

During lulls in the fighting, the police radio was overheard carrying complaints about the poor quality of refreshments. Could these two men be the guilty parties?

It's just another sample of the racism of the state to say that black people need white experts to make petrol bombs. We were using any bottles we could find (black polythene rubbish bags were ripped open to get bottles); there were enough cars around to siphon off all the petrol. The first bombs were used at Leeson Rd and the crowd cheered their appearance. I never knew how easy it was to turn over cars, they go over so easy; the symbols of consumerism only need a couple of people to go over and they burn so well! It was like being high, we felt so powerful for the first time ever.

The police retreated to cheers and a rain of missiles. People started smashing the windows of the pub and others went in and began breaking everything, pulling out drinks for all of us! I've lived in Brixton most of my life and I never saw anything like it before. Blacks and whites, rastas and punks, men and women, young and old, gay and hets. Unity just isn't a strong enough word as we shared drinks and cigarettes, everyone patting each other on the back smiling. It was like a street party, with no tension between us at all. Words just can't express that feeling, and in the distance the lines of police watched.

At about this time the looting started, the police just fell back and no one was really trying to move forward. There was a lull in the fighting, and behind our barricades was a free area, no leaders and no authority. The second pub was smashed up and burned, and then the plumbers (who really disliked the people in the area) and soon every shop was open target. For the first time ever people took what they wanted without having to work like slaves to get the cash or beg from the state. When the sweetshop was gotten into, those who got inside were throwing things to those on the outside! A lot of the negative things happened at about this time, but that was because we had ceased to be on the offensive and people had started to get drunk. Also it



was a good chance for people to get what they wanted for themselves and forget about the rest. Most of these anti-social acts were on the periphery; next time we should be ready to deal with these sorts of acts as a collective mass as we did with the fighting. On the whole people acted together; before any buildings went up in flames, some of the crowd made sure that no one was inside. If you believe the media, the rioters didn't care. Someone suggested putting a brick through the anarchist bookshop window; the rest of the crowd said no (and not just the anarchists either).

Gradually the police began moving forward again and we fought hard but a lot of us were getting really tired. It was dark and people were drifting away, buildings collapsing around us. It's how I'd always imagined the blitz. The police were moving closer yards at a time, they were armed with pick axe handles and base ball bats, they kept banging their sticks on the floor to raise the tension, they had their war cries and chants prepared (all the best psychological warfare techniques learned at school). When they charged they were like animals grabbing hold of anyone and beating shit out of them. The police violence was more vicious and painful than any of ours.

S.



Would you buy a used police coach from this man?

On escaping from the immediate area I was surprised to see how far it had spread. The people in the main riot had very little idea of what was happening outside their immediate area; lack of communication is one fault we mustn't make again. The people I spoke to wanted to join in but were cut off from the Railton Riot, but everyone was glad the police had received a beating even if only temporarily. Brixton was practically under siege, police were everywhere and sporadic fighting was taking place. The police station was ringed and they obviously felt vulnerable because they knew it would be our next target. The police couldn't let it go because it served as their communications centre and because it's their symbol of power over us.

The area had been cut off, trains and buses stopped so that reinforcements for us couldn't get there. Fires had been started and some of the main department stores looted! The police tactic of isolating the riot only in the Front-line had failed partially at least.

The first state/media reaction—to say the riot was a race riot—failed miserably. It was so obvious that the riot was anti-police and anti-authoritarian; when a priest asked for our demands the crowd asked that the police fuck off and all prisoners released. But even these were not true demands because a demand requires some level of negotiation which none of the rioters were willing to engage in.

From the very beginning the police had said that the riot was pre-planned but their theory is easily demolished. Firstly they say there were a lot of people on the streets but what do you expect on a sunny Saturday. Secondly they say white photographers were in leading positions, but those white photographers were mostly residents and in no way leaders or organisers. Thirdly the police say petrol bombs had been prepared, but you need no skill to make them and it doesn't take long either. And lastly they say 'white anarchists' were in the crowd, but those white anarchists are part of the community, we all live and some of us work in the area. I've lived in Brixton most of my life.

When the race riot tactic failed, the police fell onto the theory of white anarchists organising the riot. The state cannot admit that people are sick and tired of the system and that they are capable of rising spontaneously and successfully attacking the state and its representatives. The main lesson of Brixton is that it can happen anywhere without the need of leaders or organisers. Therefore the state must find scapegoats and invent leaders where none exist. Anarchists are that scapegoat and the police decided we are all terrorists and plotters. The reasons we are chosen must be because we made no secret of our wish for another Bristol and we are known to be active in the community and easily identified as well as the only politicians active in the riots.

The state media brought on 'international terrorists' as stage props in a well orchestrated bid to use us to explain away the hatred people feel for the system. For a start this is inherently racist, the refusal to accept that black people can act without white leaders. Secondly it gives the state special branch a chance to get back at troublesome anarchists.

When the raid on the flat in Coldharbour Lane happened it had the effect of frightening us, as far as we knew it could be the start of an anti-anarchist program. Thought of Persons Unknown etc. ran through my mind and it made us all a lot more tense (which may be the whole point anyway). It's certainly not over yet; the press has caught on to the name 'anarchist' with parasitical glee and are harping on about international links (making us out to be in touch with the spirit of Ulrike Meinhof practically).

After the riots, community leaders descended on Brixton like flies (the press haven't attacked them as outside agitators, because they serve the very useful task of pacifying us). These self-appointed leaders have been loudly apologising for the riot blaming bad housing and unemployment, asking for more cash etc. But there can be no apologies for the riot, none. Unemployment and bad housing are contributory factors but discontent goes much deeper than that. The riot can only be interpreted as the free expression of anger and disgust at the whole farce. During the riot there were no demands for jobs, we wanted everything then and there. It was a rejection of the system of which bad housing and unemployment are parts.

The left have been attempting to colonise Brixton for a long time; practically every Left group is active in the area in some way or another. Their calls for revolution and action have been shown to be nothing but hot air. During the riot the Leftists were nowhere to be seen; they had disappeared as soon as the action began. They returned only when the police had cleared the streets. Now every sect is claiming the riot as a victory but still making the usual pathetic apologies. They too blame unemployment, bad housing and racism. But if racism is to blame why did the rioters attack pubs etc? Racism is a factor but not the whole story. The left are no doubt electing themselves onto committees and looking for recruits, but I wonder how effective they will be. The people in the area generally treat them with the contempt they deserve.

As anarchists we must learn from the riots and be prepared for the next, also we must not apologise for the riots. This is probably the first riot of its kind in this country where a large number of anarchists were involved. It's a danger and a mistake to claim the riots as anarchist, in the same way the leftists claim it for themselves. Nevertheless the riot was anti-authoritarian in character and spontaneous; those of us involved felt the thrill of liberation even if only for a few hours and we also saw that the state is not invulnerable.

The struggle was limited in that we stayed in one area (the main riot in Railton Road); this was due to a reluctance to give up territory already won, though there was much talk of attacking the police station. If we had had more reinforcements it might have been possible. The police did their best to hem us in and to a certain extent their presence succeeded in discouraging any more advance. The next time we should make concerted attempts to advance; the only way to do this is by our own example. I'm sure that if we had managed to get into other areas people would have joined us.

Better communication would also be a step forward; those of us in Railton Road had very little idea of what was happening in the rest of Briston and vice versa. A press black-out would also be a possibility next time, so a feasible communication system as in Europe is a must if such riots are to spread. The majority of police in London were probably in Brixton on Saturday night, so actions in other parts of the city would have been appropriate.

Even during the riot some priests and social workers made attempts to mediate but we did not want any negotiations; as soon as negotiation begin the battle is lost. All attempts at negotiation should be resisted vigorously. If we want prisoners released we shoudn't beg for them but either get them ourselves (anti-snatch squads?) or capture prisoners ourselves if possible. □

As anarchists we do not need to beg the state for crumbs but take what is rightfully ours. The policy of direct action was put into practice on Saturday, and it was a celebration of our power over our own lives. Next time we should use the experience of Brixton '81 in an attempt to further the struggle, to spread the action to new areas, to adapt new tactics and still keep our aims in mind.

