate view: the opinions expressed are therefore those of the contributors.

While welcoming contributions, particularly on Third World problems and realities, we would like to remind our contributors that manuscripts should be short (ideally, 5,000 words), clear (as opposed to obscure) and free of jargon. Typescripts should be double-spaced.

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Editorial

Britain is a profoundly racist society. It is a racism that stems as much from Britain's past as a colonial power as from its present position of powerlessness – a weakness that shores up the memory of a lost strength, an ideological surrogate for economic under-development and political subjugation (to the USA). It is a racism not of advancing capitalism but of capitalism in retreat and, therefore, more ferocious.

The rebellions of black youth in the inner cities of Britain this summer were the answer to that racism. To allege that unemployment or social deprivation is the cause of the 'riots' is to pretend that racism is not also the cause of unemployment and social deprivation – among blacks.* It is to turn away from the understanding that the hatred of the police is a hatred both of the culture of racism they personify and the blunt force with which that culture is maintained.

That white youth have sometimes joined in the rebellion of their black fellows is a measure of how such police coercion, learnt in the fields of racism, has spread, of its own volition as much as through the dictates of government policy, to the white working-class young of slum city.

To that growth of the police force, as a force in its own right, Tony Bunyan addresses his article 'Police against the people'. In it he traces the development of policing methods and philosophy and shows how these reflect and keep pace with the political changes towards an

*By black we mean all non-white groups whose common experience of racial oppression outweighs socio-cultural differences. It is how Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, particularly the young, choose to describe themselves.

authoritarian state. But naked force – though discernible more clearly in the politics of monetarism – is not the only strategy on which the new authoritarianism relies. In addition, it draws to its own service the social and welfare agencies which were set up, in the first place, to serve the people. Lee Bridges in 'Keeping the lid on' examines this aspect of social control, sometimes fulsomely known as 'community policing', within the larger context of the state's urban policy and programmes, showing thereby the increasing intervention of central government in the affairs of local authorities.

The resistances to the growing authoritarianism of the state have come chiefly from the black community – because it is precisely there that that authoritarianism has been at its most blatant and crudest – resulting finally in the rebellions this summer. A. Sivanandan in 'From resistance to rebellion' chronicles and analyses the hitherto unrecorded history of Asian and Afro-Caribbean struggles in Britain, taking in, in the process, the international dimensions of black struggle, the struggle against racism/imperialism, and their underlying race/class dialectic. Paul Gilroy in 'You can't fool the youths' analyses the struggles of black youth in particular, and demonstrates the influence of black youth culture on their white contemporaries. Through his method and style of argument he points to the poverty of white marxist philosophy and asks that it be re-formed in the light of the black experience.

Shaken by the violence of the 'riots', some sections of the British media looked to the USA and, in particular, to the report of the Kerner Commission for solutions. In 'The parameters of British and North American racism', Louis Kushnick examines American racism and the riots of the 1960s and shows that, despite its liberal pretensions, the Kerner Commission advocated the now familiar mixture of cooption and coercion. But even so, the choices that were open to the foremost capitalist power in the world are not those which are available to Britain today.

The 'Notes and documents' section chronicles the uprisings in narrative form and provides information on other areas of British racism, essential background reading. A footnote to the whole issue is the brief record of six centuries of riot and rebellion in Britain.

Editorial Staff

Some of the debates raised in this issue will be taken up in a series of discussion meetings to be held at the Institute of Race Relations in the New Year.
For details contact the Institute of Race Relations.

A. SIVANANDAN

From resistance to rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean struggles in Britain*

On 25 June 1940 Udham Singh was hanged. At a meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society and the East India Association at Caxton Hall, London, he had shot dead Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who (as the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab) had presided over the massacre of unarmed peasants and workers at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, in 1919. Udham was a skilled electrician, an active trade unionist and a delegate to the local trades council, and, in 1938, had initiated the setting up of the first Indian Workers' Association, in Coventry.

In October 1945 at Chorlton Town Hall in Manchester the fifth Pan-African Congress, breaking with its earlier reformism, pledged itself to fight for the 'absolute and complete independence' of the colonies and an end to imperialism, if need be through Gandhian methods of passive resistance. Among the delegates then resident in Britain were Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, George Padmore, Wallace-Johnson, C.L.R. James and Ras Makonnen. W.E.B. DuBois, who had founded the Pan-African Congress in America in 1917, presided.

In September 1975 three young West Indians held up a Knightsbridge restaurant for the money that would help set up proper schools for the black community, finance black political groups and assist the liberation struggles in Africa.

A. Sivanandan is the Director of the Institute of Race Relations and has been active in the black movement from the early 1960s.

*This article is taken from the author's book, *Race, Class and the State*, to be published next spring by Pluto Press.

Race & Class, XXIII, 2/3(1981/82).

Of such strands have black struggles in Britain been woven. But their pattern was set on the loom of British racism.

* * *

In the early period of post-war reconstruction, when Britain, like all European powers, was desperate for labour, racialism operated on a free market basis – adjusting itself to the ordinary laws of supply and demand. So that in the sphere of employment, where too many jobs were seeking too few workers – as the state itself had acknowledged in the Nationality Act of 1948 – racialism did not debar black people from work per se. It operated instead to deskill them, to keep their wages down and to segregate them in the dirty, ill-paid jobs that white workers did not want – not on the basis of an avowed racialism but in the habit of an acceptable exploitation. In the sphere of housing, where too many people were seeking too few houses, racialism operated more directly to keep blacks out of the housing market and to herd them into bed-sitters in decaying inner city areas. And here the racialism was more overt and sanctioned by society. 'For the selection of tenants', wrote Ruth Glass scathingly,

> is regarded as being subject solely to the personal discretion of the landlord. It is understood that it is his privilege to bar Negroes, Sikhs, Jews, foreigners in general, cockneys, socialists, dogs or any other species which he wants to keep away. The recruitment of workers, however, in both state and private enterprises is a question of public policy – determined explicitly or implicitly by agreements between trade unions, employers' associations and government. As a landlord, Mr. Smith can practise discrimination openly; as an employer, he must at least disguise it. In the sphere of housing, tolerance is a matter of private initiative; in the sphere of employment, it is in some respects 'nationalised'.[1]

That same racialism operated under the twee name of colour bar in the pubs and clubs and bars and dance-halls to keep black people out. In schooling there were too few black children to cause a problem: the immigrants, predominantly male and single, had not come to settle. The message that was generally percolating through to the children of the mother country was that it was their labour that was wanted, not their presence. Racialism, it would appear, could reconcile that contradiction on its own – without state interference, laissez-faire, drawing on the traditions of Britain's slave and colonial centuries.

The black response was halting at first. Both Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, each in their own way, found it difficult to come to terms with such primitive prejudice and to deal with such fine hypocrisy. The West Indians, who, by and large, came from a working-class

background – they were mostly skilled craftsmen at this time – found it particularly difficult to accept their debarment from pubs and clubs and dance-halls (or to put up with the plangent racialism of the churches and/or their congregations). Fights broke out – and inevitably the police took the side of the whites. Gradually the West Indians began to set up their own clubs and churches and welfare associations – or met in barber's shops and cafés and on street corners, as they were wont to do back home. The Indians and Pakistanis, on the other hand, were mostly rural folk and found their social life more readily in their temples and mosques and cultural associations. Besides, it was through these and the help of elders that the non-English speaking Asian workers could find jobs and accommodation, get their official forms filled in, locate their kinsmen or find their way around town.

In the area of work, too, resistance to racialism took the form of ad hoc responses to specific situations grounded in tradition. Often those responses were individualistic and uncoordinated, especially as between the communities – since Asians were generally employed in factories, foundries and textile mills, while recruitment of Afro-Caribbeans was concentrated in the service industries (transport, health and hotels). And even among these, there were 'ethnic jobs', like in the Bradford textile industry, and, often, 'ethnic shifts'.

A racial division of labour (continued more from Britain's colonial past than inaugurated in post-war Britain) kept the Asian and Afro-Caribbean workers apart and provided little ground for common struggle. Besides, the black workforce at this time, though concentrated in certain labour processes and areas of work, was not in absolute terms a large one – with West Indians outnumbering Indians and Pakistanis. Hence, the resistance to racial abuse and discrimination on the shop floor was more spontaneous than organised – but both individual and collective. Some workers left their jobs and went and found other work. Others just downed tools and walked away. On one occasion a Jamaican driver, incensed by the racialism around him, just left his bus in the High Street and walked off. (It was a tradition that reached back to his slave ancestry and would reach forward to his children.) But there were also efforts at collective action on the factory floor. Often these took the form of petitions and appeals regarding working conditions, facilities, even wages – but, unsupported by their white fellows, they had little effect. On occasions, there were attempts to form associations, if not unions, on the shop floor. In 1951, for instance, skilled West Indians in an ordnance factory in Merseyside (Liverpool) met secretly in the lavatories and wash rooms to form a West Indian association which would take up cases of discrimination. But the employers soon found out and they were driven to hold their meetings in a neighbouring barber's shop – from which point the association became more community oriented. Similarly, in 1953

Indian workers in Coventry formed an association and named it, in the memory of Udham Singh, the Indian Workers' Association. But these early organisations generally ended up as social and welfare associations. The Merseyside West Indian Association, for instance, went through a period of vigorous political activity – taking up cases of discrimination and the cause of colonial freedom – but even as it grew in numbers and out of its barber's shop premises and into the white-run Stanley House, it faded into inter-racial social activity and oblivion.[2]

Discrimination in housing met with a community response from the outset: it was not, after all, a problem that was susceptible to individual solutions. Denied decent housing (or sometimes any housing at all), both Asians and Afro-Caribbeans took to pooling their savings till they were sizeable enough to purchase property. The Asians operated through an extended family system or 'mortgage clubs' and bought short-lease properties which they would rent to their kinsfolk and countrymen. Similarly, the West Indians operated a 'pardner' (Jamaican) or 'sou-sou' (Trinidadian) system, whereby a group of people (invariably from the same parish or island) would pool their savings and lend out a lump sum to each individual in turn. Thus their savings circulated among their own communities and did not go into banks or building societies to be lent out to white folk. It was a sort of primitive banking system engendered by tradition and enforced by racial discrimination. Of course, the prices the immigrants had to pay for the houses and the interest rates charged by the sources that were prepared to lend to them forced them into overcrowding and multi-occupation, invoking not only further racial stereotyping but, in later years, the rigours of the Public Health Act.

Thus it was around housing principally, but through traditional cultural and welfare associations and groups, that black self-organisation and self-reliance grew, unifying the respective communities. It was a strength that was to stand them in good stead in the struggles to come.

There was another area, too, where such organisation was significant – and offered up a different unity: the area of anti-colonial struggle. There had always been overseas students' associations – African, Asian, Caribbean – but in the period before the First World War these were mostly in the nature of friendship councils, social clubs or debating unions. But after that war and with the 'race riots' of 1919 (in Liverpool, London, Cardiff, Hull and other port areas where West African and *lascar* seamen had earlier settled) still fresh in their mind, West African students formed the West African Students' Union in 1925, with the explicit aim of opposing race prejudice and colonialism. It was followed in 1931 by the predominantly West Indian League of Coloured Peoples. This was headed by an ardent Christian, Dr Harold Moody, and devoted to 'the welfare of coloured peoples in all parts of

the world' and to 'the improvement of relations between the races'. But its journal, *Keys*, investigated and exposed cases of racial discrimination and in 1935, when 'colonial seamen and their families', especially in Cardiff, were being subjected to great economic hardship because of their colour, indicted 'the Trade Union, the Police and the Shipowners' of 'cooperating smoothly in barring coloured Colonial Seamen from signing on ships in Cardiff'.[3]

The connections – between colonialism and racialism, between black students and black workers – were becoming clearer, the campaigns more coordinated. And to this was added militancy when in 1937 a group of black writers and activists – including C.L.R. James, Wallace-Johnson, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta and Ras Makonnen – got together to form the International African Service Bureau. In 1944 the Bureau merged into the Pan-African Federation to become the British section of the Pan-African Congress Movement. From the outset, the Bureau (and then the Federation) was uncompromising in its demand for 'democratic rights, civil liberties and self-determination' for all subject peoples.

As the Second World War drew to a close and India's fight for *swaraj* stepped up, the movement for colonial freedom gathered momentum. Early in 1945 Asians, Africans and West Indians then living in Britain came together in a Subject Peoples' Conference. Already in February that year, the Pan-African Federation, taking advantage of the presence of colonial delegates at the World Trade Union Conference, had invited them to a meeting at which the idea of another Pan-African Congress was mooted. Accordingly, in October 1945 the Fifth Pan-African Congress met in Manchester and, inspired by the Indian struggle for independence, forswore all 'gradualist aspirations' and pledged itself to 'the liquidation of colonialism and imperialism'. Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Padmore, James – they were names that were to crop up again (and again) in the history of anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggle.

Three years later India was free and the colonies of Africa and the Caribbean in ferment. By now, there was hardly an Afro-Caribbean association in Britain which did not espouse the cause of colonial independence and of black struggle generally. Asian immigrants, however, were past independence (so to speak) and the various Indian Leagues and Workers' Associations which had earlier taken up the cause of *swaraj* had wound down. In their place rose Indian Workers' Associations (the name was a commemoration of the past) concerned with immigrant issues and problems in Britain, though still identifying with political parties back home, the Communist Party and Congress in particular. So that two broad strands begin to emerge in IWA politics: one stressing social and welfare work and the other trade union and political activity – though not exclusively so.

In sum, the anti-racial and anti-colonial struggle of this period was beginning to break down island and ethnic affiliations and associations and to re-form them in terms of the immediate realities of social and racial relations, engendering in the process strong community bases for the shop floor battles to come. But different interests predicated different unities and a differential racialism engendered different though similar organisational impulses. There was no one unity – or two or three – but a mosaic of unities. However, as the colonies began to be free and the immigrants to become settled and the state to sanction and institute racial discrimination, and thereby provide the breeding ground for fascism, the mosaic of unities and organisations would resolve itself into a more holistic, albeit shifting, pattern of black unity and black struggle.

* * *

By 1955 the first 'wave' of immigration had begun to taper off: a mild recession had set in and the demand for labour had begun to drop (though London Transport was still recruiting skilled labour from Barbados in 1956). Left to itself, immigration from the West Indies was merely following the demand for labour; immigration from the Indian subcontinent, especially after the restrictions placed on it by the Indian and Pakistani governments in 1955, was now more sluggish. But racialism was hotting up and there were calls for immigration control, not least in the House of Commons. There had always been the occasional 'call', more for political reasons than economic; now the economy provided the excuse for politics. Pressure was also building up on the right. The loss of India and the impending loss of the Caribbean and Africa had spelt the end of empire and the decline of Britain as a great power. All that was left of the colonial enterprise was the ideology of racial superiority; it was something to fall back on. Mosley's pre-war British Union of Fascists was now revived as the Union Movement and was matched for race hatred by a rash of other organisations: A.K. Chesterton's League of Empire Loyalists, Colin Jordan's White Defence League, John Bean's National Labour Party, Andrew Fountaine's British National Party. And in the twilight area, between these and the right wing of the Tory Party, various societies for 'racial preservation' were beginning to sprout. Racial attacks became a regular part of immigrant life in Britain. More serious clashes occurred intermittently in London and several provincial cities. And in 1954, 'in a small street of terraced houses in Camden Town [London], racial warfare was waged for two days', culminating in a petrol bomb attack on the house of a West Indian.[4] Finally, in August 1958 large-scale riots broke out in Nottingham and were soon followed in Notting Hill (London), where Teddy-boys, directed by the Mosleyites and

the White Defence League, had for weeks gone on a jamboree of 'nigger-hunting' under the watchful eye of the police.

The blacks struck back, and even moderate organisations like the Committee of African Organisations, having failed to obtain 'adequate unbiased police protection', pledged to organise their own defence. The courts, in the person of a Jewish judge, Lord Justice Salmon, made amends by sending down nine Teddy-boys and establishing the right of 'everyone, irrespective of the colour of their skin ... to walk through our streets with their heads erect and free from fear'. He also noted that the Teddy-boys' actions had 'filled the whole nation with horror, indignation and disgust'. It was to prove the last time when such a claim could be made on behalf of the nation. Less than a year later a West Indian carpenter, Kelso Cochrane, was stabbed to death on the streets of Notting Hill. The police failed to find the killer. It was to prove the first of many such failures.

The stage was set for immigration control. But the economy was beginning to recover and the Treasury was known to be anxious about the prospect of losing a beneficial supply of extra labour for an economy in a state of expansion – though the on-going negotiations for entry into the EEC promised another supply. Besides, the West Indian colonies were about to gain independence and moves towards immigration control, it was felt, should be postponed till after the British plan for a West Indian Federation had been safely established. Attempts to interest West Indian governments in a bilateral agreement to control immigration failed. In 1960 India withdrew its restrictions on emigration. In 1961 Jamaica withdrew its consent to a Federation. In early 1962 the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill was presented to parliament.

If the racial violence of Nottingham and Notting Hill had impressed on the West Indian community the need for greater organisation and militancy, the moves to impose 'coloured' immigration control strengthened the liaison between Asian and West Indian organisations. Already, in 1957, Claudia Jones, a Trinidadian and a Communist, who had been imprisoned for her political activities in the US and then deported, had canvassed the idea of a campaigning paper. In March 1958 she, together with other West Indian progressives – Amy Garvey (the widow of Marcus Garvey) among them – brought out the first issue of what was to prove the parent Afro-Caribbean journal in Britain,* the *West Indian Gazette*. In 1959, after the Kelso Cochrane killing, Claudia Jones and Frances Ezzrecco (who had founded, in the teeth of the riots, the Coloured Peoples Progressive Association) led a deputation of West Indian organisations to the Home Secretary. And

*From its loins was to spring *Link, Carib, Anglo-Caribbean News, Tropic, Flamingo, Daylight International, West Indies Observer, Magnet* and others.

in the same year, 'to get the taste of Notting Hill out of their throats', the *West Indian Gazette* launched the first Caribbean carnival in St Pancras Town Hall.

At about the same time, at the instance of the High Commission of the embryonic West Indian Federation (Norman Manley, Chief Minister of Jamaica, had flown to London after the troubles), the more moderate Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations in UK was set up. Although its stress was on integration and multi-racialism, it helped to cohere the island groups into a West Indian entity.

Nor had the Asian community been unmoved by the 1958 riots, for soon afterwards an Indian Association was formed in Nottingham and, more significantly, all the local IWAs got together to establish a central IWA-GB. (Nehru had advised it on his visit to London a year earlier.)

Now, with immigration control in the offing, other organisations began to develop – among them the Pakistani Workers' Association (1961) and the West Indian Workers' Association (1961). And these, along with a number of other Asian and Afro-Caribbean organisations, combined with sympathetic white groups to campaign against discriminatory legislation. The two most important umbrella organisations were the Co-ordinating Committee Against Racial Discrimination (CCARD) in Birmingham and the Conference of Afro-Asian-Caribbean Organisations (CAACO) in London. The former was set up in February 1962 by Jagmohan Joshi, of the IWA Birmingham, and Maurice Ludmer, an anti-fascist crusader from way back and later the founder-editor of *Searchlight*. CCARD itself had been inspired by a meeting at Digbeth called by the West Indian Workers' Association and the Indian Youth League to protest Patrice Lumumba's murder. That meeting had led to a march through Birmingham and other meetings against imperialism. In September 1961 CCARD led a contingent of blacks and whites through the streets of Birmingham in a demonstration against the Immigration Bill.

CAACO, initiated by the *West Indian Gazette* and working closely with the IWA and Fenner Brockway's Movement for Colonial Freedom, had its meetings and marches too, but it concentrated more on lobbying the High Commissions and parliament, particularly the Labour Party which had pledged to repeal the Act (if returned to power). But in August 1963, after the Bill had become Act and the Labour Party, with an eye to the elections, had begun to sidle out of its commitment, CAACO (with Claudia Jones at its head) organised a solidarity march from Notting Hill to the US embassy in support of 'negro rights' in the US and against racial discrimination in Britain – three days after Martin Luther King's Peoples' March on Washington.

But international events also had adverse effects on black domestic

politics. The Indo-China war in 1962 had split the Communist parties in India. It now engendered schisms in the IWA-GB.

* * *

In April 1962 the Bill was passed and the battle lost. Racialism was no longer a matter of free enterprise; it was nationalised. If labour from the 'coloured' Commonwealth and colonies was still needed, its intake and deployment was going to be regulated not by the market forces of discrimination but by the regulatory instruments of the state itself. The state was going to say at the very port of entry (or non-entry) which blacks could come and which blacks couldn't – and where they could go and where they could live – and how they should behave and deport themselves. Or else ... There was the immigration officer at the gate and the fascist within: racism was respectable, sanctioned, but with reason, of course; it was not the colour, it was the numbers – and for the immigrants' sakes – for fewer blacks would make for better race relations – and that, surely, must improve the immigrants' lot. It was a theme that was shortly to be honed to a fine respectability by Hattersley* and the Labour government. Evidently, hypocrisy too had to be nationalised. And in pursuit of that earnest, the Labour government of 1964 would make gestures towards anti-discriminatory legislation.**

Meanwhile, the genteel English 'let it all hang out'. In April 1963 the Bristol Omnibus Company discovered that it did not 'employ a mixed labour force as bus crews' – and freed from shame by the new absolution, it announced fearlessly 'a company may gain say fifteen coloured people and lose, through prejudice, thirty white people who decide they would sooner not work with them'.[5] But if Bristol – with three generations of black settlers and built on slavery – was only weighing up the statistics of prejudice, Walsall (with its more recent experience of blacks) made the more scientific pronouncement that 'coloureds can't react fast in traffic'. Bolton simply refused to engage 'riff-raff' any longer.[6]

The police felt liberated too. They had in the past appeared to derive only a vicarious pleasure from attacks on blacks; they had to be seen to be neutral. Now they themselves could go 'nigger-hunting' – the phrase was theirs – while officially polishing up on their neutrality. In December 1963 the British West Indian Association complained of increasing 'police brutality' stemming from the passing of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. In 1964 the Pakistani community alleged

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*'Without integration, limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible.' (Roy Hattersley, 1965)

**That Fenner Brockway, a ceaseless campaigner for colonial freedom, had introduced a Private Member's anti-discrimination bill year after year after year from 1951 had, of course, made no impact on Labour consciousness.

that the wrists of Pakistani immigrants were being stamped with indelible ink at a police station in the course of a murder investigation: it was irrelevant that they had names and, besides, they all looked alike.[7] In 1965 the West Indian Standing Conference (which replaced the more moderate Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations in UK after the fall of the West Indian Federation in 1962) documented police excesses in Brixton and surrounding areas in a report on *Nigger-hunting in England*.[8] And at the ports of entry immigration officers, given carte-blanche in the 'instructions' handed down by the government, were having a field day.

At the local level, tenants' and residents' associations were organising to keep blacks out of housing. The number of immigrants had increased considerably in the two years preceding the ban: they were anxious to bring in their families and dependants before the doors finally closed. Housing, which had always been a problem since the war, became a more fiercely contested terrain. The immigrants had, of course, been consigned to slum houses and forced into multi-occupation. Now there were fears that they would move further afield into the white residential areas. At the same time, public health laws were invoked to dispel multi-occupation.

Schooling, too, presented a problem, as more and more coloured children began to enter the country and sought places in their local schools. In October 1963 white parents in Southall (which had a high proportion of Indians) demanded separate classes for their children because coloured children were holding back their progress. In December the Commonwealth Immigrants' Advisory Council (CIAC), which had been set up to advise the Home Secretary on matters relating to 'the welfare and integration of immigrants', reported that 'the presence of a high proportion of immigrant children in one class slows down the general routine of working and hampers the progress of the whole class, especially where the immigrants do not speak or write English fluently'. This, it said, was bad for immigrant children too – for 'they would not get as good an introduction to British life as they would get in a normal school'. Besides, there was the danger of white parents removing their children and making some schools 'predominantly immigrant schools'.[9] In November Sir Edward Boyle, the avowedly liberal Minister of Education, told the House of Commons that it was 'desirable on education grounds that no one school should have more than about 30% of immigrants'. Accordingly, in June 1965 Boyle's law enacted that there should be no more than a third of immigrant children in any school; the surplus should be bussed out[10] – but white children would not be bussed in.

As for West Indian children, whose difficulties were ostensibly 'Creolese English', low educability and 'behaviour problems', the solution would be found in 'remedial classes' and even 'special' schools.

None of these measures – or the various instances of discrimination – went without protest, however. The Bristol Bus Company, for instance, was subjected to a boycott and demonstrations for weeks until it finally capitulated. Police harassment, as already mentioned, was documented and publicised by West Indian organisations. The relegation of West Indian children into special classes and/or schools was fought – and continued to be fought – first by the North London West Indian Association and then by other local and national organisations.

But, by and large, the unity – between West Indians and Asians, militants and moderates – that had sprung up between the riots of 1958 and the Immigration Act of 1962 had been dissipated by more immediate concerns. Now there were families to house and children to school and dependants to look after: the immigrants were becoming settlers. And since it was Asian immigrants who, more than the West Indian, had come on a temporary basis – to make enough money to send to their impoverished homes – before the Immigration Act foreclosed on them, it was their families and relatives who swelled the numbers now. And their politics tended to become settler politics – petitioning, lobbying, influencing political parties, weighing-in on (if not yet entering) local government elections – and their struggles working-class struggles on the factory floor – and they, by virtue of being fought in the teeth of trade union racism, were to prove political too.

In May 1965 the first important 'immigrant' strike took place – at Courtauld's Red Scar Mill in Preston – over the management's decision to force Asian workers (who were concentrated, with a few West Indians, in one area of the labour process) to work more machines for (proportionately) less pay.[11] The strike failed, but not before it had exposed the active collaboration of the white workers and the union with management. A few months earlier, a smaller strike of Asian workers at Rockware Glass in Southall (London) had exposed a similar complicity. And the Woolf Rubber Company strike later in the same year, though fought valiantly by the workers, supported by the Asian community and in particular by the IWA, lost out to the employers through lack of official union backing.[12]

The Afro-Caribbean struggles of this period (post 1962) also reflected a similar community base, though different in origins. Ghana had become free in 1957, Uganda in 1962 and Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in the same year, but there were other black colonies in Africa and the Caribbean still to be liberated. And then there was the black colony in North America, which, beginning with Martin Luther King's civil rights movement, was revving up into the Black Power struggles of the mid-1960s.

King visited London on the way to receiving his Nobel prize in Oslo in December 1964. And at his instigation, a British civil rights

organisation, the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) was formed in February 1965 – federating various Asian and Afro-Caribbean organisations and sporting Labour Party 'radicals'.

More significant, however, was the visit of Malcolm X. Malcolm blitzed London in February 1965 and in his wake was formed a much more militant organisation, the Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS)*, with Michael de Freitas, later Abdul Malik and later still Michael X, at its head. 'Black men, unite,' it called, 'we have nothing to lose but our fears.'

It is the fashion today, even among blacks, to see Michael X only as a criminal who was justifiably hanged for murder by the Trinidadian government (1975). (The line between politics and crime, after all, is a thin one – in a capitalist society.) But it was Michael and Roy Sawh (a 'Guyanese Indian') and their colleagues in RAAS who, as we shall see, more than anybody else in this period freed ordinary black people from fear and taught them to stand up for their rights and their dignity.** It was out of the RAAS stable, too, that a number of our present-day militants have emerged.

It is also alleged, in hindsight and contumely, that RAAS had no politics but the politics of thuggery. But it was RAAS who descended on Red Scar Mills in Preston to help the Asian strikers (at their invitation). And the point is telling – if only because it marked a progression in the *organic* unity of the (Afro-) Asian 'coolie' and (Afro-) Caribbean, slave, struggles in the diaspora, begun in Britain by Claudia Jones' *West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asia-Caribbean News* on which Abimanyu Manchanda, an Indian political activist and a key figure in the British anti-Vietnam war movement, was to work.

But RAAS, or black militancy generally, would not have had the backing it did but for the growing disillusion with the Labour Party's policies on immigration control and, therefore, racism. The 'coloured immigrants' still had hopes in the party of the working class and of colonial independence and sought to influence its policies. But after the 1964 general election, Labour's position became clearer. Peter Griffiths, the Tory candidate for Smethwick (an 'immigrant area' in Birmingham), had campaigned on the basis of ending immigration and repatriating 'the coloureds'.

> If you want a nigger neighbour
> Vote Labour

he had sloganised – and won. But Labour won the election and Harold

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*Raas, a Jamaican swear word, gave a West Indian flavour to Black Power.

**I remember the time in South London when an old black woman was being jostled and pushed out of a bus queue. Michael went up and stood behind her, an ill-concealed machete in his hand – and the line of lily-white queuers vanished before her – and she entered the bus like royalty.

Wilson, the incoming Prime Minister, denounced Griffiths as 'a parliamentary leper'. However, Wilson's policies were soon to become leprous too: the Immigration Act was not only renewed in the White Paper of August 1965 but went on to restrict 'coloured immigration' further on the basis that fewer numbers made for better race relations. In pursuit of that philosophy, Labour then proceeded to pass a Race Relations Act (September 1965), which threatened racial discrimination in 'places of public resort' with conciliation. It was prepared, however, to penalise 'incitement to racial hatred' – and promptly proceeded to prosecute Michael X.

Equally off-target and ineffectual were the two statutory bodies that Labour set up, the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI) and the Race Relations Board (RRB) – the one chiefly to liaise with immigrants and ease them out of the difficulties (linguistic, educational, cultural and so on) which prevented integration, and the other, as mentioned above, to conciliate discrimination in hotels and places through conciliation committees.

To ordinary blacks these structures were irrelevant: liaison and conciliation seemed to define them as a people apart who somehow needed to be fitted into the mainstream of British society – when all they were seeking were the same rights as other citizens. They (liaison and conciliation) were themes that were to rise again in the area of police-black relations – this time as substitutes for police accountability – and not without the same significance.

But if NCCI failed to integrate the 'immigrants', it succeeded in disintegrating 'immigrant' organisations – the moderate ones anyway and local ones mostly – by entering their areas of work, enticing local leaders to cooperate with them (and therefore government) and preempting their constituencies. Its greatest achievement was to lure the leading lights of CARD into working with it, thereby deepening the contradictions in CARD (as between the militants and the moderates). WISC and NFPA* disaffiliated from CARD and the more militant blacks followed suit, leaving CARD to its more liberal designs. The government had effectively shut out one area of representative black opinion. But an obstacle in the way of the next Immigration Act had been cleared.

When CARD finally broke up in 1967 the press and the media generally welcomed its debacle. They saw its sometimes uncompromising stand against racial discrimination as a threat to 'integration' (if not to white society), resented its outspoken and articulate black spokes-men and women, denouncing them as Communists and Maoists, and feared that it would emerge from a civil rights organisation into a Black Power movement. The 'paper of the top people',

*The National Federation of Pakistani Associations was formed in 1963.

having warned the nation of 'The Dark Million' in a series of articles in the months preceding the August 1965 White Paper, now wrote, 'there are always heavy dangers in riding tigers – and these dangers are not reduced when the animal changes to a black panther' (*The Times*, 9 November 1967). And a *Times* news team was later to write that 'the ominous lesson of CARD ... is that the mixture of pro-Chinese communism and American-style Black Power on the immigrant scene can be devastating'.[13] (International events were beginning to cast their shadows.)

The race relations pundits added their bit. The Institute of Race Relations (some of whose Council members and staff were implicated in CARD politics) commissioned a book giving the liberal version. Although an independent research organisation, replete with academics, the IRR had already been moving closer to government policies on immigration and integration – backing them with 'objective' findings and research.[14]

The race scene was changing – radically. The Immigration Acts, whatever their racialist promptings, had stemmed from an economic rationale, fashioned in the matrix of colonial-capitalist practices and beliefs. They served, as we have seen, to take racial discrimination out of the market-place and institutionalise it – inhere it in the structures of the state, locally and nationally. So that at both local and national levels 'race' became an area of contestation for power. It was the basis on which local issues of schooling and housing and jobs were being, if not fought, side-tracked. It was an issue on which elections were won and lost. It was an issue which betrayed the trade unions' claims to represent the whole of the working class, and so betrayed the class. It had entered the arena of politics (not that, subliminally, it was not always there) and swelled into an ideology of racism to be borrowed by the courts in their decision-making and by the fascists for their regeneration.*

Racial attacks had already begun to mount. In 1965, in the months preceding the White Paper but after Griffiths' victory, 'a Jamaican was shot and killed ... in Islington, a West Indian schoolboy in Notting Hill was nearly killed by white teenagers armed with iron bars, axes and bottles ... a group of black men outside a café in Notting Hill received blasts from a shot-gun fired from a moving car', hate leaflets appeared in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, crosses were burnt outside 'coloured citizens' homes' in Leamington Spa, Rugby, Coventry, Ilford, Plaistow and Cricklewood and 'a written warning (allegedly) from the Deputy

*In real life and real struggle, the economic, the political and the ideological move in concert, with sometimes one and sometimes the other striking the dominant note – but orchestrated, always, by the mode of production. It is only the marxist textualists who are preoccupied with 'determinisms', economic and otherwise.

Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan was sent to the Indian secretary of CARD: "You will be burnt alive if you do not leave England by August 31st".'[15] The British fascists, however, denied any connection with the KKK – not, it would appear, on a basis of fact, but in the conviction that there was now a sufficient ground-swell of grassroots racism to float an electoral party. Electoral politics, of course, were not going to bring them parliamentary power, but they would provide a vehicle for propaganda and a venue for recruitment – and all within the law. They could push their vile cause to the limits of the law, within the framework of the law, forcing the law itself to become more repressive of democratic freedoms. By invoking their democratic right to freedom of speech, of association, etc. – by claiming equal TV time as the other electoral parties and by gaining 'legitimate' access to the press and radio – they would propagate the cause of denying others those freedoms and legitimacies, the blacks in the first place. They would move the whole debate on race to the right and force incoming governments to further racist legislation – on pain of electoral defeat. And so, in February 1967 the League of Empire Loyalists, the British National Party and local groups of the Racial Preservation Society merged to form the National Front (NF) – and in April that year put up candidates for the Greater London Council elections.

But they – and the government – reckoned without the blacks. The time was long gone when black people, with an eye to returning home, would put up with repression: they were settlers now. And state racism had pushed them into higher and more militant forms of resistance – incorporating the resistances of the previous period and embracing both shop floor and community, Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, sometimes in different areas of struggle, sometimes together.

RAAS, as we have seen, was formed in 1965. It was wholly an indigenous movement arising out of the opposition to native British racism but catalysed by Malcolm X and the Black Muslims. And so it took in, on both counts, the African, Asian, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American dimensions of struggle and the struggles in the workplace and the community. It had, almost as its first act, descended on the Red Scar Mills in Preston to help the Asian strikers. It then set up office in a barber's shop in Reading and worked and recruited in the North and the Midlands with Abdulla Patel (one of the strikers from Red Scar Mills) and Roy Sawh as its organisers there. In London, too, RAAS gathered a sizeable following through its work with London busmen and its legal service (Defence) for black people in trouble with the police. It was written up in the press, often as a novel and passing phenomenon,* and appeared (in a bad light) on BBC's Panorama

*With the notable exception of an article in the *Observer* (4 July 1965) by Colin McGlashan – but he was a rare and truthful reporter.

programme. The disillusion with CARD swelled its numbers. And the indictment of Michael X in 1967 for 'an inflammatory speech against white people' – when white people indulged freely in racist abuse – served to validate RAAS's rhetoric. At Speakers' Corner Roy Sawh and other black speakers would inveigh against 'the white devil' and 'the Anglo-Saxon swine', and find a ready and appreciative audience.