*All this was written as a purely personal response to the Brixton Riots, events which have not yet finished and will no doubt be talked about for a long time. This article only represents the beginning, we are all still learning from the experience.*

1. The attitude of the left press has shown only a slight difference to that of the state press. They have gone overboard in apologising and excusing our actions whilst presenting a package deal of community leaders with answers to the 'problems' in the way of begging the government for money. They have gone ahead and printed photographs of rioters engaged in action which the police can use for identification and victimisation (it is said police are using these photos as evidence already). Yet there are no such photos of police attacking us.
2. The police were obviously ready for something on Saturday; their numbers suggest this, some had taken off their I.D. numbers in readiness. But they were not prepared for the militancy and size of our attack. Rumours about the army were going round on Saturday night, but we can be certain that the army were made ready and trucks were seen in Kennington ready to reach Brixton. It is also said that the SAS were prepared to move into the area at the first sign of guns from the rioters. We also know that a navy liaison officer was called into Brixton police station with a quantity of CS gas. Rumours among the police were that two of their number had been burnt to death, this was guaranteed to cause greater tension on their side.

3. What is suprising is that in the circumstances no one spoke about Belfast, and only Bristol was mentioned. The riots are presented as purely due to local conditions and circumstances but it is truer to say that the same conditions exist in other places, all over Britain and beyond. The hatred most people feel exists from Belfast to Berlin, anywhere where authority shows itself. It is very important that we stress this fact and the belief in our power as individuals to confront the system is applicable everywhere. People are saying 'where next', anarchists should be saying and hoping 'here next'.
4. Unity and co-operation were unspoken principles; everyone helped build barricades, no one was ordered to help. No one was pressured into fighting or looting. Middle-aged white women celebrated beside teenage rastas and white punks (this is a feature which was reported in other riots but which I never quite accepted until I saw it for myself). Whenever people felt that more ammunition was needed, groups of people would collect bottles or crates full of bricks for everyone to use.
5. The reformist Left have always stated that rebellion cannot happen, that people do not need to resort to violence. The fallacy of that argument is obvious to most people. On the other hand the argument of the so-called 'revolutionary' left that action is not possible unless led by the vanguard party is not so easy to discredit. But the events of Brixton as well as Bristol and across Europe prove that the only successful riots are not led and that leftists and their vanguard parties play no part at all. No doubt while we fought in Railton Rd, the left were selling their papers or attending meeting meetings or conferences.

# RIOTS AND LOOTING SPREAD IN ENGLAND TO A DOZEN CITIES

## DANGER OF ANARCHY SEEN

Violence Is Called Worst Yet  
— 250 Seized in London as  
Firemen Battle Blazes

By R. W. APPLE JR.

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Saturday, July 11 — Urban violence erupted in a dozen cities across England last night and early this morning as policemen and firemen fought to control thousands of youths, black and white, on a rampage of rioting, burning and looting.

A Government spokesman said the disturbances, which came as the epidemic of violence entered its second week, were by far the worst to date. He said that in some cities "we are facing anarchy."

Use of Troops Not Excluded

# THE IMPOSSIBLE CLASS

A spectre is haunting Europe: the spectre of an 'impossible' class, a newly emerging social subject whose very existence defies attempts by orthodox class theory to analyse it and attempts by the state to institutionalise it. Although for many years this class has been erupting in continental cities, its sudden eruption in riots last year in England has led to banal conjecture over their possible 'causes', particularly over unemployment levels. Those who thus attribute rioting simply to 'unemployment' thereby evade the historically new class relations facing us, no less so than the reactionaries who blame 'permissive' teachers & parents or lead pollution. And the common purpose of such analysts, each in their own way, is to identify the 'cause' of the rioting in order to eliminate it, so that the problem can be solved through 'real politics' rather than through street confrontations. In particular the left-wing version broadly aims to uplift marginalised sectors into full citizenship of 'the working class', into the full legitimacy of exchanging their labour for wages—that is, of existing as a part of capital.

Our purpose, of course, is just the opposite. We want to articulate the hitherto implicit politics of the uprising itself, to grasp its implications for re-defining 'the working class' and 'revolutionary organisation'. For we are interested less in how the working class suffers unemployment than in how the class becomes recomposed in ways which undermine the discipline of the entire labour market which tries to label us as 'the miserable unemployed' in the first place.

## What Working Class?

In the past, orthodox class analysis has been able to trace mass social/political behaviours back to particular relations of production. For example, we could understand the historical succession of trade union organisations and Communist Internationals partly in terms of successive recompositions of the working class—from artisans, to craft workers, to 'the mass worker' expending abstract labour power (e.g. on an assembly line) deprived of any intrinsic meaningful content. Or we could examine the history of that 'other working class' (e.g. 'outcast London'), always antagonistic to the established institutions of its time and remembered mostly for its more violent confrontations with capital and the state. But it as well existed in some fairly well definable relation to the official labour market (as a 'sub-proletariat', 'lumpen-proletariat', or—in liberal rhetoric—'the poor', defined juridically in relation to the Poor Laws and more recently to the social security system).

What is new, then, about today's 'impossible' class? In the uprisings we saw antagonistic behaviours based not on any particular relation to the capitalist labour market but rather on its inter-face with a subterranean unofficial economy which (after all) had been the target of the state's attack on the insurgent districts in the first place. In this illegal labour market, in which earnings often supplement Supplementary Benefit payments from the DHSS, labour acts not as a creature of capital but largely outside it. Because payments for labour ignore statutory deductions, it is less the producer or consumer than the state who gets 'cheated'. Furthermore, unlike official wage-labour, which entails selling

one's whole life in order to buy it back with commodities, this unofficial economy offers the state little space in which to mediate it. Indeed, there is hardly a political language available to communicate with the aspirations which develop within it.

Although aspects of that mass illegality are no less exploitative than that of the capitalist economy as a whole, its very existence undermines the discipline of the official labour market. Culturally, it opens up greater space for re-defining 'useful' production directly in relation to consumers by detaching use values from exchange value (e.g. self-publishing punk rock bands, to take a well-known example). And more generally 'black work'—although depriving workers of statutory protections and guarantees—nevertheless trains people in illegality, in thinking and behaving beyond the limits deemed legitimate by the state. It reverses the bourgeois relation of future/present by replacing deferred gratification (of National Insurance or pension payments) with immediate gratification in wages or even in fulfilling work. It reverses the bourgeois relation of work/leisure, so that working time becomes determined by non-working time rather than allowing a purely recuperative 'leisure' to be determined by normal working hours.

In the 1981 uprising, then, it was this 'invisible assembly line' of that subterranean economy which broke through the surface, spreading widely on the basis of a shared oppositional culture and state oppression, and then disappearing with virtually no organisational trace—precisely because the insurgents cannot be traced back to any particular common site in the official labour market. To label them 'unemployed' is at best misleading and at worst patronising—as if they were simply passive 'victims' 'provoked' by the police. Although many of them might be officially labeled 'unemployed', our point is that their daily behaviour defies the system's expectations that they should feel apologetic or miserable for being so—for example, by trying to make themselves at least appear more 'employable'. That

task seems to be taken up only by the Workers Revolutionary Party, with its youth retraining schemes in South London—thereby doing the 'Right To Work' Campaign one better!

By contrast, the insurgents' uprising created a larger space in which their 'unemployability' could be given a more positive enjoyable meaning. The largely selfish, individualist character of everyday mass illegality could be superseded by a more social appropriation of goods—indeed, by a collective re-appropriation of the entire neighborhood and its resources as a contested territory. The 'no-go areas' not only excluded the police but began to include wider layers of the local and surrounding population, while disorganising the collaborationist 'community leaders'. The buildings burned down included not only capitalist and racist symbols but also derelict property earmarked for state-controlled 'rehabilitation' schemes. In these various ways, the highly selective destruction was a positive affirmation of territory.

### Crisis of Policing

For understanding the uprising's internal dynamic, our main point here is that the police came to bear the full burden of containing an 'impossible class' which could be neither integrated nor repressed by more subtle means. Although variations on such an impossible class have been emerging throughout Western Europe—Paris, Lyons, Zurich, Nijmegen—there remains the riddle as to why mass anti-police violence erupted so widely and suddenly in England. Indeed, as England finally experiences the intensity of rioting already commonplace in other European countries, the British state becomes threatened in a far more profound way than elsewhere because here it is the state itself which is directly under attack.