In June 1967 the Universal Coloured Peoples' Association (UCPA) was formed, headed by a Nigerian playwright, Obi Egbuna. It too arose from British conditions, but, continuing in the tradition of the struggle against British colonialism, stressed the need to fight both imperialism and racism. The anti-white struggle was also anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist – universal to all coloured peoples. And so its concerns extended from racism in Britain and elsewhere to the war in Vietnam, the independence of Zimbabwe, the liberation of 'Portuguese Africa', the cultural revolution in China. It was, of course, inspired and influenced by the Black Power struggle in America and, more immediately, by Stokely Carmichael's visit to London in July that year.

'Black Power', Egbuna declared at a Vietnam protest rally in Trafalgar Square in October 1967, 'means simply that the blacks of this world are out to liquidate capitalist oppression of black people wherever it exists by any means necessary.' Black people in Britain, the UCPA pointed out, though numerically small, were so concentrated in vital areas of industry, hospital services (a majority of doctors and nurses in the conurbations were black) and transport that a black strike could paralyse the economy. Some UCPA speakers at meetings in Hyde Park urged more direct action. Roy Sawh (the members of one organisation were often members of another) 'urged coloured nurses to give wrong injections to patients, coloured bus crews not to take the fares of black people ... [and] Indian restaurant owners to "put something in the curry"'.[16] Alex Watson, a Jamaican machine-operator, it was alleged, exhorted coloured people to destroy the whites. Ajoy Ghose, an unemployed Indian, pointed out that to kill whites was not murder and Uyornumu Ezekiel, a Nigerian electrician, having derided the prime minister as a 'political prostitute', said that England was 'going down the toilet'.[17] They were all prosecuted; Ezekiel was discharged, the others fined.

But UCPA rhetoric was helping to stiffen black backs, its meetings and study groups to raise black consciousness, its ideology to politicise black people. The prosecution of its members showed up the complicity of the courts – 'protection rackets for the police', the secretary of WISC was to call them. And its example, like that of RAAS, encouraged other black organisations to greater militancy.

RAAS, it would appear, stressed black nationalism, while the UCPA emphasised the struggles of the international working class. But they were in fact different approaches to the same goals. RAAS's

'nationalism', stemming as it did from the West Indian experience, combined an understanding of how colonialism had divided the Asian and African and Caribbean peoples (coolie, savage and slave) with an awareness of how that same colonialism made them one people now: they were all blacks. Hence the Black House (and the cultural groups) that RAAS was briefly to set up in 1970 did not, like Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka's Spirit House, by which it was probably inspired, exclude other 'coloureds'; the historical experience was different.

Meanwhile, the number of black strikes – mainly Asian, because it was they who were employed in the menial jobs in the foundries, the textile and paper mills, the rubber and plastic works – began to mount, and nearly all of them showed up trade union racism. Working conditions in the foundries were particularly unendurable. The job itself involved working with molten metal at 1400 degrees centigrade. Burns and injuries were frequent. The wage was rarely more than £14 a week and promotion to skilled white-only jobs was unthinkable. Every action on the part of the Asian workers was either unsupported or opposed by the trade union to which they belonged, for example in the strike at Coneygre Foundry (Tipton) in April 1967 and again in October 1968, at the Midland Motor Cylinder Co in the same year and at Newby Foundry (West Bromwich) a year later. But the support from their communities and community organisations was unwavering. The temples gave free food to strikers, the grocers limitless credit, the landlords waived the rent. And joining in the strike action were local organisations and associations – IWAs and Pakistani Welfare Associations and/or other black organisations or individuals connected with them.

Some issues, however, embraced the whole community more directly. For, apart from the general question of wages, conditions of work, etc., quite a few of these strikes also involved 'cultural' questions, such as the right to take time off for religious festivals, the right to break off for daily prayer (among Moslems), the right of Sikh busmen to wear turbans instead of the official head-gear. And because of trade union opposition to such 'practices', the struggles of the class and the struggles of the community, of race, became indistinguishable.

These in turn were linked to the struggles back 'home' in the subcontinent – if only through family obligations arising from economic need predicated by under-development caused by imperialism. The connections were immediate, palpable, personal. Imperialism was not a thing apart, a theoretical concept; it was a lived experience – only one remove from the experience of racism itself. And for that reason, too, the politics and political organisations of the 'home' countries had a bearing on the life and politics of Indian and Pakistani settlers in Britain – but now, in view of the mounting (though different)

authoritarianisms in both India and Pakistan (East and West), not in terms of electoral political parties so much as in terms of the resistance movements to the authoritarian state* – which, in turn, had resonances for them in Britain. Asian-language newspapers kept them in constant touch with events in the subcontinent, and the political refugees whom they housed and looked after not only involved them in their movements, but fired their own resistances. Reciprocally, their people back 'home' were keened to the mounting racism in Britain.

* * *

On all these fronts, then, blacks by 1968 were beginning to fight as a class and as a people. Whatever the specifics of resistance in the respective communities and however different the strategies and lines of struggle, the experience of a common racism and a common fight against the state united them at the barricades. The mosaic of unities observed earlier resolved itself, before the onslaught of the state, into a black unity and a black struggle. It would recede again when the state strategically retreated into urban aid programmes and the creation of a class of black collaborators – only to be forged anew by another generation, British-born but not British.

In March 1968 the Labour government passed the 'Kenyan Asian Act', this time barring free entry to Britain of its citizens in Kenya – because they were Asians. O.K. so they held British passports issued by or on behalf of the British government, but that did not make them British, did it? Now, if they had a parent or grandparent 'born, naturalised, or adopted in the UK' – like those chaps in Australia, New Zealand and places – it would be a different matter. But of course the government would set aside a quota of entry vouchers especially for them – for the British Asians, that is. The reasons were not 'racial', as Prime Minister Wilson pointed out to the Archbishop of Canterbury, but 'geographical'.[18]

Between conception and passage the Act had taken but a week. The orchestration of public opinion that preceded it had gone on for about a year, but it had risen to a crescendo in the last six months. In October Enoch Powell, man of the people, had warned the nation that there were 'hundreds of thousands of people in Kenya'** who thought they belonged to Britain 'just like you and me'. In January the press came out with scare stories, as it had done before the Immigration Act of

*Such as the Naxalites, Adivasis, Dalit Panthers in India, and the Pakhtun, Sindhi and Baluchi oppressed people's movements in Pakistan. In 1974 organisations of untouchables in Britain came together at the (new) IRR to organise an International Conference on Untouchability (which for financial reasons never got off the ground).

**There were in fact about 66,000 at this time who were entitled to settle in Britain.

1962, except that this time it was not smallpox but the clandestine arrival of hordes of Pakistanis. In February Powell returned to his theme – and other politicians joined in. Later in the month the *Daily Mirror*, the avowedly pro-Labour paper, warned of an 'uncontrolled flood of Asian immigrants from Kenya'. On 1 March the bill was passed.

Blacks were enraged. They had lobbied, petitioned, reasoned, demonstrated – even campaigned alongside whites in NCCI's Equal Rights set-up – and had made no impact. But the momentum was not to be lost. Within weeks of the Act Jagmohan Joshi, Secretary of the IWA Birmingham, was urging black organisations to form a broad, united front. On 4 April Martin Luther King was murdered ...

'I have a dream ...' They slew the dreamer.

Some two weeks later Enoch Powell spoke of his and the nation's nightmare: the blacks were swarming all over him, no, all over the country, 'whole areas and towns and parts of towns across England' were covered with them, they pushed excreta through old ladies' letter boxes; we must take 'action now', stop the 'inflow', promote the 'outflow', stop the fiancés, stop the dependants, 'the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population', the breeding ground. 'Numbers are of the essence.'

'What Powell says today, the Tories say tomorrow and Labour legislates on the day after.' But, immediately, it was public opinion that was roused. The press picked up Powell's themes and Powell. The unspeakable had been spoken, free speech set free, the whites liberated; Asians and West Indians were abused and attacked, their property damaged, their women and children terrorised. Police harassment increased, the fascists went on a rampage and Paki-bashing emerged as the national sport. A few trade unionists made feeble gestures of protest and earned the opprobrium of the rank and file. White workers all over the country downed tools and staged demonstrations on behalf of Powell. And on the day that even-handed Labour, having passed a genuinely racist Immigration Act, was debating a phoney anti-racist Race Relations Bill, London dockers struck work and marched on parliament to demand an end to immigration. Three days later they marched again, this time with the Smithfield meat-porters.

But the blacks were on the march too. On the same day as the dockers and porters marched, representatives from over fifty organisations (including the IWAs, WISC, NFPA, UCPA, RAAS, etc.) came together at Leamington Spa to form a national body, the Black People's Alliance (BPA), 'a militant front for Black Consciousness and against racialism'. And in that, the BPA was uncompromising from the outset. It excluded from membership immigrant organisations that had compromised with government policy or fallen prey to government hand-outs (Labour's Urban Aid programme was

beginning to percolate through to the blacks) or looked to the Labour Party for redress. For, in respect of 'whipping up racial antagonisms and hatred to make political gains', there was no difference between the parties or between them and Enoch Powell. He was 'just one step in a continuous campaign' which had served to give 'the green light to the overtly fascist organisations ... now very active in organising among the working class'.[19] Member organisations would continue to maintain their independent existence and function at the local level, in terms of the particular communities and problems; the BPA would operate on the national level, coordinating the various fights against state racism. And, where necessary, it would take to the streets en masse – as it did in January 1969 (during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference), when it led a march of over 7,000 people to Downing Street to demand the repeal of the Immigration Acts.

From Powell's speech and BPA, but nurtured in the Black Power movement, sprang a host of militant black organisations all over the country, with their own newspapers and journals, taking up local, national and international issues. Some Jamaican organisations marched on their High Commission in London, protesting the banning of the works of Stokely and Malcolm X in Jamaica, while others, like WISC, RAAS and the Caribbean Artists' movement, sent petitions. On the banning of Walter Rodney from returning to his post at the university, Jamaicans staged a sit-in at the High Commission. A 'Third World' Benefit for three imprisoned playwrights – Wole Soyinka in Nigeria, LeRoi Jones in America and Obi Egbuna in Britain – was held at the Round House with Sammy Davis, Black Eagles and Michael X. But Egbuna's imprisonment (with two other UCPA members), for uttering and writing threats to kill police, also stirred up black anger. 'Unless something is done to ensure the protection of our people', wrote the Black Panther Movement in its circular of 3 October 1968, ' ... we will have no alternative but to rise to their defence. And once we are driven to that position, redress will be too late, Detroit and Newark will inevitably become part of the British scene and the Thames foam with blood sooner than Enoch Powell envisaged.'*

Less than six months after Powell's speech, Heath, the Tory leader, having sacked Powell from the Shadow Cabinet, himself picked up Powell's themes. Immigration, he said, whether of voucher-holders or dependants, should be 'severely curtailed' – and those who wished to return to their country of origin should 'receive assisted passage from public funds'. But Powell outbid him in a call for a 'Ministry of Repatriation' and 'a programme of large-scale voluntary but

*A reference to Powell's Birmingham speech (April 1968) in which he said: 'As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood".'

organised, financed and subsidised repatriation and re-emigration'. Two months later Heath upped the ante: the government should stop all immigration. Powell, who was on the same platform, applauded him. Callaghan, the Home Secretary, however, derided Heath's speech as 'slick and shifty'. Three days later Callaghan debarred Commonwealth citizens from entering Britain to marry fiancées and settle here, 'unless there are compassionate circumstances'. And in May 1969, in an even more blatant piece of 'even-handedness', Callaghan sneaked into the 'liberal' Immigration Appeals Bill* a clause which stipulated that dependants should henceforth have entry certificates before coming to Britain. And with that he set the seal on the prevarications, delays and humbug that British officials in the countries of emigration, mainly India and Pakistan now, subjected dependants to – till the young grew old in the waiting and old folk just gave up or died. It was a move in Powell's direction, but he meanwhile had moved on to higher things, like calculating the cost of repatriation. Before Callaghan could move towards him again, Labour lost the election (1970). It was now left to a Tory government under Heath to effect Powellite policies (on behalf of Labour) in the Immigration Act of 1971.

The new Act stopped all primary (black) immigration dead. Only 'patrials' (Callaghan's euphemism for white Commonwealth citizens, a concept propounded by the class of 1968) had right of abode now. Non-patrials could only come in on a permit to do a specific job in a specific place for a specific period. Their residence, deportation, repatriation and acquisition of citizenship were subject to Home Office discretion. But constables and immigration officers were empowered to arrest without warrant anyone who had entered or was suspected ('with reasonable cause') to have entered the country illegally or overstayed his or her time or failed to observe the rules of the Act in any other particular. Since all blacks were, on the face of them, non-patrials, this meant that all blacks were illegal immigrants unless proved otherwise. And since, in this respect, the Act (when it came into force in January 1973) would be retrospective, illegal immigrants went back a long way.

Entry of dependants of those already settled in Britain would continue to be made on the basis of entry certificates issued by the British authorities, at their discretion, in the country of emigration. Eligibility – as to age, dependancy, relationship to the relative in the UK, etc. – would have to be proved by the dependant. Children would have to be under 18 to be eligible at all and parents over 65. But 'entry clearances' did not guarantee entry into Britain. It could still be refused at the port

*The Bill proposed to give immigrants who were refused entry the right of appeal to a tribunal.

of entry by the immigration officer on the ground that 'false representations were employed or material facts were concealed, *whether or not to the holder's knowledge*, for the purpose of obtaining clearance' (emphasis added).* And as for those who wanted to be repatriated, every assistance would be afforded.

On the face of it, the Act appeared no more racist than its predecessors. Bans and entry certificates, stop and search arrests and 'Sus',** detentions and deportations were already everyday aspects of black life. Even the distinction that the Act made between the old settlers and the new migrants to make them all migrants again did not seem to matter much: they had never been anything but 'coloured immigrants'. But there was something else in the air. The 'philosophy' had begun to change, the raison d'être of racism. It was not that racism did not make for cheap labour any more, but that there was no need for capital to import it. Instead, thanks to advances in technology and changes in its own nature, capital could now move to labour, and did – the transnational corporations saw to that.[20] The problem was to get rid of the labour, the black labour that was already here. And racism could help there – with laws and regulations that kept families apart, sanctioned police harassment, invited fascist violence and generally made life untenable for the black citizens of Britain. And if they wanted to return 'home', assisted passages would speed their way.

To get the full flavour of the Immigration Act of 1971, however, it must be seen in conjunction with the Industrial Relations Act of the same year. For if the Immigration Act affected the black peoples (in varying ways), the Industrial Relations Act, which put strictures on trade unions and subjected industrial disputes to the jurisdiction of a court, the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), affected the black working class specifically. As workers, they were subject to the Industrial Relations Act's overall attack on the class (and later to the government's three-day week). As blacks, they were subject to the Immigration Act's threat of deportation – as illegal immigrants or for acting in ways not 'conducive to the public good'. As blacks and workers, they were subjected to the increasing racism of white workers and trade unions under siege – and more susceptible to being offered up to the NIRC for the adjudication of their disputes. Together, the Acts threatened to lock the black working class into the position of a permanent under-class. Hence, it is precisely in the area of black working-class struggles that the resistance of the early 1970s becomes significant.

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*When, in 1980, Filipino domestic workers who had entered legally were to ask to bring in their children, they would be deported – on the basis of this clause – for having withheld information (re children) which they were not asked for in the first place.

**Under section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act anyone could be arrested 'on suspicion' of loitering with intent to commit an arrestable offence.

But these were not struggles apart. They were, because they were black, tied up with other struggles in the community, which in turn was involved in the battles on the factory floor. The community struggles themselves had, as we have seen, become increasingly politicised in the Black Power movement and organised in black political groups. And they, after the failure of the white left to acknowledge the special problems of the black working class or the need for black self-help and organisation, began to address themselves to the problems of black workers – in the factories, in the schools, in their relationship with the police. Which in turn was to lead to more intense confrontation with, if not the state directly, the instruments of state oppression. But since these operated differentially in respect of the two main communities, except in the workplace, the resistance to them was conducted at different levels, in different venues, with (often) different priorities (again with the exception of the workplace).

The energies of the Asian community, for instance, were taken up with trying to get their families and dependants in – and once in, to keep them (and themselves) from being picked up as illegal immigrants. Since these required a knowledge of the law and of officialdom, it was inevitable that their struggles in this respect would be channelled into legal battles – mainly through the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)* with its expertise and commitment – and into petitioning and lobbying. This aspect was further reinforced by the issue of the 'shuttlecock Asians', those British Asians in East Africa who (for one reason or another) were bandied about from country to country before eventually being imprisoned in Britain prior to admission.** From 1972 Asian leaders and organisations were also preoccupied with the resettlement of British Asian refugees from Amin's Uganda.

If the struggles to gain entry for their families and dependants drained the energies of the Asian community at one level, the abuse and the humiliation that those seeking entry were submitted to by immigration officials served to degrade and sometimes demoralise it. The instances are legion and have been documented elsewhere.[21] But the most despicable of them all was the vaginal examination of women for virginity – in itself an appalling violation but, for women from a peasant culture, a violation beyond violence. Equally debilitating of the community was the police use of informers to apprehend suspected illegal immigrants individually and through 'fishing raids', generating

*JCWI was set up in 1967 as a one-man welfare service for incoming dependants at Heathrow Airport, but later burgeoned into a case-work and campaigning organisation.
**According to a letter in the *Guardian* of 10 September 1981 from members of Jawaharlal Nehru University (Delhi), there are still '20,000 people of Indian origin from East Africa ... waiting in India for their entry vouchers to the UK'.

thereby suspicion and distrust among families. In turn, the battles against them channelled the community's energies into getting the retrospective aspect of the Immigration Act regarding illegal immigrants repealed (and was finally 'rewarded' by the dubious amnesty of 1974 for all those who had entered illegally before 1973). But the police's Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit (IIIU) remained in force.[22]

The Afro-Caribbean community, for its part (and again excepting the workplace, which will be treated separately), was occupied with fighting the mis-education of its children and the harassment of the police. Both problems had existed before, but they had now gathered momentum. West Indian children were consistently and right through the schooling system treated as uneducable and as having 'unrealistic aspirations' together with a low IQ. Consequently, they were 'banded' into classes for backward children or dumped in ESN (educationally subnormal) schools and forgotten. The fight against categorisation of their children as under-achieving, and therefore fit only to be an underclass, begun in Haringey (London) in the 1960s by West Indian parents, teachers and the North London West Indian Association (NLWIA) under Jeff Crawford, now spread to other areas and became incorporated in the programmes of black political organisations. An appeal to the Race Relations Board (1970) elicited the response that the placement of West Indian children in ESN schools was 'no unlawful act'. The Caribbean Education Association then held a conference on the subject and in the following year Bernard Coard (now Deputy Prime Minister of Grenada) wrote his influential work, *How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal* ... Black militants and organisations, meanwhile, had begun to set up supplementary schools in the larger conurbations. In London alone there was the Kwame Nkrumah school (Hackney black teachers), the Malcolm X Montessori Programme (Ajoy Ghose), the George Padmore school (John La Rose* and the Black Parents' Movement), the South-east London Summer School (BUFP: Black Unity and Freedom Party), Headstart (BLF: Black Liberation Front) and the Marcus Garvey school (BLF and others).**

Projects were also set up to teach skills to youth. The Mkutano Project, for instance, started by the BUFP (in 1972), taught typing, photography, Swahili; the Melting Pot, begun about the same time by Ashton Gibson (once of RAAS), had a workshop for making clothes; and Keskidee, set up by an ex-CARD official, Oscar Abrams, taught

*John La Rose had been Executive of the Federated Workers' Trade Union in Trinidad and Tobago.

**It was one of the founders of this school, Tony Munro, who was later to be involved in the Knightsbridge Spaghetti House siege.

art and sculpture and encouraged black poets and playwrights. For older students, Roy Sawh ran the Free University for Black Studies. And then there were hostels for unemployed and homeless black youth – such as Brother Herman's Harambee and Vince Hines' Dashiki (both of whom had been active in RAAS) – and clubs and youth centres. Finally, there were the bookshop cum advice centres, such as the Black People's Information Centre, BLF's Grassroots Storefront and BWM's Unity Bookshop,* and the weekly or monthly newspapers: *Black Voice* (BUFP), *Grassroots* (BLF), *Freedom News* (BP: Black Panthers), *Frontline* (BCC: Brixton and Croydon Collective), *Uhuru* (BPFM: Black People's Freedom Movement), *BPFM Weekly*, the *BWAC Weekly* (Black Workers' Action Committee) and the less frequent but more theoretical journal *Black Liberator* – and a host of others that were more ephemeral. Some of these papers took up the question of black women, and the BUFP, following on the UCPA's Black Women's Liberation Movement, had a black women's action committee.

RAAS's Black House was going to be a huge complex, encompassing several of these activities. But hardly had it got off the ground in February 1970 than it was raided by the police and closed down. And RAAS itself began to break up. Members of RAAS, however, went on to set up various self-help projects – as indicated above.

By 1971 the UCPA was also breaking up into its component groups, with the hard core of them going to form the BUFP. (National bodies were by now not as relevant to the day-to-day struggles as local ones and the former's unifying role could equally be fulfilled by ad hoc alliances.) The UCPA, RAAS, the Black Panthers and other black organisations had in the previous two years been increasingly occupied with the problem of police brutality and fascist violence. The success of Black Power had brought down on its head the wrath of the system. Its leaders were persecuted, its meetings disrupted, its places of work destroyed. But it had gone on gaining momentum and strength: it was not a party, but a movement, gathering to its concerns all the strands of capitalist oppression, gathering to its programme all the problems of oppressed peoples. There was hardly a black in the country that did not identify with it and, through it, to all the non-whites of the world, in one way or another. And as for the British-born youth, who had been schooled in white racism, the movement was the cradle of their consciousness. Vietnam, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe, Azania were all their battle-lines, China and Cuba their exemplars. The establishment was scared. The media voiced its fears. There were rumours that Black Power was about to take over Manchester City Council.[23]

In the summer of 1969 the UCPA and the Caribbean Workers'

*The BWM (Black Workers' Movement) was the new name the Black Panthers took in the early 1970s.

Movement were documenting and fighting the cases of people beaten up and framed by the police – in Manchester and London. In August the UCPA held a Black Power rally against 'organised police brutality' on the streets of Brixton. In April 1970 the UCPA and the Pakistani Progressive Party staged a protest outside the House of Commons over 'Paki-bashing' in the East End of London. And the Pakistani Workers' Union called for citizens' defence patrols: a number of Asians had been murdered in 1969 and 1970. A month later over 2,000 Pakistanis, Indians and West Indians marched from Hyde Park to Downing Street demanding police protection from skinhead attacks. In the summer of 1970 police attacks on blacks – abuse, harassment, assaults, raids, arrests on 'Sus', etc., in London, Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, etc., put whole black communities under siege. In July and August there were a series of clashes between black youth and the police in London and on one occasion over a hundred youth surrounded the Caledonian Road police station demanding the release of four blacks who had been wrongfully arrested. Things finally came to a head in Notting Hill on 9 August, when police broke up a demonstration against the proposed closure of the Mangrove restaurant with, even for them, unprecedented violence. The blacks fought back, a number of them were arrested and nine of the 'ringleaders' subsequently charged with riot, affray and assault.

The Mangrove was a meeting place and an eating place, a social and welfare club, an advice and resource centre, a black house for black people, a resting place in Babylon. And if only for this reason, the police could not leave it alone. They raided it and raided it, harassed its customers and relentlessly persecuted its owner, Frank Critchlow. They made it the test of police power; the blacks made it a symbol of resistance. The battle of the blacks and the police would be fought over the Mangrove.

The trial of the Mangrove 9 (October-December 1971) is too well documented to be recounted here, but, briefly, they won. They did more: they took on what the defence counsel called 'naked judicial tyranny' – some by conducting their own defence – and won. Above all, they unfolded before the nation the corruption of the police force, the bias of the judicial system, the racism of the media – and the refusal of black people to submit themselves to the tyrannies of the state. Other trials would follow and even more bizarre prosecutions be brought, as when the alleged editor of *Grassroots* was charged with 'encouraging the murder of persons unknown' by reprinting an article from the freely available American Black Panther paper on how to make Molotov cocktails. But they would all be defended – by the whole community – and become another school of political education.*

*See Institute of Race Relations, *Police against black people* (London, 1979) and various issues of *Race Today* for the important trials of this period.

If the Mangrove marked the high water-mark of Black Power and lowered the threshold of what black people would take, it also marked the beginnings of another resistance: of black youth condemned by racism to the margins of existence and then put upon by the police. 'Sus' had always laid them open to police harassment, but the government's White Paper on Police-Immigrant Relations in 1973, which warned of 'a small minority of young coloured people ... anxious to imitate behaviour amongst the black community in the United States', put the government's imprimatur on police behaviour. The previous year the press and the police had discovered a 'frightening new strain of crime' and 'mugging' was added to 'Sus' as an offence on which the police could go on the offensive against West Indian youth.[24] The courts had already nodded their approval – by way of an exemplary twenty-year sentence passed on a 16-year-old 'mugger'. From then on, the lives of black youths in the cities of Britain were subject to increased police pressure. Their clubs were attacked on one pretext or another, their meeting places raided and their events – carnivals, bonfires, parties – blanketed by police presence. Black youths could not walk the streets outside the ghetto or hang around streets within it without courting arrest. And apart from individual arrests, whole communities were subjected to road blocks, stop and search and mass arrests. In Brixton in 1975 the para-military Special Patrol Group (SPG) cruised the streets in force, made arbitrary arrests and generally terrorised the community. In Lewisham the same year the SPG stopped 14,000 people on the streets and made 400 arrests. The pattern was repeated by similar police units in other parts of the country.[25]

The youth struck back and the community closed behind them at Brockwell Park fair in 1973, for instance, and at the Carib Club (1974) and in Chapeltown, Leeds, on bonfire night (1975), and finally exploded into direct confrontation, with bricks and bottles and burning of police cars, at the Notting Hill Carnival of 1976 – when 1,600 policemen took it on themselves to kill joy on the streets.

Clearly the politics of the stick had not paid off – or perhaps it needed to be stepped up to be really effective. But by now a Labour government was in power and the emphasis shifted to social control.

Meanwhile, the struggles in the workplace were throwing up another community, a community of black class interests – linking the shop-floor battles of Pakistanis, Indians and West Indians, sometimes directly through roving strike committees, sometimes through black political organisations, while combating at the same time the racism of the trade unions, from within their ranks. Where they were not unionised, black workers first used the unions, who were rarely loth to increase their numbers, however black, to fight management for unionisation – and then took on the racism of the unions themselves. Unions, after all, were the organisations of their class and, however

vital their struggles as blacks, to remain a people apart would be to set back the class struggle itself. They had to fight simultaneously as a people and as a class – as blacks and as workers – not by subsuming the race struggle to the class struggle but by deepening and broadening class struggle through its black and anti-colonial, anti-imperialist dimension. The struggle against racism was a struggle for the class.

A series of strikes in the early 1970s in the textile and allied industries in the East Midlands and in various factories in London illustrate these developments. In May 1972 Pakistani workers in Crepe Sizes in Nottingham went on strike over working conditions, redundancies and pay. They composed the lowliest two-thirds of the workforce, were subjected to constant racial abuse by the white foreman and worked, without adequate safety precautions and toilet and canteen facilities, an eighty-four-hour week for £40.08. And yet five of their number had been made redundant – not fortuitously, after the workers had joined the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). There was no official support from the union, however, till a Solidarity Committee composed of the wives and families of the strikers and of other Asian workers, community organisations and the Nottingham-based BPFM forced the TGWU to act. In June the management capitulated, agreeing to union recognition and the re-instatement of the workers who had been made redundant.

The strike of Indian workers at Mansfield Hosiery Mills in Loughborough in October 1972 was for higher wages and against the denial of promotion to jobs reserved for whites. The white workers went along with the wages claim but not promotion, and the union, the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, first prevaricated and then decided (after the strikers had occupied the union offices) to make the strike official, but not to call out the white workers. Once again, community associations, Asian workers at another company factory and political organisations like the BPFM and the BWM provided, in the Mansfield Hosiery Strike Committee, the basis for struggle.

So that when strikes by Asian workers at the Courtauld-owned Harwood Cash Lawn Mills in Mansfield and E.E. Jaffe and Malmic Lace in Nottingham broke out in the middle of 1973, the Mansfield Hosiery Strike Committee was at hand to give them support. More importantly – from a long-term view – the Strike Committee – pursuing its policy of pushing the trade union movement to fight racism not just in word but in deed, now called for a Conference of Trade Unions against Racialism. Accordingly, in June 1973 350 delegates from all the major unions and representatives from community groups and black political organisations* came together at a conference in Digbeth Hall,

*These included representatives from Indian, Pakistani and West Indian associations and from black political organisations such as the BPFM, BUFP, BCC and the Black Workers' Co-ordinating Committee, etc.

Birmingham. From this emerged the Birmingham Conference Steering Committee, which in turn led to the setting up of the National Committee for Trade Unions against Racialism (NCTUAR).

Meanwhile, in the London area in June 1972, West Indian workers at Stanmore Engineering Works struck work demanding wage increases recommended by their union, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW). They went further – they staged a sit-in. But although the union was prepared to award strike pay, it was not prepared to bring its national weight to bear on the strike – by, for instance, getting workers and unions in the motor industry to 'black' products from Stanmore Engineering. The strikers were eventually removed by a court injunction and sacked.

Trade union racism showed up again a year later in the strike at Standard Telephone and Cables (New Southgate), a subsidiary of ITT, over promotion of West Indians to 'white-only jobs', as at Mansfield. The craft unions, like the Metal Mechanics, remained stubbornly craft/race oriented. The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) opposed the strike as detrimental to its (white) members, into whose ranks blacks sought promotion. The local AUEW shop steward, though supporting the strikers, could not get the support of his union on a national basis. The NCTUAR called on the trade unions and trade unionists to back the workers in their official strike action against racial discrimination – and leafletted the annual Trades Union Congress (TUC) Conference at Blackpool. Once again, all the black political organisations, the London-based BUFP, BCC, BWCC and the BWM, along with the BWAC and the BPFM from the East Midlands, came to the aid of the strikers. The BWAC sent a cable to the Non-Aligned Conference in Algiers pointing out the international depredations of ITT. But all to no avail.

In November 1973, in a strike at Perivale Gutterman, a yarn factory in Southall, over the question of wages and productivity, Indian and Pakistani workers struck work and were sacked. The TGWU branch supported the strike but gave no strike pay till February the following year. Management tried to introduce their version of the Indo-Pakistan war into the factory, but failed to inflame communal passions. The workers once again turned to the communities for help and were assisted by Indian and Pakistani workers' associations, *gurdwaras* and local shops, who between them collected money and supplied the men on strike with free sugar, flour, oil and essential groceries. The TGWU, which, like most unions, had hitherto refused to cooperate with the government's restrictive Industrial Relations Act, now referred the case of the dismissed workers to the NIRC – which of course ruled against the men. The strike was defeated.

The apotheosis of racism, however, and therefore the resistance to it, was reached in 1974 at the strike in Imperial Typewriters (in

Leicester), a subsidiary of the multi-national Litton Industries. For here the white workers, management and unions worked hand in glove and were backed up by the violent presence of the National Front at the factory gates. Over a thousand of the 1,500 workforce were Asians, a large section of them women, most of them refugees from Uganda, and the strike itself arose from the usual practices of racial discrimination and exploitation. The TGWU refused to support the strikers with the hoary excuse that they had not followed correct negotiating procedures, and even prevailed on some of the Asian workers to remain at work by insisting that 'the tensions are between those Asians from the subcontinent and those from Africa'. By now, of course, there was virtually a standing conference of black strike committees in the Midlands and a network of community associations and groups plus a number of black political organisations, all of which came to the aid of the strikers. And money came in from, amongst others, the Southall IWA, Birmingham Sikh temple, a women's conference in Edinburgh, the Birmingham Anti-racist Committee and the European Workers' Action Committee. The strikers won, but the firm was closed down shortly afterwards by the multinational parent company.[26]

* * *

By the middle of the 1970s, the youth had begun to emerge into the vanguard of black struggle. And they brought to it not only the traditions of their elders but an experience of their own, which was implacable of racism and impervious to the blandishments of the state. The daily confrontations with the police, the battles of Brockwell Park and Chapeltown and Notting Hill and their encounters with the judicial set-up had established their hatred of the system. And they were now beginning to carve out a politics from the experiences of their own existence. Already by 1973, 'marginalised' young West Indians in the ghettos of Britain were being attracted to the popular politics of Rastafari. Bred in the 'gullies' of Jamaica, the Rastas were mortally opposed to consumer-capitalist society and saw in their own predicament the results of neo-colonial and imperialist intervention.[27] And in their locks and dress and music they signified their deadly opposition. They were the 'burning spear' of the new resistance. The police took note, the state also.

The Labour government's White Paper of September 1975 and the Race Relations Act that followed it in February 1976 spelt out between them the anxieties of the state. Having noted that 'About two out of every five of the coloured people in this country now were born here and the time is not far off when the majority of the coloured population will be British born', the government warned that it was 'vital to our well being as a society to tap these reservoirs of resilience, initiative and vigour in the racial minority groups and not to allow them to lie

unused or to be deflected into negative protest on account of arbitrary and unfair discriminatory practices'. Hence the government would pass a Race Relations Act which would encompass whole areas of discrimination and vest the new Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), a merger of the CRC* and the RRB, with a few more powers to deal with it – and develop in the process a class of collaborators who would manage racism and its social and political fall-out. At the same time, it would hand out massive sums of money from its Urban Aid programme to key black self-help groups and so stamp out the breeding-grounds of resistance.[28]

The strategy worked in the short run. But even within a year, it was showing signs of failing in the long term. In September 1975 three West Indians (two of them youngsters), in the hope of financing black political groups that had refused to be corrupted by state benefice and of setting up black schools and self-help groups, held up the Spaghetti House, a restaurant in Knightsbridge. At the end of a five-day siege, they were arrested and charged and received sentences from seventeen to twenty-one years. For Sir Robert Mark, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, 'the Spaghetti House case ... was the most difficult and potentially explosive of all the various problems' he had to deal with in his career,[29] but it was also one in which his strategy to by-pass his political masters and go direct to the media for the legitimation of police practice had paid off. It was an entente that, given the endemic racism of the media and the police, had been naturally entered into vis-à-vis the black population, but would now extend to other areas of society and substitute legitimation for accountability.[30]

Among the Asians, too, it was the youth who were moving into the forefront of struggle. Like their Afro-Caribbean peers, they had been bred in a culture of racism and, like them, were impatient though not unreckoning of the forms of struggle that their elders conducted. The fascist attacks in their community had gone on mounting, the police afforded no protection against them, condoned them, even, by refusing to recognise them as racially motivated. And the police themselves subjected the community to racial abuse, arbitrary arrest and 'fishing raids' for 'illegal immigrants'. And then, in June 1976, opposite the IWA's Dominion Cinema, Southall, a symbol of Asian self-reliance and security, 18-year-old Gurdip Singh Chaggar was set upon by a gang of white youths and stabbed to death. (The motive, announced Sir Robert Mark, was not necessarily racial.)