Until 1981, mass violence against the police had generally arisen from mobilisations around specific demands, usually mediated by political organisations; weapons were limited to whatever was readily at hand (bricks, bottles, sticks, stones). In 1977, for example, when the police tried to protect a National Front march through Lewisham in southeast London, police attacks on the anti-fascist protestors led to a riot in which



Outside Lambeth Town Hall: choreography with Lewisham-style props

the police used riot shields for the very first time in Britain. In April 1981, however, those riot shields caught fire as Brixton rioters used 'molotovs' for the very first time as a street weapon in Britain. That riot, and the national wave of rioting which ensued 3 months later, erupted out of a long-standing conflict over the police presence as such, not out of demands on negotiable 'political' issues.

Previously, the police had certainly come under attack when they were seen as political enemies of organised campaigns or festivals (such as the 1976 Notting Hill carnival). However, this new choice of anti-police weaponry signified a tactical decision by people to organise themselves specifically against the police, and specifically to undermine the sort of massive police concentrations protected by riot shields since Lewisham. Instead of the police isolating the opposition, a mobile and diffused use of petrol bombs isolated the police and even police stations.

In Britain not only haven't rioters demanded the jobs which the left always assumes they want, but the haven't even demanded an extension of the welfare state, such as the housing or youth centres at issue in continental cities. There the municipal councils could pacify the rebels by conceding (or even just negotiating on) well-articulated demands, even if the councils have feared jeopardizing their authority by doing so. But in the English metropolises, the rioters had no formal demands to negotiate and no representatives to do the negotiating. Rather, the battle was to defeat the police, to free those arrested and to go 'shopping without money'. While in other European countries the police intervention has come in order to break up demonstrations or occupations over specific social demands, in Britain it is policing itself which has shaped the 1981 confrontations.

Over and over again last year, the British police have blatantly provoked riots—either through their routine harassment of individuals on the street, or through massive intervention into otherwise 'normal' public gatherings. These provocations have led on to virtual police riots — riots as much by the police as against them. Although some critics have described these police actions as 'military', that hardly describes a situation where the police themselves go out of control, where they lack the discipline to implement a truly military strategy.

The background to this violent escalation lies in intensified police aggression over the last few years, especially against black youth. In the mid-1970s, sections of the police and media organised a propaganda

campaign against the threat of 'street' muggings committed by black people. This provided the justification for massive police terrorism in predominantly black neighbourhoods. Furthermore, through a long series of racist attacks on black people and their homes, the police response was to ignore them, deny any racial motive, and/or harass the victims themselves. After the infamous 'New Cross massacre', it was friends of the dead children who suffered the most from the police investigation, and police attempted (unsuccessfully) to obstruct the March 2nd protest march through central London.

These police responses have emboldened young fascists to continue their attacks, especially on Asian neighbourhoods, with little fear or police reprisals. For example, when on July 3 hundreds of fascist skinheads invaded Southall, the eventual police intervention served to protect them from the Asian youths trying to chase them out of the neighbourhood. The next night there began the concentrated 10-day national wave of anti-police rioting, in large measure taking revenge for years of police harassment.

Unlike the rest of Europe, then, the British crisis has become a crisis of policing as such as more diffuse forms of social control have been disintegrating. Since it's the bourgeois order under threat, it is worth examining how the more sophisticated bourgeoisie has analysed the causes.

### 'Secondary Control'

*The Economist* (18 July 1981), a ruling class journal, has developed the concept of a breakdown in 'secondary control', a control which normally makes low-key policing sufficient and which comes from an 'unofficial network of vigilance: local figures of authority, the pubman, the shopkeeper, the teacher, parents, housewives chatting on the doorstep, recognised people "occupying" the street.' These are 'the true policemen of any close community', an 'unofficial authority'.

In the national wave of rioting *The Economist* pointed to the utter collapse of such authority, the collapse of a sense of 'close identity between individuals and their immediate environment'. *The Economist* noted that this breakdown didn't occur in many immigrant areas — e.g. East London, many in the Midlands (predominantly Asian neighbourhoods) — which were conspicuously absent from the rioting. Instead it occurred especially in neighbourhoods with a strong presence of second-generation West Indian youths, even though the festivities attracted many other people as well; there what shocked the bourgeoisie was 'the novel acquiescence of parents and other local adults in the rioting'.

Of course, far less tangible than the decomposition of the traditional proprietary 'community' is the recomposition of a new oppositional 'community'. This organisationally expresses its lack of any stake in the existing order, in ways which are both nihilistic and creative at the same time. How to disorganise that tendency, and reconstitute a proprietary community, is the real bourgeois project underlying the current public debate. Socialist ideologues tend to attribute the entire problem ultimately to unemployment, and so prescribe all sorts of job-creation programmes, but the people directly faced with managing the crisis know that the reasons are rooted more fundamentally in the texture of daily life.

*The Economist* went as far as to suggest that the riots signify the utter failure of the entire post-War social-democratic project, which it euphemistically labels 'the Anglo-Saxon tradition of town planning'. In other words, it is the project of 'social engineering' which has destroyed people's sense of having a stake in a community. In particular, the journal argued, the riots occurred precisely in those areas where governments have spent enormous sums of money on 'redevelopment projects', whose clearances have replaced traditional neighbourhood housing with a more anonymous high-rise housing and have eliminated small indigenous property-owners. 'Local councils have used central government funds to buy up, often compulsorily, anyone with any financial stake in the community — home owners, shop keepers, landlords, small businesses. . . Therefore it is this 'communal vandalism' by public councils which is to blame.

In order to reconstitute a popular proprietary stake, the journal argues, the government should rely less on creating yet more artificial jobs than on fostering 'communal reconstruction'. This means supplying material resources and political legitimacy to indigenous projects which can restore 'secondary control' over deviants. For example, it could institutionalise squatting by re-establishing 'classic squatters rights on public property freed from any controls'.

### A Self-Policing Community?

What is crucial for state control, though, is not that the police keep out entirely, but that they be seen to intervene only within a local informal authority. This requires reforming at least the widespread racist image—if not the practice—of the police. However, there seems little prospect of implementing even cosmetic measures such as hiring more black police to patrol black neighborhoods, of only because this

would require acknowledging that the police are not impartial. According to the official ideology, the police by definition cannot be racially discriminatory; rather, they are necessarily 'colour-blind' because so is the law, which it is their duty to enforce. It is that rigid conception of maintaining 'law and order', somehow above politics, which officially legitimises the police in operating above the law, while receiving little condemnation from politicians.

What, after all, is happening to would-be reformers of the police? The one-man vanguard of the new urban counter-insurgency known as 'community policing'—Captain David Webb of Handsworth, Birmingham—has been preparing to leave the police force (to become a Liberal Party politician); his decision comes less from any decisive failure to win over a collaborationist black petty-bourgeoisie than from outright reactionary resistance to his reforms from within the police force itself (see the *Observer* colour supplement, 10 Jan. 1982). And what is perhaps most remarkable about the Scarman Report is that—having clearly absolved the police force of any institutional racism—the Report has come under far more attack from the right than from the left, simply for having dared to criticise the police at all. Its main result has been to legitimise the increased armament of the police force. Yet, even if we know that Scarman's proposed reforms would only serve the state anyway, it is nevertheless important for us to understand the real institutional obstacles to their implementation.

The major obstacle to reform has been the growing institutionalised racism of the police in which their changing role (and thus recruitment) has selected for racist individuals and reinforced their racism. Far from employing more enlightened, educated people (as recommended by the Kerner Commission Report after the USA riots), the British police have been moving in the opposite direction. The Home Office has had to request substantial salary increases in order to find new recruits capable of passing the literacy tests!

After mass mobilisations of police against black strikers and anti-fascist demonstrators in 1976-78, there were many defections by those police who simply wanted to remain a local 'bobby-on-the-beat'. The only such policeman based in the Railton Road, Constable Brown, found himself totally isolated in condemning the 'Swamp 81' police invasion there.

It is the police themselves who have sabotaged the possibility of a self-policed community. For example, when police in Brixton made an arrest which was to spark the July 1981 riot there, a local Rastafarian-shopkeeper tried to intervene — only to find himself beaten up and arrested for 'obstructing' the police, even though he was a member of the police-community liaison committee.