A few months earlier, the government (Labour) had announced a Green Paper on Nationality (on the lines, we now know, of the present Tory Bill) which would 'rationalise' the law which they themselves had

*The Community Relations Commission (CRC) emerged as the successor to the NCCI in the Race Relations Act of 1968.

fouled up in 1968. (Of course they had, as was their wont, balanced it with an anti-discriminatory Race Relations Bill which was just then, March, going through parliament.) In April the NF staged a march through the black areas of Bradford under police protection, but were beaten back by the people of Manningham, Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, young and old. In May the press started a concerted campaign against immigration with the revelation that a homeless British Asian family expelled from Malawi was being housed in a four-star hotel at a cost of £600 per week to the British tax-payer. Later that month, Enoch Powell announced that he had secret information from a 'suppressed' government report which said that bogus dependants and wives from India were making their way into the country. The press picked up Powell as Powell had picked up the press. And the attacks on the 'Asian invaders' became more intense through the days of May. On 4 June Chaggar was killed.[31]

The community was stunned. A meeting was held and the elders went about it in the time-honoured way, passing resolutions, making statements. The youth took over – marched to the police station, demanding redress, stoning a police van en route. The police arrested two of them. They sat down before the police station and refused to move – until their fellows were released. They were released. The following day the Southall Youth Movement (SYM) was born.

Various Asian youth movements sprang from this initiative – whenever and wherever there was need and in response to specific circumstances. But since these circumstances were invariably connected with fascist attacks and murders and/or police inability either to protect or apprehend (an inability so massive that it had taken a qualitative leap into connivance), the youth movements tended to centre largely around the defence of their communities, and their organisations to reflect that purpose. (Their intervention in the campaigns against deportation would come later.) In the course of the next couple of years a number of youth organisations and defence committees sprang up, in London, Manchester, Leicester, Bradford, several of them in London alone – in Brick Lane after the murders of Altab Ali and Ishaque Ali, in Hackney after the murder of Michael Ferreira, in Newham after the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig. And, like the strike committees earlier, the youth groups moved around aiding and supporting each other – joining and working with West Indian youth groups in the process, sometimes on an organisational basis (SYM and Peoples Unite, Bradford Blacks and Bradford Asian Youth Movement), sometimes as individuals, often coalescing into political groups (Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation and Bradford's United Black Youth League).

At another level, political groups were consciously formed by Afro-Caribbeans, Asians and Africans who had been active in white left

movements but had left them because they did not speak to the black experience. And they took on not only the black condition in Britain, but that of black peoples everywhere. They were anti-racist and anti-imperialist; and they were active in their communities. Their publications showed these concerns and helped further to politicise black people. *Samaj in'a Babylon*, in Urdu and English, and the group that produced the paper, came out of Chaggar's murder (June 1976), the Notting Hill riots (August 1976) and Soweto (June 1976). *Black Struggle* was its theoretical but accessible counterpart, *Mukti* its successor. Black Socialist Alliance (BSA) would comprehend them all for a while and shift the emphasis to campaigning material. Blacks Against State Harassment (BASH) would later address itself specifically to state racism. Other papers and journals and defence committee sheets and newsletters came and went, like their organisations, as the struggle rose and fell, moved and shifted, re-formed – but moving always in one direction: against the police, the government, racism. And the sheep/goat distinction that the state had hoped, by selective openings in higher education, to achieve, had broken down: the educated gave of their skills to the community and the community grounded them in the realities of political struggle.

* * *

Stop at Heathrow a minute, at the airport, as you are coming in or, if you are lucky, going out. Look around you, and you will see the division of labour that characterises the workforce of Britain. Cleaning and sweeping the (women's) lavatories, the halls, the stairways are Asian women from nearby Southall. Among the porters you will find a scattering of Asian and West Indian men. In the catering section, white women pack the food on the trays, while Asian women pack the same trays with cutlery (for £10 less per week). The menials in the kitchen are invariably Asian women – plus a few men, perhaps, for the heavier work.

And, of course, there is no question of promotion. Indeed they are lucky if the agency that employs them does not sack them and re-employ them at some other terminal, at the same wage if not a lower one. Their union, the TGWU, has been indifferent to their demands and in 1975, when 450 Asian workers walked out on their own initiative, the union declared the strike unofficial. The women managed, though, to elicit a few concessions on their own – and went back to work.[32]

The strike at Grunwick Film Processing plant in North London in August 1976 is, of course, more celebrated – not because the Asian workers, most of them women from East Africa, sustained it in wet and snow and police harassment of pickets for over a year, but because

the whole force of the unions and of government appeared to be gathered at last on behalf of black workers. Not only were the strikers given strike pay by their union, but were also supported by the national unions – TGWU, TUC and UPW (Union of Post Office Workers) – and by local union branches, shop stewards committees, trades councils, the lot. And cabinet ministers appeared on the picket lines. The basic issue for the strikers was the question of racist exploitation with which union recognition was involved, but, in the course of accepting union support, they also accepted the union line that union recognition by management was really the basic issue, losing in the process the lasting support of the black community. Union recognition would not have of itself got the vast backing of the unions, let alone that of cabinet ministers – it had never happened before – but there was now a deal between the government and unions (the Social Contract) which in exchange for workers not striking ensured, through the Employment Protection Act, that employers did not prevent unionisation. And that put Grunwick in the middle of it.

As the strike dragged on into a year and the media and the management and its supporters threatened to involve more fundamental political issues such as the closed shop and the mass picket, the unions lost interest and left. In November 1977 four Asian strikers, two of them women, started a hunger strike outside the TUC headquarters. They were immediately suspended by their union and their strike pay withdrawn. Len Murray, General Secretary of the TUC, suggested that they take up their hunger strike at the factory gates and not outside his office.[33]

The lessons of the earlier strikes – that black workers needed to rally the community behind them and from that base force the unions to their side – had been temporarily unlearnt by workers who had not had the benefit of that tradition. On the other hand, the persistence of Asian women in womanning the picket lines, month after month, against the pressure of their husbands and their fathers, the deception of the union and the attacks of the SPG – supported consistently by women's groups – had established the strength of the emerging black women's movement.

In 1977 the National Front, encouraged by their performance (in terms of the percentage of votes cast) in previous local elections, staged several marches through black city areas, with the police ensuring for them the freedoms of speech and assembly. They were closely attended by anti-racist groups – and black youth took the opportunity to stone both police and fascists alike.

In January 1978 Judge McKinnon ruled that Kingsley Read's pronouncement on Chaggar's death – 'One down, one million to go' – did not constitute incitement to racial hatred. 'In this England of ours', the Judge observed, '... we are allowed to have our own views still, thank

goodness, and long may it last.' Kingsley Read was the head of the fascist National Party.

In the same month, in the run-up to the local elections, itself a run-up to the general election of the following year, Margaret Thatcher assured the nation that her party would 'finally see an end to immigration', for 'this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture'. Since primary immigration had ended with the 1971 Act, she was clearly referring to dependants. Shortly afterwards, the House of Commons (all-party) Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, sounding a similar note, went on to recommend 'new procedures to tighten up identity checks' and 'the consideration of a system of internal control on immigration'. The Tories promised to go further: they would 'improve' existing 'arrangements ... to help those who are really anxious to leave this country'. The existing 'arrangements', such as the SPG and the IIIU, the immigration officials, and the Home Office, the courts and the media, were obviously not enough; the Tories would reverse policies of 'reverse discrimination' and amend the law on incitement to racial hatred, requiring it to prove 'an intent to offend'.

The media quickly tuned into Thatcher's warning about 'swamping'. The *Daily Mail*, in a series of articles on immigration, with headlines such as 'They've taken over my home town', gave real life stories of 'culture swamping'. A BBC television discussion programme on immigration afforded Enoch Powell enough latitude to enlarge on his theme of 'induced repatriation'. In the local elections that followed in May, Tory candidates reiterated and justified Tory proposals.

Hardly had the orchestration ceased than white fascist maggots began to crawl out of the decaying capitalist matter. Whole communities were terrorised. Three Asians were murdered in London within a period of three months, a shot-gun attack was mounted on West Indians in Wolverhampton, places of worship were desecrated and properties damaged and vandalised. And Tory-controlled local councils, mandated by their victory at the polls, set out to pursue Thatcherite policies in preparation for her victory.[34]

Emboldened by these events, but also wishing to show the country that they were the true party of fascism, the NF in April the following year requested permission from the local council to hold an election meeting at Southall Town Hall. Permission had been refused elsewhere and, even in Ealing, refused by the previous Labour-controlled council. Now, however, the Tory majority, after little prevarication, granted permission. Five thousand people demonstrated before the Ealing Town Hall the previous day, demanding that the meeting be called off, but to no avail. Instead the council flaunted the Union Jack, the NF's symbol, from the roof of the Town Hall. It was St George's day, the day of the NF. The Southall community planned a peaceful

protest. 'But on the day, 2,756 police, including SPG units, with horses, dogs, vans, riot shields and a helicopter, were sent in to crush the protest' – and the whole town centre declared a 'sterile' area.[35] People were penned in, unable to get to the Town Hall or go back home – and began milling around. The police went berserk. Police vans were driven at crowds of people and when they scattered and ran, officers charged after them, hitting out at random. Blair Peach, a relentless anti-racist campaigner and teacher, was beaten to death and hundreds of others injured, many seriously. The offices of Peoples Unite (an Afro-Caribbean-Asian meeting centre) were vandalised by police in readiness for the Tory council to demolish them – years before the scheduled date. Asian newspapers recalled the Amritsar massacre of another April in 1919.

The trials of the Southall 342 were held twenty-five miles away, far from the eye of the community, in Thatcher country. The magistrates rushed rapidly through the cases, convicting with abandon – 80 per cent in the first weeks of the trials – before the community could alert public opinion and the conviction rate was brought down to 50 per cent. The SPG officer who had bludgeoned Blair Peach to death remained unidentified and untried. The (Tory) government refused to hold an inquiry. The Home Secretary tut-tutted the SPG and, despite a massive public outcry against the unit (in which even the media was caught up), let it go back to its former devices. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir David McNee, summed it all up in an epigram: 'If you keep off the streets in London and behave yourselves, you won't have the SPG to worry about.' But Southall, Southall knew, would not lightly be invaded again, as 3 July 1981 was to prove.

* * *

The Tory government of 1970, with its Immigration Act and Industrial Relations Act, its White Paper on Police-Immigrant Relations and other bits and pieces of policy, had begun the moves from the control of blacks at the gates to their control within. The Labour government had continued in the same vein, and not always by default: there was the Child Benefit law* and the Green Paper on Nationality – and, of course, there was their unwavering support for the police and their practices. The Tory government of 1979 now sought to perfect these measures, carry them to a logical conclusion, a final solution, within an overall attack on the working class and the welfare state in the framework of a law-and-order society. In articulating and clarifying the ideology of British racism in the run-up to the elections, Thatcher

*Tax relief in respect of dependent children was replaced by child benefit paid to wives – but those with children abroad were not entitled to it, even if they were supporting them.

had established a climate in which officials in the health service, employment, education, housing, social and welfare services would, without benefit of edict, insist on passports and identity checks before affording a service to black citizens. Her Nationality Bill, by providing for various classes of (black) citizenship, would tend to regularise these practices.[36] Britain was effectively moving to a pass-law society.

The resistance of the black community went up a notch and, as so often before, threw up new types of struggle and new leaderships – this time in the form of the black women's movement, which would encompass all the struggles and add its own particular perspective to the resistance of the late 1970s. A few Afro-Caribbean women's groups had been in existence for over a decade, taking up issues that neither the white women's movement nor the black parties would concern themselves with. Asian women had begun to support their sisters through industrial strikes, on the Grunwick picket line, for instance, and outside Heathrow Airport. By 1978 black women's groups, Asian and Afro-Caribbean, had sprung up all over Britain and came together to form one powerful national body, the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), with its paper *FOWAAD*. OWAAD would hold national conferences and work with other national black groups, whilst allowing its constituent groups autonomy of work in their communities. Through OWAAD, the Asian and Afro-Caribbean experiences and campaigns could cross-fertilise and develop particular lines of struggle that would benefit the whole black community. For they were taking up issues of discrimination against class, race and gender at once – in the face of harassments which, under the new Tory regimen, went deep into community life, into households, into children's welfare.

It was naturally Asian women's groups which first became aware of issues such as the discrimination in new Child Benefit provisions – since it was mainly their community's children which were kept out under immigration law. But they were soon joined in their campaigning by Afro-Caribbean women who were already exposing other state attacks on black family life. Together they worked on issues of black child care, black prisoners' rights, the enforced use of Depo-Provera and abortion law (without recourse to abortion, black women would be subjected increasingly to dangerous contraception methods such as the use of Depo-Provera). Asian women joined the campaigns against 'Sin-bins' (special 'adjustment units' which replaced ESN schooling for West Indian children), which the United Black Women's Action Group in North London had started. Brixton Black Women's Group launched the first Black Women's Centre (1979).

In fighting for educational and social and welfare services for the whole community, Asian and Afro-Caribbean women pinpointed the parallel histories of a common racism. In health care, for example,

black women fought against the neglect of 'black disease'. Simultaneous campaigns were mounted in Brent against sickle-cell anaemia (affecting West Indians) and Vitamin D deficiencies causing rickets (affecting Asians). And issues such as forcible sterilisation, arising from the health services' obsession with black fertility, or the easy consignment of black women to mental hospitals, arising from its stereotyped understanding of 'black psyches in captivity', were fought by black women from both communities.

Asian women in AWAZ and Southall Black Sisters (set up in the wake of 23 April 1979) continued to lead the protest against the virginity testing and X-raying of immigrants. Here they gave the lead not only to other women, but to long-established, male-dominated Asian organisations such as the IWA, which eventually joined them. And when Asian youth groups began to campaign in the community over specific immigration cases, it was the black women that helped keep the names of Anwar Ditta and Nasira Begum in the public consciousness.

Black women have also been active in working-class struggles, as in the strike of Asian women at Futters (March-May 1979) and at Chix (1979-80), worked in local community self-defence groups and combined in national black campaigns such as BSA and BASH. And from the richness of their struggles – at the factory gate, on the streets, in the home, at the schools, in the hospitals, at the courts – and from their joint initiative with IWA and BASH arose the first national black demonstration against state brutality (June 1979), when blacks, with the violence of virginity tests, the fascists and the SPG still fresh in their minds, marched in their outraged thousands through the heart of London.*

The loom of British racism had been perfected, the pattern set. The strands of resistance were meshed taut against the frame. The frame had to give. Instead, it was screwed still tighter in the unexplained death of Rasta 'Cartoon' Campbell in Brixton prison** (March 1980), the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig on the streets of Newham (July 1980) and the burning to death of thirteen young West Indians in a fire in

*Symbolically, the man who had initiated so many of the black working-class and community movements of the early years and clarified for us all the lines of race/class struggle, Jagmohan Joshi, died on the march, of a heart attack.

**Campbell was arrested on 1 March 1980 on charges he claimed were false. From 10 March he refused food and drink. On the 26th he was force-fed. On the 31st he was found dead in his cell. Steve Thompson, who was also a Rasta, had a year earlier been forcibly shorn of his locks and following his protest sent to Rampton Mental Hospital. A Home Office circular denying recognition of Rastafarianism as a religion in prisons had been issued in 1976 (60/76). In 1977 a white sociologist showed in a Cranfield Police Study how the Rastas were terrorising the police of Handsworth (Birmingham). In April 1981, the Home Office confirmed its circular. In June, 'Tubby' Jeffers collapsed in prison from refusing food that violated his Rasta beliefs.

New Cross (January 1981).

It was clear to the black community from the evidence of a black witness, if not the evidence of their whole history in Britain, that the fire had been started by the fascists. But even before the investigation was concluded, the police, with the aid of the press, had put it about that it was (in descending order) the work of a disaffected black party-goer, or a prank that went wrong or maybe an accident. Finally they 'proved' through forensic expertise that the fire had been self-inflicted one way or another. Just nine months earlier, the police had 'raided' a black meeting place in St Pauls Bristol, only to be beaten back by the youth and routed by the community. Now the community closed ranks again. From all over the country they gathered at meetings in New Cross. A day of action was planned. The Race Today Collective* took over its organisation. And on 2 March over 10,000 blacks downed tools and marched through the heart of London, past the halls of imperial finance, past the portals of the yellow press, past the Courts of Justice, past the proud shopping centre of consumer society, past Broadcasting House and into the anointed place of free speech – Speakers' Corner.

It had been, for its size and length and spread of time, a peaceful march. There had been a few skirmishes, a window or two broken and a few arrests made. But the banner head-lines in the people's press spoke of 'mob violence', 'blacks on the rampage', the invasion of privacy, the damage to property. The quality press mourned the breakdown of police/black relations, the frustration of the blacks, even at times white insensitivity to 'black problems' – and went back to sleep again. The Home Secretary muttered something about an inquiry into racial violence. White society ensconced itself in its goodness and thanked God for the British 'bobby'. And, heartened, the bobbies went back to baiting Brixton, the fascists to baiting Southall.

In April Brixton exploded in rebellion, in July Southall – for blacks, Afro-Caribbean and Asian alike, all distinction between police and fascist had faded – and in the days following, Liverpool, Manchester, Coventry, Huddersfield, Bradford, Halifax, Blackburn, Preston, Birkenhead, Ellesmere Port, Chester, Stoke, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Southampton, Newcastle, High Wycombe, Knaresborough, Leeds, Hull, Derby, Sheffield, Stockport, Nottingham, Leicester, Luton, Maidstone, Aldershot and Portsmouth, black and white – rebellion in slum city – for the deprived the state was the police.

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*The Race Today Collective emerged from the radicalisation of the Institute of Race Relations (1969-72)[37] as an independent black journal and had grown, under Darcus Howe and John La Rose, into an activist collective. The journal itself comprehends all black struggles, nationally and internationally.

* * *

Nowhere have the youth, black and white, identified their problems with unemployment alone. That has been left to the social analysts of a past age. They know, viscerally, that there will be no work for them, ever, no call for their labour: it was not just a matter of the recession (the rich were doing all right), technology was taking over and the recession just gave 'them' the chance to get rid of the workers and bring in the robots. Society was changing, and they didn't need the secretary of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to tell them that it was 'a fundamental and irreversible change'. But they do not want to be pushed into artificial work schemes or institutionalised leisure or receive hand-outs from the enemy state. There is enough to go round and they want a part of it, a say in its giving. Or they will get it by thieving and 'loitering' and hustling – those things which pass for normalcy in a slum but threaten established society.

They are not the unemployed, but the never employed. They have not, like their parents, had jobs and lost them – and so become disciplined into a routine and a culture that preserves the status quo. They have not been organised into trade unions and had their politics disciplined by a labour aristocracy. They have not been on the marches of the dis-employed, so valiantly recalled by Labour from the hunger marches of the 1930s. Theirs is a different hunger – a hunger to retain the freedom, the life-style, the dignity which they have carved out from the stone of their lives.

The police are not an intrusion into that society but a threat, a foreign force, an army of occupation – the thick end of the authoritarian wedge, and in themselves so authoritarian as to make no difference between wedge and state.

That authoritarianism had been perfected in the colonies, in Ireland, in the fields of British racism, and, as it grew, it found ways to by-pass its political masters and become accountable to no one but itself – by obtaining legitimation for its actions from the silent majority through its cultivated liaison with the media.

It was once held that the British police were governed more by popular morality than by the letter of the law. They have now become the arbiters of that morality. There is no criticism of them they would brook, no area of society they do not pronounce on (with the shadow of force behind them). Look at the ferocity with which they attack their critics (even the Parliamentary tribunes of the people),* their refusal to

*For example, Greater Manchester Chief Constable James Anderton referred to police critics 'as creepy and dangerous minorities ... who are obviously using the protection imparted by our very constitution in order first to undermine it and then eventually to displace it' (September 1980).

be accountable to elected local police authorities, their pronouncements on the jury system, the unemployed, homosexuality, etc.,* the press campaign mounted by their PRO, the Police Federation, for increased police powers (in various submissions to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure for instance) or the bon mots of their police chiefs** to understand how the police have moved from accountability to legitimation.

But then a government which is not accountable to the people – a government which governs with the politics of the stick and the policies of a thousand cuts, which is anti-working class and anti-women and anti-youth – must have a police force that is accountable to it and not to the people. In turn, the government itself needs to be legitimated by an ideology of repression. And it is not merely that a free market economy requires a law and order state but that, even in its passing, it leaves only the option of a mixed economy with a corporate state maintained by surveillance. They are but two shades of the same authoritarianism, the one more modern than the other, but neither speaking to the birth of a new society that waits in the wings of the new industrial revolution.

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TONY BUNYAN

The police against the people

In the summer of 1981 the British state went on the attack against the people. The July 'riots', as they are known, broke out in more than thirty towns and cities, shaking the state and the ruling class to the core. The sheer anger of the 'riots' – that the black communities, youth in particular, in the inner city ghettos were no longer prepared to accept their oppressed status – was beyond their comprehension. Moreover, what had begun in April as a 'riot' against the police by the black community in Brixton extended in the July 'riots' to black and white fighting the police side by side. The race dimension was clear from Brixton onwards, but in July, with Toxteth in Liverpool as the outstanding example, the class dimension was added. The black communities and the dispossessed white working class, living side by side in the squalid ghetto areas of Britain's major cities, joined together to fight the police – the common denominator and symbol of their oppression.

After the Brixton 'riot' in April, the government set up an inquiry under Lord Scarman, a man described by the *Guardian* as 'the last great hope for British democracy'. But after the July 'riots', when race and class combined to set Britain alight, it was clear that the 'traditional' options were out. Even as Scarman continued his 'deliberations', the police took the offensive, 'dispensing justice on the streets'; arresting hundreds and beating up thousands more; using CS gas, for the first time on mainland Britain, in Liverpool; and finally, and

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Race & Class, XXIII, 2/3(1981/82).

inevitably, the first 'rioter' – a young, disabled white man, David Moore – was killed by a police van driving at high speed.

The immediate cause of the 'riots' can be placed squarely at the door of years of aggressive policing policies which only needed a 'spark' to provoke a violent reaction. That the target of the 'rioters' was the police came as no surprise. For the black youth had experienced years of persistent harassment and attack at their hands. But the young (and not so young) poor whites had also suffered from police practices, and they too faced a future without hope. So what the 'riots' also signalled was that the price of Britain's economic and social decline had finally to be met.

With registered unemployment destined to top three million in September 1981, there are no signs that the spiral of industrial decline which began in the mid-1960s is going to end. All the 'expert' forecasts have already been surpassed. Even the estimate that in order to get registered unemployment back down to one million (as it was in 1970) five million extra jobs will need to be created in the next three years may be optimistic.[1]

Britain, along with other capitalist nations, is set on restructuring its productive base in order to participate in the new industrial revolution – more specifically, through the use of the microprocessor. For,

> The microprocessor is to the new industrial revolution what steam and electric power was to the old – except that where steam and electric power replaced human muscle, microelectronics replaces the brain ... Consequently, there is virtually no field in manufacturing, the utilities, the service industries or commerce that is not affected by the new technology.[2]

For Britain, the political and social costs of such a restructuring, which presumes almost a third of the potential working population being permanently unemployed, will require the imposition of a highly authoritarian regime.

Already, in the transition period of the 1970s, the political and social costs were becoming evident. By the end of the decade the police were demanding increased powers over ordinary citizens and massive increases in recruitment targets. The number of police in England and Wales reached a record peak of 117,423 in 1980. Britain has proportionately the largest prison population in western Europe (currently 44,000); the prisons themselves are full to overflowing and army camps are now being prepared. And Britain has been engaged in civil war in Northern Ireland for the past twelve years.

What the 'riots' and the state's response to them marked was an open recognition that the days of 'liberal democracy' are numbered, and that the transition to an 'authoritarian democracy', in which only the privileged majority will be allowed to participate, is underway.

From 'class democracy' to 'liberal democracy'

The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 marked the beginning of the parliamentary system, the final supremacy of an elected parliament over the monarch. And the political system from 1688 right through to the 1920s can broadly be defined as a 'class democracy', for although there was an elected parliament, empowered to pass laws affecting all the people, the electorate itself was limited, based as it was on property qualifications. The 'great' Reform Act of 1832 gave the vote to the new industrial bourgeoisie, and further Reform Acts late in the nineteenth century extended male suffrage to the petit bourgeoisie.

The control of state agencies had resided solely with the monarch until 1688. During the eighteenth century some control passed to parliament, over finance and the two ministries of state. But as the increasingly powerful new bourgeoisie demanded and won the right to vote in the 1830s, so it began also to strive for control over the coercive agencies of the state – the military, the law and the police. It was during this period of struggle between the competing sections of capital – the landed aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie – that the foundations of 'liberal democracy' were laid, well before an 'equal voice' was accorded to labour. The concept that the state and its institutions were 'neutral' was hammered out in this period, less out of respect for democracy than as a convenient means of arbitrating between the competing sections of capital in the face of the militant and unrepresented working class. The coercive agencies of the state were thus to become autonomous, free of parliamentary control, operating, as it were, over and above the different sectional interests within society, claiming to act in the interests of all the people – and not those of any one class – well before the advent of universal suffrage.

The displaced peasantry of feudalism and the new working class of capitalism did not take the massive upheavals in their lives lying down; they resisted vigorously, fighting against each change. Bourgeois histories of this period place much emphasis on the 'violence' of the 'mob'. Historical evidence does not support this view, as the historian Rudé observed:

> From my (no doubt) incomplete and imperfect record of the twenty-odd major riots and disturbances taking place in Britain between the Edinburgh Porteous Riots of 1736 and the Great Chartist demonstration of April 1848 in London, I totted up the following score: the crowds killed a dozen at most; while, on the other side, the courts hanged 118 and 630 were shot dead by troops.[3]

The 'Peterloo massacre' of 1819, in which troops rode directly into a large crowd of demonstrators, causing eleven deaths and hundreds of injuries, is only the most notorious example of the state's use of

violence against its own people. And, as it is today, the violence of the state was represented as legitimate, and the marginal violence of the people as 'criminal' and 'unlawful'.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the police were under the personal direction of the magistrates and comprised a handful of constables and watchmen in each town. When necessary, they summoned help from the militia, the yeomanry or the army. The onset of industrial capitalism, however, raised a qualitatively new problem for policing. In 1800 some 80 per cent of the people lived in the country: by 1850 over 50 per cent lived in the new towns and cities. There was a growing working class in the cities and permanent groups of unemployed in town and country. Moreover, the new industrial bourgeoisie was significantly less keen to take up arms every time disorder broke out than the landed gentry (yeomanry) and the small farmers (militia) had been in the past.

The initial response was to establish a network of army barracks around the country. The traditional opposition of parliament to a large standing army at the king's command disappeared; it was the only force capable of protecting the new order. In 1792 there were only forty-three garrisons available to house a home-based army of some 20,000; by 1805 there was room for a total of 160,000 (just 10,000 less than the present size of the army). The more enlightened understood that stability would not result from the permanent and outright suppression of political gatherings and demonstrations. In place of the 'old' and partisan forces of order came the formation of a 'new' force, with the appearance of impartiality, which could act as a shield between the bourgeoisie and the working class. The police force, as we know it today, was created apparently independent of the class it was formed to protect.

The Metropolitan Police, formed in London in 1829, and the other forces created throughout the country later in the century, took over the job of maintaining order from the army. Although unarmed, the 'neutral' police repeatedly and often violently broke up demonstrations. In November 1887 a massive march of the unemployed attempted to storm Trafalgar Square and was met by the police taking the offensive, batons flying. One of the marchers, Alfred Linnell, died of the injuries inflicted on him by the police. His death was commemorated by William Morris:

> They will not learn: they have no ears to hearken.
> They turn their faces from the eyes of fate,
> Their gay-lit halls shut out the skies that darken,
> But lo! this dead man knocking at the gate.
> Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
> But one and all, if they would dusk the day.[4]

The police knew that as a last resort the army could be called in. And call them in they did. Between 1872 and 1908 the army was brought in to quell political and trade union demonstrations on no less than twenty-four occasions. Not until the 1920s could the police alone maintain public order in Britain (Ireland was another question altogether).

But the job of the 'new' police forces was not only to maintain order but to enforce the law in the community, to protect the person and property of all citizens: 'The earliest instructions issued to the Metropolitan Police made it clear that every police officer was to regard himself both as servant and guardian of the public and to treat all citizens with civility and respect.'[5]

In practice the working-class communities in Britain received little 'protection' of their person and property (if any) from the police until the 1920s. Even in London, with the most efficient force, there are many reports of the 'mob' rescuing someone the police were trying to arrest – like the 'riots', this is by no means a new phenomenon of the 1980s. Similarly, police histories at the turn of the century speak of the 'dark' areas of London where the police always patrolled in twos or threes, and then only occasionally. The real motive for patrolling, and 'protecting', working-class communities was that they housed the 'criminal classes'. The gaining of the 'consent' of the working class to be policed can only be portrayed as a process of attrition between the 1880s and 1920s. Even since then, acquiescence, rather than consent, has been won – there is a long-standing and still-existent tradition that matters are sorted out within the community rather than by calling the 'old Bill'.

Ideologically, the police were presented as an arm of the 'neutral' state, answerable, in the final analysis, to the courts. And the courts and the legal system were similarly charged with the role of upholding the law of the land, with the military, the security and intelligence agencies working for the defence of the 'national interest'. All these agencies supposedly had an overriding national function and were presumed to operate on behalf of the whole of society. Thus the coercive agencies had, before the advent of 'liberal democracy', attained an autonomous status free from the partisan influence of elected governments. This autonomy was bequeathed to 'liberal democracy' in the concept of the 'separation of powers', which asserted the independence of the executive, parliament and the judiciary from each other.

The ideology that state agencies act as neutral arbiter has an important legitimating function, since it implies that the state acts for the benefit of society as a whole. Hence, political action or resistance to these agencies is portrayed as action against the common interest.

The 'liberal-democratic' phase

For more than a century any working-class movement, or attempt at organisation, was not only perforce extra-parliamentary, but were often seen as unlawful. The coercive agencies of the British state were thus overwhelmingly directed against these movements and the potential threat they posed. Those agencies did not disappear with the advent of 'liberal democracy', but were held in reserve.

Trade unions were not finally recognised until the 1906 Trades Dispute Act,* which legalised the right to strike and to act in solidarity with other workers. In 1900, when the Labour party was founded, only six million men were entitled to vote, some 27 per cent of the population over 21. A massive increase in the franchise came with the Reform Act of 1918. This had been devised by Lloyd George's secret Ministry of Reconstruction to head off working-class anger at the indiscriminate slaughter of their fellows during the First World War – a sacrifice that was rewarded back home with unemployment and recession. And, not far from the minds of the ruling class was the fear that the revolution of October 1917 would spread to Britain – a fear not without some foundation (in 1919 even the police went on strike), for the working class could not be simply bought off with the vote. On 20 February 1920 a special conference of ministers met to discuss threatened industrial action and the likelihood of revolution. The meeting was told by Bonar Law that 'all weapons ought to be available for distribution to the friends of the government'; by Winston Churchill, that the country was nearly defenceless; and by G.H. Roberts, a Labour member of the Coalition government, that 'there are large groups preparing for Soviet government'. The 1920s were indeed to be a testing time for the state and the ruling class, culminating in the 1926 General Strike, in which the country came to a standstill, and which was only ended when the TUC leadership sold out its members.

With the Reform Act of 1918 the electorate rose from seven to twenty-one million – 78 per cent of those aged over 21. Full adult suffrage did not come until 1928, when more than 5 million women between 21 and 30 were finally enfranchised. The age of universal suffrage had arrived, the two basic tenets of 'liberal democracy' enacted – the right to strike and the right to vote.

For capital it was a pragmatic development, for labour a contradictory one. It opened the way for the organisation of the working class to accept the parliamentary road to change rather than take to the streets. Implicitly, it also opened the way for the acceptance of the 'rule of law', of the police and the courts. For if the class's representatives

*The repeal of the Combination Acts in 1825 allowed workers to form trade unions, but did not recognise the right to strike or to picket.

could potentially take office, at national and local level, then surely they could control those agencies which had previously been used to suppress working-class actions. The first majority Labour government, elected in 1945, exploited its sweeping victory by finally establishing the 'welfare state', tentatively begun in 1906, providing free education and health services, subsidised housing and benefits for the old, infirm and unemployed. There was in the post-war period an unwritten contract between capital and labour on the economic, social and political fronts, a consensus based on relative affluence and high employment.

But two contradictions remained. Although the dominant expression of class action was through the Labour party on the political front and the trade unions on the industrial front, extra-parliamentary actions continued unabated on both fronts through the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s – as they had in the 1930s. Moreover, although Labour governments could and did take office they never took power. Ultimate state power resided in the coercive agencies whose actions were not subject then, as now, to parliamentary control. These agencies, of the 'neutral' state, were held in reserve, to guard against times when the 'spontaneous consensus' failed.

The passing of the 'liberal-democratic' phase

Indications that the 'liberal-democratic' phase was coming to an end came in 1962 when the first Immigration Act was passed, just three years after Harold MacMillan had told the country that 'you've never had it so good'. This Act restricted the entry of black people to this country from the Commonwealth. The ideology of 'liberal democracy' had held out the promise that all citizens of the Commonwealth were equal, with the right to come and live in Britain as free and equal citizens – and in the 1950s black people from the Caribbean and from Asia were drawn in their thousands to meet Britain's need for cheap labour.

But the concept of free entry was short lived, and the period from 1962 onwards has seen a logical progression to the present dual policy of 'induced repatriation' or second-class citizenship.[6] In that it contains the seeds of repatriation, the 1962 Act can also be seen to be the precursor to the systematic attack on the basic rights of not only black people but the working class as a whole which was to take place a decade later. In the 1970s trade unions and the right to strike came under mounting pressure, and the Employment Act 1981, with its accompanying guidelines to the police and the courts, which limits the number of pickets and forms of strike action, basically seeks to abolish the right to act in solidarity with other workers. The essential difference between this Act and the Heath government's ill-fated

Industrial Relations Act of the early 1970s is that the latter tried to take on the unions nationally, whereas the former insidiously allows strikers to be picked off at a local level.

The other prong of the attack has been to narrow the limits of what is politically acceptable, both in terms of who should be allowed to participate in the parliamentary road to change and what forms of extra-parliamentary action are permissible.

The drift of the political attack is to de-legitimise those who are not prepared to go along with the new ground rules of the coming 'authoritarian democracy'. Actions, even opinions, of elements labelled as 'extremist' are unacceptable. In 1971 David Wood, the political correspondent of *The Times*, wrote an article on the Special Branch, the political arm of the police:

> I for one share Michael Foot's liberal horror of a society in which ideas have to be policed as lawless acts. Yet this is hypocrisy, the liberal fallacy. The idea precedes the act, and the best hope of counteraction lies in catching the criminal idea on the wing. We are hypocrites to pretend otherwise.[7]

The import of this 'liberal fallacy' was to become official state policy in the 1970s. Whereas in 1963 Lord Denning, in his report on the Profumo affair, spelled out the official definition of those considered 'subversive' as people who 'would contemplate the overthrow of government by *unlawful* means' (emphasis added),[8] in April 1978 Merlyn Rees, then Home Secretary, confirmed that subversion was now defined as 'activities which threaten the safety or well-being of the state, and are intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by *political, industrial* or violent means' (emphasis added).[9]

The shift in state policy between the 1960s and 1970s had now become explicit, and for the first time Rees announced figures which confirmed that there had been a sevenfold increase in the size of the Special Branch, from 200 in the early 1960s to nearly 1,400 in 1978. One of the main jobs of the Special Branch, and the other internal intelligence agencies, is to monitor 'subversive' activities, or, as Rees told parliament, 'those who ... cause problems for the state'.[10] Individual activists and Labour party MPs with 'extremist' views and active trade unionists clearly cannot be relied on to consent to the new order. Similarly, those who wish to conduct such extra-parliamentary action as a demonstration are going to have to do so on terms laid down by the police, for example, by giving advance notice of their intention to hold a march (several local Acts to this effect and the government Green Paper on public order indicate the future direction in this field).