Here is the contradiction for a self-policing strategy: Aspiring local leaders now find themselves hardly capable of mediating, as their longstanding attempts to moderate police behaviour come to nothing, and as their appeals for moderation among rioters go unheeded. But if the police continue to resist demands for 'accountability' to the community, it is not simply because they are malicious or reactionary. It is also because there is increasing confusion as to *who is* this community. If the rebels have no permanent organisation or delegates, then to whom might the police be accountable?

### Police Create 'Criminals'

Until and unless a new proprietary community is reconstituted, the major political parties have little option but to give full support to the police force, who soon received a *carte blanche* offer from the Tory government for any and all of the hardware which the security forces have tried out in Northern Ireland over the last decade. Heeding warnings that heavy technology can isolate or burden them, the police have so far taken up primarily the one technique which has proven the most successful in Northern Ireland: driving Land-Rovers at high speed directly into crowds so as to undermine their 'psychological ascendancy' over the street and then pick out the boldest rioters with snatch squads.

The political context for this approach was set by representing the police as protecting 'the public' from criminal elements, that is, protecting society from social disorder.

However, it wasn't long before the police themselves undermined such a strategy. In order to regain the 'psychological ascendancy' lost by ordinary foot-patrols during the rioting, they invaded people's homes and drove their armoured vehicles at high speed all over the neighbourhood (in one case killing a disabled man on his way home).

Whatever ambivalence local people had felt about the riots, these 'search & destroy missions' demonstrated that the police presence had nothing to do with protecting them. In fact, these occupations led to yet more local people fighting the police. The so-called 'criminals' have become *potentially everyone* who lives in these rebellious districts. Everyone is potentially guilty of refusing to keep off the streets.

Here, again, lies the threat to the existing society, and perhaps the possibility of a new 'community', as the counter-attacks on the police have been uniting people across barriers of race, sex and age. It has drawn on and emboldened far more people than the small core of mostly male youths who have been suffering police harassment on the streets.

### Work Discipline

Given that for many years Labour Party politicians (among others) had already been warning about 'riots in the streets' if unemployment were to exceed  $\frac{1}{2}$  million (!), why didn't anything like the 1981 uprising happen sooner?

The Labour government despite all its budget cuts, expanded the Manpower Services Commission to manage unemployment more effectively. In particular, the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) offered to pay school leavers £21 per week if they would accept the 'work discipline' of 40 hours mock-employment. Meanwhile the Labour government tried to keep alive the vain hope that prosperity was just around the corner.

After the May 1979 general election, however, not only did unemployment increase (officially) to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million, but the new Tory government gave up all pretense of hope for better times. Many school leavers, initially grateful for YOP placements, have ended up leaving the programme before the end of their 6 months because they find the jobs so degrading and meaningless (a preparation for real jobs!).

In reality official unemployment is still far below that of the 1930s Great Depression, but the nature of employment itself has been changing. Only a small, declining section of the working class has been able to sustain its job security and living standards (and even those workers only through increased overtime), while the rest get relegated to menial, insecure and part-time jobs. The restructuring in industry is fast removing the material basis for an identity in paid work, especially the link between effort and reward — reward both in terms of job enjoyment and wages.

Unlike the 1930s, not only are few unemployed people willing to blame themselves, but their passive exclusion from wage-labour is gradually turning into an active rejection of such work, or at least of officially paid work. A community worker in Toxteth (Liverpool) told journalists that, after a few weeks or months eagerly searching for a job, many school leavers become so resentful that they entirely lose interest and base their lives instead on 'hanging out' with friends. It is this threat which has been the target of the schools, the DHSS and Department of Employment—and ultimately the police.

More generally, such behaviours indicate a long-term crisis for the entire Keynesian strategy of containing the class struggle through welfare measures whose recipients now increasingly devise ways of subverting them to create their own independent space. Instead of serving to reinforce the link between reward and effort, the intended targets of these measures have learned how to use them for getting the most reward for the least effort, as had already happened in the 1970s with the social security system. So the Tory government remains reluctant to implement the Labour Party's proposed solutions (e.g. massive public works projects), not simply because of dogmatic Thatcherism, but also because such social-democratic proposals seem unlikely to succeed in restoring the discipline of the capitalist labour market.

### 'Criminal' Cultures

The limitations inherent in any Keynesian-type solution lie in the deviant behaviours which have been developing over many years, and which have emerged as more publicly obvious and better organised during the rioting. As one Tory politician admitted after the first Brixton riot in April 1981, heavy policing is necessary there, not simply because the crime rate is high, but also because the people living there 'have no respect for authority'. Brixton stands as one extreme case of people developing their own ways of getting money outside the official economy and their own ways of enjoying themselves outside of the official marketplace. It is the self-organisation of non-work, or of unofficial work, which makes the entire culture extra-legal and labelled 'criminal' by the state.

In black neighbourhoods where half the youths are unemployed, so-called 'deviance' becomes the norm, symbolised for the police by sound systems and marijuana. It is this affirmative culture which the

state has set out to disorganise—be it with social workers, the YOP, 'community police' or the Special Patrol Group. Although the police choice of target is obviously racist, it is not merely so, for it is the public, affirmative character of black people's response which is their target. Their oppositional street culture becomes a public assertion of self-worth, no longer needing a job for one's identity. And it is this refusal to suffer individually which the police label as 'criminal' in practice. As was said in the film *Blacks Britannica*, the police systematically harass black youth during the day because they are supposed to be either at school or at work or looking for jobs.

Although that police practice has a long history, the police have come to extend it to all working class youth, so that it is no accident that the 'multi-racial' 1981 uprisings revolved around battles for 'street space'. After the first Brixton riots in April, the local police tried to maintain a low profile, but became afraid that Brixton was becoming a 'no-go' area for them; so they soon resumed their usual bullying approach and provoked the later wave of riots there. Peaceful co-existence is impossible because one side or the other must win.

When a Liverpool Labour Councillor declared that conditions are so bad in Toxteth that people would be apathetic if they didn't riot, she was pointing to a process of public self-affirmation in the rioting itself. And here is the supreme threat posed by the revolt: that its offensive character, its sense of fun in defying the authorities, can speak positively to the misery of most people's lives and lead them to question the daily sacrifice which they normally make, be they in or out of jobs. This process became clearer with the riots in Wood Green (North London), not a particularly depressed district, where a group of white rioters replied to a journalist's question about unemployment: "We've all got jobs. We want a riot!" Another group in Wood Green said "We were trying to prove that it's not all the blacks who cause trouble. We've got friends who are blacks. It's everybody who causes trouble."

### Marginalisation Strategies

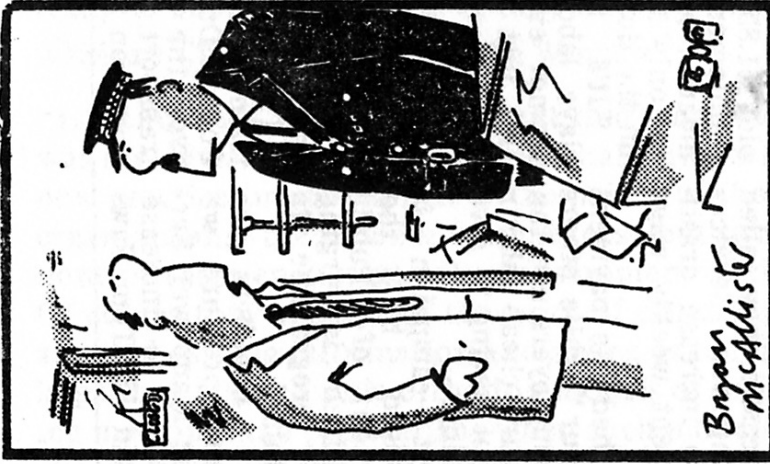
From the state and party system, there have been various strategies for marginalising the revolt which has so far erupted. After the first Brixton riot in April 1981, the more sophisticated media attributed the event to exceptionally racist police provocation, bad housing and high unemployment — as if the same potential 'causes' didn't already exist in most metropolises in England. Three months later, when there

came the national wave of rioting, many right-wing commentators pointed to the 'multi-racial' composition of the rioters, as evidence that racial provocation obviously couldn't be the cause (also that many rioters were too young to hold jobs). Implicitly this meant that the allegedly exceptional causes of the Brixton riot were now missing as a potentially political legitimization: these were mere 'copycat riots'. Therefore, they argued, the rioting was not political but merely "criminal".