The historically evolved contract between capital and labour, characterised in the 'liberal-democratic' phase, is ending. The 'multi-

racial' society, the right to strike, to free speech and to demonstrate, and the welfare state – all the components of the 'liberal-democratic' phase – are literally being torn up, dismantled or abolished, And 'rioters', like the 'mobs' of the past, are, as we shall see, to be met with the full might of the state. The violence of the state will be put across as legitimate, and the political action of the 'rioters' as 'criminal'.

It is no wonder that the black youth lead the fightback, for their oppression has been the sharpest. Nor is it surprising that the dispossessed white youth, only at one remove, that of colour (which counts for nothing in a recession), should follow this lead. Such struggles have many echoes in British history and as the police and the courts, backed by the government and the media, move into the frontline in response to the 'riots', their neutral facade is dropped – they become overtly the state against the people.

From Saltley to Toxteth

National security

At such times as the present it is important to stand back and understand how the immediate past has led to this moment. By 1970 unemployment already stood at one million and the post-war social peace was quickly shattered when the Tory government of Heath decided to take on the national trade union movement and define the limits of union activity in the Industrial Relations Act of 1971. The counterattack was spearheaded by the miners, whose 1972 strike, carried out in defiance of official edict, took on the government politically. More than 30,000 miners and other workers gathered to block the entrance to the coal depot at Saltley in Birmingham. The police, outnumbered, decided that discretion was the better part of valour and retreated. The government, the state and the ruling class saw this mass defiance of 'law and order' not only as a challenge to their authority but as a major defeat in their bid to curb the power of trade unions. By taking to the streets the labour movement, not for the first time in history, had stopped the state in its tracks.

In response, the state, as it had done in the past (at the turn of the nineteenth century and after the First World War) totally revised its 'contingency plans'. Immediately after the confrontation at Saltley the Home Secretary, Robert Carr, set up the National Security Committee to review all aspects of maintaining order – from everyday policing to policing in an insurrectionary situation. The review reflected the economic and political conditions of the 1970s, and its recommendations were accepted by the governments of both parties. Labour, who had already been back in office for a year before the new plans of the National Security Committee were completed in 1975, changed its name to the less contentious Civil Contingencies Committee, but it carried on doing exactly the same work.

The context within which the review took place is important to pinpoint. Overall, despite the unions' hostility to the Heath government, the post-war period of 'consensus' politics, involving as it did the separation of the economic and political aims of the labour movement, had dulled the reaction of organised labour to attacks on basic rights. And this was even more evident when, after the Labour party was returned in 1974, under the aegis of the social contract the working class was debased and demoralised.[11] As E.P. Thompson wrote:

> [once] the libertarian response of the British people has been brought under sedation, then the reasons for the invisibility of the state within the state begin to lose their force. And so we see the evidence, in the past decade, of the police, the army, the security services ... becoming more public, engaging in active 'public relations', lobbying for new curbs on civil rights and for a 'simplified' legal process, and attempting to familiarise the public with their intrusive presence.[12]

Thompson puts his finger on the most dominant feature of the transition from the 'old' order to the 'new', from the 'liberal-democratic' system in which the coercive state agencies played a low-key role to an 'authoritarian-democratic' system where these agencies move to the forefront.

The first step taken after Saltley was to strengthen the police in the community – the 'frontline' in police terminology. This, as we shall see later, totally altered the image and role of the police. The second step was to strengthen the security services – the Special Branch and MI5, the secret internal agency – and to allow military intelligence (the Defence Intelligence department of the Ministry of Defence) to extend its remit to internal affairs. To back up the security services new techniques of surveillance were introduced. Harnessing technological advances and drawing on the experience in Northern Ireland, computerised record-keeping systems were developed capable of embracing the whole population. The most obvious example was the extension of the Police National Computer to hold the records not just of 'criminals', but of all car-owners and vehicle licence holders, covering over half the adults in the country. The government-appointed Lindop Committee on Data Protection reported that the Special Branch (and via it the other security agencies) had access to this computer through a 'flagging' system that could bring its attention to any misdemeanour committed by someone of 'interest'. (Inspection of the more sensitive computers, like those of the Special Branch at Scotland Yard and of MI5, was simply denied to the Committee, which had to rely on press reports to present its findings on these.)

The most secret change involved the military, which was to be geared up to intervene in public order situations that the police could not

handle and to intervene in strikes. The 'War Plan', a product of the period after the First World War, was redrawn to cope not only with an external nuclear threat, but also with internal dissent. Over a three-year period, every high street, bridge, railway, river, town and city in the country was surveyed by the military. Joint police-military exercises were also held. In 1974 Heathrow airport was occupied by the police and the army on four occasions, allegedly to counter terrorist threats; but in fact as 'a public relations exercise to accustom the public to the reality of troops deploying through the high streets'.[13] Then, in the winter of 1977/8, the army was used overtly – during the national firemen's strike, when more than 20,000 troops took over. For the first time in British history the army replaced an entire workforce, and successfully helped defeat the strike.

The final element in the new 'contingency' planning was the creation of a special body in the Cabinet Office, the Civil Contingencies Unit. This services the ministerial Civil Contingencies Committee and coordinates the state's response to any 'emergency' – from terrorist threats and natural disasters to public order and strikes – uniting the cabinet, key ministries, the police, the military, the security agencies and the fire and ambulance services. Beneath it lies a system of 'regional government' which can be rapidly activated.

All these changes, largely hidden from public view, but legitimised through the media when overtly used (as with the firemen's strike), signalled the beginnings of 'authoritarian democracy'.

And in the frontline of the move towards authoritarianism was the police force. To meet the new circumstances, the police had to develop new strategies and tactics, new equipment and concepts of policing – while at the same time holding out the continuing image of the copper on the beat, protecting the community.

As the country moved into a deeper recession and the government's monetarist policies alienated further sections of the working class, the contradiction between image and reality became sharper – until, in the 'riots' of 1981, the police were finally revealed as a force against the people, representing the increasing authoritarianism of the state itself. It was left to the media and police spokesmen to go on flogging the dead ideology of the 'friendly bobby'. This image of the friendly bobby, developed in the post-war period when the police's public order role, so prominent up to the 1930s, had receded in the public mind, was supported by the ideology that 'so long as the police are unarmed and have few powers not available to the ordinary citizen, they are compelled to rely not on the exercise of oppressive authority, but on public support'.[14]

By the end of the 1970s, however, the police had acquired a different image. 1977 saw the introduction of riot shields for the first time on mainland Britain – at Lewisham in London during the running battles

between the police and the anti-fascists at a National Front march, and a month later at the traditional Notting Hill Carnival where young blacks pelted the police with bricks, bottles and stones in a three hour battle.

Yet the police have continued to present themselves as a neutral force. After the St Pauls 'riot' in Bristol in April 1980, and the Brixton 'riot' in April this year, the Chief Inspector for the police service in England and Wales, while acknowledging the function of the police in 'maintaining public order', went on to assert that the reputation of the police was that of 'an *independent* and *impartial* body dedicated to *humane* law enforcement' (emphasis added).[15] Two months later, in the July 'riots', the police were being attacked with everything from petrol bombs to bricks and paving stones, and even television sets (dropped from high-rise flats), in more than thirty cities across the land.

The seeds of the change are to be found in the two apparently contradictory styles – which are in fact complementary – of policing which emerged in the 1970s. One may be characterised as 'fire-brigade' policing – heavy, reactive, designed to stamp out trouble on the streets; the other, only now emerging, has been termed 'community policing' – but is more accurately described as infiltrating the community in order to police it.

In the general context of decline and recession, the police have seen the maintenance of public order as their major task, and one which continues. James Anderton, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, is quite explicit about this. In a BBC TV programme in October 1980 he said:

> I think that from the police point of view ... my task in the future, in the ten to fifteen years from now ... that basic crime such as theft, burglary, even violent crime will not be the predominant police feature. What will be the matter of greatest concern to me will be the covert and ultimately overt attempts to overthrow democracy, to subvert the authority of the state, and to in fact involve themselves in acts of sedition designed to destroy our parliamentary system and the democratic government of this country.[16]

Anderton himself uses fire-brigade policing, a strategy first developed by the Metropolitan police, under Commissioner Robert Mark, in London, whereby most officers patrol in cars, backed by a central mobile reserve, so that any trouble spot can be dealt with swiftly and in force. It will be obvious that built into any such strategy is a tendency to over-react and over-police in a blatantly aggressive manner.

One question considered by the National Security Committee in 1972 was that of a 'third force'. Britain, unlike other European countries, has never had a third force, a para-military police like the CRS in

France, the *Marechaussee* of Holland and the *Bereitschaftspolizei* of West Germany. Such forces not only have sophisticated riot-control equipment (for example, water cannon, CS gas and armoured personnel carriers), but their members are experienced marksmen (with pistols, rifles and submachine guns) and are specially trained to deal with riots, demonstrations, pickets and terrorism.

The creation of such a force in Britain had been raised on a number of occasions – notably in a Home Office Working Party which reported secretly in 1971. It came out against the idea. After ten years of deliberation it stated that the British public would not support the creation of a para-military force and that existing police forces should be re-trained and re-equipped to fill the gaps that existed.[17] The strongest argument in favour of a third force was that it would relieve the conventional police of their aggressive role in dealing with public order and enable them to maintain friendly relations with the public. Against this view, the experience of other European countries demonstrated that riot police generated more hatred and counter-violence than the ordinary police. 'Unlike the policemen on the beat, they have little chance to mend their fences by being seen as friends and protectors, because they seldom meet people until they become rioters.'[18]

The National Security Committee reached the same conclusion as the Home Office Working Party – the police and the Home Office had both argued vociferously against the creation of a third force. The police, it was agreed, would continue to be responsible for all public order situations. However, riot training was to be stepped up, clear guidelines were to be drawn up as to when the army would be called in and joint police-military exercises were to be held regularly.

In theory, the distinctive roles of the army and the police were to be maintained. As one military expert, Brigadier W.F.K. Thompson, expressed it at the time, the police 'must be acceptable to the majority of the citizens', while the army, 'the final repository of arbitrary force ... needs no acceptance'.[19] In practice, the police, from this time on, were committed to a particular path which was to change their role greatly, and ultimately open to question the idea of the 'ordinary' policemen.

One of the obvious starting points was to create Special Patrol Groups (SPGs) in other major cities, along the lines of the one in London, and to train them in riot-control techniques. The London SPG was the first to be re-trained. Robert Mark, appointed as the new Commissioner of Police for London in April 1972, was impressed by the techniques used by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He had his 200-strong SPG trained in 'snatch-squad' methods (to arrest ringleaders), 'flying wedges' (to break up crowds) and random stop-and-search and roadblock techniques, 'based on the army's experience in Ulster'.[20] There are now at least twenty-eight SPG-type groups in

the fifty-two local police forces in the United Kingdom, and of these, twenty-two were created in 1972 or after. Every major city now has its own SPG, all of them playing the dual role of anti-crime and para-military units.*

In their 'anti-crime' role, the London SPG were in the forefront of fire-brigade policing. They were mainly used in 'saturation policing' in areas defined by the police as 'high-crime' areas – more accurately, the inner city ghettos with large black communities. Year after year the SPG was sent into areas like Brixton, Lewisham, Hackney, Peckham, Notting Hill and Brent – all areas which were to figure in the 'riots' of 1981, especially Brixton. In November 1978, some 120 SPG officers and thirty extra detectives from Scotland Yard were sent into the London borough of Lambeth which includes Brixton. For a month they carried out mass stop and searches, set up roadblocks and conducted drugs swoops, resulting in 430 arrests for obstruction, alleged theft, 'sus' and assaults on police officers. The *Daily Telegraph* reported after the operation: 'Three-fifths of those arrested were white, the rest coloured. A high percentage of black people live in the area'.[21] In effect, 40 per cent of those arrested were black, more than double the estimated black proportion of the local community. This SPG operation, one of many over the years, led the borough council to set up a public inquiry into the relations between the police and the community. Its report called for the SPG to be disbanded, and found numerous cases of assault on members of the local black community by the police.

The same picture emerged over the years in all the cities where SPGs were operating. Of particular interest is the history of the Liverpool SPG. Set up in 1974 and known as the 'Task Force', its reputation was such that when Kenneth Oxford was appointed Chief Constable in 1976, one of his first acts was to disband it. 'This rather forceful type of policing wasn't doing the image much good', Oxford commented. However in his annual report, he blandly stated that, 'following the redistribution of the establishment of the former Task Force', he had created a new unit, now called the Operational Support Division, with exactly the same duties! It was no surprise when Liverpool 8 erupted in July. It too had been defined as a high-crime area with a large black population and was subjected to frequent 'visits' by the local SPG.

But local SPGs alone would not be able to contain major trouble on the streets, so Police Support Units (PSUs) were also set up. The first

*Notorious examples of the style of such 'third force' policing could be seen at the Red Lion Square demonstration against the National Front in June 1974, when one of the protesters, Kevin Gately, was killed. One SPG officer told the inquiry, under Lord Scarman, that his unit had cut through the demonstrators 'like a knife through butter'. And at the anti-National Front demonstration in Southall in April 1979, a member of the SPG murdered Blair Peach, a young teacher.

were formed in 1973, ostensibly as a civil defence measure in case of nuclear war. According to the *Police Manual of Home Defence*, issued by the Home Office in 1974, chief constables were to 'take steps to form' PSUs on 'receipt' of a 'message from the Home Office'. Each of the 325 local divisions in England, Wales and Scotland was, according to the *Manual*, to form a minimum of one PSU, consisting of an inspector and three sections, each with a sergeant and ten constables – thirty-four men in all. In practice, during the 1970s PSUs were created, special transits purchased and riot training given in a large number of forces, not for civil defence but for public order. An examination of fifty chief constables' reports for 1979 showed that twenty-eight had formed PSUs in the previous six years; and a further fourteen reports contained mentions of courses on crowd control, public order or shield training. Even before St Pauls, Bristol, erupted in April 1980, there were at least 12,000 riot-trained police.

Such units have been and are used to go to the aid of other forces, whenever required, under the 'mutual aid agreements'. Although this type of mutual aid has always been a feature of policing (in 1910, Winston Churchill, as Home Secretary, sent 800 officers from London to Tonypandy in Wales to suppress a miners' strike), today's pickets and demonstrators are confronted not by untrained police but by paramilitary SPG and PSU forces. For instance, when the National Front held a demonstration at Leicester on 21 April 1979, there was 'a total of 5,065 officers, including 4,035 from 20 other forces'.[22]

Even before the 'riots' in Bristol in April 1980, in Brixton in April 1981 and countrywide in July 1981, the contradiction between the police continuing to police the community while at the same time forming a 'hidden' third force for 'riots' was openly recognised. The Chief Constable of Norfolk, a county force, wrote in his annual report for 1979: 'It is a matter of some concern that officers who not only are trained for, but also experience, violent confrontations are expected to revert immediately to the role of a community officer.' The British police have two incompatible and irreconcilable demands placed on them – to police the community in the everyday sense and to act as Britain's third force.

Community policing

John Alderson, Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, is one policeman who clearly sees the cost of such overtly oppressive policing:

> Social pressures tend more and more to seduce police thinking and public awareness ... towards a quasi-military reactive concept ... The modern generation of police officers are beginning to see themselves as mobile responders to incidents. The car, radio and the computer dominate the police scene. The era of preventive policing is phasing out in favour of a responsive or reactive police.[23]

The main casualty, according to Alderson, is the confidence and trust the community places in the police, as the police and the people are increasingly only likely to meet in conflict situations. This development of fire-brigade policing in Britain's major cities, could lead, Alderson concluded, to a style of policing 'more akin to that of an occupying army'.

Alderson is the foremost exponent of what he has termed 'pro-active' policing, to distinguish it from 'reactive' (fire-brigade) and 'preventive' (large numbers of men on the beat) policing. At a conference organised by the Ditchley Foundation in 1977, he had already defined pro-active policing as containing:

> all the elements of preventive policing but [it] goes beyond it. Whereas preventive policing tends to put the system on the defensive, pro-active policing sets out to *penetrate the community* in a multitude of ways. It seeks to reinforce social discipline and mutual trust ... it strives to activate all possible resources in support of the common good [emphasis added].[24]

And he added that the police were probably 'better placed than most other organisations for providing social leadership of this kind'. Successful pro-active policing, Alderson argues, involves an 'open and trusting' relationship with the media, coupled with the breaking down of barriers between the police and other agencies – such as the social and probation services and education departments. In other words, those in the pay of the state, but whose function has been to serve their 'clients' or to 'educate' children, are now to be harnessed to help 'police' the community. And a circular to this end was, according to the latest annual report of the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, sent out by the Home Office (circular no. 211/1978) soon after the Ditchley Conference.

The other aspect of community policing which it is necessary to draw out is the role of the police officer actually on the beat – the community or neighbourhood officers, as they are called. It is part of their training to gather intelligence on the people within their patch and to pass this intelligence to the 'collator' at their local police station ('intelligence collators' have replaced the old-style station sergeants like Dixon of Dock Green). By this means, information gathered by one officer is available to the whole force, including the local Special Branches. One force, Thames Valley, has carried the logic of this system to the ultimate by installing a half-million pound computer to correlate the information brought in off the streets.

Community policing, despite its high-sounding purpose, is a double-edged tool to penetrate the community – through other professional agencies and by spying on the community under the guise of offering a protective, friendly approach. 'Consent' is thus to be 'engineered',

and, in case this fails, intelligence is gathered in an attempt to pre-empt dissent.

The burning of Britain

The July 'riots' marked a watershed in British policing and politics. The police thought they had prepared for every eventuality during the 1970s, and especially after a year of reorganisation following the St. Pauls 'riot' in April 1980. Take, for example, Kenneth Oxford, the Chief Constable of Merseyside, who wrote in May this year:

> My policy on relationships with the community has been endorsed and strengthened throughout the year with all members of the Force being mindful of their obligations in this direction. I am confident that these relationships, with all sections of the community, are in a healthy position and I do not foresee any serious difficulties developing in the future.[25]

Oxford was not just confident, he could also report that the 'relationship between the Merseyside Police ... and ethnic groups has been good'. Two months later, Liverpool 8 was aflame and he and his officers attacked by a whole community.

Oxford was not the only police chief to be caught off balance. The whole national system of mutual aid broke down in the July 'riots' and the police literally lost control of the city centres. Now, with the sanction of the Home Secretary, they are to go on to the offensive in future 'riots' – using whatever tactics are required, such as driving vehicles at high speed at crowds of people, and whatever equipment they choose to employ, such as CS gas, water-cannon and plastic bullets. These tactics will, in turn, lead to an escalation in everyday confrontations on the streets as the fire-brigade policing of Britain's cities continues, and 'community' policing (if only in its underdeveloped form) becomes discredited.

Equally, the choices presented to the state are between coercion and co-optation. But, given the running down of industry, the increase in unemployment and the cuts in welfare expenditure, the shift towards coercion and 'authoritarian democracy' must become more pronounced. Nor is a Labour government going to do much better – in view of the structured unemployment that is going to be a feature of the silicon age. Britain after all is the weakest link in the capitalist chain and cannot afford the 'life-long education, part-time work, early retirement, reified leisure and living dole' scenario that Sivanandan summons up for more developed capitalist societies.[26]

It is more likely therefore that we are entering a period of greater repression – and resistance.

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LEE BRIDGES

Keeping the lid on: British urban social policy, 1975-81

The 'riots' that have shaken British cities have sent reverberations across the full range of government economic and social policies. Most immediately, the 'riots' represent, as the participants have made clear, a revolt against persistent police harassment and repression of inner city communities and a protest over the conspicuous failure of the police to protect the black members of those communities from racist attacks. More generally, the 'riots' signify a rejection by youth, both black and white, of a future of mass unemployment and social and environmental degradation, a future to which the Prime Minister, in upholding her government's monetarist policies, has said there is no alternative. But the 'riots' may also be seen as a repudiation of all that has gone on over the past fifteen years in the name of British urban social policy.

In this latter context, there is a sickening irony in the fact that Mrs Thatcher's immediate response, after voicing spontaneous support for 'positive policing' tactics in putting down the riots, has been to dispatch two of her ministers, Michael Heseltine and Timothy Raison, to Liverpool to investigate what has gone wrong in the management of Britain's urban problems. This is the same Michael Heseltine who, as Secretary of State for the Environment, has held overall responsibility for the government's inner cities policy over the past two and a half years and who personally has chaired Liverpool's Inner City Partnership during that time. It is also Michael Heseltine who has presided over the financial devastation of Britain's urban housing programme

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and who, under his own draconian Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, is currently engineering a massive shift towards centralised control over local government finances and activities. Equally, Timothy Raison, as Minister of State at the Home Office with primary responsibility for immigration policy, has not only ushered the highly racist Nationality Bill through Parliament, but has also been responsible for the widespread and increased use of existing immigration laws, operating in conjunction with passport checks in employment exchanges, social security offices and hospitals, as an instrument of internal harassment and control over Britain's resident black communities.

Looked at in terms of the government's own economic strategy, however, there is nothing illogical about Mrs Thatcher's choice of ministers for this fact-finding mission to Liverpool – these are the very men who have faithfully imposed the financial and repressive measures that monetarism demands. By the same token, neither the Heseltine-Raison pilgrimage nor Lord Scarman's more judicious inquiry into the Brixton uprising will lead to any dramatic alteration in the course of government policies. Instead, they are likely to confirm the trend, long evident in Britain's urban social programmes, towards even greater central direction and control over the inner cities and their residents. Nor will these developments in the government's social programmes be something distinct or separate from the militarisation of the police now underway. Indeed, Timothy Raison's presence in Liverpool may well foreshadow the re-emergence of the Home Office, already to the forefront in programmes to re-arm the police and modernise their methods, in the social policy field as well, so as to lay the groundwork for an eventual merger of these two elements of the state's overall repressive policy in 'community policing'.

Structural unemployment, political dislocation and the inner cities programme

Britain's urban social programmes date back to the 1960s when they emerged as a set of piecemeal initiatives from different central government departments.[1] For its part, the Home Office's interest in this field stemmed originally from its law enforcement and crime control activities and what was seen in the early 1960s as a growing problem of juvenile delinquency, itself supposedly a product of the breakdown in traditional working-class family and community life.[2] Later there came the Home Office's responsibility for the management of racism, initially through immigration control and subsequently under race relations legislation and a community relations machinery geared towards the integration, on an individualistic basis, of Britain's black settler population.[3] By the late 1960s these two groups – the 'deprived' working class and the 'disadvantaged' immigrants – were being linked

together in the minds of social planners, if not always of politicians, as part of a single 'urban crisis'. In 1968, when the Labour government decided to establish an Urban Aid programme at the same time as introducing the first major cuts in public expenditure in the post-war period – a pattern that was to be repeated time and again in succeeding years – responsibility for this programme was based in the Home Office. From then through to the mid-1970s, there was a marked tendency, despite the introduction of even more competing programmes in other departments, for the Home Office to take on an explicit social planning role.[4] This trend culminated in the creation in 1973 by the then Tory government of an Urban Deprivation Unit in the Home Office, with an overall coordinating role in respect of the government's urban social policies. As its name implied, the Unit was imbued from the outset with a social pathology or 'cycle of deprivation' model of poverty, and this was reflected in the idea, emanating from the Unit, for Comprehensive Community Programmes focussing on small geographical pockets of poverty with a population of no more than 10,000 persons.[5]

In fact, the Home Office's predominant position in the urban social policy field was to be relatively short-lived. The incoming Labour government in 1974, and particularly Roy Jenkins as Home Secretary, initially encouraged and continued the work of the Urban Deprivation Unit, although, interestingly, thinking on Comprehensive Community Programmes soon abandoned the small area approach in favour of one based on formulating 'deprivation plans' for the whole of local authority areas.[6] However, in 1976 several factors combined to shift the course of government policy in this field. It is tempting to explain this shift in terms of changes in the personnel of the Labour government, with James Callaghan having replaced Harold Wilson as Prime Minister, Merlyn Rees retreating from Northern Ireland to take over from Roy Jenkins at the Home Office, and Peter Shore becoming Secretary of State for the Environment. It was Shore, an unreconstructed Keynesian and MP for a London East End constituency, who was appointed in September 1976 to lead a ministerial-level review of urban policy.

An explanation based on personalities is inadequate, however, as it ignores the underlying structural changes in the British economy and their attendant social and political dislocations that were by then becoming widely apparent. After all, 1976 was the year of the International Monetary Fund's intervention into the British economy, at whose behest the Labour government imposed massive public expenditure cuts across the range of its social and welfare programmes. More generally, the rapid rise in the unemployment rate from 1974 onwards, along with the growing need for direct state subsidies to prop up manufacturing industry, were clearly indicative of a structural shift in

the British economy towards permanent high levels of unemployment,[7] and several reports emerging out of earlier urban programme experiments pointed to the fact that the victims of this structural unemployment were disproportionately concentrated in the inner cities.[8] As the government White Paper on *Policy for the Inner Cities* that emerged from the Shore review was to put it:

> In inner areas generally there has developed a mismatch between the skills of the people and the kinds of jobs available. In some cities ... there is a general lack of demand for labour which affects the whole conurbation but is particularly severe in the inner areas.[9]

In speaking of the problems faced in the bigger cities, the White Paper frankly admitted that their 'sheer scale is greater' than anything previously contemplated in terms of urban social policy:

> the rapid rate of decline in population and jobs, and the ways in which they have got out of step, have compounded the difficulties. Between 1966 and 1976, Glasgow lost 205,000 people (21%), Liverpool lost 150,000 (22%), Manchester 110,000 (18%), Inner London 500,000 (16%), Birmingham 85,000 (8%) ... In nearly all the big cities there have been big job losses – generally much greater than in other cities.[10]

The White Paper was quite explicit about the threat which this state of affairs held out not just for the residents of the inner cities, but for British urban society as a whole:

> The inner parts of our cities ought not to be left to decay. It would mean leaving large numbers of people to face a future of declining job opportunities, a squalid environment, deteriorating housing and declining public services. But without effective action, that could be the future for those who live in inner areas, bringing with it mounting social bitterness and an increasing sense of alienation. The hearts of our cities would suffer as the surrounding inner areas went further downhill.[11]

Of course, the validity of this latter point had been brought home dramatically just a month before the setting up of the Shore review, when the first of the current series of urban 'riots' occurred, with West Indian youths confronting the police following the annual Notting Hill Carnival in August 1976. Yet it would be wrong to see the Labour government's inner cities policy initiative as being directed primarily at the black community. Indeed, although the White Paper contained the by now inevitable token section on 'ethnic minorities' and specifically mentioned the need to encourage investment from the 'immigrant

communities' in inner city housing and shops, it nevertheless stated that 'the attack on the specific problem of racial discrimination and the resultant disadvantages must be primarily through the new anti-discrimination legislation and the work of the Commission for Racial Equality'.[12]

A hint of the true source of the Labour government's anxiety is to be found in the White Paper's statement that 'in some areas people feel alienated from or apathetic to the impersonal workings of central government – and indeed of local government too'.[13] To this one might have added, 'and from the Labour Party as well', since if the White Paper's figures on the population loss of the cities were evidence of people voting with their feet, the danger was that these were primarily white working-class votes being lost from the Labour Party's traditional strongholds in inner urban constituencies.

However, it was not just the loss of votes but also the disaffection of the remaining residents of the inner city that the new policy was intended to combat. Events during the mid to late-1970s were to demonstrate just how unpredictably this disaffection could develop and express itself. On the one hand, the strike at the Grunwick film processing plant in North London during 1976-7, which, unlike previous black workers' strikes, attracted mass support from the white labour movement despite the Labour government's attempts to contain its effects, showed that struggles developing against the exploitative working and living conditions of the inner cities could threaten the whole of the political and industrial compromise that had been reached between the Labour government and the trade union leadership under the Social Contract.[14] On the other hand, the growth of support for the National Front and other right-wing organisations among the white working class of the inner cities and elsewhere, particularly in London and the Midlands, was an important factor contributing to the Labour Party's poor showing in a number of by-elections during this period and held out the threat of even greater losses at a future general election. In the meantime, it led to a series of direct street confrontations between the National Front and the police, on the one hand, and a popular anti-fascist movement that had grown up outside the structures and therefore the control of the Labour Party, on the other.

Inner cities policy was thus intended to complement the Social Contract, the one a mechanism of compromise with the more affluent, organised and largely white sectors of the working class, the other a programme of containment directed at the less unionised, increasingly dis-employed white and black residents of the inner cities. It is possible here to describe only briefly the major features of the Labour government's inner cities initiative. What had previously been the Urban Aid programme was to be expanded and recast, so as to entail a four-fold increase in expenditure (from £30m to £125m annually) and to

encompass industrial and environmental as well as social projects. Indeed, the only new legislation introduced was an Inner Urban Areas Act which empowered local authorities to make grants to local industry and to set up 'industrial improvement areas'.

The bulk of this increased expenditure was to be concentrated in eight Inner City Partnerships. The word 'partnership' implied two things. First, planning and administration of the special inner cities spending programmes was to be carried out by small teams of both central and local government officials, overseen by Partnership committees made up of local politicians but also involving and being headed by central government ministers. In other words, there was to be greater central direction of these programmes than ever before, and the local administrative arrangements necessary to cater for this, along with the Labour government's haste to launch the programmes before it was too late to save it from electoral disaster, meant that there was even less scope for community participation and involvement.[15] Secondly, there was a supposed commitment on the part of both central government and local authorities to redirect spending under their mainline programmes towards the inner cities, which, given the general restrictions on public spending at the time, would have implied even more severe cuts for other areas. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that such a redirection of spending actually occurred outside the programmes directly controlled by Shore's own Department of the Environment. In line with what was now recognised as the generality of the 'inner cities problem', the Partnerships were to be based not on small pockets of poverty, but were to cover vast tracts of Britain's major cities. For example, the Birmingham Partnership was eventually defined so as to include two-thirds of the city's million population, with a special 'core area' containing no less than 278,000 residents.[16] Finally, given the wider scope of the programme and the Home Office's lack of a regionally-based administrative structure, responsibility for the whole of government policy in this field was transferred to the Department of the Environment.

But, if the Department of the Environment had been given the job of stemming the general disaffection of the inner cities, then the Home Office supposedly still had its function of managing and containing racism. No sooner had the Race Relations Act 1976 been passed, conferring vast new legal powers in this field,[17] than the economic and political ground shifted to undermine the strategy of enforced cooptation of the black community on which the Act had been based.[18] Once again, political personalities played a part, as neither James Callaghan as Prime Minister nor Merlyn Rees as Home Secretary was prepared to see anti-discrimination legislation enforced over a white working class whose tie to the Labour government under the Social Contract was already precarious – and the more the support for the

National Front grew, the greater became their reluctance to act. Moreover, judicial support for the new powers of the Commission for Racial Equality under the Race Relations Act could not be guaranteed, especially after the House of Lords had so blatantly scuttled the Labour government's attempts to settle the Grunwick dispute, first through the intervention of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service and then by setting up an extra-judicial inquiry under Lord Scarman.[19] There was also the fact that the unseemly scramble among the black functionaries of the race relations industry for status within the Commission for Racial Equality undermined any real legitimacy that body might have held in relation to the black community as a whole.

The Home Office was therefore left in what a recent House of Commons Select Committee report has described as an 'essentially passive role as spectator'[20] in so far as 'positive' race relations policy was concerned, and this in turn served to highlight even further its increasing use of coercion against the black community, both in terms of general policing and in its use of immigration law as an instrument of internal harassment and control.[21] It is little wonder that, late in the life of the Labour government, the Home Office put forward proposals to alter s.11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in order to enable it to expand its support for local authority ethnically-related projects and for black groups as well.[22] These plans were abandoned, however, when the Labour government fell in the spring of 1979.

Monetarism and the inner cities

A precursor of the Tory government's approach to the inner cities was given in a speech by Geoffrey Howe, then Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the Isle of Dogs in East London in 1978.[23] Howe argued that the problems of the inner cities could be resolved by an accelerated application of monetarist principles in the form of free-trade or 'enterprise' zones, where a whole range of government taxes and regulations on such matters as employment protection, workers' health and safety, environmental pollution and land-use planning would be lessened or removed in order to stimulate private investment. Howe's speech thus represented a statement of faith in pure monetarist doctrine, without mention of the social conflicts or of the necessary state response to them that such a pure economic approach would engender. As Stuart Hall has observed:

> The new *laissez-faire* doctrine, in which social market values are to predominate ... is not at all inconsistent with a strong, disciplinary state. Indeed, if the state is to stop meddling in the fine-tuning of the economy, in order to let 'social market values' rip, while containing

> the inevitable fall-out, in terms of social conflict and class polarisation, then a strong, disciplinary regime is a necessary corollary.[24]

At the same time, it is important to avoid seeing monetarism as a monolith or to imagine that its application can proceed in a simple, straightforward fashion. Britain is not Chile,[25] and in a society where local government, the welfare state and trade union bureaucracies have become well entrenched, there will be substantial institutional barriers in the way of implementing monetarist objectives. Certainly, in so far as urban policy is concerned, the new Tory government has produced a series of confusing, often contradictory, programme initiatives.

Nevertheless, one of the first acts of the new government in June 1979 was to impose a 3 per cent reduction on local authority budgets as part of a £1.5 billion cut in public expenditure, and this was only the first of several rounds of such cuts:

> Four months later £3.5 billion was cut from the budget for 1980-81. This coincided with the publication of plans for state spending up to 1983-84, which not only provided for a further decline of £3 billion in gross annual total expenditure, but also for a redistribution of resources between programmes. Thus substantial increases in defence and law and order spending have been balanced against very severe real cuts in expenditure on housing, health, education and social services. Continuing a trend begun under Labour, housing has been severely hit – in 1974-75 total housing expenditure was over £7.1 billion, by 1979-80 it had fallen to £5.1 billion, and according to Tory plans will have fallen to £2.8 billion by 1983-84.[26]

Moreover, as these authors point out, continuing 'large rises in unemployment, pushing up social security spending, and the effects of the recession on the nationalised industry' will themselves force the government into even further cuts in general social welfare programmes if their monetarist strategy is to be maintained.[27]

The above figures relating to overall expenditure actually mask the real effect of public spending cuts on the inner cities. In particular, along with the general reduction in social programmes, the Tory government has reversed the previous policy of redirecting expenditure towards the inner cities. The impact of this can be illustrated by reference to Birmingham's housing programme. In the last two years of the Labour government, Birmingham's allocation of central government funds for its general Housing Investment Programme increased from £72m in 1977/8 to a planned £86m in 1979/80, despite overall reductions in national housing expenditure, and there was also a further special expenditure of £0.6m on inner city housing under the 1979/80 Partnership programme. The first two years of the Tory government have seen a virtual halving of the city's general Housing Investment Programme allocation, down to £60m in 1980/81 and

£46m in 1981/2. These reductions in housing expenditure alone have more than wiped out any benefit Birmingham has gained from the continuation of the Inner City Partnership, which was allocated a total £16.6m in 1980/81, of which only £3.6m went on housing, and £16.9m in 1981/2, including only £2.8m on housing.

Yet, even the Tory government's programme of general expenditure cuts has not been without its difficulties. Although supposedly committed to 'rolling back the state', government planners quickly realised that to force spending reductions on local authorities, even those under Tory control, and to prevent them from making up for cuts in central grants by higher local taxation, would require greatly enhanced powers for central government over the finances and activities of local government. Thus, one of the first major pieces of legislation pushed through Parliament, against frequent opposition from within the ranks of the Tory Party itself, was the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, under which the Secretary of State could virtually dictate to local authorities the nature of their capital spending programmes and impose financial penalties on those authorities unwilling to make the desired cuts in services. The same Act also implemented an idea long favoured by certain elements in the civil service for Urban Development Corporations, under which responsibilities for housing, transport and land development could be taken away from local authorities and handed to specially-appointed corporations answerable only to the Secretary of State for the Environment. Although only two such Urban Development Corporations have so far been established, one for London Docklands and the other for Merseyside Docks in Liverpool, the power contained in the Act to set them up is a general one and stands as a continuing threat to the autonomy of local government.

In the meantime, the Inner City Partnerships, while being retained, have been given a new 'economic' emphasis, and Howe's proposals for Enterprise Zones have also come to fruition. In guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment to Inner City Partnerships in June 1981, just weeks before the recent outbreak of urban 'riots', it was made clear that the primary objective of inner cities policy was now to be:

> the stimulation of economic activity ... Schemes should be framed so as to produce as great a visual impact as possible: tangibly physical improvement will help to attract private investment ... In short, the aim must be to seize imaginative projects which will lift the sights of people living and investing, or wishing to invest, in the inner areas.[28]

If the language here suggests an essentially window-dressing activity, then at least the benefits held out to investors in the newly-established Enterprise Zones are more tangible, although the civil servants and

possibly even some of his less monetarist-committed ministerial colleagues had the effect of toning down Howe's more radical ideas for removing government restrictions on business. As implemented, Enterprise Zones amount to little more than glorified industrial estates with very limited land-use planning controls, where investors can gain substantial concessions from national and local taxes. However, even this has been enough to elicit the opposition, not of local authorities or trade unions, but of established local businessmen fearful of the unfair competitive advantage new firms will gain by locating in the Zones. Indeed, the evidence already available indicates that, with little and mainly local capital available for investment, these tax-free Zones will act to drain existing businesses off from surrounding parts of the inner city,[29] and in this sense they stand in direct contradiction to the new economic emphasis of the Inner City Partnership programmes. More generally, as one commentator has noted:

> little thought has yet been given to the link between regenerating the inner city economy and meeting the needs of the disadvantaged worker. The present government's emphasis ... on measures designed to generate wealth creation and stimulate private sector activity, exemplified, perhaps, in the enterprise zone approach, is not designed to promote exploration of this link. On the contrary, there seems to be a growing emphasis on regenerating the area *regardless* of the impact on the residents.[30]

Perhaps it is to state the obvious that monetarism is directed towards enhanced profits rather than general social welfare, but it would be wrong to dismiss out of hand the new economic emphasis within urban policy. At the very least, these economic programmes may attract and even serve to create a black entrepreneurial class in the inner city to which the government can turn for support in its efforts to repress dissident elements in the community. Certainly, both the Department of the Environment and the Commission for Racial Equality have been active in recent months attempting to import and promote American concepts of 'community enterprise'. Against this, as more resources are poured into economic initiatives, less funding will be available for the type of social and community support projects that have in the past helped to contain social discontent within manageable parameters. Substantial cuts have already occurred in these projects due to technical reasons such as the 'silting up' of Partnership budgets with recurring revenue spending and the fact that many projects originated under the old Urban Aid programme have now reached the end of their five-year eligibility period for funding. Moreover, it is likely that reductions in spending on social and community-oriented projects will have a disproportionate effect on the black community. After all, there is a paradoxical yet still significant sense in which such 'buffer'

institutions,[31] while serving the purposes of the state, can function also as one of the few channels available to the black community to make its voice heard and even to resist the increasing incursions of the state itself, especially as the 'official' organs in the form of the Commission for Racial Equality and local community relations councils have proved so ineffective in this respect. It was probably just this factor that led to the following instruction being included in the latest Partnership guidelines:

> Projects funded under the programme must qualify as ones which can appropriately be financed from public funds. They must be seen to be politically neutral ... Projects which show a party political bias or would involve political propaganda will not therefore be approved for grant aid.[32]

Community policing: towards the local police state

In the wake of the 'riots' it is clear that there will be a swing towards increased coercion of inner city communities, with the police already being re-equipped and reorganised in order to deal with any new outbreaks of resistance. Nevertheless, it is questionable how far even a Tory government will be willing to see such direct confrontation develop without some renewed social intervention in the community. The government's record in relation to racist attacks against the black community may be instructive here. Needless to say, the racist sentiments openly expressed by Mrs Thatcher during the 1979 election campaign and since, and the passport checks and raids for 'illegal immigrants' that have been carried out by her government, have lent ideological support to those perpetuating increasingly frequent and violent attacks against members of the black community. Equally, the application of monetarist policies, in creating a vast pool of unemployed white youth, particularly in formerly more affluent areas such as the south-east and the Midlands, has provided a mass recruitment ground for fascism. Nor can it be argued that the slowness of the government's response to racist violence was the result of a lack of evidence.[33] Instead, it was at the point where the resistance against these attacks threatened to spill over on to the streets – as it eventually did in Coventry and Southall – and to engage all sections of the black community, including even the businessmen and more conservative community and religious leaders the Tories see as their 'natural' allies, that the government moved to set up its investigation of right-wing organised violence.

The fact that the Home Office is responsible for this investigation, and also that it is under pressure from the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee to adopt a more active role in promoting and

coordinating the race relations policies of government,[34] suggests that it may be the obvious agent to take on any new social programme directed at the black community. Of course, the government will seek to ensure that a future social intervention of this type is closely controlled, both financially and in terms of its political effects, and past experience with such programmes indicates that neither local authorities, now increasingly under the influence of 'radical' local Labour parties, nor a central government department on its own, are capable of exercising sufficient restraint. At the same time, the Home Office, already more closely involved than ever before in the central coordination and direction of policing activities, is likely, following the 'riots' and a potentially critical report from Lord Scarman's current inquiry, to perceive a need to 'modernise' police methods and to provide the police themselves with a positive social role to counterbalance their increasingly negative, coercive image. It remains to be noted that an ideology[35] and, indeed, a working model of a method for resolving these various concerns is already in existence.

It is not possible here to develop a full critique of 'community policing',[36] although it is important to recognise that it has nothing to do with the local democratic control of the police now being widely demanded. On the contrary, community policing, fully developed, represents a means for circumventing democratic control of the police by local authorities and of co-opting or isolating social and political activists operating at grassroots level. However, the concept is a flexible one and can encompass a number of different methods and purposes. At its most simple, it entails little more than the return of a few additional officers to foot patrols within the community and possibly also a relaxation in the enforcement of such indiscriminate laws as the notorious 'sus' provisions of the Vagrancy Act,[37] which engender widespread community opposition, in favour of more discreet and less controversial measures of control. On another level, community policing embraces an extension of police intelligence-gathering by an invidious placement of police officers in schools and other community institutions. Finally, as indicated, community policing can become an instrument of political co-optation and control, through which the community is made accountable to the police rather than the police accountable to the community.

In the past, a favoured method of such co-optation was to create police-community liaison committees with members, often chosen by the police themselves, drawn from various statutory and community organisations. The experience of such committees has been that they tend to be consulted only following and rarely preceding police incursions into the community, and as a result this method has been largely discredited.[38] Recently, a more developed model of this aspect of community policing has been operating in the Lozells (Handsworth) area of

Birmingham on an experimental basis, with £50,000 per annum funding (to increase to £75,000 in future years) from the Inner City Partnership programme.[39] During the first year of the experiment, due to delays in re-opening a community centre, a large proportion of this money was distributed by the local police, nominally acting through a committee including local workers drawn from statutory organisations such as schools, social services and the probation service, to a wide range of groups in the community. Interestingly, this was happening at the same time as the Birmingham Partnership, in line with those elsewhere in the country,[40] was refusing to meet demands from the community to establish on a formal basis a decentralised structure to provide small grants to local groups. Since the initial year of the Lozells project the bulk of the funding has gone towards the cost of a police-operated community centre and related activities and less has been available for wider distribution, although, significantly, recipient groups are now being required to involve police officers in their organisations as the price for receiving financial support. By these means, the local police have succeeded in penetrating local statutory and voluntary organisations and compromising their workers. Moreover, those politically conscious organisations who refuse to cooperate in such activities have been singled out for adverse comment and attention by the police. In some cases, it has been alleged, this has involved special forms of harassment in terms of searches and raids as specific 'punishment' for their non-cooperation.

This is not to suggest that a full programme for this type of community policing is likely to be implemented in Britain's inner cities in the near future, or even that the Lozells project as it stands provides a complete blueprint for the political management of the community under the police. Indeed, all the indications are that the only concession the present Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, having himself never lived down within the Tory Party his disastrous attempt to impose a political solution in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, will make to current demands for police reform is the placing of a few additional officers back 'on the beat', and then in the context of a vast accretion in police powers, both physical and legal. Nevertheless, the Lozells project and other 'community policing' experiments stand as models to be developed and refined at some future point, in order to resolve a number of contradictions long evident in both urban social policy and the policing of inner city communities. Thus, community policing helps to meet criticisms of the lack of 'participation' and community involvement in programmes such as the Inner City Partnerships, while at the same time deflecting what are seen as politically motivated demands for greater democratic control of the police through local authority police committees. It also provides central government, and the Home Office in particular, with a social outlet in

the community which is neither subject to the vagaries of local elections nor in danger of 'going native' and siding with the community in wider political struggles against the state. Finally, community policing merges at the local level the coercive and consensual functions of government, enabling the police to wield a frightening mixture of repressive powers, on the one hand, and programmes of social intervention, on the other, as mutually reinforcing tools in their efforts to control and contain the political struggle of the black and working-class communities. It is a model of a local police state that must be resisted, and is being resisted, out of raw experience – by the kids on the streets of the inner cities.

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LOUIS KUSHNICK

Parameters of British and North American racism

The urban uprisings that have erupted in Britain's inner cities have raised fundamental questions about racism and the state in advanced capitalist societies. The urban ghetto uprisings in the United States in the 1960s and the responses engendered provide an important body of data which can illuminate the range of choices open to the British state and help predict which it will choose.

The US responses involved developments in police technology, tactics, training and command and control to pre-empt or put down future insurrections more expeditiously; efforts to re-legitimise the system in the eyes of the black community; co-optation of sections of black leadership and repression of other sections, and an overall attempt to defuse the situation by de-emphasising the importance of race in American politics. But before we can analyse these responses, we need to look at the basic differences between Britain in the 1980s and the United States in the 1960s and the specific racial situation out of which the rebellions arose.

The US in the 1960s was in the midst of one of its longest unbroken periods of economic growth. The military-engendered boom was strengthened in the short run by the war in Vietnam. The economy functioned as it did on the basis of state intervention in two forms – massive military expenditure and huge investment in the creation and construction of the suburbs and the related infrastructure – generating

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growth in the construction, automobile and petroleum sectors of the economy. These provided the framework for the necessary political stability – based on the depoliticisation of large parts of the white, particularly male, unionised working class in the primary sector of the economy. In return for job security and wages in line with, and perhaps a bit ahead of, inflation, the unions provided a disciplined and reliable labour force. This facilitated the long-term planning that the monopoly corporations had to engage in. Blacks, as well as other racially oppressed groups, and most women and the white male poor, were left out of this cosy arrangement.

The key point was that, to maintain its profitability, monopoly capital, with and through its political allies, was willing to make material concessions to its labour force to ensure stability and growth. This meant that if the need arose there was already an economic and political framework within which concessions could be made to blacks to cool them out and reintegrate them into the system. As we shall see, however, this framework did not last out the decade of the 1960s and state strategies changed. The concessions were functional and when they were no longer necessary or could not be afforded, they were withdrawn.

In contemporary Britain, we find an economy under attack from competitors abroad and from the government at home. The government's monetarist strategy is predicated on cutting non-repressive state expenditure, relying on market forces to facilitate profitable economic activity – in Britain and outside – and cheapening labour within Britain by cutting the social wage and weakening or destroying working-class organisations. The ideological and material framework is thus very different from that of the New Frontier America of the 1960s, and the range and type of responses available to Britain are limited.

There are fundamental differences, besides, between Britain and the US in terms of their racial histories. Although racism emerged out of the creation and extension of capitalism as a world system, in which Britain played a leading part, and for whom the slave trade, the plantation economies and the conquest of India provided the major part of the surplus needed to fuel the creation of the industrial capitalist economy, Britain did not rely on black labour within its national boundaries for a major part of its work force. It used Irish labour and labour displaced from its own countryside. That is, until, starved of an adequate work force, it turned to its colonies for labour in the boom period of post-war reconstruction.[1]

The United States, on the other hand, virtually from its inception as Britain's North American colony, has depended on black labour – and later, on that of the Hispanic peoples incorporated into the territory in the course of imperial expansion. Ideologically, therefore, the choices before white America have not included the repatriation of its black population.

A third and more striking point of difference follows from these distinctions. Because of its particular history of black employment and settlement, in Britain, unlike in the US, poor whites and poor blacks live cheek by jowl in many of the inner city areas and are subjected to the same deprivation, giving rise to the joint rebellion of blacks and whites against the system. These rebellions are not 'race riots' as such.

Background to the uprisings

But there are common denominators between the uprisings in Britain and the ghetto riots of the US. Here I have concentrated on three key issues – the nature of policing, employment and education – which highlight the state practices that led to the rebellions.

Police

One central factor common to both Britain and the US has been the nature of policing in the inner cities. Not only have the police failed to protect the black communities of those areas, they have indulged in deliberate and sustained harassment of them, particularly of black youth. In the most run-down areas of Britain, this type of policing has also spilled over on to white working-class youth. There is a striking similarity in the nature of the 'special units' deployed in Britain and the US, and their use of deliberately aggressive tactics. In Britain, the Special Patrol Group and similar units are special squads deployed in large numbers, often without any preliminary warning, in the 'high-crime' areas of the inner cities. Their concern is not, however, with major larceny, fraud or 'white-collar' crimes, but with 'policing' the inner city on the streets.

The Kerner Commission's* assessment of such practices in the ghettos of the US could equally well serve as a description of what takes place in Britain:

> These practices, sometimes known as 'aggressive preventive patrol', take a number of forms, but invariably they involve a large number of police-citizen contacts initiated by police rather than in response to a call for help or service. One such practice utilises a roving task force which moves into high-crime districts without prior notice and conducts intensive, often indiscriminate, street stops and searches.[2]

The immediate trigger of the uprising in Brixton in April 1981 was a police operation, felicitously named 'Swamp 81'. Without warning, Brixton was flooded with plainclothes officers; in four days over 1,000 people were stopped and around one hundred arrested. This operation, which was pronounced a success by the officer in charge despite its

*Set up by President Johnson to investigate the riots of 1967.

consequences, was mounted even though only 4 per cent of black youth in Lambeth commit street crimes.[3]

This common pattern of harassment and invasion is reinforced in both societies by the criminalisation of large sections of the black communities – particularly the youth. In Britain, this has taken the specific form of what the Institute of Race Relations has called 'Sus 1' and 'Sus 2'. Sus 1, or the 'Sus' law, is in fact a section of the 1824 Vagrancy Act,* under which an accused person can be brought to trial on no other evidence than that of acting suspiciously in the eyes of two police officers. The evidence of independent witnesses is hardly ever called. It is used primarily against Afro-Caribbean males – making parts of London, such as the West End, virtual 'no-go' areas for them. In 1977, for example, young Afro-Caribbean males, who made up only 2.8 per cent of the total population of London, accounted for 44 per cent of all 'Sus' arrests.[4]

Sus 2, used mainly against the Asian population, is embodied in the 1971 Immigration Act, under which the police have 'the power to arrest anyone whom they suspect of being an illegal entrant'. And for suspected illegal entrants there is no right to a trial in open court – instead they are held indefinitely in detention until either removed or reprieved. 'Since all blacks are considered "immigrants" and some of them are illegal, the only way to tell an illegal black from a legal one is to suspect the lot.'[5] It is significant that this process of criminalisation and control has been accomplished by a combination of executive actions and judicial decisions, which have widened the scope of what is culpable under the Immigration Act – even including the failure to answer questions that were not asked in the first place. At the same time, basic common law protections have been eroded – habeas corpus is not available for people detained as suspected illegal entrants.

Sus 1, while specific to Britain in its details, is similar to police tactics used against young blacks in the US. It has been operated to increase fear and insecurity among the white public and to identify the source of that fear as young blacks. The creation of a scare about the new crime of 'mugging' in Britain is a case in point. There is, in fact, no such crime on the statute book, and if it means handbag-snatching or robbery with violence, it did not arrive with the coming to puberty of young Afro-Caribbean males. But mugging already had a meaning in Britain thanks to the media misreporting of events in the US and to the popularity of TV police series. Given this sensitivity, it did not take the British media, police and courts long to fasten the label mugger on young Afro-Caribbeans in general and create an atmosphere in which police invasions of black communities seemed reasonable and

*Section 4 has now been repealed after a sustained campaign led by black organisations – but has reappeared, in another guise, in the Criminal Attempts Act.

necessary for the common good. Sus 2 is similar to the experience of the Hispanic population in the US and, as the scapegoating of the so-called 'undocumented workers' increases, we will see an ever-increasing use of state power against them.

Police practices are further reinforced by the 'normal' racist functioning of the criminal justice systems in both societies – through the definition of crime itself, through selective, discretionary and discriminatory law enforcement, through differential access to bail and adequate legal representation, differential rates of plea bargaining and guilty pleas, differential conviction and sentencing rates – all adding up to a process which channels an increasingly significant portion of the black community into criminalisation and imprisonment. Blacks are grossly overrepresented in America's prisons, and the same pattern is increasingly evident in Britain. Plea bargaining, with the threat of harsh sentencing if the accused exercise their legal rights and plead not guilty, thus 'wasting' the judge's time and the taxpayers' money, is widespread in both countries.[6] Legal representation and legal rights are commodities to be purchased – if you have the money. The Kerner Commission was forced to recognise this reality:

> Some of our courts, moreover, have lost the confidence of the poor ... The belief is pervasive among ghetto residents that lower courts in our urban communities dispense 'assembly-line' justice; that from arrest to sentencing, the poor and uneducated are denied equal justice with the affluent, that procedures such as bail and fines have been perverted to perpetuate class inequities.[7]

If those are the characteristics of criminal 'justice' in normal times, what happens in times of insurrection? The Kerner Commission concluded that 'the massive influx of arrested persons resulted in serious deprivation of legal rights' and that 'judicial procedures became oriented to mass rather than individualized justice'.[8]

The Legal Action Group (LAG) in Britain, commenting on the operation of magistrates' courts after the 'riots' this summer, described them as 'taking dangerous short cuts', in some cases simply assisting the police in 'street-clearing operations', and concluded that 'in many cases normal judicial principles and standards are being disregarded'. LAG sees calls by government ministers for quick justice, riot courts, new riot laws, heavy deterrent sentences and prison camps as 'inimical to the cool and orderly dispensation of justice'. It is afraid that sentencing will become 'punitive and arbitrary – as happened in many of the cases involving Southall defendants following the disturbances there in 1979'.[9]

The system has not only created the conditions for the oppression of black communities, but has also fuelled their anger and created the framework for a high degree of radicalisation of black prisoners.

George Jackson and the other Soledad Brothers were not alone in becoming politicised while in prison, and there is evidence that this process is taking place in Britain and feeding back into the communities and their struggles.[10]

There is another disturbing similarity in the police response to black rebellion. Tom Hayden, who observed the Newark, New Jersey, rebellion of 1967, wrote:

> Thus it seems to many that the military, especially the Newark police, not only triggered the riot by beating a cab-driver but created a climate of opinion that supported the use of all necessary force to suppress the riot. The force used by the police was not in response to snipers, looting, and burning, but in retaliation against the successful uprising of Wednesday [12 July] and Thursday [13 July] nights.[11]

A similar pattern of violence and revenge by the police and/or the National Guard in other US cities, such as Watts, Los Angeles, and Detroit, has been reported.[12] In Britain, after the hit-and-run killing of David Moore, a crippled 22-year-old man, by a police land rover, one journalist reported:

> It is no exaggeration to say that Toxteth believes Moore was deliberately run down and that his assailant will never be brought to book. It is also widely believed that, beginning last Sunday, Liverpool police set out on a deliberate vendetta, using the fresh riots as an opportunity to settle old scores.[13]

And in Brixton, some days after the latest street violence, there was a massive police raid on homes and businesses on the 'front line', Railton Road. Even toilets and televisions were smashed in what police claimed was a search for petrol bombs, but which was in fact consistent with their less publicised attempts – since the 'riots' of April 1981 – to reassert their control, teach the people of Brixton a lesson and get their revenge.

But of immediate and central importance as the police are, they are not the only racist institution that we need to look at for the background to the current wave of rebellion.

Employment

In both Britain and the US, blacks have been, and are, channelled into the dirtiest, lowest paid, lowest status and most insecure jobs, or into the reserve army of unemployed – or, today, into the never-to-be employed category. Changes in technology and investment have created the situation in which large parts of the black community, particularly the youth, are surplus to requirements.

In the US in the 1960s, even in the war-induced boom, black unemployment was double that of whites. In 1967, 26.5 per cent of

non-white teenagers were unemployed, while the figure for white teenagers was 10.6 per cent – and these statistics understate the reality, based as they are on an extremely narrow definition of unemployment, which excludes all those not registered and those who can only take part-time work. A US Department of Labor analysis in 1966 found a sub-employment rate in the ghettos of 32.7 per cent – nearly nine times the national official unemployment rate.

The position of black people in Britain, particularly in Britain's cities, is shaped by a number of factors which make their current position similar to that of the urban blacks of the US. When the US southern blacks migrated to the older cities in the north and west, they became part of an urbanised, and often unionised, working class. But even as they did so, industry was moving out of the city centres – to non-city, non-union sites, indeed increasingly to Third World countries. The blacks were left stranded. In Britain, where black migrant labourers became a settler labour force, the massive process of deindustrialisation that is occurring in the 1980s, to a significant extent as the result of government policies, is rebounding on the black communities. While there has been widespread discussion in the media – particularly since the uprisings – of black youth unemployment, it is important to note the growing level of unemployment among black men and women generally. The industries that they have been concentrated in (for example, textiles) have been hard hit in the current economic climate, and black workers are likely to get laid off first. Cuts in social and welfare services – many of which have been major recruiters of Afro-Caribbean and Asian women – have also meant job losses.

Black teenagers attempting to enter a massively declining job market find it many times more difficult to find such work as exists – or even obtain places in government stop-gap schemes – than their white counterparts. In some areas there are black teenage unemployment levels of 50-60 per cent – comparable to the current situation in America's ghettos. In addition, young black people are vigorously resisting attempts to channel them into the jobs that their parents have done. The latter put up with the shit work of society on the understanding – in the hope – that things would be better for their children. This clearly has not been so – indeed, as one black mother put it after the second round of battles in Brixton: 'These children are British, but they don't stand a chance. The police get after them, the employers won't give them a job and the teachers downgrade them.'[14]

Education

The educational system has been an important arena of struggle in both countries, central as it is not only to the reproduction of class relations but also to 'the web of urban racism', in which the various institutions of society interconnect to create, maintain and re-create racism.[15] Annie Stein, a courageous veteran campaigner and researcher, has

analysed the functioning of the educational system in the US and has identified the 'strategies for failure' that have been developed and implemented by the state.

> The average child in eighty-five percent of the Black and Puerto Rican schools is functionally illiterate after eight years of schooling in the richest city in the world [New York].
>
> This is a massive accomplishment.
>
> It took the effort of 63,000 teachers, thousands more administrators, scholars, and social scientists, and the expenditure of billions of dollars to achieve. Alone, however, the 'Professional' educators could not have done it. They needed the active support of all the forces of business, real estate interests, trade unions, willing politicians, city officials, the police and the courts.[16]

These schools have not 'failed' to educate black youngsters, they have succeeded in channelling them into failure, in blaming them and their parents for that failure and in channelling and training white youngsters, in class terms, to fill their appropriate places in the system. The whole range of processes, including low teacher expectations, which become self-fulfilling prophecies, racist or irrelevant curriculum materials, tracking/streaming, the use of IQ tests and segregation – de jure and de facto – have all worked to produce such an outcome. Malcolm X gives a painful – and by no means atypical – example of what happened when he told his favourite teacher that he wanted to be a lawyer.

> Mr. Sostrowski looked surprised, I remember, and leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands behind his head. He kind of half-smiled and said, 'Malcolm, one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer – that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be.'[17]

In the 1960s the language changed – from 'nigger' to 'cultural deprivation' and then back to genetic inferiority – but the processing of black children into failure, into shit work or unemployment continued. It was not accidental, therefore, that one of the most highly contested issues in the black struggles of the 1960s in the US was that of the miseducation of their children. These battles moved from demands for integration, through compensatory education programmes to struggles for community control of education.[18] There is not the space here to detail the outcome of these struggles – suffice it to say that, on the whole, they failed to gain control or to make the schools accountable to the black community.

In Britain in the 1980s we find a similar pattern of educational

practice and black sense of betrayal and anger. The processing of black children into failure was noted as early as the late 1960s when black parents campaigned against Haringey education authority for sending a disproportionate number of their children to schools for the educationally subnormal.[19] And throughout the 1970s black parents continued to campaign against the miseducation of their children, pushing for positive, non-racist teaching materials to counter the negative stereotypes and low teacher expectations and setting up nurseries, play groups and supplementary schools to counter the effects of state schools. Black children in Britain were being incorporated into a class-based educational system at the very lowest level. A recent committee set up by the government to investigate black 'under-achievement' concluded: 'we are convinced from the evidence that we have obtained that racism, both intentional and unintentional, has a direct and important bearing on the performance of West Indian children in our schools'.[20] It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the chairman of that committee was subsequently persuaded to resign.

The range of processes, of acts of commission and omission, which the committee identified as contributing to the failure of West Indian children is directly comparable to those found in the US, ranging from low teacher expectations and racist curricula to the possibility that West Indian children were still being unfairly assessed and were over-represented among those suspended or excluded from school or sent to disruptive units. The similarity with ghetto mis-education in the US indicates that British schools are succeeding all too well in separating and channelling black youngsters into second-class status, clearly making education part of the contested terrain.

State responses to urban rebellion

Public order and community policing

What have been the US responses to urban rebellion? If we are to draw lessons from them as to possible courses of action for the British state, we must bear in mind the differences in the British and American political economies. It is also necessary to keep in mind the way in which some of the US state responses have changed in accord with changes in the political economy.

The first set of responses, which have continued to obtain since the 1960s, had to do with increasing the size and improving the efficiency of the state's repressive apparatus. One indication of the seriousness of purpose in this area is that the rate of increase in US government spending on criminal justice between 1966 and 1971 was five times as great as it was in the previous decade. In 1971 over $10.5 billion was spent in this area, and by 1974 the figure reached over $14 billion, with over $8 billion of that for the police alone.[21] Another indication of the

seriousness of the state's determination to reassert control was that during the 1960s and early 1970s there were four separate federal commissions studying these questions, and several more set up by corporations and foundations.[22]

Of these, the Kerner Commission was of major importance for its recommendations, which can best be summed up in the old cliché of the iron fist in the velvet glove.* Its prime concern was to develop a more effective policy for the restoration of public order. Its apparently liberal, and more widely publicised, concern over the causes of the riots – indeed its very composition and approach – can be seen as an attempt to re-legitimise and restore confidence in the system. But the heart and substance lay in making police methods more effective. What the Commission diagnosed was police 'over-reaction', bad or non-existent command and control and an inadequate range of weapons. What it recommended was improved control capabilities, improved discipline and command within police departments, improved tactics and sufficient personnel to implement these, and the development of a wide range of non-lethal weapons, including a specific recommendation in favour of the use of CS gas. The Commission specifically recommended federal funding of certain programmes – 'community service officers, development of portable communications equipment, a national clearing house for training, information and non-lethal weapons development', as well as increased support to 'pay for the large capital investment necessary for experimental programs or development of new equipment'.[23]

It was in this area that the Commission's recommendations were most enthusiastically and expeditiously implemented, in response not only to the urban insurrections, but also to the development of the New Left, the civil rights movement and the emerging anti-war movement. The Center for Research on Criminal Justice saw the initial government response as one whose 'overall thrust was toward reorganizing the police as an effective combat organization'.[24] Criminal justice information systems – police files – underwent a major computerisation programme, largely funded by the federal government's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). In addition, LEAA supplied money to police departments for the purchase of new guns, automobiles, riot control equipment, helicopters, computers and sophisticated intelligence-gathering systems.

It is here that we can see the clearest similarity with both existing and probable future British government policies. Indeed, since the Metropolitan Police first established the Special Patrol Group in London, most major cities have created their own special squads. This

*Since the July uprisings in Britain, the Kerner Commission has been frequently cited by politicians and the media as a source of ready-made solutions.

development, combined with the creation of Police Support Units (PSUs), involving an even wider group of police obtaining riot control training, clearly indicates the British state's approach. The Thatcher government's pledge – and its enthusiastic honouring of it – to increase police spending in real terms and to increase police pay (even, or especially, at a time of pay restraint for most of the rest of the public sector workers) is further indication of this approach.

The immediate reaction of Home Secretary William Whitelaw, police chiefs, police union officials and Tory backbenchers to the urban insurrections has been to call for new weaponry and training. Armoured cars, protective clothing, rubber bullets, CS gas and water cannons are all to be made available as police chiefs determine. The primary objective is to restore law and order and reassert police hegemony in black neighbourhoods.

But the adoption of harsher and more sophisticated measures of containment was not the only response of the US state. A necessary adjunct to them was a greater emphasis on community involvement. This not only served the function of acting as a sop to the black community, an attempt to deflect black resistance and legitimate the police in the eyes of blacks, it was also useful as a means of gathering information on the black community. As the Kerner Commission put it: 'Negro officers also can increase departmental insight into ghetto problems, and provide information necessary for early anticipation of the tensions and grievances that can lead to disorders.'[25] On the reasons for police involvement in community service, it was even franker:

> First, police, because of their 'front line position' in dealing with ghetto problems, will be better able to identify problems in the community that may lead to disorder. Second, they will be better able to handle incidents requiring police intervention ... Third, willing performance of such work can gain police the respect and support of the community. *Finally, development of nonadversary contacts can provide the police with a vital source of information and intelligence concerning the communities they serve* [emphasis added].[26]

This approach has become an important part of federal government activities in the race field over the past decade. The Community Relations Service, originally established as an ally of the civil rights movement, has functioned since the late 1960s as an intelligence-gathering body for the state and has placed undercover operatives in ghettos throughout the US to provide early warning of tensions which might lead to disorder. The operatives cultivate local black elites and intervene to defuse struggles and isolate militants and activists.[27] The Kerner Commission has indeed borne fruit, and it is interesting that two Community Relations Service officials were brought to Toxteth for a Granada TV programme on 27 July 1981 to talk about the

importance of having operatives in such communities. Community policing is important to the state in that:

> it [is] useful to decentralize police *functions* without decentralizing police *authority*, that is, the police should have close contact with the community, but the community should not be allowed to have any real influence on the police. The aim of this kind of decentralization is to enable the police to integrate some citizens into the lower levels of the police system itself, on police terms, thus blurring the distinction between the police and the people they control.[28]

Repression and concession

It is no coincidence that even as the community policing strategy was being developed, the US state was mounting a massive counter-insurgency programme (COINTELPRO) against black militants, the anti-war movement and other left groups. Patterned on previous campaigns against internal 'enemies', it involved the infiltration, destabilisation and disruption of organisations. Activists were arrested on trumped up charges and inordinately high bail prices were set, which, together with long pre-trial delays, ensured that the accused would be kept off the streets for up to two years. Frequent acquittals proved only that 'justice' still worked after all. There were, in addition, shoot-outs and the killings of activists, as in the murders of Mark Clark and Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party in Chicago.

But this mix of outright repression and 'community policing' was still not considered sufficient. For by now, it was recognised that blacks could not be counted on to be quiescent. Their willingness to fight for 'freedom and democracy' in the future could no longer be assumed and the concessions of the early 1960s – civil and voting rights – were no longer enough. When Harlem exploded in 1964, soon after the passage of the Civil Rights Bill, it became clear that additional concessions – material concessions – would have to be made to cool out the ghettos, restore stability and provide the framework for a process of co-optation. Given the expanded economy of the time, such an argument had an appeal. New programmes needed personnel, and potential personnel were on the streets making trouble. Their incorporation into the system would help both to legitimate it and to defuse opposition to it. This was encouraged by foundations such as Ford, which provided large sums of money in the attempt to penetrate and buy off militant organisations (the internal struggles in CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) exemplify the conflicts that such a strategy engendered).[29]

Before looking at the fate of these programmes and concessions and their implications for the political struggle of the black community it is important to reiterate that such an approach cannot automatically be reproduced in Britain in the 1980s. The level of US state expenditure,

though totally inadequate, was on a scale that is extremely unlikely to be entered into by the monetarist Thatcher government. The US's expanding economy made the Keynesian approach appear as a reasonable way of ensuring social peace. Such an approach was also predicated upon the existence of a significantly large group of people who, if not co-opted, might become dangerous enemies. While it is clear, as Sivanandan cogently argued in *Race, class and the state*, that British policy towards the Asian population has, in part, been predicated on the possibility of utilising the existing class and age structures within that community to control the Asian working class and youth, such a strategy with regard to the Afro-Caribbeans, an overwhelmingly working-class community, has not been possible. Instead, part of the British state's strategy has been geared to creating a functionary stratum within that community through the race relations industry, for example, the Community Relations Commission, the Race Relations Board, the Commission for Racial Equality and the local community relations committees. But this stratum just does not appear large enough, nor does the pool of potential recruits, given the functioning of the racist British educational system. There is massive evidence that the entire strategy of dividing the Asian and the Afro-Caribbean communities, and using the divisions within each to maintain control, has come unstuck.

The crucial point to bear in mind is that the liberal, concessionary approach – allied, of course, to the repression – was not the only possible response of the American state and was dependent upon a particular set of political and economic circumstances. As these circumstances changed so did the ideological argument. And even in the mid-1960s we can see the forerunners of the rightist arguments that would come to dominate thinking and reflect government policy in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1965, for example, Moynihan prepared a report which blamed the structure of black families for their own situation.[30] The 'culture of poverty' approach was already widely used by social scientists and being popularised by people such as Edward Banfield, who saw crime and delinquency as stemming directly from the culture of the lower class. The poor lived in slums because they preferred it that way, having made the areas slums in the first place. It therefore made little sense to talk about slums, unemployment and poverty as causes of riots. The emphasis on moral decay and lack of parental discipline being offered by Whitelaw and others following the recent British uprisings is strikingly similar. In a recent issue of the *Daily Telegraph*, John O'Sullivan, editor of *Policy Review* (the journal of the far right-wing Heritage Foundation, a crucial organisational link between the neo-conservatives and the moral majority in the US), had this to say: 'all the youth employment schemes and social workers in the world will not reduce or eliminate rioting. That will only be done by

enforcing the law and holding people responsible for their lawless actions.'[31] Or, put more succinctly by Mrs Thatcher recently: 'You can't buy your way out of the riots.'