Although the left needed a political explanation in order to blame the Thatcher government, they also needed to marginalise the rioting, or to instrumentalise it for a narrow definition of politics, as with the patronising slogan 'Riots or Revolution?' In the public debate over the 'causes', the project is to reform away what are seen as the provocations for the rioting — be it police bullying, unemployment, and so on. These are treated as factors for why youths feel excluded from society, which must let them back in — for example, through a massive project of public works. But now that they have the shared experience of defeating the police, of 'shopping without money', and of decisively asserting 'street space', there is no going back to capitalist normality, even to the conventional aspirations of British socialism. In the neighbourhoods which revolted, it's not simply that the rioters are an oppressed minority excluded from society; as the police well realise, it's also that their daily lives express an active rejection by creating a new social space which threatens not to attack the community but to become a new community.

Thus we can begin to understand the recent riots as less about unemployment as such than about the changing nature of employment. However, the growing refusal of work doesn't simply mean choosing leisure over work, because the new 'deviant' behaviours lie outside the duality of legitimate work/commodified leisure.

The threat to capital lies most fundamentally in breaking the normal connection between work and leisure — that is, leisure as individualised commodity consumption, centrally mediated through the market, and geared to reproducing one's capacity for submitting to wage-labour. Instead, there are developing directly social forms of enjoyment which resist that submission and undermine capitalist reproduction. These behaviours do not serve to valorise capital by gearing labour power to produce surplus value; rather, they serve to undermine the value-relation and to realise (or valorise) people, to define needs outside the



*"They took absolutely everything — except for the royal wedding souvenirs."*

cash nexus. Italian communists (presently being criminalised) have called this tendency 'self-valorisation', or self-realisation through use values appropriated outside commodity exchange.

## The Right Not To Work

Despite these new structural challenges to bourgeois society, the left like to represent the recent upheavals as a passing phenomenon of recession, or even to attribute them to the Tory government's policies, which must be replaced with 'socialist' ones. But in reality the sub-cultures of resistance challenge the traditional 'productivist' perspective of socialism. Defining a space largely outside the world of official wage-labour, these cultures undermine all the other institutions (family, school) which normally prepare people and sustain them for the labour-capital relation.

In other words, refusing identification with capitalist production these youth subcultures challenge the reproduction of capitalist relations geared to that production. At the most fundamental level, this is the significance of their attacks on the authority of the state, as organiser of capitalist reproduction. And that is why the police won't leave alone those who attempt to implement in practice 'the right not to work'.

This right not to work means refusing the discipline of wage-labour and refusing the paternalism of asking what should be done for the rebels. What is most significant about the riots is simply that the local people did it themselves, with their own rudimentary organisation. That achievement must be the starting point for asking how to build a new, stronger oppositional community of creative activity which can defend itself from being disorganised by the state and political parties. Although it's hardly yet clear how to go about building on the more creative moments of the recent revolts, it is becoming very clear that the demand for 'the right not to work' is not negotiable.

After all, in this case everything is upside-down, as it is the state which is making programmatic demands upon the people by trying to organise the impossible class into the official labour market or at least into official categories of 'unemployment'. Unfortunately for the state, the impossible class won't negotiate. Indeed, perhaps the class can't even be found... until the next uprising. For the battle is not over negotiable demands but over the legitimacy of the entire wage-labour system.

# Youth rally against YOP 'slave labour'

21.8.81

By our Correspondent

Hundreds of youngsters protested yesterday about wages paid on the Government's Youth Opportunities Programme.

At a noisy rally in the centre of Newcastle they called on the Manpower Services Commission to increase drastically the present weekly wage of £23.50.

Some described the payment as "slave labour" while others claimed that employers use the scheme to ensure cheap labour supplies without having to give adequate training.

The protest campaign is being organised by the National Union of Public Employees, which is urging those on the programme to join a trade union.

"The more members we have, the more pressure we can put on the Manpower Services Commission to increase the wages," said Mr Tom Saw-

yer, NUPE's northeast division officer.

The MSC had asked the Government to raise the allowance to £28 a week, he said, but after the travel commitment this would only give 18-year-olds £1.85p a week more than supplementary benefit. This meant that YOP workers would get only 5p an hour more than on the dole.

"It's nothing more than slave labour, and many firms do not even give you training and just stick you in boring jobs."

"I get 10p a day more than I would on the dole. That is just pathetic," Stephen Stonehouse, aged 17, from Consett in County Durham, said yesterday.

Three weeks ago, 120 YOP trainees in Derwentside, County Durham, went on strike over the withdrawal of free transport. After three days they won their fight.

# FROM OFFENCE TO DEFENCE TO ....?

'In the refusal to combat these roles there subsists the fact of the global acceptance of alienated society. Those who claim to be revolutionaries say they want to change the world and their own lives. But in reality these individuals hope that they will be changed by a revolution. Thus they remain passive individuals, ready to adapt themselves, if they have to, but who fundamentally fear all change.'

—Jeanne Charles, 'Arms and the Woman'<sup>1</sup>

Looking back, it is now apparent that what was absent from last year's struggles was the development of organisational forms which *fully* corresponded with the new practices made explicit at the height of the fighting. Certainly there were organisations—the defence committees—but subsequent events have revealed that none of these encouraged the development of the new relations already created. Of course they solidly did the work of obtaining speedy legal assistance for those arrested, issuing information and acting as rallying points, etc. However, by and large they applied stale orthodox models of resistance to the *fresh* tasks confronting metropolitan proletarians when such models had, to a certain extent, become already superseded by the very events upon which the organisations based themselves.

For what had started out in April as an attack on racist policing developed into an attack on policing *as such*, on commodity exchange *as such* and, by implication, on the whole process of production and consumption in capitalist society. Also, the *mode* of the attack was itself a living critique of the usual mediations by which political parties and trade unions contain and regulate class struggle. Further, it enabled us to break through the usual roles and half-rotted ideologies and, for a brief but ecstatic moment, to transform social relations. Such transformations—which remain at the heart of the communist project and which, within the limits of time and space of Brixton that weekend, became a form of *mass practice*—needed a broad-based and flexible form of organisation in which to bloom. (For example, in times of social upheaval this form has very often been that of general assemblies or councils, soviets.<sup>2</sup>) But the organisational forms which arose in Brixton did so on the basis of only partial critiques, only limited visions, seeking to defend those arrested without having to delegitimise the state which was criminalising them in the first place.

Undoubtedly the defence committees' criticisms of the racist state were expressed more forcefully than previously, but this was largely a difference of degree and did not mark a qualitative shift in oppositional critique or practice. (For example, they might have identified the ways in which the uprising went beyond an attack on racist policing methods, so as to incorporate the knowledge gained into their defence strategies.) Their limitations suggest that, of all the proletarian layers which participated in the fighting, none had a *thoroughgoing* awareness of the significant changes which had taken place in the composition of the proletarian groupings themselves. So when those of us who took to the streets concretised the latent and embryonic aspects of ourselves shaped by this recomposition of social relations, we were unable to grasp and develop that process collectively. Overtaken by the enormity and rapidity of events, we nevertheless were inspired by the forces unleashed to create practices of struggle in which we found ourselves confronting the now-realised aspects of ourselves. Yet, as in a dream, we *did not fully recognise ourselves*. Therefore, we fell back upon analyses and their corresponding forms of organisation which our very own actions had rendered obsolete. This is understandable insofar as consciousness often lags behind events, especially events of such qualitative rupture.

But what were these 'new aspects'? In short, the practical unity of black and white proletarians forged in action against both the state and the reign of commodities. There were no cries of 'black and white unite and fight' as we were too busy doing exactly that to bother with such sloganising. Moreover, we were not just 'fighting the state' but were transforming social relations, making real the communistic project by realising the communistic potential of ourselves, albeit briefly. At that point in the process, the struggle went beyond a physical confrontation with racist policing by (mainly) black youth, even if that had been the detonator and main component of the struggle. However, that step beyond was not reflected in the committees which reproduced fragmented and partial analyses. The temporarily visible, concrete relations receded from consciousness, back into invisibility. After one step forward on the streets, two steps backwards were taken in the committee rooms.