Another strand of intellectual racism that re-emerged in the 1960s was that of scientific racism and its emphasis on the genetic inferiority of blacks.[32] Where Banfield and Moynihan and their ilk emphasised the blacks' pathological culture, Shockley, Jensen, Herrnstein and their British ally Eysenck emphasised the hereditarian basis of black inferiority. Both positions postulated that the victim's position was due to his or her basic characteristics – a useful approach for a political system under attack for its racism.

Market forces and black capitalism

By the end of the 1960s, the US political economy had moved and with it state strategies and ideological currents. The weakening competitive position of the economy, the inflationary pressure following the war in Indochina, the worsening profit position of capital, the growing indebtedness of American business and the development of what capitalist economists could label but not understand or cure, 'stagflation', all necessitated a counter-attack on the working class as a whole, and particularly against the material concessions which had increased the social wage and set some limits on the operations of the corporations and their ability to generate and realise profit. All such impediments would have to go, and go most of them did.[33]

This had disastrous consequences for the mass of blacks, and the new strategy also went hand in hand with the development of a neoconservative movement that argued vigorously against the liberal interpretations of the 1960s, that attacked the gains won then and that claimed that the poor should be left to market forces, and to their own devices. Government strategy abandoned such reform efforts as had been attempted in the Johnson years; henceforth the market was to provide the basis for individual black advance. Black capitalism became the rhetoric of the time.

None of the reforms accomplished in the 1960s tackled the fundamental structures of the political economy. Consequently, the patterns of black un- and under-employment did not change; for even in the boom period new investment was capital- not labour-intensive, and was not made in the inner city ghettos. The ratio of black/white incomes, the relative proportions of black and white poverty and the relative rates of infant mortality, for example, did not fundamentally change. And under the policies of benign neglect, the extent of deterioration is undeniable. As William Tabb states:

> Even before the economic downturn in 1974-75 Black economic gains of the 1960s had vanished. Between 1970 and 1973 Black family income fell behind as inflation eroded monetary gains (White

family income rose by over six per cent). The number of Black families living in poverty rose while the number of white poverty level families continued to decline.[34]

And these patterns continued for the remainder of the decade.

What has had a more lasting effect has been the co-optation strategy – resulting in the growth, small and insecure as it is, of a black middle class, in the state bureaucracy and in the major corporations.

> Growth of Black college enrolment, white-collar employment and entrepreneurship has gone hand in hand with continued high unemployment. The rising Black bourgeoisie urges self-reliance on the Black poor and working classes, while it as a class has gradually abandoned the relative independence of self-employment for jobs as hired hands of government and big business.[35]

The goal of creating black capitalism has, however, not been achieved. All that is left from earlier initiatives is a residue of small, mostly family-owned shops and businesses, extremely vulnerable to the recession. Berkely G. Burrell, head of the black National Business League, put his finger on it: 'A banker is a banker is a banker and if the S.O.B. isn't going to make me a loan, he isn't going to make it with government money behind him either.'[36] The government backing did not last long in any event. Black capitalism as a slogan in Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign soon gave way to 'minority business enterprise' and to benign neglect and calls for corporate involvement, thus making it even less likely that the 'S.O.B.s' would make the loan.

At the height of the appeals for corporate investment in the ghetto, a survey of 700 major corporations revealed that only 112 of them 'indicated a willingness to build new plants in or near slum areas'. In addition, not one of them would make the move unless certain conditions were met, including:

- A large and non-aggressive labour pool.
- Programs to train local workers with new and useful skills.
- Ample land at reasonable prices, roads and utilities, and new zoning codes.
- Pleasant environmental conditions, including quality housing in the immediate area and assurances that ghetto 'blight' would be removed.
- Lower real estate taxes.
- Adequate security and fire protection.
- Relations only with 'responsible community groups' not with militants.[37]

The British state and British finance capital are unlikely to be any more successful in the creation of black capitalism – particularly Afro-Caribbean capitalism. And no matter how many inner city coach-tours

Environment Minister Michael Heseltine organises for businessmen, it will be interesting to see how many of the conditions demanded by US corporations he will be able to deliver in monetarist Britain – even if there are any firms willing to take advantage of them. The free enterprise zones mooted by government may be able to supply some of these requirements – but in their present watered down form they are unlikely to attract significant investment.

Conclusion

The black uprisings of spring and summer of 1981 have been increasingly joined by alienated, unemployed white youth who feel anger against the police and the system. Their experiences with the police, though not as severe or total as those of the blacks, have nonetheless given them cause for rage. In a racist and highly class stratified society, the struggle of the black community, essentially against the racism which permeates society, is also a struggle against the class system. For the white youth – and the white left – struggle against the class hierarchy cannot by itself lead to fundamental change – they need to confront and overcome the racism which has historically retarded and distorted white working-class consciousness.[38] It is also important that when looking at the British uprisings that began in St Paul's, Bristol, in 1980, blew up in Brixton in April 1981 and in city after city in July 1981, they are not isolated from the continuing struggles of black youth and the black community in general against escalating fascist/racist attacks.

The British state has begun the attempt to contain the uprisings as well as the more problematic task of preventing future ones. The media and the ideologues have entered the fray as well. The New Right from the US has been peddling its noxious doctrines of selfishness, black inferiority and repression alongside its British allies. The more sophisticated and liberal elements have raised the question of concessions of one sort or another – but not material ones, for after all, as Heseltine has said, there is 'no crock of gold'. More coordination of government activities has been proposed, as has an attempt to overcome racial disadvantage in housing and employment. As *The Times* put it: 'The more these disabilities can be removed, the easier it will be for black and Asian people to find satisfactory places for themselves in accordance with their individual abilities.'[39] A strategy to find 'satisfactory places' – at least for some – is made even more necessary because, as Sivanandan shows, changes in production related to microtechnology, and the investment decisions associated with those changes, are such as to make unemployment a permanent condition for a significant portion of the working class.[40] And we can be sure that blacks will be round in that group in large numbers. So central is this

reality that even *The Times* had to acknowledge – albeit in muted fashion – that 'we have moved into a different economic climate in which jobs will be in short supply for years to come'.[41]

Meanwhile, the Labour Party and the trade unions have belatedly had to confront the consequences of their own racist policies and have proved unable to deal with them. The Labour Party, committed by both policy and practice to managing a capitalist economy (with some state ownership), will also have to give priority to capitalist requirements and capitalist economic activity – rather than to maintaining, let alone improving, social and welfare benefits. Given the massive and sustained erosion of Britain's economic and industrial base, and the lack of any Labour policies to deal with that, there is no way that it will be in any position to make the sort of material concessions made in the US in the mid 1960s by the Democrats. It is unlikely, therefore, that even with a change of government the conditions which give rise to the uprisings will be significantly altered. In the short run, there will be more repression, various symbolic gestures and increased attempts at co-optation.

This article began by looking at the US black insurrections of the 1960s, and the various state responses. We have seen that as the economy retrenched, capitalist imperatives required the clawing back of many of the material and procedural concessions made to the black community, in favour of repression allied to co-optation. It appeared throughout the 1970s that the strategy had worked. There were, however, a number of indicators that the ghetto blacks were not as quiescent as had been assumed. During a power failure in New York city in 1977 and during a blizzard in Baltimore – both of which put the police temporarily out of action – blacks engaged in widespread looting. In 1979 a black uprising in Miami followed the acquittal by an all-white jury of four white policemen who had beaten a black man to death.

The ideological disarray among liberals in the US, and the lack of concern about race – it is no longer an 'in' subject – has given the New Right allies of capital a dominant position. Their anti-black, anti-woman, anti-gay ideology provides the cover for a massive re-allocation of state funds from the working class as a whole – with blacks and other racially oppressed groups bearing a disproportionate burden – in favour of capital.[42] On the whole, the co-opted black functionaries, at least those not being laid off as a result of cuts, can be counted upon to defend their new class position. But the danger from the state's perspective is that the mass of poor blacks will take matters into their own hands. US Attorney General William French Smith has stated that the possibility of racial violence erputing as a result of cuts in social programme budgets will be monitored by an 'early warning system' (he is referring to the Community Relations Service). But so

far, 'we haven't had any great alarms that have gone off anywhere ... It's quite possible that the effect of these so-called budget cuts won't materialize at all ... in terms of causing temperatures to rise.'[43]

What this indicates – apart from the obvious propaganda element – is a state on the attack, relying both on its domestic intelligence network and its agencies of force to contain trouble. At the same time, the ideological offensive against blacks and the poor is heightening, as evidenced in two recent major articles in the *Los Angeles Times*.[44] They are worth discussing in some detail because they exemplify current thinking, and give an alarming foretaste of future trends.

The articles argue that while twice as many whites as blacks are part of a new permanent underclass, the black underclass is more worrying because it is concentrated in America's major cities rather than being scattered in the Appalachias and other semi-rural areas. Structural factors in maintaining and creating this underclass are mentioned, but the overriding theme is that of its own responsibility for its position. And if statistics will not do to bring the message home to the reader, there is a case study of a day in the life of a South Side Chicago black welfare mother, with ten illegitimate children, five of whome are on welfare with her, and one of whom has just had an illegitimate child – under the invidious title 'The underclass, how one family copes'. These blacks are not only living off the rest of us because they cannot or will not work, but they also engage, we are told, in widespread criminal activity which also costs the rest of us. The experts quoted agree that not a great deal can be done, the economy is shrinking, and it's all the fault of the poor anyhow.

But more dangerous than the familiar 'blame the victim' structure of the debate is the way we are encouraged to fear and loathe the victim. The second article, appearing one week later, drops all pretence at social concern. Luridly titled 'Marauders from inner city prey on LA's suburbs', it begins as follows: 'One by one and in small bands, young men desperate for money are marauding out of the heart of Los Angeles in a growing wave to prey upon the suburban middle and upper classes sometimes with senseless savagery.'[45] Robbery (with blood-curdling violence) and the rape of two white women is the stuff, we are informed, of one such 'raid'. We are then returned to the ghetto with these savage marauders to watch them showing off and spending their ill-gotten gains. We are repeatedly told that the police do not have enough powers or manpower and that the courts are too lenient.

The President of the Los Angeles Urban League, John Mack, sees the solution lying with placing 'the major focus on the ones who are still salvageable ... We are a race of people who are equal to anyone else, but within that framework we have some winners, and we have some losers. We have to go with the winners.' Mayor Tom Bradley has a solution for the 'losers'.

> I think that there is a concept where you have a controlled environment, where you keep the child not just while he or she is in school but in the hours outside school, you have that child in a controlled environment. The kibbutz in Israel is one such concept ... It, of course, would not be a kibbutz, but it would be that kind of concept.[46]

Bradley's 'concept' – the twenty-four hour a day controlled environment for the unco-opted members of the underclass – is the frightening logic of the current US situation. Is that where Whitelaw's army camps turned prisons for the rebellious youth of Britain's inner cities will also lead?

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PAUL GILROY

You can't fool the youths ... race and class formation in the 1980s

You teach the youths to learn in school
that the dish ran away with spoon
You teach the youths to learn in school
that the cow jumped over moon
So you can't blame the youths of today
you can't fool the youths

Pete Tosh

There is nothing more to organise. You can organise workers as workers. You can create a special organisation of revolutionary workers. But once you have those two you have reached an end. Organisation *as we have known it* is at an end.

C.L.R. James

Where marxist science has stooped to provide accounts of racial conflicts, it has been at best 'race blind' and at worst eurocentric. Socialist politics driven to the edge of popular nationalism by the crisis are incapable of solving the complex problems posed by the articulation of race and class. Yet the economic, ideological and political struggles over the meaning and relevance of 'race' have effects on the formation and reproduction of classes.

Racism is not a transhistorical essence, and not least because the biology of racial characteristics has no relation to 'races' in political struggle; there can be no general theory of 'race' or 'race relations situations'. The 128 racial classifications of the French

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Imperial *code noir*, the structured racism of today's South Africa and the popular racism which forms the backdrop to the latest legislation on British citizenship do not make for theory. Different racisms are found in different social formations and historical circumstances. To paper over the specifics of each historical conjuncture with a general theory of 'race' or 'race relations situations' is misguided; to acknowledge simultaneously that the biology of racial characteristics has nothing to do with races as constituted in politics is dishonest. In each case, racial differences, whether wholly imaginary or anchored in the raw material of biology, are magnified, systematised and rationalised into vehicles of political dominance. And it is this 'malleability' of the concept of 'race' which qualifies its use as a scientific category of social analysis. Its very meaninglessness, on the other hand, should continually refer us to the precise but changing conditions in which racial groups become possible in politics, ideology and economic life. And it is to this unique dialectic of race and class at the centre of contemporary British politics that this article addresses itself – not so much for what it reveals of how real structural phenomena are misrecognised and distorted by racial prisms, but for what it enables us to perceive about our historical period. It is precisely because race binds the processes by which ethico-political hegemony is presently reproduced that focusing analysis around it offers a privileged view of unfolding state authoritarianism, the stage of capital accumulation and the balance of forces in political struggle.

Unlike the sociologists, the British left has remained reluctant to concede any depth to racial divisions in the working class, let alone approach that Pandora's box. With few exceptions, it has been cheerfully unaffected by sixty years of black critical dialogue with marxism, presented, most notably, by Garvey, Padmore, James and Wright. The theoretical and political contributions of these authors, particularly their early critique of Stalinism and their dogged anti-reductionism fashioned in the awareness that black liberation required more than economic transformation, make recent European discovery of non-economistic socialism less than startling. Yet their insights have been bypassed, and the left has adopted a peculiar national perspective which obscures the role of black struggles in the development of the British working class, all the way from abolitionism to the factory gates of Imperial Typewriters. It has remained stubbornly blind to the fact that, even though rendered invisible, black labour power has conditioned the most intimate structures of British daily life. 'It is the sugar you stir, it is in the sinews of the infamous British sweet tooth, it is the tea leaves at the bottom of the British cuppa.'[1]

Having waved away the political analyses of autonomous black groups with a few fashionable insults such as 'economistic', 'reductionist' or 'abstentionist',[2] the left's recent writings on the subject of

racial politics remain paralysed by an inability to conceive race and class as related. Race is either shorn of all determinacy and allowed to ascend to the rarified heights of ideological autonomy, from where it 'only subsequently' intervenes at the level of the economy, or it is subsumed entirely to class. The experience of racial domination is so distorted that its class character evaporates. Variations on the latter theme present the struggle for black liberation as a 'democratic' issue to be secured by the simple assertion of a 'pluralist national identity'[3] or, more predictably, as a divisive danger to the achievement of *true* class consciousness parallel to the threat posed by fascist organisation.[4]

On the contrary,

> The class relations which inscribe the black fractions of the working class function as race relations. The two are inseparable. Race is the modality in which class is lived. It is also the medium in which class relations are experienced.[5]

That is not to say that 'race' can be miraculously hitched on like an extra railway carriage to the locomotive of non-reductionist marxism. The extent to which blacks have become part of the working class demands more than that the left should simply note their presence and register the resultant 'multi-cultural' tones of metropolitan class struggle. Though even this may have polemical value, it woefully underestimates the transformation of political culture brought about by post-war black settlement.

Marx's famous remark that 'the tradition of dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living' acquired new poignancy as the great-grandchildren of martyred slaves and indentured labourers set up home in the land of those who had tormented their progenitors. The mass of black people, who arrived here as fugitives from colonial underdevelopment, brought with them legacies of their political, ideological and economic struggles in Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian sub continent, as well as the scars of imperialist violence. Far from being fixed or unchanging, the accumulated histories of their far-flung resistance have brought a distinct quality to class struggles in their new metropolitan home. For, as Cabral points out: 'If imperialist domination has the vital need to practise cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture.'[6]

Developing this theme, Sivanandan has argued that a disorganic articulation of capitalist relations of production with vestigial political and ideological forms tends to generate a contradiction between 'the political regime and the people, with culture as the expression of their resistance. And it is cultural resistance which ... takes on new forms ... in order fully to contest foreign domination.'[7] It is in the embers of

that furnace that the now-transplanted political consciousness of post-war black settlers was forged. It is with that tradition that they and their British-born children have preserved *organic* links, in their kitchens and temples – in their communities. Though their new struggles at the centre are diffused throughout a different structure in dominance, the lingering bile of slavery, indenture and colonialism remains, not in the supposedly pathological forms in which black households are organised, but in the forms of struggle, political philosophies and revolutionary perspectives of non-European radical traditions, and the 'good sense' of their practical ideologies. The contradiction is, of course, between the people and the power bloc[8] – but because in this case it is bounded by racial division, culture assumes a central importance. Hence, in opposition to those theorists who would reduce 'race' to custom or 'ethnicity', we must locate racist and anti-racist ideology as well as the struggle for black liberation in a perspective of culture as a terrain of *class* conflicts – in the same way that Richard Johnson does for the working class as a whole:

> 'working-class' culture is the form in which labour is reproduced ... This process of reproduction, then, is always a contested transformation. Working-class culture is formed in the struggle between capital's demand for particular forms of labour power and the search for a secure location within this relationship of dependency. The outcomes of such necessary struggles depend on what ideological and political forces are in play.[9]

Except that – and it bears repetition – the struggles of 'black' people appear in an intensely cultural form because the social formation in which their distinct political traditions are now manifest has constructed the arena of politics on ground overshadowed by centuries of metropolitan capitalist development, thereby denying them recognition as legitimate politics.

To put it another way, the politics of black liberation is cultural in a special sense: Coons, Pakis, Nig-nogs, Sambos and Wogs are cultural constructions in ideological struggle. Cultures of resistance develop to contest them and the power they inform, as one aspect of the struggle against capitalist domination which blacks experience as racial oppression. This is a class struggle *in* and *through* race. Black struggles to refuse and transform subjugation are no ready answer to class segmentation, but because they are 'against capitalism, against racism', they do attempt to constitute the class in politics where 'race' is no longer relevant; whereas the racist ideas and practices of the white working class become ways in which the class as a whole is disorganised.

The division of humanity into social classes explains its history infinitely better than its division into races or peoples. Yet the racial fragmentation of the British working class is a powerful warning

against any view of classes as continuous or homogeneous subjects which, once formed, develop in a linear manner as political actors on the historical stage. The marxist concept of class refers primarily, but not exclusively, to the location of groups in production relations. The effect of capitalism's tendency to generate surplus labour power which is excluded from employment by revolutions in the productive process and changes in accumulation should emphasise this.[10] At the social formation level, this labour power is actual men and women expelled from production – 'black', 'unskilled', 'old', 'young'. But there are intense political struggles over the *composition* of this surplus population. It is never determined mechanistically by the objective conditions (development of productive forces, phase of accumulation, etc.), which only delineate the range of possible outcomes. Even the commonly understood definition of unemployment itself reflects this. For example, at present it refers disproportionately to males, while the possibility of waged work for women is suppressed by ideologies of domesticity. Patriarchal capitalism can accept the 'unemployment' of women marooned at home, but as the crisis bites, black youth on street corners become a 'visible political problem' which prompts new forms of state intervention and social control. The way in which this surplus population becomes organised politically has implications for the segmentation of the working class, and is clearly relevant to racial politics. It serves to remind us that the privileged place of economic classes in the marxist theory of history is not the same as a simple assertion of their political primacy in every historical moment.

> We cannot conceive of the class struggle as if classes were simply and homogeneously constituted at the level of the economic and only then fractured at the level of the political. The political level is dependent – determinate – because its raw materials are given by the mode of production as a whole.[11]

Marx makes it clear that there are periods in which the proletariat is unable to constitute itself as a class in politics, even though 'the domination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests'.[12] Recognising the problems in the effective entry of classes into politics is the first step to understanding that: 'Classes must be viewed as the effects of struggles structured by objective conditions, that are simultaneously economic, political and ideological.'[13]

These objective conditions change, and the unity between the 'economic movement and the political action' of the working class is not the same in 1981 as it was in 1871. The working class is different. This is a place where we can restore some of the determinacy which class struggle has lost in much recent marxist writing. We must re-draw the boundaries of the concept 'class struggle' so that it includes the relentless processes by which classes are constituted – organised and

disorganised – in politics, as well as the struggles between them, once formed. In this way, to synchronise the movement of different class fractions with discontinuous but related histories becomes an object of struggle itself. This unity is now less than ever pre-ordained in economic positions. A complex view of class formation which gives due weight to the struggle to organise classes in politics takes us far beyond the simplistic 'class in itself/class for itself' dichotomy. It poses the question of *forms* of struggle and political organisation. This has become important not simply because blacks have introduced new political traditions into the British social formation, but also because 'in many instances in the 1970s the immigrant workers have not only participated in labour's struggle: they have led it. They have not only participated in existing forms of struggle, they have invented new ones.'[14]

Working-class black communities

Following in the well-trodden footsteps of Castles and Kosack,[15] recent avowedly marxist approaches to analysis of the black working class have centred myopically on the shop-floor. Phizacklea and Miles[16] have shown a dogged determination to impose their own restricted conceptualisations of political organisation on the blacks whose political consciousness they have quantified on the basis of questionnaire material. In doing so, they ignore the fact that the specific character of the black struggles they describe has often resided in the support such struggles have drawn from the surrounding black community.

Localised struggles over education, racist violence and police practices continually reveal how black people have made use of notions of community to provide the axis along which to organise themselves. The concept of community is central to the view of class struggle presented here. For it links distinct cultural and political traditions – which have a territorial dimension – to collective action and consciousness, and operates within the relations of 'economic patterns, political authority and uses of space'.[17] The idea of a racially demarcated collectivity of this type underlines the fact that community cannot be viewed as either static or as determined by the essential characteristics of the class or class fractions which have come to constitute it.

The cultural institutions which specify community have not been a continual feature of working-class life. The history of working-class communities, into which we should insert the particular experiences of post-war immigrants and their children, is entwined with the processes of industrialisation and social discipline [18] which established the city as a site of unique political conflicts. The form and relevance of community have therefore fluctuated with the changing social character of

capitalist production. Even while the British proletariat was still being formed, attempts to assess the political relevance of community required that attention be paid to the dynamics of class formation and political organisation. The histories of the Minters, the Costermongers, the Scuttlers and their Molls[19] all show the strengths of the working class organised on the basis of community in urban struggles long before blacks became a replacement population in areas which, 'despite the demand for labour power ... failed to attract sufficient white population.'[20]

In an influential discussion which anticipates the direction of the argument here, Gareth Stedman-Jones has pointed to a growing separation of the workplace from the domestic sphere as an important determinant of both the cultural and political life of urban workers in late nineteenth-century London.[21] His example of the disruption of community in fact illustrates the concept's value in connecting the spheres of waged and domestic labour. To make this connection pays dividends not only where leisure practices are found to impinge on the labour process,[22] but also where political organisation forged outside the immediate processes of production (for blacks with police, racists or profiteering ghetto landlords) has effects on the struggle at work and vice versa.

> The making of classes at work is complemented by the making of classes where people live; in both places adaptive and rebellious responses to the class situation are inevitably closely intertwined.[23]

The notion of community is also important for the way it can be used to re-establish the unity of black people in answer to the divisions which state policy, race relations sociology and common-sense racism have visited on their experience of domination. All of these fragment the cohesion of black people, united in their opposition to the power bloc by cultures and languages of resistance. In its place, they have created the image of the respectable and hard-working first generation of black immigrants locked in struggle with their children, whose 'identity crises' and precarious position 'between two cultures' impel them into deviant behaviour. Rejecting the parental culture while reproducing its pathological characteristics, these young people, whether of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin, are presented as divorced from their parents' concerns. This powerful stereotype unites self-proclaimed radical and openly racist theories of black life. It must be met with a concept of community which reveals the ties between the struggles of blacks outside the workplace and those who remain within the wage relation. Unemployment is increasingly affecting all black people, regardless of age, and where community has broadened the base from which they successfully fought the unholy alliance of employers and racist trades unions, there is every reason to suppose that it may now

provide the means to take on the state itself in defence of local services and amenities. Where generational conflict is visible, it expresses deep debates over political strategy rather than aberrant familial practices. Such conflicts are always premised on the fundamental unity of the community in question and conducted within the repertoire of its political traditions, which make the common ground on which discussion is possible. Tension between Asian youth movements and the Indian Workers' Association organisations is a clear example of this process. It reveals the struggle between corporate and autonomous modes of struggle in a complex fashion, informed and affected by the peasant political traditions in which both aspects of the movement have been formed.

The interrelation between production and the political space in which community develops is not satisfactorily understood at the level of production's immediate processes. The need to periodise class struggle and relate it to phases of accumulation requires detailed consideration of the organisation of surplus labour power. This is inextricably fused with the formation of workers into a class. It should be obvious that the move from full employment to structural unemployment heralds fundamental changes in the way surplus labour power appears as surplus population. In the context of organic crisis, the importance of community in these processes is highlighted by the use of new mechanisms of social control and surveillance which, recognising the strength of communities, attempt to penetrate them in new strategies for containment[24] – 'control is shifted from the criminal act to the crime-inducing situation, from the pathological case to the pathogenic surroundings, in such a way that each citizen becomes, as it were, an a priori suspect or a potential criminal'.[25]

The political traditions of black people expressed in the solidarity and resistance of their communities have determined such a *territorialisation* of social control. This is visible in the use of 'Sus' laws to confine black youths to particular areas,[26] and in the particularly brutal police operations which have become commonplace in black neighbourhoods. In the past, community relations apparatuses fused political representation with state intervention to channel black grievances into 'quasi-colonial institutional structures which would deal with the issue of race outside traditional political arenas'.[27] Now, 'community policing' initiatives reveal new dimensions to the urban struggle in their attempt to redefine community so that it is counterposed to 'crime' rather than to the police.

Corporatism vs autonomy

All this means that forms of struggle cannot be taken for granted. Mass unemployment generated by crisis and the microprocessor revolution

demands reassessment of the institutions of political representation. These must be understood as historical phenomena. Posing the problem of political organisation in direct form invites the separation of corporatist modes of struggle from the diverse attempts to repoliticise the process of class formation. All this is taking place in the face of a new imposition of authority, new ideologies of the crisis and the mobilisation of the law in political struggle. Corporatism is defined as:

> political structure within advanced capitalism which integrates organised socio-economic producer groups through a system of representation and cooperative mutual interaction at the leadership level and mobilisation and social control at the mass level. Corporatism is understood here as *an actual political structure, not merely an ideology* (emphasis added).[28]

Black political traditions fall outside the 'contradictory unity' of corporatism/parliamentarism. There is also overwhelming evidence to support the view that the political institutions of the white working class have consistently failed to represent the interests of black workers, both abroad[29] and at home, where black rank-and-file organisation has challenged union racism at every level since the day the *Empire Windrush* docked. Nor are blacks alone in the marginalisation they suffer. The experiences of female, young, unemployed or even unskilled workers present similar examples. The growth of rank-and-file militancy and conflict between the shop floor and union bureaucracy only hints at the struggle in these institutions. Indeed, they do not represent the class *as a class* at all. Their failures must be set beside the rapid growth of new movements with an autonomy from capitalist command as well as from the disabling political perspectives of the labour movement. The movement of the black communities is but one place among many where a patient listener may discern:

> The dialogue ... between a young social movement, still searching for its identity, and the movement which preceded it but which is now growing old, dying, or being converted into its own antithesis by becoming an agent of the authorities.[30]

Such a claim requires that we demonstrate that black struggles are not merely political in a broad sense, but approach the task of social transformation not from a transplanted disorganic politics alone, but in forms and with ideas which relate directly to the immediate historical conjuncture in which they have developed. Rastafari, which appears where blacks are supposedly least *class* conscious, provides useful but by no means unique evidence of this.[31] It is an example which must be treated with care if it is not to reinforce the peculiarly powerful racist image of intransigent black youth, whose previous incarnation, 'the mugger', has been brought up-to-date in a new folk-

devil, 'the criminal Rasta'. Sociologists who identify the movement exclusively with young men have done nothing except reinforce this view. Their definition of the movement is crude and empiricist – offering a shopping list of dogmatic tenets to which the true 'cultist' is subsequently found to subscribe. Instead, we should locate the symbols of dread-head wraps, long skirts, Ethiopian colours and dreadlocks – by which researchers have identified 'cult affiliates' – at one end of a continuum of belief which encompasses both age and gender difference. Avowed Rastas maintain that all black people are Rasta whether they realise it or not. This points to a broader idea of the movement than sociological orthodoxy allows. To see it as a distinct expression of the contradiction between black people and the power bloc lays bare its real structure as a movement organised around a political and philosophical critique of oppressive social relations – identified by the Rastas as a cohesive human creation – 'Babylon system'. That this critique appears partially in religious form should not lead us to underestimate the degree of political transformation it represents. Though religion has always supplied weapons in the struggles of the colonised, downtrodden and enslaved, the 'religious' elements in Rasta discourse comprise a sophisticated criticism of a people's paralysing encounter with religion. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than by the Wailers:

> Preacher man don't tell me
> Heaven is under the earth
> I know you don't know
> what life is really worth ...
> Most people think great god will come from the sky
> take away everything make everybody feel high
> but if you know what life is worth
> you will look for yours on earth
> now you see the light you stand up for your rights.

The Rastas' insistence that heaven is on earth and nowhere else, and the denial of god which comes with their belief that 'God is I and I and has always been' are the kindling of the process in which: 'The criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.[32]

The sharing of linguistic devices and political concepts marks the limits of a community bonded by a particular conceptualisation of 'the people'. The confrontation in style which has developed where open signification of dreadness transforms the unacceptable attribute of blackness into a source of collective strength and inspiration acts as a focal point for dread and baldhead alike. The immense scope of the movement is obscured by continual preoccupation with the stylised

and flamboyant defiance of its younger adherents. Once dread style has been abandoned as the essential qualification for 'cult' membership, it becomes clear that many older people share the movement's pan-Africanist sentiments and take pride in its rejection of racial domination. For older West Indians have encountered the discourse of Rasta before.

Black culture, white youth and class struggle

The 'youth culture' dimension to Rasta mobilisation has created an important space for dialogue between youth from different racial backgrounds. Asian youth movements have been as inspired by the combativity of Afro-Caribbean young people as the Afro-Caribbeans have been by the Asians' tenacious defence of their communities, however much this has been concealed by a persistent stereotype of their passivity. At a demonstration against racist violence in Coventry in May 1981, which was under-reported for this very reason, young Asians chanted 'Brixton, Brixton' as they charged the ranks of police who protected the racists. And in Southall in 1979, Afro-Caribbean youth came out with the Asians against the Nazis (and the police who protected them) in the defence of their common community.

The effects of West Indian culture in general, and, through reggae, Rastafari in particular, on white youth are seldom considered. It seems that this may have had a profound impact on the racism of young Britons who were not, like their parents, weaned on an unadulterated diet of Empire. There are new limits to the adequacy of racial explanations for the ravages of the crisis. The arrival of black settlers proved to be both catalyst and inspiration to the grandchildren of jingoism who were quick to ape, absorb and adapt the styles and cultural practices which were black relics of a distant colonial engagement with their foreparents. Dick Hebdige has established the connection between white youth cultures and the presence of black citizenry: 'We can watch played out on the loaded surfaces of the British working-class youth cultures a phantom history of race relations since the war.'[33]

By extending this argument, we can begin to see the fundamental class character of black cultural struggles in a different dimension, and the articulation of 'race' around the contradiction between capital and labour in ways obscured by the dominance of corporatist political representation. Since the incorporation of reggae into the sub-cultural repertoire in the late 1960s, political themes began to displace moral and generational conflict as the raw material for the cultural expressions of young whites. The progression from The Who's 'My Generation' to the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' and, more recently, the self-conscious anti-racist politics of the 'Two Tone' movement exemplifies this process. It has been fuelled at each stage by youth's own

perceptions of economic crisis and the consequent crisis of social relations. The Specials' 'Ghost Town', which was the number one record during the unprecedented week of rioting in British cities in July 1981, provides a chilling image of national decline observed from inside the oppositional culture of urban youth.

> This town is coming like a ghost town
> Why must the youth fight against themselves?
> Government leaving youth on the shelf
> This town is coming like a ghost town
> No job to be found in this country
> Can't go on no more, people getting angry
> This town is coming like a ghost town.

The mass mobilisations of white youth thrown up in this process, though always both cultural and political, have not always been anti-racist, like the important but short-lived Rock Against Racism alliance. Though it contains no guarantees of a progressive outcome, the fact that neo-fascist and nationalist attempts to win young whites have been forced to recognise the political power of black culture as an obstacle to their success indicates the relatively precarious nature of the youngsters' commitment to race and nation.[34]

Regardless of the ultimate direction of the popular struggle of white youth, we should recognise that its *forms* have been prefigured in the resistances of black communities – in much the same way that the movement of black Americans in the 1960s determined the patterns of autonomous protest which followed it:

> Without Black Brotherhood, there would have been no Sisterhood; without Black Power and Black Pride there would have been no Gay Power and Gay Pride. The movement against the abuse of powers of the state ... derived much of its strength and purpose from the exposure of the FBI's surveillance and harassment of the Black Panthers and Black Muslims ... only the Environmental Movement did not have the Black Movement as a central organisational fact or as a defining political metaphor and inspiration.[35]

The mass politicisation of youth cultures, which has followed from their encounter with black cultural forms and leisure practices, bears witness to the survival of African traditions which do not recognise the separation of politics from other spheres of life. Armand Mattelart has reminded us that: 'Acquiring and developing class consciousness does not mean obligatory boredom. It is a question of transforming what used to be used exclusively for pleasure and leisure into a means of instruction.'[36] Non-European traditions have never recognised this separation in quite the same way, and consequently do not have to be readjusted.

Rastafari is a sophisticated expression of the critical consciousness which informs black struggles, commentating on society and the state and extending into analysis of the post-colonial scene as a whole:

> Africans a bear the most pressure, because you find that the people that are controlling them are the white people them. They try to be superior over black people. Not all of them, but certain of them ones as is gods and seat up in high places: All those system, you just see them big notches who a control. Certain of them captains and them big pirates from long time is them family. Some of them people really have the world in their hands, so them keep up various kinds of isms now. Them stop slaving the Africans alone, but them slaving everyone else still. Is the people them to come and unite now, that's the only way.[37]

The consciousness of exploitation provoked in the experience of racial oppression, both inside and outside production, is not some preliminary phase in the development of a mythically complete class consciousness sometime in the future. Though for the social analyst 'race' and class are necessarily abstractions at different levels, black consciousness of race and class cannot be empirically separated. The class character of black struggles is not a result of the fact that blacks are predominantly proletarian, though this is true. It is established in the fact that their struggles for civil rights, for freedom from state harassment or as waged workers are instances of the process by which the working class is constituted politically, is organised in politics. Classes are not static or continuous subjects of history, they are made and remade in a continual struggle. It is only the ancient heresy of economistic marxism which stipulates that the relations of commodity production alone determine class relations. The struggle for hegemony cannot be reduced to economic determinations or vulgarised to refer to solely cultural phenomena, and class analysis cannot be restricted to those positioned in the immediate processes of production.

Conclusion

The resistance and oppositional symbols provided by Afro-Caribbean political culture are central reference points for the struggles of other young people. Like feminist organisation, the anti-state movements which have been at the heart of urban communities' opposition to increasingly authoritarian forms of social control demand critical self-scrutiny from the left. In both cases, distinct political practices force the 'heretical' realisation that the movement for human liberation and social transformation must itself be viewed as an historical phenomenon.