**'The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something which has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.'**

—Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*<sup>3</sup>

It was at the point when the decisive actions on the streets had broken down many (though not all) of the ideological barriers that keep black and white proletarians in close but different orbits that the whole spectrum of political activists stepped in with their 'traditional' analyses. In the heat, speed and confusion of the moment, the regressive aspects of their intervention went un-noticed and prevailed by default.

The first 'spirit' that was 'conjured up' was the division on colour lines. The quickly-formed Brixton Defence Campaign (BDC) was open only to blacks. While that restriction could be seen as an attempt to curtail the influence of the (predominantly white) party-builders and to exclude possible police agents, its immediate social effect was to divide the streetfighters. Furthermore, the BDC itself immediately divided on class lines between the street youth and the older professionals & politicians on the platform. These differences resulted in one faction of the 'leadership' cancelling the public rally called for the following weekend—fearing, no doubt, to lose control of the situation to the streetfighters eagerly anticipating the rally. Falling on an Easter weekend, the rally would have ensured broader participation by local people and also supporters from elsewhere, thereby providing an opportunity to extend the struggle and overcome Brixton's isolation. As it happened, that weekend—just a few days after the uprising—passed in silence. (The BDC opened itself up to white participants shortly afterwards, but only temporarily.)

These initial divisions by colour and geography from within the proletariat had a 'domino effect' as they strengthened—not weakened—the left groups, who now had a fragmented and confused mass to pick over and recruit. Soon there were no less than *five* defence groups/committees: The BDC included most black people. The Brixton Legal Defence Committee (BLDC), although formed essentially to cover court cases, reflected the involvement of leftist professionals/politicians, mainly Labourites. The Labour Committee for the Defence of Brixton came from the Militant Tendency of the Labour Party. South London Workers Against Racism (SOLWAR) was the local branch of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) in

another form. Lastly, People Against Police Occupation (PAPO), by far the smallest group, consisted of socialist-feminists, radical gays and libertarians.

The BDC saw the uprising only as a black issue. While it is clearly undeniable that it was police racism which sparked the uprising, and that this was but one more example of the manifold attacks made on black people—economic, legal, social, physical, etc.—it should also be clear that the surge of (mainly black) proletarian anger in response went far beyond the initial objective of attacking racist police. The BDC's attempt to contain the struggle within a solely 'black people vs. the racist state' framework turned out to complement the state's own strategy of delegitimising any protest outside the scope of a narrowly defined 'racial discrimination'. It is precisely *within such terms* that the state, especially its would-be reformers, have attempted to contain the struggle.

Another problem with the BDC's approach was that it did not take account of differences within 'the' black community. As soon as the BDC was formed, the *class* differences surfaced and persisted as the campaign developed. An explicit proletarian standpoint from the start (which would have included the vast majority of black people anyway) could have avoided the confusion surrounding such issues as the collaboration with Lord Scarman by certain petty-bourgeois black groups and the collaboration with the police by such 'community leaders' as Courtney Laws and Ivan Madray. Also, in order to advance the struggle on the ground, perhaps more faith could have been put in mobilising black proletarians in Brixton than in lobbying Caribbean diplomats.

Of course the BDC, as the biggest of the defence groups, helped the most defendants, and its limitations in no way detract from that achievement. Also, these criticisms should not be seen as a criticism of black autonomy. The 'multi-racial' developments of the uprising did not challenge the basis of black autonomy; on the contrary, they reaffirmed the need for autonomous organising by everyone. However, we need to re-think the ambiguity between autonomy and separatism, so that autonomous organisation strengthens everyone's autonomy *from the state* rather than facilitating the state's containment strategies. Perhaps future developments will bring some practical clarification to this delicate area.

What of the other defence groups?

The Brixton Legal Defence Committee made interventions only on the legal level. The most notable was the attempt to halt the Scarman Inquiry on the grounds that the proceedings endangered defendants in certain court cases. As there was no chance that the legal establishment would stop Scarman from performing his liberal exhibitionism, the Committee's attempt failed.

The Militant Tendency, wearing the 'costume' of the Labour Committee for the Defence of Brixton, used the 'borrowed language' familiar to most of us by now. According to them, the uprising was due to the policies of Thatcherism and 'uncontrolled' policing; therefore, more public expenditure on social welfare programmes, the disbandment of the Special Patrol Group (SPG) and police 'accountability' would somehow keep the lid on. This committee, too, assisted defendants financially. Also, it was the only committee willing to sink ideological differences by offering at least some assistance to the arrested anarchist Patrizia Giambi—so far the sole explicitly 'political' case to result in conviction from the uprising.

SOLWAR applied to the situation a class analysis containing a critique of racism (both in the state and in the labour movement). They called for resistance to the police raids which happened after the fighting, with the resistance to be carried out by 'militia' similar to their anti-fascist squads in East London, but that proposal was not implemented. SOLWAR also helped defendants financially and—with the slogan 'Police in the Dock'—assisted some black families to prosecute police for assault.

Like the proposal to resist police raids, this was another attempt to take the struggle onto the offensive against the police.

PAPO was the most *ad hoc* of all the groups, as it existed only for as long as did the heavy police presence. It consisted mainly of friends and acquaintances who were excluded from the BDC and averse to the party-based defence groups. They sought to represent no one but themselves and felt no pressure to 'represent' anyone else, being a small group. Like SOLWAR, they too sought to direct the struggle against the police but, being so small, could do little more than organise a picket of the police station which succeeded in drawing 150 people.

Even this brief look at the approaches of the defence committees & groups gives us a glimpse of the potential which a *general* assembly could have had, especially one which recognised the historically new aspects of the uprising. But what we had instead was a proliferation of groups which precluded open political debate about the nature of the uprising and the formation of a collective strategy. These divisions reflected not only the divergences on the local political scene but also an (unconscious) acceptance of the state's divide-and-rule tactics.

In the uprising the state's tactics were made explicit in the ravings of Commissioner McNee (and in July in those of Kenneth Oxford and James Anderton), who attributed the uprising to 'black hooligans' (common criminals) and to 'white anarchist agitators' (political criminals). That political line was followed through into the courtroom and can be seen in the more or less straightforward criminalisation of black youth and the more overtly political criminalisation of, for example, the anarchists Patrizia Giambi in Brixton and Simon Los in Nottingham.<sup>4</sup> Of course, the state is trying to have it both ways with the Bradford 12 conspiracy charges, which themselves reflect the state's growing fear of organised black proletarians.

The most negative effects of the insurgents' fragmentation were the competition between defence groups and the attempts by some of them to appropriate the struggle as their own. An example: When the Scarman Inquiry opened at Lambeth Town Hall, the BDC called for a picket. This call was supported by all the other defence groups. However, SOLWAR brought along their own banner and, when asked by BDC stewards to take it down, refused. This refusal was heavily criticised by the other pickets and was seen as RCP vanguardism. But it can be seen another way—as the BDC attempting to limit the struggle and subordinate other initiatives; such confusion was due to the lack of prior debate. The lack of open political debate meant that, whatever differences in political approach did exist (and such differences are always bound to exist), they got expressed in terms of crude competition. Thus it *appeared* that such competitive divisions were consciously desired, or at least self-perpetuating, rather than resulting from everyone's earlier failure to come together for mutual clarification and collective decision-making. In effect, then, the BDC—which was seen as the 'authoritative' defence group—became the superior arbiter and sole source of legitimacy for initiatives. (Hence the absence of the BDC *as the BDC* from the PAPO picket of the police station.)

A second example: It became impossible to discern the pattern of, much less to resist collectively, the police raids which continued for months after April, largely because there was no *common* reference point for information about them. The information which was gathered was not made freely available. During the raids in June, people seemed gripped by a sense of powerlessness which in turn heightened the feeling of fragmentation and isolation. So, when there was street fighting again in July, it was not simply the fact of the police being better armed (than in April) which enabled them to clear the streets so easily. The events in July were an example of one way in which the proliferation of defence groups had compounded the decline of the April solidarity.