The young people who set British cities alight are no more a 'reserve army of labour' or a 'lumpenproletariat' than they are the 'criminal hooligans' that the state has branded them. Their situation exists where many of Marx's concepts – which were themselves historical – are of limited use. Their actions must be examined on their political merits, as far as possible outside the moralistic categories which so much contemporary socialist thinking shares with common-sense ideologies. Racial segmentation places this problem at centre stage: too often the working class is divided into reputable and disreputable strata, personified, on the one hand, by the honest trades union stalwart and, on the other, by black youth whose alienation is manifest in their criminal inclinations. This is dangerous because it dovetails with the state's own strategy of criminalisation as a response to these new political challenges. The urban 'race rioters' strike out at oppressive power materialised in the particular institutions and structures in which it bears down upon them, '[in] its capillary form of existence, at the point where power returns into the very grain of individuals, touches their gestures and attitudes, their discourses and daily lives.'[38]

The simple point here is that power is not confined to the labour process. Understanding new political movements – new class struggles – requires analytic concepts historically appropriate to the new forms they take. These spontaneous struggles may sometimes become violent, but this does not render them irreconcilable with a strategic long-term 'war of position'. The workers' movement has always struggled with laws and law officers pitted against its own interests.

Bearing in mind the way that C.L.R. James has demonstrated the interrelation of spontaneity and organisation,[39] we must also realise that forms of political action and organisation developed in previous struggles offer no guarantees of efficacy in new circumstances and relations of force. The ahistorical fetishisation of organisational forms which have outlived their adequacy in the dogmatic prescriptions of omniscient bureaucrats and party officers is both a fetter on progress and a set of blinkers preventing useful analysis of the present. From this perspective the struggle for black liberation and the related struggles of black and white youth may assume a place parallel to popular feminism and, at a greater distance, political ecology and anti-militarist initiatives. They are not the same, but their critiques of the movement which preceded them are similar. The marginalisation which they suffer at its ageing hands may even be the basis of new alliances and collective actions. Each group's discourse of powerlessness is potentially resonant for the others. All these movements extend the boundaries of politics beyond the social democratic focus on policy. They represent themselves in politics and preserve the authority over their experience of domination so long

denied by corporatist political institutions and patterns of state intervention. The 'cultural' character they share signifies the way each reaches into the future, as a dynamic complex unity of political, ideological and economic concerns, from which heterogeneous struggles form a new working class inside and outside the workplace.

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Notes and documents

The 'riots'

The 'riots' began in April 1980 in the St Pauls area of Bristol. After years of harassment all that was needed was a 'spark', and that the police provided by raiding the Black and White cafe, one of the very few meeting places for black youth. The police blocked off the area around the cafe and for over two hours, in front of an ever-growing crowd, they removed crates of beer; then they brought out the owner in handcuffs. The crowd (including some white youth) started to assail the police with stones, bricks and bottles and attacked several police vehicles. The police, greatly outnumbered and unprepared for the anger of the 'rioters', were forced to withdraw, after attempting to confront the youth with military-style tactics for two hours. For four hours, while the police waited for reinforcements from neighbouring forces, St Pauls was a 'no-go' area.

In all, some 130 people were arrested in the days after the St Pauls 'riot'. Ninety-one were charged with 'minor' offences – only one was found not guilty.

In the House of Commons the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, said: 'I am not prepared to contemplate "no-go" areas in any part of this country.' He went on to announce that there was to be a 'thorough and urgent examination ... into the arrangements for handling spontaneous disorder'.

Then, in July 1980, twelve people were charged with 'riotous assembly', a serious charge carrying the possibility of a long prison sentence. The police hoped for a show trial, but in court their case collapsed. Halfway through the proceedings the judge directed that three of the defendants be acquitted on the grounds that no case had been made out against them. And the jury, which had four black members and several women, refused to convict the rest. It found five not guilty and was unable to reach a verdict on the other four. In April this year, the Director of Public Prosecutions announced that the latter would not have to face retrial.

St Pauls became a symbol of resistance – black youths chanted 'Bristol, Bristol, Bristol' at police defending a National Front march in Lewisham, South London, later the same month.

Brixton, April 1981

Brixton, in South London, has a large black community and has been subjected to heavy handed policing for years. On Monday, 6 April, the Brixton police

launched 'Swamp 81', a special operation to combat 'muggings' and street crime. For a week 120 officers, working in plainclothes, walked the streets, with specific instructions to stop and question 'persistently and accurately' anyone who looked suspect. The head of the local CID described the operation: 'More than 1,000 people were stopped ... and there were just over 100 arrests in the first four days ... It was a resounding success' (*New Standard* 13.4.81). The operation also included raids on homes and cafes. On 10 April the local paper had as its front-page story plainclothes police beating up a black man outside the Henry Fawcett school – an incident witnessed by teachers, pupils and parents. 'One parent who tried to remonstrate with the officers was coshed with a truncheon and arrested for obstruction' (*South London Press* 10.4.81).

By now relations between the police and the black youth were very tense. Then, at 6.20pm on Friday, 10 April, a group of 100 black youths surrounded a police car in which a black youth, Michael Bailey, who had been wounded in a fight, was being held, and released him. Sixty police reinforcements, with riot shields and dogs, arrived and a 20-minute battle ensued. Two police vehicles had their windows smashed and the police, after making eight arrests, made a 'tactical' withdrawal (*Guardian* 11.4.81).

The next morning the whole area around Railton Road was swarming with police. The scene was set for confrontation: 'Policemen patrolled under the eyes of large groups of black youths waiting on street corners. Other policemen stood by in vans. An incident seemed inevitable' (*Observer* 12.4.81). It came at 4.45pm. Outside a mini-cab office, a young black man was arrested by a plainclothes officer, punched in the stomach and dragged to a police van. The street quickly filled, first with black youths, who attacked the van, and then with the police, who tried to make further arrests – only to be pelted with missiles by the crowd.

By 6.30pm the first petrol bombs had been thrown, setting fire to police cars, and by 8.30pm the Windsor Castle pub in Lesson Road and the George pub in Railton Road were on fire. 'The burning of the George pub was undoubtedly an act of revenge for years of racial discrimination' (*South London Press* 14.4.81). A local councillor who approached 500 youths behind a barricade was told that they would disperse if the police withdrew from the area. But a police spokesman replied: 'The police will not withdraw. The only people who control the streets of London are the Met [Metropolitan Police]' (*Sunday Telegraph* 12.4.81). From this point the police lost control of the situation – police vehicles were stoned and petrol bombed and more buildings were set on fire.

Although the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir David McNee, declared that 'there are no "no-go" areas', all the police managed to do was to create a three-mile square cordon to try and contain the 'riot'. Within the cordon, groups of police with riot shields made forays into the crowds, to be met with bricks and petrol bombs. Some groups of police took matters into their own hands. A freelance photographer was behind Brixton police station when a group of about fifteen police in jeans and casual jackets walked by with 'a pick-axe handle, rubber tubes ... and a piece of chain about 18 inches long' (*Sunday Times* 19.4.81). Whether in or out of uniform, police took to dispensing arbitrary revenge.

The 'rioting' started up again next day, Sunday, 11 April. Again the area was cordoned off and it took the police more than five hours to break up the crowds and clear the streets. The local police commander's car was attacked with petrol

bombs and 250 youths tried to storm the police station. That day, there were 4,000 police in the area: 1,000 ringed the police station, riot shields at the ready, 1,000 maintained the outer cordon, and 2,000 were on call in coaches to rush to trouble-spots. Such a presence meant that police reserves had been called in from the whole of southern England – the police capacity was stretched to its limits. By the end of the weekend sixty-three police vehicles had been burnt or attacked and twenty-six buildings badly damaged by fire. Over the weekend and the following week 286 people, mainly black, were arrested. And a Scotland Yard spokesman admitted that the figure of 286 charged 'doesn't count those dragged in and thrown out again' (*Sunday Times* 19.4.81).

The reason for the 'riot' was not hard to find. In the words of a black youth: 'It is not against the white community, it's against the police. They have treated us like dirt. Now they know it's not that easy' (*Sunday Telegraph* 12.4.81). The reaction of the black community was 'four square behind the youths' (*Guardian* 18.4.81).

The government response was two-fold. Lord Scarman was appointed to carry out an investigation into the events and causes, and the Home Secretary arranged for an urgent review of police riot gear. Refusing to recognise that the root cause was the racism of the Metropolitan Police, Home Secretary Whitelaw told the Commons that one of the reasons was the past lack of immigration control: 'a large number of those concerned came here between 1957 and 1962 and all of us who were in the House at that time bear a similar share of the responsibility' (*Hansard* 13.4.81).

The Scarman inquiry, which began in mid-June, was overtaken by events. Throughout May and June clashes with the police and black youths continued in various parts of London.

The July 1981 'riots'

The July 'riots' marked a turning point in British politics. The actions of black youth on the streets destroyed at a stroke the myth of police invincibility – a lesson not lost on the dispossessed white youth. For if the April 'riot' in Brixton was led by black youth, the July 'riots' showed that the malaise went further. In Merseyside and many other cities the youth of the working class – black and white side by side – petrol bombed the police, their vehicles and their police stations.

Southall

The 'riots' in Southall began over the weekend of 3-5 July. On the Friday evening coachloads of skinheads arrived for a pop concert at the Hambrough Tavern on Southall Broadway. Trouble soon started. A group of skinheads attacked the wife of the owner of an Asian shop, the Maharajah General Stores, and the windows of several other shops were smashed in. Inside the Hambrough Tavern a barman stated: 'One band was really stirring up the audience. They were winding them up with Sieg Heil salutes and British marching songs.' Outside, hundreds of Asian youth came on to the streets and besieged the pub. Only a few police were on the spot and by 10pm the pub had been set ablaze with petrol bombs. The skinheads, protected by the police, withdrew.

The husband of the Asian woman who had been attacked said: 'Whatever our boys did, it was purely in self-defence. It was an unprovoked attack. There

will be no foolish action from our people, but if anyone comes again and tries the same thing, God help them. We can control our children so far, but no further' (*Sunday Times* 5.7.81). The Asian youth had made clear that Southall was a 'no-go' area for fascists.

Liverpool

Even as the television was carrying pictures of street fires in Southall, early on the Saturday evening Toxteth in Liverpool 8 was going up in flames.

Over four nights of 'rioting', starting on the Friday, 150 buildings were burnt down, 258 police needed hospital treatment, and 160 people were arrested. In the now familiar pattern one incident provided the 'spark'. At 9pm a black motorcyclist was arrested by the police and put into a police van. A crowd stoned the police, and the motorcyclist jumped from the van to safety. Police arrived in force and a battle ensued. Throughout the evening police vehicles in Toxteth were repeatedly stoned by roaming gangs.

On the Saturday, shortly after 10pm, black and white youths stoned police cars and started setting fire to derelict buildings. Barricades were thrown up in the streets by the 'rioters' and police with riot shields were met with petrol bombs, bricks and chunks of concrete. When 'order' was restored by 7.30am on the Sunday morning, buildings were still blazing. At this stage only three arrests had been made.

From Sunday evening through to early Monday morning 'all hell', in the words of one policeman, was to break loose. The scale of the 'riot' is hard to convey. Building after building was set on fire. A black community worker said: 'It was obvious why people went for the police, but there were exact reasons why each of those buildings was hit. The bank for obvious reasons, the Racquets Club because the judges use it, Swainbanks furniture store because people felt he was ripping off the community' (*New Society* 16.7.81). Even with 800 police in the area, and with reinforcements from Cheshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester, the police totally lost control of Toxteth. The ferocity of the 'rioters' smashed their ranks and they retreated from the area at 11pm. At 1am the Press Association reported that looting was widespread and there was not a policeman in sight. When the police did go back in they started firing CS gas into the crowds – for the first time on mainland Britain – using cartridges intended for penetrating walls and buildings (*New Statesman* 17.7.81). One such cartridge hit and seriously wounded 21-year-old black footballer Phil Robbins. Four other people were badly injured.

Kenneth Oxford, the Chief Constable of Merseyside, claimed on the Sunday: 'It is exclusively a crowd of black hooligans intent on making life unbearable and indulging in criminal activities' (*Guardian* 6.7.81). But it is clear that black and white youth fought the police together, and more, that middle-aged white women helped make petrol bombs for the kids to throw.

A black woman journalist on the *Liverpool Daily Post*, June Henfrey, wrote:

> The people of Toxteth have long been dissatisfied with the type of policing they get. Some months ago a young white woman told me that she thought people in Liverpool 8 should be paid danger money for living there, not because of crime but because of the level of police activity. At least no one so far has suggested that the youngsters of Toxteth should be sent home. They

are at home, and bitter though it may be not to find the promised land in a strange country, it is infinitely more so to be dispossessed in one's own (6.7.81).

'Repression ... the only answer'

Describing a debate in the Commons on the 'riots' on the Monday, a *Guardian* editorial wrote: 'As with Northern Ireland, the political mood in the House of Commons yesterday was overwhelmingly one of bafflement ... Suddenly, forces appear to have been unleashed which nobody knows how to control' (7.7.81).

On Wednesday, 7 July, Whitelaw announced that Lord Scarman was to extend his Brixton inquiry to include Toxteth and Southall. This hasty response was to be overtaken by the events of the next few days. What was already becoming clear from the government, the state and the media was that the police had to take the offensive. *Guardian* columnist Peter Jenkins put his finger on it: 'Now it is too late to remedy the consequences of long years of decline ... Repression will be the embattled authorities' only answer. The ruling class in Britain has lost its competence and its confidence' (8.7.81).

That same evening, in a party political broadcast, Mrs Thatcher repeated what she had said after Brixton in April: 'Nothing can justify, nothing can excuse and no one can condone the appalling violence we have seen on television.' The following day, at a press conference, Whitelaw recognised the inevitability of Peter Jenkins' judgement. The government, he said, was 'well aware of the long-standing problems of our inner cities', but these were 'problems which stretch back for decades' (9.7.81). The only answer, he said, was to maintain 'law and order ... on the streets of the United Kingdom'.

But even as Whitelaw's long-term strategy was beginning to emerge, reports were coming in of further 'riots' in other cities; Toxteth was still simmering with 2,000 police permanently engaged; and that same day, 7 July, Manchester exploded.

Manchester

At 10.15pm, just after Mrs Thatcher had finished her party political broadcast, a massive crowd of 1,000 youths, black and white, stormed Moss Side police station. Nearly all the windows were smashed and a dozen police vehicles in the backyard turned over or burnt.

James Anderton, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, said: 'they have had their chance. I am convinced that the vast majority of the public want to see policemen on the streets to prevent disorder and from here on that is where they are going to be' (*Manchester Evening News* 10.7.81). Anderton moved on to the 'offensive'. On Thursday night:

> 24 police wagons, each manned by 10 steel-helmeted riot police, roared around the shopping and housing area pinning black and white youths to the walls and arresting them. Several youths were knocked to the ground by the wagons ... The rioters moved on to take up positions in high rise flats and flyovers to hurl down rocks on the wagons. Later snatch squads of police moved into the flats. Youths – black and white – were kicked to the ground before being taken away (*Daily Mirror* 10.7.81).

Next day, Whitelaw, on a 12-minute car tour of Moss Side, said that Anderton's techniques (obviously adopted from Northern Ireland) were a 'conspicuous success'.

Britain ablaze

By the weekend of 10-12 July, 'riots' were taking place in over thirty towns and cities. In many cities 'rioting' took place in several different areas – in London, for example, major confrontations occurred in over twenty neighbourhoods. The police system of 'mutual aid', the sending of reinforcements to neighbouring forces, was in tatters, so widespread was the 'rioting'. No longer were the 'riots' happening in isolated pockets but in all the major inner city areas. No longer was it just the black youth, but black and white together, and in some areas the white youth alone.

The media and the government could not keep up with the events, except to condone any measures to end the 'riots'. In the *Observer*, regular columnist Alan Watkins wrote: 'For myself, I should support the shooting of petrol bombers on sight' (12.7.81). On Monday, 13 July, Whitelaw's speech to Tory backbenchers was leaked to the press. Army camps were to be prepared to hold convicted rioters; the police were to be equipped with armoured vehicles, and chief constables would be provided with CS gas, rubber bullets and water cannon. He also said the time had come for the police to take the 'offensive' on the streets, as Anderton had done in Moss Side, Manchester. This new policy was confirmed in the Commons on Thursday, 16 July.

At the same time Whitelaw announced two inquiries: one (to be conducted by the Northumbrian police) into the use of the CS gas cartridges in Toxteth; and the other (an internal police inquiry) following a large raid on eleven premises in Brixton on 15 July. One hundred plainclothes and uniformed officers had raided shops and homes in Railton Road, ostensibly looking for a petrol bomb factory, and had smashed in doors, wrecked shops and destroyed furniture on a large scale. No petrol bombs were found. Some Scotland Yard officers expressed surprise at the 'fuss', when more than seventy other police raids had already taken place in Brixton since the April 'riots' (*New Standard* 20.7.81). The response to this provocation was inevitable – the crowds took to the streets again and fought pitched battles with the police for several hours.

The new 'offensive' police tactics, driving vans at high speed at 'rioters', brought their own consequences. On the night of 28 July fresh 'rioting' broke out in Liverpool 8 and the police responded by using landrovers as a means of dispersing the crowds. The first casualty was a white youth, Paul Conroy, who had his back broken after being rammed against a wall by a police van (*Guardian* 29.7.81). The same evening a disabled white youth, David Moore, was run down by a police van and killed. The Liverpool 8 Defence Committee said: 'We regard this action as murder and hold Oxford [the Chief Constable of Merseyside] ultimately responsible' (*Guardian* 30.7.81). The case of Paul Conroy is to be 'investigated' – by the local police. The death of David Moore, together with allegations that a policeman slashed a man's penis with a machete, are to be 'investigated' by the Northumbrian police team.

Chief Constable Oxford, who has faced persistent criticism of his policies over the past three years, remained implacable in the face of the 'riots' and criticism from the local community and the local police authority. Margaret Simey, chairman of the Merseyside Police Committee, who has campaigned for

years for the police to be made accountable to the community, said of the people of Liverpool 8: 'The conditions are so bad that they ought to riot. When you have seen the background it becomes understandable ... There is social unrest in the area and I would regard the people as apathetic if they didn't riot' (*Guardian* 29.7.81).

Excerpted from the CARF sections of Searchlight

Over the period of the 'riots' the police resorted, when they could, to dispensing justice on the streets, to arbitrary arrest and in some cases mass arrest. By Tuesday, 14 July, the press reported that 1,000 people had been arrested; by 20 August, according to the Home Office, the figure had risen to 3,000.

Since the 'riots' committees have been set up in every city to defend and campaign for those arrested, and to expose the official version of events. In Brixton black community organisations, spearheaded by the umbrella organisation, Brixton Defence Campaign, have boycotted the Scarman inquiry, the only government inquiry to be set up. In Manchester, where a semi-official inquiry has been set up by the Greater Manchester Council, the Moss Side Defence Committee has campaigned vigorously for a boycott, on the grounds that police practices in Manchester are already well known, have been bitterly complained of for years by the black community, and that there is no point in further exposing the community to police retribution. Brief extracts from the documents of some of these committees are reproduced below.

The Brixton Defence Campaign says Boycott the Scarman Inquiry

The Brixton Defence Campaign calls for a total boycott of the state's inquiry into the Brixton Uprising of 10-13 April 1981 set up under the chairmanship of Lord Scarman with terms of reference: 'To inquire urgently into the serious disorders in Brixton on 10-12 April and to report, with the power to make recommendations.'

There is no escaping the fact that the Scarman Inquiry, but particularly Phase 1, *very seriously prejudices the legal position and therefore endangers the liberty of all defendants yet to be tried.*

Lord Scarman has seen fit to divide his inquiry into two phases: Phase I – Examining the 'immediate causes' of what happened in Brixton on 10-12 April 1981; Phase II – Assessing the 'underlying reasons, looking specially at the problems of policing multi-racial areas'.

Why do we say that Phase I is but a deadly weapon aimed at our hearts?

First: Because Lord Scarman himself had positively to agree, that Phase I will 'prejudice the rights of fair trial to those who have yet to come before the courts'. His promise to take evidence in such a way that individuals will not be named or identified cannot be carried out.

Second: What, it must be asked, are these 'immediate causes' into which Scarman is going to investigate so urgently in Phase I. It was the MP for Norwood (John Fraser) who said, quite correctly, that *the immediate causes of what happened in Brixton 'are well understood'.*

Third: Instead of looking at the real 'immediate cause' of the Brixton Uprising, Scarman will be seeking to give subtle legitimacy to the totally racist view – so dramatically put by Margaret Thatcher – that the Brixton Uprising was simply a confrontation between, on the one hand, fundamentally blameless forces of law and order, and, on the other, mainly black criminals!

The Brixton Defence Campaign is satisfied that Lord Scarman is disposed to be used by the state to provide it with a basis for re-writing the Riot Act and to provide justification for dramatically increasing repressiveness in policing methods which are already massively racist, lawless and brutal as well as substantially uncontrolled. In the past five years there have been repeated requests to the Home Secretary for a public inquiry into police brutality and malpractice. To none of these calls was there a positive response by the state.

There are no benefits to the black community to be derived from Phase II of Lord Scarman's inquiry. First, it is not aware that Lord Scarman has any expertise in the field of social policy and is not satisfied that even were he to have both the necessary expertise and sympathy that these would be sufficient given the other factors which apply. *Second*, there are no good reasons to hold that ignorance on the part of the state is a major cause/force determining the present direction of its policies in the field of housing, employment, education, etc. *Third*, the Campaign is satisfied particularly that where the black communities' grievances over the racist, brutal, lawless and uncontrolled policing methods used against them are concerned the state has no basis for even claiming to be ignorant. A mountain of evidence has been 'submitted' and ignored.

Liverpool 8 Defence Committee
Why Oxford must go

The call for the dismissal of the Chief Constable of Merseyside, Kenneth Gordon Oxford, has been made by the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee, the Liverpool Black Organisation and the Liverpool Trades Council, all of whom remain firmly convinced that he is the prime obstacle in the way of any constructive dialogue between the police and the community. Our specific reasons are as follows:

1. The responsibility for the fair and proper policing of any community lies with the Chief Constable. Oxford's own racism, combined with his belief that tough and repressive policing methods are the best way of keeping order, have resulted in excessive police harassment, especially of black people, which stretches back many years. Oxford must take the ultimate responsibility for this.

2. Oxford's own racism is an established fact. He is well-known for making derogatory and racist remarks about the Liverpool 8 community. Despite the fact that it has been pointed out to him time and time again that the term 'half-caste' is racist and insulting, he continues to use it in public and has even defended the use of the word. Oxford's own racism allows his officers to give expression to their racism and to indulge in the harassment of the black community. If the Chief Constable is a known racist, how can he be capable of stamping out racism in his own police force?

3. Oxford has shown himself to be incompetent as well as racist. His handling of the riots themselves led to a situation where he failed abysmally to maintain proper policing of the Lodge Lane area on the night of the 5/6 July 1981. His

decision to use CS gas was taken without first consulting the Home Secretary or the Chairman of the Police Committee. The gas was fired without any warning, and the kind used was specifically prohibited for use in crowd control.

4. The treatment of those arrested during and since the riots is appalling. There is evidence of police beatings, ill-treatment while in custody, refusal of bail, and denial of access of parents to their children. Many have been in custody – some in prison – for periods of 2/3 weeks. We demand an immediate investigation into the treatment of those arrested.

5. In the 3 weeks that have elapsed since the riots, young people have been stopped and searched for no reason at all, racially abused and frequently questioned about their movements during the weekend of the riots. Many have been arrested and charged. The continued harassment of people on the streets is creating further resentment and frustration, and is leading to a situation which is dangerously explosive.

6. Oxford has now invited representatives of community groups to meet with him on August 3rd. This is a last ditch stand to gain credibility with the community. Does Oxford now believe that he can engage in dialogue with a community that has been harassed by his police for many years and towards which he has shown himself to be racist? The Liverpool 8 Defence Committee, the Liverpool Black Organisation, and the Charles Wootton Centre will be boycotting the meeting and call upon other community groups to do likewise ...

25 July 1981

Hackney Legal Defence Committee

Defend our youth: Black youth took to the streets to defend our communities against police and racial violence. From Brixton to Toxteth, Moss Side to Southall black youth said: 'No more: enough is enough!'

In Hackney [East London] the black youth are taking the brunt of racial violence, unemployment, poor housing and mis-education. This situation has been aggravated under the present Tory rule. The numerous cases involving police harassment of the members of the black community in their homes, meeting places, schools and on the streets has now united the community to condemn these police actions. This is how we see the response of the youth and their actions as an *uprising*.

In Hackney on 10-11 July 1981, the uprising of the black youth led to over 100 arrests. We witnessed a military-type operation by the police who were drafted in in hundreds. The SPG led the baton charges and snatch operations which caused numerous bloody injuries.

Bradford

In July eleven young Asians, members of the United Black Youth League, were arrested and charged with conspiracy to cause damage by fire or explosion with intent to endanger lives, and conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm. (The seriousness of these charges stems from the discovery of a cache of petrol bombs six days after their arrest.) The following is an extract from the Bradford July 11th Action Committee defence statement.

Free Our Brothers Now! Framed by the police. Charged with conspiracy. Facing life imprisonment.

Our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers are attacked and murdered in the streets. The police do nothing. Our homes and places of worship are burned to the ground. Nobody is arrested. Families are burned to death. The murderers and fire bombers speak openly of their organised violence against our communities. They are not charged with conspiracy. The politicians and police have failed us. Our youth are our only protection. These young men defended Anwar Ditta, Jaswinder Kaur and many others. Now they have been taken from us. We must not fail them. We must fight to bring them back. They have defended our community. We must now defend them.

Background – British racism

Our documentation would be incomplete if we were only to record the immediate events of the July 'riots'. For the past ten years, the Institute of Race Relations has monitored and documented the extent and incidence of racism in Britain. As background we give below excerpts from anti-racist and anti-fascist publications, including our own submission to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure. These show how black people are attacked, are criminalised and are rendered second-class citizens. For a fuller account readers are urged to refer to the original sources.

Racial violence

From the murder of Charles Wootton in Liverpool in 1919 to the burning of families in New Cross, Walthamstow and Leeds this year, black people have had to contend with racial violence. Since 1976 at least nine Asians have been stabbed to death in the streets. In Leamington Spa, an elderly Asian woman died after racists poured petrol over her and set her sari alight. In London, at least four West Indians have been killed in racist attacks and a Zimbabwean student, stabbed in the back at a bus stop, died instantly. In Manchester, a group of young boys were idly throwing apple cores at passing cars when a driver gave chase and stabbed one black boy to death.

In Britain, black places of worship, black shops, black centres are targets for brutal attack, vandalism and fascist daubings. Nor is there safety inside the house – bricks may be thrown through windows and burning petrol-soaked rags pushed through letter-boxes. Day in, day out black people, young and old, men and women, are subjected to abuse and assault. Yet, by and large, this violence, even arson and murder, goes unreported, except at the local level – and not always then. Therefore, each month, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF) publishes in *Searchlight* documentation on the extent of racial violence. Reproduced below are three such items: a shortened version of one month's listing of violent attacks; documentation on racist murders; and documentation on arson attacks.

Racial attacks

Leeds: A National Front sympathiser was jailed for 12 months for an attack on a black youth. Another received 3 months at a detention centre for the same offence. (*Telegraph & Argus* 23.1.81)

East Ham, London: Three youths attacked and kicked unconscious a black schoolboy and insulted his white girlfriend. The schoolboy was taken to hospital with a suspected fractured skull, but was discharged 3 days later after receiving stitches to a cut in his mouth. A few days later in the same area a black couple were beaten up by a gang of skinheads. (*Newham Recorder* 12.2.81, 19.2.81)

New Cross, London: A Mauritian man received a broken arm and minor facial injuries when several youths attacked him with a long piece of wood outside his home. (*South London Press* 23.1.81)

Stafford: Racist slogans and the words National Front were sprayed on the walls of the New Testament Church of God. (*Stafford Newsletter* 19.2.81)

Brighton: A 'race-hate' campaign over a number of years has forced a black family to put their house up for sale. Windows have been smashed, racist messages left and burning paper pushed through the letter-box. (*Evening Argus* 4.2.81)

Enfield: Local anti-racists have spoken out against the increase in attacks on black families in the area. Physical assaults, stone throwing and racist phone calls have been reported. (*Enfield Gazette & Observer* 12.2.81)

Winsford: Winsford – described as Cheshire's top recruiting town for the NF – is also the scene of increasing attacks on Asians and their property. Several shop windows have been smashed and NF posters left on the scene. Local NF organiser John Green said: 'People didn't like these coloured immigrants coming in one little bit.' (*Winsford Chronicle* 29.1.81)

Borehamwood: A Labour councillor has expressed concern about racial attacks on black families in Borehamwood and local youth workers are fighting to counter racism among young people in the town and their recruitment by British Movement and NF groups. Chief Superintendent Ronald Terrington said that the relatively few incidents had been properly investigated. 'I would say that Hertsmere and Borehamwood remain a nice part in which to reside.' (*Borehamwood, Elstree & Edgware Post* 23.1.81, 5.2.81)

Aldershot: 'Why should I need barbed wire in a free country?', inquired an Indian father bitterly. His family fear they may become the next victims in a series of arson attacks on black homes in Aldershot. Twelve attacks have been reported in the last 18 months, but many other incidents apparently go unreported through a sense of futility at the frequency and widespread nature of the attacks. (*Aldershot News* 12.2.81)

East London: A study centred on London's East End by the Policy Studies Institute has noted that racism and acute waves of vandalism have made some ter-

rified families impose their own dusk to dawn curfew. (*East London & Hackney Advertiser* 23.1.81)

Excerpted from the CARF section of Searchlight *(April 1981)*

Reporting racist murders

CARF knows that many black murders are not treated by the police as having a racist motive. Recent experience has shown that the police admit to a 'racial murder' only when the racial strife of an area is overtly proven in running street battles or 'riots'. Thus Fenton Ogbogbo, killed on 20 June 1981, was a victim of a racist attack because a few miles away black youths were battling with police outside Peckham Rye Fair in London. But when Famous Mgutshini was stabbed to death outside Liverpool Street Station, the police denied a racial motive by calling his assailant mentally unstable. The victim's family were encouraged not to make a fuss but to remove their son's body as quickly as possible to Zimbabwe for burial. Only one paper (a black one), apart from ourselves, reported on this murder.

That the police are often the sole source of such information for newspapers, and therefore initially control the coverage (or lack of it), is also worrying. An *Observer* reporter, forced to defend the paper's omission of Miam Azim's murder in South London, explained that they depended on police sources for information on murders.

And the over-riding impression one gets from an analysis of press reporting of murders of black people is that they are simply not considered newsworthy. The murder of Mohammad Arif was only mentioned obliquely in a 400-word article in the *Burnley Evening Star* which concentrated on Asian community leaders' appeals for calm. The killing of Sewa Singh Sunder in Windsor on 1 January 1980 did not come to our attention until the local press reported on the court proceedings some nine months later. The killing of Malcolm Chambers in Swindon this year did not figure in the national press.

How many similar cases there have been is hard to assess, but it is clear that without community vigilance and protest we might well have not heard of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, of Altab Ali and Michael Fereira, of Akhtar Ali Baig and Satnam Singh Gill, or of the other twenty-six black people known to have been the victims of racial murder in the last five years.

Excerpted from the CARF section of Searchlight *(August 1981)*

Deptford fire

On 18 January 1981 fire swept through the home of a West Indian family in Deptford, South London. A birthday party was being held at the time; 13 young people died. There had been other attacks on black homes in the locality, and a black community centre had been deliberately burnt down, but this incident was the most devastating. After three months of police investigations, which clearly aimed at tracing the cause of the fire to the party-goers themselves, rejected the possibility of a racial motive for the crime and played down supporting evidence, anger in the black community reached massive proportions. And on Monday, 2 March 1981, over 10,000 black people, many of them young, mounted a Black Day of Action. They marched the 10 miles from

Deptford to Central London, demanding justice for black people and an end to racist murders and protesting against police conduct of the inquiry into the fire and media indifference to the mass murder. (After the march, the 'policing' of black areas in South London, especially Brixton, became noticeably intensified.)

The inquest that was subsequently held was criticised by a High Court Judge for a 'serious irregularity' in its conduct. Nonetheless, it could not conceal, despite the weight which the Coroner gave to the police version of the events, both the methods which the police had used to pressurise black witnesses and slant the investigation, and the intense anger felt by the bereaved families, as well as the black community at large, at what they were convinced was a cover up. The inquest returned an open verdict, and no one has ever been charged with the crime.

Terrible as the Deptford fire was, it was not an isolated occurrence. By September of this year arson attacks had become so frequent that *Searchlight* had regularly to devote space to listing these alone. Here are but a few.

Leeds: A disabled Sikh woman was burnt to death and her house gutted by fire in Chapeltown, Leeds. Her husband, Mr Poran Singh, saw something burning coming through the window and smash on the opposite wall. It dropped on to the settee his wife was sleeping on, which caught fire. Attempts to rescue her failed. A neighbour, Mr Reg Dixon, confirmed that he saw 'something fly through the air, with a flash of light' and he heard a window break.

However, police are saying that 'there are no suspicious circumstances' and that the cause of the fire is unknown. Mr Singh stated that when he was being questioned, police insisted he was lying. (*Leeds Other Paper* 24.7.81)

Ilford: A gang of 5 skinheads threw a fire bomb at the home of the Patel family late at night. Neighbours saw the gang produce a Coke bottle full of petrol, light a fuse and then throw it at a window. Luckily it missed the Patel's kitchen window by inches and exploded on to the outside wall. (*Ilford & Redbridge Post* 8.7.81)

Bolton: A petrol bomb was thrown through Mr Dilip Myangar's shop window in the early hours of 14 July. A fire in the off-licence section was quickly put out. Petrol was also poured through a letter-box and ignited at another Asian-owned shop in Bolton. The owner, who did not want to be named, said he came down when he heard a strange noise to find the door in flames. (*Bolton Evening News* 14.7.81)

Reading: A West Indian family in Tilehurst, Reading, has had two petrol bombs thrown at their house. Both bombs landed in the garden and one caused serious damage. This is not the first attack. During the last year windows have been broken and National Front stickers left on others. (*Reading Evening Post* 23.7.81)

London: Reports have reached us of a fire attack on an Asian Women's Centre in London. The attack was similar to the attack in Walthamstow (see below). Inflammable liquid was poured through the letter-box in the early hours of the morning when all residents were in bed. Fortunately, an alarm alerted the occupants to the fire and no one was killed or injured.

Walthamstow: At 3am on 2 July Mrs Parveen Khan and her three children were murdered when petrol was poured through the letter-box of their Walthamstow home and set alight. The local warning signs had been there. An increase in harassment – paki-bashing, the daubing of a school and a synagogue, bricks through windows and the firebombing of the local community relations council building. Yet for 36 hours after the murders Scotland Yard refused to accept there were any 'suspicious circumstances'. They said it started in a front bedroom, probably caused by an electrical fault. Firemen were certain the inferno began in the hallway.

When the murder investigation finally began, the police considered a 'racist motive' to be one of several 'possible lines of inquiry'. Since the murder, other arson attempts have emerged – for example, a lighted petrol-soaked rag was put through the letter-box of a West Indian family in Chingford, Essex.

Almost 3,000 police came into Waltham Forest on the day of the Khan's funeral, 11 July, although the funeral procession and protest march had been banned. There were 36 arrests and 10 windows broken. Yet the *Sunday Mirror* managed to describe it as turning into 'a bloody riot'.

The comparison with the Deptford coverage is all too easy to make – 10 broken windows got more prominence than the murder of 4 black people.

Excerpted from the CARF section of Searchlight *(September 1981)*

In the face of such onslaughts, and the failure of the forces of law to prevent them, to protect the victims, or bring their assailants to book, black communities have perforce had to defend themselves. Invariably, the mass media have portrayed such initiatives as the setting up of lawless vigilante groups. The following extracts are from a talk given by A. Sivanandan at the Institute of Race Relations in 1979.

The case for self-defence

No community should have to defend itself. That, in a democracy, is the function of the forces of law and order. But when those self-same forces have repeatedly and over a period of time shown, beyond *any* reasonable doubt, that they are unable to protect that community, that inability becomes a refusal. If then such a denial of the right to be protected is upheld by judicial decision (or indecision), compounded by bad law and justified by the media (if only by default), such a community is reduced to one of two choices. It can either submit to indignity, harassment, brutalisation and even murder or it can defend itself. It is a choice or rather a 'choicelessness' which no society which prides itself on being free should visit on its citizens, let alone whole communities. For, in the final analysis, the measure of a free society is in the range of *effective* choices it makes available to its peoples, irrespective of class, colour or creed.

The black community is a community under attack and, increasingly, a community without redress. The debates on race relations and immigration, whether in parliament or in the mass media, have from the beginning been couched in racialist terms – the legislation itself sanctifies and legitimises

racialism and it finds echo in the overt violence of the streets. There is no room here to convince the liberal or the sceptic through massive documentation that such violence is neither 'isolated' nor 'superficial'. That it has become a way of life for many black people is well documented.

* * *

Case after case shows that the police are not interested in providing protection, that they are unwilling to take witnesses' statements, that they are not concerned with arresting attackers, that they prefer to recommend to victims that they themselves apprehend their assailants and/or take out private summonses. More often than not the police do not treat attacks as a priority – they arrive many hours after a phone call about an attack – certainly long enough for the assailants to have left the scene.

Black self-defence – a term which has recently been co-opted and advocated by the white left – has emotive and contentious connotations for those who do not appreciate either what it means or the fact that it is forced upon the black community. Firstly, self-defence of a community does not mean mounting 'vigilante' groups, inflicting random and racially motivated revenge attacks on the host community or 'taking the law into one's own hands'. Racial violence can in no way be equated with black self-defence. For it involves the patrolling of areas by members of the community to allow its children to return unmolested from school, its workers to reach home unharmed, its youth to walk the streets without fear, its houses and businesses to withstand vandalism. Communities are being forced to adopt self-defence to restore those rights which are taken for granted by every member of the white population.

Secondly, unlike other forms of community control, black self-defence does not signify a 'no-go area' for the forces of law and order, but rather – like the defence the Jewish community mounted against fascist attacks some forty years earlier – reflects the fact that the forces of law and order do not operate for them. To counsel the black community to 'keep calm' or to 'ignore fascists', in a mistaken hope that racism or fascism will go away of their own accord, ignores the experience of communities that find daily life increasingly unbearable and is certainly belied by history, which shows such counsel leading to the gas chambers.

The Virk brothers' case* has raised fundamental issues in the relationship of the state and black self-defence. The case epitomises the negative role that the police can play in investigating cases of racial attack. The officers apprehended those who had in fact been forced to defend themselves in a street attack. Judge Argyle accepted the police version of events and sentenced the brothers to prison. He went one step further; he deemed as 'irrelevant' the introduction of 'racial prejudice' by the defence and reprimanded them for enquiring whether

*In April 1977 four Asian brothers were attacked by a gang of white youths while repairing their car outside their house in East London. The brothers used tools lying at hand to defend themselves from the attackers. One brother went to call the police. When the police arrived, they arrested the victims of the attack and let the whites go free. Judge Argyle sentenced the Virk brothers to 3 months, 2 years, 3 years and 7 years imprisonment.

the white attackers were members of the National Front. When judges unquestioningly accept police versions of events, turn a blind eye to the racial dimensions of a case and even accuse black defendants of introducing racial issues where there are none, justice is not only not done, but is no longer seen to be done.

In the face of such a massive onslaught from the fascists, the police, the politicians, the press, the judges and the law, the black community must perforce defend itself. But in so doing, it raises questions not of civil rights and liberties per se but of their function in informing and cohering a free society. Thrown back on itself, it throws us back on first principles. Where is the justice in a law that ordains some of us inferior? How effective in fact is a law that is enforced lawlessly? Should a free press be free of social responsibility? What is this freedom of speech which exhorts to kill ('One down, a million to go') and encourages to harass (being 'rather swamped by an alien culture')? Of what use is it, if it takes precedence over the first freedom – the freedom to life?

CARF Collective

Police

> If, as our researches show, Britain is moving towards 'two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal', the police will have had no small part to play in that polarisation ... Popular morality has come to define black people out of society as 'an alien wedge' or as 'swamping' British culture, and the police no longer just reflect or reinforce that morality: they re-create it – through stereotyping the black section of society as muggers and criminals and illegal immigrants. Deriving their sanction from popular morality they are now become the arbiters of that morality ...

Central not only to this issue of *Race & Class* but to the work of the Institute of Race Relations as a whole over the past years has been the monitoring of police practice vis-à-vis the black community. It is not possible here to summarise effectively the scope of that work, but some indication of it can be given. Two years ago, the IRR was invited to submit evidence to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, which had been set up to look into criminal procedure and determine whether or not police powers should be extended. The IRR evidence was published under the title *Police against black people*. Drawing on the case files of solicitors, barristers and law centres, on press reports, on black and minority journals, on the research of other concerned bodies and on personal interviews, it documented over 150 cases of police malpractice towards black people, involving the persistent abuse of black citizens, and the denial of their basic civil rights from the point of being stopped on the street to the granting of bail. It found that the type of extension and ratification of powers the police were demanding were already in use against the black community, and should be opposed.

Analysis of the cases showed a clear and consistent pattern, not only of police failure and refusal to protect the black community from racist attacks – something of this will have already been gleaned from the preceding section on racial violence – but of their use of criminal procedure and policing tactics in the systematic harassment of the black community. The strategies used to

police Britain's inner cities have been documented in Tony Bunyan's article in this issue. What *Police against black people* demonstrated was that the police concentrated their forces in black localities, that black events and festivals (such as the Notting Hill Carnival) have in recent years been oppressively overmanned and that black meeting places – cafés, clubs, community centres – are time and again the targets for large police raids, often on flimsy pretexts, particularly if those centres had become a focus and meeting place for black political activity. One such example is that of the Mangrove Restaurant in West London, which from 1969 onwards has been the subject of repeated raids. Pretexts such as suspicion of drugs, contravention of public health, fire or licensing regulations have been used against the Mangrove. Similar tactics were also used against the restaurants in Brick Lane, East London, in which the Bengali youth met when they were involved in organising the defence of their community against a spate of racist attacks.

Or take the events surrounding the Notting Hill Carnival in 1976, which, as the pamphlet demonstrates, provide a clear example of the ways in which police methods can be used to harass not only individuals, but a whole community. Earlier carnivals had, despite high attendance, been relatively peaceful affairs – the police had kept a low profile. In 1976, however, Carnival became a political issue; the police joined with borough councillors, who in turn mobilised local white residents under the slogan 'Get carnival off the streets'. The Home Secretary was called on to ban the event. The move failed and the subsequent huge police presence at the Carnival was seen by some as an attempt to intimidate the black community. Street battles broke out between police and black youths, with the police using dust-bin lids as riot shields. The organisers of Carnival, the Notting Hill Carnival Development Committee, accused the police of provocation, pointing to Carnival's peaceful history, claiming that the 'unnecessary army of policemen instilled fear in the revellers' and caused 'loss of psychological advantage in not leaving the Committee's own stewards to control the crowds'.

Following the Carnival, police went on what the black community could only regard as a revenge raid. Eighteen youths from Islington were arrested on a total of 90 charges, including the catch-all charge of conspiracy (to steal at the Carnival). So violent was the manner of the arrests and the conduct of the police in the police station, that an independent Labour Movement Enquiry was held into the affair. Its report was published under the title *Under Heavy Manners, the Labour Movement Enquiry into police brutality and the position of black youth in Islington, held on Saturday, July 23, 1977.* What emerged most clearly was that this police action was aimed at teaching the black youth of Islington a lesson – the fact that the accused youth were convicted on only eight of the 90 charges brought by the police goes some way to justify the charge of 'heavy manners' on the part of the police. In many ways, what happened during and after the 1976 Carnival was a premonition of the later 'riots', first in Bristol and then throughout the country.

The use of specific statutes to criminalise the black community – designated in the pamphlet as 'Sus 1' and 'Sus 2' – has already been described by Louis Kushnick and the use of squads, such as the Special Patrol Group, has been described and analysed by Tony Bunyan and Louis Kushnick. There is, however, another special Scotland Yard squad whose operations directly affect the black community, the Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit (IIIU). Set up

by the Home Office before even the 1971 Immigration Act had become law, its purpose was to coordinate information on a nation-wide basis on 'suspected' illegal entrants. Since its formation the IIIU is known to have directly organised several 'passport' raids on black communities in different parts of the country and to have supplied information to local police forces. Few illegal immigrants have been discovered, but many black people have been subjected to detention and harassment. Among known examples there were two mass passport raids in London in 1973, a series of raids in East and South-east London in 1975 and 1976, and a mass raid on the Bengali community in Newcastle in 1977; while in 1980, three major raids are known to have been carried out – against staff of the London Hilton hotel, against staff and customers of a chain of West London shops, and against staff at the Main Gas factory in North London.

The continual use of such methods, so indiscriminately and on such a wide scale, can only mean that the black community as a whole is suspect in the eyes of the police. Through the use of wide-scale swoops they can collect a mass of information on the community at large. Thus such methods become one means by which the community is kept under surveillance. For example, following a stabbing in Acton, West London, in 1978, a police operation was mounted in which numerous West Indian households were raided. Yet how could the police distinguish so precisely beforehand which were black households, except by drawing on files of information built up previously on the community?

Information gathering and collating on a mass scale is integral to the work of the IIIU, which is engaged in building up lists of names of those it *suspects* are illegal immigrants and overstayers. It has been estimated that as of January 1979 the names of some 15,700 'suspected' illegal entrants were held on the Home Office computer.

No wonder, then, that the evidence submitted to the Royal Commission by the IRR discerned a 'consistent pattern of police suspicion against and general harassment of black communities throughout the country'.

> The police have become suspect in the black community because of a clear pattern of repeated raids on the same locality, the calling of reinforcements out of all proportion to the situation and a tendency towards revenge or punitive action against individuals or groups for other activities.

Nor was the IRR alone in perceiving this to be the nature of police practice towards the black community. At the time its evidence stated: 'From all over Britain – from Handsworth in Birmingham, from Wolverhampton, Cardiff, Brixton, Lewisham, Islington, Waltham Forest – we have received reports on police excesses and harassment on a community-wide scale.'

Since then, there have been other reports and other enquiries. In early 1979, Lewisham community relations council was so disturbed by the implications of one case – involving 19 black youths who had been charged and tried for conspiracy to rob, the police case being based on secretly taken video film of the youths hanging around near a particular bus stop – that they published a full report on it. In 1979, South Yorkshire County Council began an enquiry into relations between police and public which paid substantial attention to relations between the police and the black community. There was an independent enquiry into the events in Southall on April 23, 1979 (see below), which called for a public enquiry into the role and operation of the SPG and similar forces. Again, in 1979, Lambeth Borough Council (which covers Brixton) set up a

working party on community police relations in the borough. It produced a slamming indictment of police practice in the borough only weeks before the Brixton 'riots' of April 1981. It, like earlier reports, was ignored by police. Local monitoring groups were established in Southall by the local law centre and in Hackney, London, by the local community relations council. Since the Labour victory in the Greater London Council elections in 1981, the GLC has set up a London-wide committee to monitor the police, and particularly police treatment of black people and racial harassment.

'Policing against the community' was how the IRR encapsulated this section of its evidence. 'Not policing for the community' was the term used to describe, at best, police failure to protect the black community from racial attacks and incursions and, at worst, police refusal to undertake that protection. Following a spate of racist attacks in the East End of London, for example, the local Bengali community undertook its own self-defence – bringing further reprisals against it from the police. The murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar by a gang of white youths in Southall in June 1976 (referred to in a speech by one racist demagogue as 'one down, one million to go') was followed by the ad hoc formation of defence groups and by a mass militant protest on the part of the local community, demanding an end to racist violence and calling for adequate police protection. At one point the marchers surrounded the local police station en masse until two of their number, who had earlier been picked up on the march, were released.

The police have combined heavy protection of provocative racist marches and election rallies, held in the heart of black localities, with oppressive tactics against local communities who have attempted to oppose such incursions. The most famous example is that of Southall, where, on 23 April 1979, nearly 3,000 police, including SPG units, with horses, dogs and riot shields, massed to 'protect' around 50 National Front supporters at an election meeting in the local town hall. Protesters who attempted to demonstrate outside the town hall were forced back by police, crowds were dispersed into side streets with extreme violence, the town centre itself was cordoned off for many hours, local residents were trapped between tight police cordons and the local law centre was sealed off. One demonstrator, Blair Peach, was killed by police using unauthorised weapons; over 340 people, mostly local residents, were arrested; many hundreds were injured, and community premises were entered at will and severely damaged.

The events of 23 April took place after the IRR's evidence was published, but the sentiment of one community leader – who felt that he had witnessed a police state in operation – bore out the IRR's earlier conclusion that:

> ... if black people are, of themselves, suspect in the eyes of the police, it is not less true that the police are suspect in the eyes of black people ... It is precisely because the role of the police in the colonies was that of an occupying force – and not that of the 'friendly bobby' – that the traditional 'immigrant' view of the police is one of distrust. The reasons are historical rather than social or cultural. The first experience of a police force that the colonies ever had was that of the British police force – and it is that force's colonial tradition which still persists among the indigenous police even after independence. To continue that same policing tradition in the black ghettos of our inner cities is not to win black people over to 'the traditional English

view' of the police but to confirm them in their traditional view of the English police – as a police against the people.

Based on Police against black people (*London, 1979*)

Second-class citizenship

Yet the police and policing methods should not be viewed in isolation. For in the last year or two, the processes whereby racism has been institutionalised in legislation and government policy (from 1962 onwards) have culminated in what can only be described as moves towards 'induced repatriation', on the one hand, and a pass law society, on the other.

Immigration law, from being a system of external control, draconian in its severity, has become additionally a means of maintaining internal control: the administrative basis for what is tantamount to a pass law society. And the tortuous provisions of the new Nationality Law, the latest in this line of legislative enactments, have finally set the seal on this, have brought immigration law within doors as it were.

'Induced repatriation'

> The whole system of immigration control is based upon discrimination. It is the essence of the Immigration Act that people will be discriminated against on the grounds of race or nationality and it is the function of certain officials to ensure that the discrimination is effective [Admission from a Home Office lawyer][1]

Now that black immigration has virtually ceased, immigration laws and policy have become a device for harassing the settled black population, as well as a means through which black people are 'encouraged' to return home. For, by the term 'induced repatriation', we mean all those measures whose effect is to make life untenable for black people in Britain.[2] Witness the efforts made under the Immigration Rules to keep families apart – by attempting to prove that black children are not their parents' true offspring, that wives are not legally married to their husbands, that children are over age and therefore cannot join their parents.

Increasingly, where black people are concerned, other legislation is interpreted in the spirit and in the light of immigration law. Look, for example, at how some local authorities have carried out their statutory duties under the Homeless Persons Act, when black families are involved. Last year Ealing Council refused to rehouse an evicted man and his two children who had lived in England for several years on the grounds that he had a part share in a house in India. Another local authority, Hillingdon, has made headline news by 'dumping' a newly arrived refugee black family on the steps of the Foreign Office, while continuing to house without fuss newly arrived white immigrants from Zimbabwe. In a more recent case, one black man, who came to Britain 15 years ago and whose wife and children were finally allowed to enter (after a six year delay) in 1980, was evicted by his landlord. On applying for council housing as a homeless family, he was told by the local authority (Hillingdon again) that he was not eligible. The courts ruled that because there was a house in

Bangla Desh the family could go to, they were not homeless and therefore the Act did not apply.

Or take entitlement to social security benefits. Recent changes under Immigration Rules and the new Social Security Act have removed the responsibility for the state to provide for the dependants of black families. A person applying for family members to join him or her must 'be able to maintain and accommodate his dependants without recourse to public funds'. And the Social Security Act states that once this undertaking has been given that person shall be liable to maintain his or her dependants indefinitely.

The rights of black families – to social and welfare benefits, to treatment under the national health service, even to educational provision for their children – are constantly called into question. In any and every encounter with officialdom, they will have to prove their entitlement, in a way that simply does not obtain for white people. Thus, in October 1979 the Department of Health and Social Security sent a circular entitled 'Gatecrashers' to Area Health Authorities in London encouraging passport checks on black people when applying for treatment. Now the government has plans to charge 'foreigners' for treatment under the National Health Service, and of course this will mean that all 'foreign'-looking people will be liable to checks.

This holds true for job applications as well. A black applicant for a job as sorter at a Birmingham post office was asked for his passport, and when he complained to an Industrial Tribunal that this constituted discrimination under the Race Relations Act, he was told that such checking was not discriminatory, a view since endorsed by government statements.

Towards a pass law society

Since, in British thinking, all black people are immigrants and some of them are illegal, the only thing to do is suspect the lot. What this means in practice is that black people may be called on at any time to prove their right to be in Britain – we have already noted in the earlier section the type of mass passport raids that go on – despite frequent official denials. And despite a review of procedures in December 1980, the raids continue. In the same month a large number of hotel workers in London were rounded up and detained. One of those held, a Filipino worker, said 'They tell you to give your passport over but won't give it back until you leave the country! One waiter from St James Hotel was told to pick up his passport at Heathrow.'[3]

But perhaps even more sinister, because more insidious, is the way in which black people not only have to prove to the police their right to be in Britain in the first place, but have to go on proving it to every agency of the state, to every NHS doctor or dentist, to every social security clerk, to every hospital receptionist. And such agencies can and do make their suspicions and information about their 'clients' known to the police and Home Office. In one case a Moroccan woman marrying an English man at a registry office was reported by the registrar to the Home Office and was arrested on the spot as a suspected illegal immigrant, which she was not. In another case a Cypriot woman attending St Bartholomews hospital was reported by a hospital clerk to the Department of Health and Social Security, which in turn checked her status with the Home Office and passed on details of the woman's next appointment and home address.

*New Nationality Act**

It had been hoped that the new Nationality Act would at least clarify the rights of all people in Britain, black and white – that is, after all, what one would expect from a law whose ostensible purpose is to define citizenship. But the new legislation before Parliament does not say anything about the rights of citizenship – the right to vote, to receive welfare benefits, education, housing, health provisions – and says little about the duties of such citizenship. All that is left vague, open to the discretion of future governments and future Home Secretaries. (And we have already seen something of how such discretion has operated in the past vis-à-vis black people.) The only clues to the new law's implications in this area are to be found in the White Paper, which states 'British citizenship will make available a ready definition by which duties or entitlement may be redefined in the future.' The key word here is *redefined*. What the Nationality Law does, in the complexity of status it sets out for non-white people, is to provide a base from which both administrative practice and future legislation can spring to erode further the position of those who are not deemed full citizens, and to bind in even greater intricacies of bureaucratic harassment those who are.

It is not intended here to go into the detailed provisions of the law – for that the reader is referred to the CARF section of *Searchlight*, Summer 1980, and to the publications of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.[4] But what is clear from an examination of the provisions is that the law – vague about citizenship per se – is extremely precise about who is to be excluded from that citizenship, while still leaving great discretionary powers in the hands of the Home Secretary. Within itself it embodies, regularises and codifies the discriminatory essence of all the Immigration Acts from 1962 to 1971. It becomes the discriminatory mechanism par excellence. In sum, what we are left with is an Immigration Act masquerading as a Nationality Act; an Immigration Act which, because of that masquerade, has jurisdiction not only over the right of black people to enter Britain, but over the rights of black people resident in Britain. The circle is complete.

CARF Collective

References

1 Quoted in the *Guardian* (3 October 1980).
2 A. Sivanandan, *From immigration control to 'induced repatriation'* (London, Race & Class pamphlet no. 5, 1978).
3 Quoted in *Time Out* (12 December 1980).
4 *Searchlight* is available from 37B New Cavendish Street, London W1M 8JR; JCWI's address is 44 Theobald's Road, London WC1.

**At the time of writing the Bill is in the final stages of its passage.*

Six centuries of revolt and repression

There are three things of such a sort
That they produce merciless destruction
When they get the upper hand:
One is a flood of water,
Another is a raging fire
And the third is the lesser people,
The common multitude;
For they will not be stopped
Either by reason or by discipline.[1]

Riot and revolt has been, for the past six centuries, a traditional way of expressing and redressing the grievances of the poor and powerless – a method of last resort, after petitions and pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

It was the rise of the money economy, leading to the spread of wage labour and rising rent and food prices, which caused revolt in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Minor rebellions among villeins, artisans and peasants in the 1350s to 1370s led to the passing of an Act in 1361 which empowered justices to demand sureties for good behaviour from riotous and tumultuous persons,[2] and an Act of 1379 which allowed the arrest of rioters and their removal to jail pending the arrival of a justice.

Then, in 1381, came the Peasants' Revolt – triggered by excessive taxation, but also a revolt against serfdom – when, in less than two weeks, 60,000 men from Kent and Essex swept through Kent, besieging and taking castles on the way, to London, where they threw open prisons, destroyed palaces and lawyers' chambers and beheaded hundreds of nobles, lawyers and churchmen. Hertfordshire, Surrey, the West Country and East Anglia were also on the verge of revolution. In Suffolk 10,000 men burned and looted the property of the rich, and in Bury the Chief Justice of the King's Bench and the prior were beheaded. Five hundred Essex rebels were killed in pitched battle with the army of Londoners the King had raised to quell the revolt, and 500 more were spared in exchange for information about the ringleaders. The trial began two days after Wat Tyler's killing by the Mayor of London. The King, 14-year-old Richard II, told a Royal Commission to 'punish everyone who presumes to make riots by ... beheading or mutilation of limbs as seems to you most expeditious and sensible'[3] and issued an indemnity for all those who had killed rioters without due process of law. All agreements made with rioters were declared void; to begin a riot was declared treason. A further Act of 1394 empowered sheriffs to call out a posse – the 'posse comitatum' or Power of the County – composed of all yeomen, to deal with 'assemblies, riots or rumours'; all were obliged to respond to the call to arms.

In response to further outbreaks of riots, this time against enclosure, Henry V passed a Riot Act in 1414 which imposed imprisonment 'for one whole year' on those engaged in great and heinous riots; for petty riots, the punishment was at the justices' discretion. Henry VI, went further, when, in 1450, a large anti-enclosure revolt broke out in Kent, with Jack Cade at its head. Not content with Cade's death, Henry had him attainted for treason posthumously, declaring him 'the most abominable tyrant, horrible, odious and errant false traitor'.[4]

Two more Riot Acts were passed by Henry VII in 1495 and 1503 in response to a wave of anti-tax riots. The Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536, a peaceful but huge march on York in protest at the dissolution of the monasteries, and subsequent enclosure of their lands, led to the imposition of martial law and the execution of 200 participants. In 1549 Cornwall and Devon rose for the same reason. With local yeomen refusing call-up and Exeter besieged by the rebels, an army of 8,000 royal troops and 300 mercenaries was brought in and 4,000 rebels killed. In the same year Norwich was taken and held for four weeks by 16,000 labourers protesting at the failure of local justices to prevent enclosures. Italian mercenaries were brought in and the city retaken, with 3,000 deaths among the rebels. A further forty-nine of them were executed, and those local people who had refused to be enlisted had their names noted, to be dealt with later. By the Riot Act of that year, anyone who did not disperse within an hour of the reading of the official proclamation or who continued to destroy fences, barns, hayricks or buildings was declared a felon without benefit of clergy, the penalty for which was death. The Act was re-enacted in 1553 by Queen Mary, and by Queen Elizabeth in 1558.

Unemployment, vagrancy and continued anti-enclosure riots led to more varied responses in the second half of the sixteenth century. In 1576 a job creation scheme was devised whereby yarn would be brought to the unemployed for spinning, 'to the intent that youth may be accustomed and brought up in labour and work, and then not like to grow to be idle rogues'.[5] Measures were introduced to keep corn prices down, but to no avail, and widespread food rioting in the 1590s led to more repression: vagabonds were to be whipped and sent home and in 1601 the death penalty was imposed for burning corn or demanding corn or money with menaces.

After the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, rebellions and agitations by the Jacobites in support of the Pretenders to the throne led to the suspension of habeas corpus eleven times between 1688 and 1746, and to the re-enactment of the Riot Act in 1714 in a new form, which included an indemnity for law officers if rioters were killed or injured while being dispersed. The Act was never liked and led to all kinds of confusion. Despite the indemnity, magistrates were tried for murder three times during the century, and were never certain of their powers. They were reluctant to call in the troops, for the army was hated and many felt its presence provoked more trouble. Often they could not be heard reading the proclamation, and, in any case, their constables were frequently at the forefront of the rioters. But the Riot Act was in constant use throughout the turbulent eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when riots were endemic – against rising food prices; against the second and far more sweeping enclosure movement; against turnpikes and tollgates and press gangs and the introduction of machinery. London suffered mini-riots on almost every public occasion; elections, fairs, executions were accompanied by window-smashing and looting by the poor, who were able to disappear speedily into the maze-like back alleys which were 'no-go' areas for gentlemen and troops alike.

Many riots were, however, far more serious. Large-scale turnpike riots led to three Acts between 1727 and 1734 making the destruction of turnpikes and tollgates a capital offence. In 1736 large numbers of 'wicked, desperate and bloodthirsty persons of detestable principles'[6] seized and hanged Captain Porteous, who had fired on a crowd during the attempted execution of a smuggler – an Act rushed through parliament imposed the death penalty for all those

involved and all who were concealing them from justice. In 1756-7 troops were called out over a hundred times to deal with food riots among colliers and weavers in Leicester, Coventry, Nottingham, Derby, Sunderland, Leeds, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, Devon, Monmouth, Shropshire, Manchester, Liverpool and parts of southern England.

1768 saw riots among the sailors of the north-east, food riots in the east and south-east, and the Wilkes Riots in London, against George III's efforts to buy up parliament and stifle the opposition press. Benjamin Franklin, visiting London, looked on aghast at

> mobs patrolling the streets at noonday, some knocking all down that will not roar for Wilkes and Liberty ... coal-heavers pulling down the houses of merchants who refuse to give them more wages, sawyers destroying saw-mills, watermen ... threatening to pull down bridges, soldiers firing among the mobs killing men, women and children ... some punishment seems preparing for a people who are abusing the best constitution and the best king any nation was ever blessed with.[7]

The Massacre of St George's Fields, at which seven people were killed, provoked fury: 'By whose order were any of the military sent into these fields against an unarmed ... multitude, and by whose order were the soldiers to furnish themselves with ball ... we are not as yet under military government.'[8] Parliament retaliated with the Malicious Injury Act, creating new capital offences for rioters who pulled down buildings, mills and works.

The Gordon Riots of 1780 posed a greater threat to public order than anything that century. Starting off as anti-Catholic riots, they soon became anti-authority and anti-wealth, and in fifteen days over 100 houses were destroyed, six prisons fired and their inmates released, and damage done to the value of £100,000. The authorities feared outside agitators, 'led by either principle or interest, to wish for a general confusion in order to overthrow the government',[9] and suggestions were made for 'surgeons and nurses in the hospitals to converse with the wounded rioters in their care ... so as to trace the persons employed in convening, paying and directing the efforts of the mob'.[10] When magistrates refused to call in the troops, the King called them in himself. Opposition leaders accused him of deliberately fostering the riots as a pretext for imposing martial law. Troops killed 285 rioters and wounded 173 more; twenty-five were hanged for their involvement, and Acts were hurried through indemnifying those who had killed rioters.

Revolution in France provoked more repression in England, but did not stop the riots. In 1789 the Destruction of Property Act was passed against the wilful burning and destroying of ships, woollen, silk, linen and cotton goods or implements used in their manufacture, after a spate of 'collective bargaining by riot' among weavers, and mutiny in the navy. Mutinies and ship-breaking continued, culminating in the Mutiny on the Nore in 1797, when the Red Flag was flown and leaders threatened to hand over the fleet to the French. Inland, pro-Church and King riots against the revolutionists in 1790-91 soon gave way to anti-conscription riots, and in 1795 there were huge outbreaks of rioting over soaring prices.

At this time radical movements were growing. But the burgeoning Radical press was stamped on by a proclamation of 1792 against seditious publications; habeas corpus was suspended seven times between 1794 and 1800; a Treason

Act of 1795 forbade written or spoken criticism of parliament; Acts of the same year outlawed seditious meetings and interference with the passage of grain, and Acts of 1793 and 1797 imposed the death penalty for arson, mutiny and any contact with mutineers. An Act of 1798 required all newspapers to be registered and to pay a duty, putting many out of business and driving others underground. In 1799 a number of seditious organisations were banned, as were all combinations of workmen, and political 'agitators' were seized and charged with high treason. Superficial calm prevailed for a while.

However, in 1811-12 the widespread use of machinery in textiles, combined with the collapse of the export market and exceptionally high corn prices, reduced the weavers to misery and to riot. The Luddite riots swept Yorkshire, Nottingham, Cheshire, Lancashire, Staffordshire and Leicester: frames and looms were smashed, mills and factories damaged or destroyed; manufacturers who used power looms had their houses burned and some were killed. Twelve thousand troops were needed to quell the disturbances. Eight rioters were killed by troops, thirty were hanged and thirty-seven more transported. Acts of 1812 imposed the death penalty for the destruction of stocking frames and for malicious damage to buildings and machines.

The repression led to more self-consciously political agitation. At the end of the war with France the poor were demanding parliamentary reform as a solution to their grievances. Radical sheets were selling in unprecedented numbers. Meanwhile, agricultural workers, their livelihoods destroyed by enclosures, erupted in riots in East Anglia in 1816, firing ricks, workhouses, farms and the gentry's houses and demanding 'Bread or Blood'. In the same year a Radical march and demonstration in Spa Fields, London, was accompanied by some looting and rioting, and its leaders were charged with high treason. By the 'Gagging Acts' of 1817 all public meetings were forbidden, except with a licence from a magistrate; habeas corpus was again suspended in 1817 and 1818; and a planned hunger march of cotton weavers from Manchester to London in 1817, the 'March of the Blanketeers', was broken up by troops as it set out from St Peter's Fields. This led to outbreaks of rioting and plotting for a 'Moscow of Manchester' – a wholesale insurrection. Abortive uprisings took place in Derby and Yorkshire, but the work of government spies and *agents provocateurs* undid them.

By 1818 the Secretary of State was seriously worried about the interaction of the starving weavers and 'disaffected demagoguism ... known to be ever alive to the means of doing mischief'[11] in Lancashire. William Cobbett was amazed at the burst of interest in his *Political Register*: 'The labouring classes of people seemed as if they had never heard a word on politics before. The effect on their minds was like what might be expected to be produced on the eyes of one bred in the dark, and brought out, all of a sudden, into broad daylight.'[12] Then, in 1819, a peaceful meeting of cotton-weavers in support of universal male suffrage, in St Peter's Fields, Manchester, was charged by sabre-wielding troops. Eleven people were killed and hundreds injured. The government followed up the 'Peterloo Massacre' with the notorious Six Acts, whereby magistrates were given extended powers of search and seizure of weapons, paramilitary drilling was suppressed, 'seditious' and cheap periodicals were subjected to a 4d duty per issue, and trials of some political offences were made summary. The cotton-weavers were defeated. In spite of further machine-breaking riots in the 1820s, their weekly wage sank from 32s in 1790 to 6s in 1832.

In 1830 agricultural labourers rose in the 'Captain Swing' riots to destroy threshing machines and demand a living wage. Starting in Kent, the revolt spread to Sussex, Berkshire, Hampshire and Wiltshire, and then through southern England to East Anglia. Workhouses were burned to the ground, hayricks blazed as far north as Carlisle, and foundries, factories and mills were destroyed, as well as the hated threshing machines. Public sympathy was with the rioters. In Sussex no one would join the yeomanry or special constabulary to put them down; the Norfolk magistrates declared themselves for the rioters' demands, and even *The Times* was sympathetic. But the government felt that 'severity is, in the first instance, the only remedy which can be applied to such disorders with success',[13] and sent the troops in. Between November 1830 and March 1831 1,406 people were brought to trial, of whom nineteen were hanged, 464 transported and 657 imprisoned.

Meanwhile, a bill to reform parliament and widen the franchise was being debated. Its defeat sparked riots in Derby, Nottingham and Bristol (where twelve rioters were killed by troops). The bill was re-presented and passed, but joy turned to anger as it was realised how minimal the franchise extension was. The Chartist movement, with its demand for universal male suffrage, grew out of that anger in the late 1830s. As petitions were ignored by parliament, preparations for physical force went ahead. In 1839 a riotous meeting at the Bull Ring, Birmingham, drove off sixty London police sent in to control it and troops had to be called in. There was an attempted revolt in Yorkshire by 4,000 men. In Sheffield a search of one Chartist's house revealed twelve hand grenades, some 'fire balls', about forty ball cartridges and three dozen iron bullets. In Newport, when 8,000 men rose to seize the town, twenty-four rebels were killed and 125 arrested. Eight were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered, and only a public outcry secured commutation of the sentences to life transportation. Then, in 1842, hundreds of thousands of workers in the industrial north marched on factories, sabotaging machinery; police stations were also attacked and the homes of magistrates, parsons and factory owners fired. Troops of cavalry and artillery had to be called in to patrol the streets.

The Chartist movement ended suddenly in 1848 when a proposed march on parliament attracted 170,000 special constables and a large military force and was called off. There were sporadic riots and paramilitary drilling in Yorkshire, Liverpool, Manchester, Leicester, Aberdeen, Glasgow and London, but by this time Chartism was being overtaken by the rapid growth of the trade union movement, which, for the organised workers, brought with it new forms of struggle – strikes, negotiations and meetings. There were anti-police riots in the 1840s and 1860s in the northern towns, but rioting by and large was left to the paupers and the unemployed, who had no union and no vote, even after the extension of the franchise in 1867. It was the marches and rallies of the unemployed which led to riots in 1886 and 1887 against police harassment in Trafalgar Square.

This century has seen riots in 1909 and 1911 in Llanelli and Liverpool among striking railway workers, and extensive rioting and looting after the Great War, during the 1919 police strike and among 70,000 soldiers waiting to be demobbed. 'Race' riots broke out in the port towns of Liverpool, Cardiff and on the Tyne as black workers defended their jobs – and their lives – from white attacks. In Liverpool Charles Wootton, a black seaman, drowned attempting to escape from a white mob. The Great Depression of the early 1930s led to rioting

among the unemployed of Birkenhead and the north-east, and 5,000 Flying Squad and a large reserve of special constables were called in to defend London against the hunger marchers from Jarrow in 1934.

The growth of the British Union of Fascists from 1933 onwards led to violent clashes between its supporters and anti-fascists, culminating in the Battle of Cable street in 1936, when 100,000 people fought off Mosley's Blackshirts and the police to establish a 'no-go' area for fascism in London's East End. It was this, more than the rise of the fascists themselves, which led to the passing of the Public Order Act in 1936, giving the police extensive powers to ban and control public processions, and outlawing the wearing of uniform and paramilitary drilling.

Frances Webber

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