It is worth dwelling further on the differences between the July fighting and that in April. The main difference was that in April the police were taken by surprise. That gave streetfighters the time and space in which to gather for large-scale confrontations, which became the material basis for the unity. By contrast, in July there were uprisings taking place throughout the country but the police everywhere were better prepared—with riot helmets, short&light shields for extra mobility, the possible backing of water cannon and CS gas (used in Liverpool) and the political instruction to 'go on the offensive'. In Brixton their chief tactic was mobile squads racing around attacking any semblance of group formations. That tactic kept those of us on the street running around in circles and prevented any large-scale gathering. Hit-and-run tactics were the only feasible form of resistance. (These have been used in St. Paul's and Toxteth in early 1982.) There was little scope for united collective action like that of April. And now that police riot squads have been formed in all the large Metropolitan Police divisions with the back-up of gas and water cannon,<sup>5</sup> the tactics of 'isolate and disperse' will again undoubtedly be the order of the day should there be any more streetfighting. Should this prove to be the case and should they succeed, then it may be even more difficult to recover the ground lost since April.

But, to return to the proliferation of defence groups—how did this come about?

**'....the need to formalise appropriate levels of the organisational process and speed it up is demonstrated by the spread inside the movement of behaviour which, in substance, denies the class the possibility of self-organisation and shows a serious process of decomposition.... This process [of decomposition] comes, on the one hand, from the attitude which makes people accept their marginalisation once they become aware of it.'**

—Autonomia Operaia, 'Movement for Workers' Autonomy'<sup>6</sup>

Of all the social changes of the 1970s, one of the most significant was the growth of black people as an organised force. Black groups organised themselves around opposing the many attacks from the state and racist groups.<sup>7</sup> A combination of the two—the Nationality Bill and the New Cross Massacre—meant that, at the time that the police implemented their 'Operation Swamp '81', black people were on a combative footing and in no mood to tolerate yet more provocations. But this process goes back to the period immediately after World War II and is connected with other relevant historical developments.

The changing needs for new types of labour power by post-war capital gave rise to two trends. Black people were invited over here as a source of cheap unorganised labour at a time of a shortage.<sup>8</sup> Also, with the decline of traditional industries (coal, steel, ship-building and so on) and the growth of service and light industries, women—another source of cheap, unorganised labour—became a larger part of the labour force and structurally more integrated into it.<sup>9</sup> Both groups also received a large impetus from the liberation movements of the late 1960s—the Black Power Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement.

Linked with oppositional developments of the late 1960s was the growth of a whole range of revolutionary groupings, from Trotskyists through to anarchists. Also, since the mid-1970s there has been a growing reserve army of young people, black and white, excluded from the labour process. Unlike the reserve army of the 1930s, however, there is a tendency to turn its exclusion into a rejection of normal 'success' models. Many of these people feel themselves to have little stake in reforming capitalism and have proven themselves willing to defend physically any encroachment upon their 'non-work oriented' subcultures.

All this reflects changes in the composition and self-perception of the working class. Such changes are inevitable given that classes are not fixed groups but social processes. For example, the large expansion of office jobs has 'bourgeoisified' traditionally working class people and has 'proletarianised' traditionally middle class people. The expansion of higher education has given some of the working class a passport into the middle class. Black people (especially first-generation immigrants) have been doing menial jobs while a certain portion of the white working class becomes upwardly mobile. The welfare state—designed to individualise class conflict and isolate people—has been nevertheless used by refusers of wage-labour to gain time and space in which to move outside the wage-slave cycle and develop their opposition through new practices. And so on.

What all the above-mentioned groups have in common is that they organise and express themselves outside of the usual channels of political parties and trade unions (even if the organised left tends to channel people back in again). To a greater or lesser extent they are all marginalised politically, socially or economically—and, in the case of most women and blacks, in all three spheres. This is due mainly to objective conditions, some of which—for example, the structured individualisation of officially 'unemployed' people—were challenged by last year's uprisings.

But the forces at work are not only objective. In such a world, people who are antagonistic to the norms are only too pleased to find like-minded people. Such groups become the reference points for identity, safety and support. Gradually, people come to *accept* their marginalisation, and this 'self-ghettoisation' cuts off people from other oppositional groups, and not merely on 'ideological' grounds. That is, there is a certain degree of (unconscious) complicity with the tactics of divide-and-rule. Friction occurs among groups as each either explicitly or implicitly claims to hold the key to real social transformation, to be the subject of history. (Isolation and vanguardism are often mutually inclusive.)

So, despite changes in social relations that had taken place in the streetfighting, when the task of organising presented itself there was an in-built tendency for people to revert 'automatically' to the roles they knew best, thus reproducing the old divisions. However,

'Since the Leninist model assumes a vanguard expressing the total class interest, it bears no relation to the reality we have been describing, where no one section of the class can express the experience and interest and pursue the struggle for any other section. The formal organisational expression of a general class strategy does not yet anywhere exist.'<sup>10</sup>

Since those words were written almost a decade ago, this problem has become even more pressing. Yet one major attempt elsewhere at its resolution—the 'Beyond the Fragments' conferences—is doomed to failure. 'Beyond the Fragments' failed not just because it attempted to create unity only on an ideological level, but also because it sought to 'breathe life into some Frankenstein monster constructed of the decaying remains of the political movements of the last two decades'.<sup>12</sup> That is, it failed to recognise what is new in the general proletarian refusals of this society and especially the role of the left in domesticating such refusals. What is needed most is an attempt at unity on a practical and continuous basis, a basis which recognises the new and breaks through old ideological barriers. (Last year's uprisings could well provide the beginnings of such a basis.)

But these are not the sole reasons for the proliferation of defence groups and partial analyses. The spontaneous nature and the scope of the actions took most

people by surprise. Before events and their potential could be fully grasped, the moment had passed, the state had regained control of the streets, and the resulting 'vacuum' favoured the people with worked-out analyses and organisational models—almost *any* analyses and models. As the focal point of the struggle shifted from the streets to the committee rooms, it became blurred and less intense through that process. And here is a perennial problem of periods of social rupture—the division between 'fighters' and 'organisers'—which can be seen as the 'division of revolutionary labour'. We must constantly identify and challenge such division. However, it is not enough to challenge it formally, because it persists by default, from our failure to articulate the historically new needs expressed in insurrectionary practice yet still lacking the new language required to counterpose those needs to the old 'socialist' models.

For all those reasons, the earlier suggestion of 'general assemblies' is not without problems. The main difficulties to be surmounted would be: the different histories of the various members, the different levels of commitment, the different goals desired, the fear and mistrust among member groups, and now the more dispersed 'guerilla' tactics required to counter a better-equipped police force. Yet we need to tackle these problems—now—if we are to cease reaffirming our 'marginalised' misery and instead advance ourselves as a class, to advance from defence yet again to offence.

—M. Brique  
March 1982

## Notes

1. *Anarchist Review* no.3 (1977), available @£2 from Cienfuegos Press, Over-the-Water, Sanday, Orkney.
2. Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets*, Pantheon, 1974, Chapter 1.
3. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852).
4. For the charge of 'threatening behaviour', Patricia Giambi was sent to prison for a month and almost deported. In her appeal against the court's recommendation for deportation, it became even more obvious that the police wanted to see her deported because she was an anarchist, whose deportation would provide *prima facie* 'evidence' for their conspiracy theory of the riots.  
In Nottingham, Simon Los was sent to prison for 3 years for 'inciting to riot', i.e. putting anarchist leaflets into people's mailboxes.
5. *The Guardian*, 18 February 1982.
6. *The Ripening of Time* no.12 (1979), available @50p from Revolutionary Struggle, PO Box 1103, 29 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1.
7. See A. Sivanandan, 'From Resistance to Rebellion', in *Race and Class*, Autumn/Winter 1981, available @£1 from the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1. See also the series in *Race Today* by Darcus Howe, 'Bobby to Babylon', soon to be published as a separate pamphlet, available from 165 Railton Road, London SE24.
8. For a concise account, see A. Sivanandan, 'Race, Class and the State: The Black Experience in Britain', *Race and Class* pamphlet no.1.
9. For a concise account of this, see Irene Bruegel, 'Women as a Reserve Army of Labour', in *Feminist Review* no.3, available from 65 Manor Road, London N16.
10. Selma James, 'Sex, Race and Class', Falling Wall Press/Race Today, 1975, available from Falling Wall Press, 79 Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol.
11. Sheila Rowbotham *et al.*, *Beyond the Fragments*, Merlin Press, 1979.
12. 'Beyond the Fragments or Beyond the Left?', in *Authority*, 1980, available c/o 121 Railton Road, London SE24.

# Judge lets anarchist stay

**ITALIAN** anarchist Patricia Giambi who, a court decided, should be sent back home, can stay in this country after all.

A recommendation for deportation was made by a magistrate when he jailed the 25-year-old student for a month after hearing how she had stoned police during the Brixton riots.

But on Thursday, Judge Edward Cox upheld her appeal and over-ruled the decision, saying there was no evidence that she took a leading part in the disturbances.

'I am glad to be able to stay in the country,' was her only comment yesterday—shouted from the window of her fourth-floor flat.

Special Branch detectives have firm evidence that Giambi has strong links

By TIM MILES

with anarchist cells in Britain and Italy.

'She's a professional troublemaker,' said a detective. 'Very anti-police and uncompromising in her belief that the establishment should be overthrown. We hoped she would be kicked back to Italy. But then we don't make the laws.'

Before being jailed last month she worked part-time in an anarchist bookshop in Railton Road which was the scene of the fiercest battles between police and rioters last April.

She shares a flat with two self-confessed anarchists in Carlton Mansi-

ons, Coldharbour Lane, Brixton. The walls of the three-roomed apartments are covered with leftist posters. One shows a photograph of a smiling President Reagan with a circle around his heart. Another urges support for the notorious Baader-Meinhof political terrorist gang.

When police raided the flat, they unearthed a card index listing virtually every anarchist group in the world, with the home and office addresses of members. Love letters from a known Italian agitator were also discovered.

At her court hearing, two policemen said that on three occasions Giambi was seen hurling bricks at officers taking cover behind riot shields.

Her defence solicitor told the magistrate that it was not an offence to have anarchist views.

## APPENDIX: THE CASE OF PATRICIA GIAMBI

### To be deported for possession of anarchist literature

We want to bring to your attention the case of Patricia Giambi, which arises out of the events which took place in Brixton on April 11th. Her story began, like many others, on Saturday April 11th, when she was caught up in a police charge near her Brixton home and charged with having an offensive weapon and of using threatening behaviour and words. Here again her situation was similar to hundreds of others, police accusations resting on contradictory elements of identification in what was a crowd situation in a narrow unlit street.

It did not take police long to single her out for special treatment, however, when they discovered that she was living in the same house as someone on whom they had a political file and who was also arrested that evening. From that moment on, there has been a deliberate and unconcealed attempt to single out these two women and frame them in the role of outside agitators in an event which has been widely recognised as a popular uprising against survival conditions and police provocation. The role attributed to Patricia, prompted by her Italian nationality, is that of the imperative 'foreign link'—an Italian one to boot—where police, through the organs of the daily press, have made repeated references and innuendos to the Red Brigades, international terror links and so on.

As an EEC citizen, she left her local government post for a year, using her full rights of mobility as laid down in the Treaty of Rome, to find employment here and to study the English language. Language difficulties and ever-increasing unemployment made it difficult for her to find work, but she was eventually engaged as a cleaner in a local hospital, where she worked six mornings a week. She has also gained an intermediate English certificate at Westminster College, which she has attended since January.

Over the past few months, since her arrest in April, she has appeared in court on numerous occasions and while on bail was granted her passport to go to Italy to visit her sick father. She returned early in September to face trial and now finds herself serving a sentence of 28 days in Holloway Prison and on completion faces deportation. This is as a result of being found guilty of threatening behaviour under Section 5 of the Public Order Act.

Upon conviction police presented the magistrate with an album of enlarged colour prints of the study of the flat where Patricia was living. The photos had been taken during a raid following her arrest and showed bookshelves containing, among others, books dealing with anarchist theory and history which are freely available in libraries and bookshops. These, plus a photograph of a poster in the same room with the slogan (in Italian) *Bread, love and struggle*, were taken as being conclusive evidence that she was a national security risk, so justifying the deportation order. Patricia made no attempt to conceal her interest in anarchism which, as far as she knew, was not illegal in this country.

When the deportation order was contested by her barrister, Ian McDonald, police overtly reinterpreted EEC law by saying that she was not a *bona fide* worker (an expression which does not appear in the act) or student, and therefore could benefit from no rights. She has been working for over four months and studying at Westminster College in the evenings. She was also at one time part of a libertarian book collective and worked voluntarily one afternoon per week. This was distorted by police and presented as further evidence as to why she should be deported.

She is appealing against her sentence and in the meantime we feel her case should be brought to the widest public attention, as it sets an ominous precedent.

—Friends of Patricia Giambi  
September 1981

**'Anarchy' clue to riots in Brixton**

By JACK McEACHRAN  
SPECIAL Branch' detec-  
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riots.

**Terror plan behind the Brixton riot**

Sunday Express Reporter



popular misconception of typical anarchist

News of the World 26 April 1981

## Yard hunt suspects in riot probe

By CHARLES SANDELL

SCOTLAND Yard is still trying to find out whether the Brixton riots were organised by extremist groups.

Five men and two women seen by police at the height of the trouble have been identified as having links with international terrorists.

But there is no proof that they provoked the riots or supplied Molotov cocktails to hurl at police.

Yard chief Sir David McNee has appointed Commander Michael Richards, head of the Anti-Terrorist Squad, to investigate the

possibility of outside influences.

Both Left and Right-wing extremists had been active in the Brixton area.

The two women suspects were living in a squat where political documents and pamphlets were found.

Police have failed to locate the five men they want to interview.

They believe they could have slipped out of Britain during recent disruption at airports, caused by striking civil servants.

### Postscript to the leaflet:

After she went back into prison upon being sentenced on September 17, Friends of Patricia Giambi distributed the above leaflet (among others) to organise a support campaign for her appeal against the Magistrate Court's recommendation that the Home Office deport her. Finally on October 15 she won her appeal at the Inner London Crown Court. Thus her case did not go to the next step, where the Home Office would have decided whether to accept the Magistrate Court's original recommendation that she be deported.

Despite that victory, we should not forget the precedents set by this case for criminalisation of revolutionaries, in particular:

- 1) Of all the EEC nationals who were arrested on similar charges in the Brixton uprisings, Patricia Giambi was the only one who received a recommendation for deportation in addition to a prison sentence. Obviously, then, that overtly political treatment was due not to the criminal charge as such but to her choice of housemate. It's not what you've done but who you are, how you live.
- 2) The courts' refusal to grant bail meant that there was little point in pursuing an appeal against the prison sentence, as Patricia completed the 28 days before the date of her appeal anyway. The prosecution arguments against bail were that she might abscond and that 'there is evidence to show she is an anarchist'.
- 3) Even though she completed the 28 days before her appeal date, she wasn't permitted to leave the prison until she won the appeal—apparently on grounds that she might evade an eventual deportation order. Since it is common practice for the British state to imprison potential deportees only after they have received a deportation order, the judicial system was treating Patricia *as if* the Home Office had already decided to deport her—indeed, almost as if her appeal could not succeed. Thus her additional imprisonment served in effect to confirm the police theory that she was a politically dangerous person.
- 4) When the magistrate at the appeal hearing incredulously challenged the 'respondant' (the prosecution) to prove their suggestion that Patricia was part of a dangerous anarchist conspiracy, the police declined to make their accusation any more specific but *instead* went as far as to argue that she should be deported as an 'undesirable' because of her association with other people who are themselves 'undesirable'. (Unfortunately for the police, most of her London friends hold British citizenship and so cannot themselves be deported.)

Although the courts ultimately did not accept the wilder police innuendo about Patricia having organised the riots, this was partly because of the support campaign, which had to counter not only the police but also the mass media. (See for example the *Daily Mail* 17 October 1981, in which a journalist enthusiastically promotes the police arguments—quoted in full—as to why Patricia should have been deported.) Furthermore, the police succeeded in setting the terms of reference: on the key issues of bail and deportation, they forced the defence case to refute grave criminal accusations (e.g. organising riots), yet without the police having to mount a normal prosecution case on such charges. So the entire affair, especially Patricia's imprisonment while awaiting the appeal hearing, served to lend credence to the conspiracy theory of the uprising, even in the absence of any concrete evidence. Instead the police pressed forward their case entirely on the basis of Patricia's life, particularly her 'associations'. Perhaps the British police are following the lead of developments in Italy, where the state (especially the Italian Communist Party) is putting away thousands of revolutionaries into prison on charges of 'subversive association'—for which they can be kept imprisoned for up to 12 years without trial.