

**Now You Do Know**

by

**John Downing**

**An independent report on racial oppression in Britain  
for submission to a World Council of Churches' Consultation**

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## FOREWORD

In an attempt to throw additional light on the problems of racism and ways in which to combat it, the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism invited submissions from independent sources for its world consultation held in Holland in June 1980. This pamphlet on racism in Britain is one of these independent assessments which provides a strong statement of a possible scenario of events occurring in this country. WOW Campaigns Limited, a campaigning organisation which gives general support to War on Want (a registered charity), was approached by the British Advisory Committee to the WCC for help in its publication, and has provided the funds to enable this work to be published.

Racism is an issue about which people feel very strongly. Ethnic and cultural minorities experience it daily. The white majority ignores it, or fails to perceive its pervasive virulence in British society. Another minority actually promotes it. We tend to avoid discussion of racism and somehow hope it will go away.

Very few people may actually believe that black people are "racially inferior". There is a tendency in times of economic and social crisis to blame deeper problems on ethnic and cultural minorities causing them to sense they are rejected by the wider culture. This sense of rejection is exacerbated by the feeling that much of the majority population have slipped into racist attitudes even if they do not believe in racist ideas. The ethnic and cultural minorities are on the receiving end of racism — and they know racism not merely in individual attitudes but as a subtle (and not so subtle) oppression built into the fabric of our social, legal, economic and political institutions.

After the Bristol disturbances, racial prejudice and racial discrimination are again on the political agenda. The high youth unemployment among blacks in Britain is reminiscent of the slums of West Kingston in Jamaica. In the West Indies a deepening spiral of unemployment and social conflict has several times led to violence and political instability, particularly in the late 1930s and late 1960s. Now this social crisis is re-emerging in the Caribbean and in Britain simultaneously.

Cultural differences mean that society has to accept pluralistic identities in the future instead of assuming that a "majority culture" is "best". Economic and social problems have to be tackled in the context of technological change and a new world economic system. The poor and under-privileged are united by their common needs and aspirations for changes that will eliminate poverty and allow every cultural tradition its own

identity.

This Report is a fighting document. WOW Campaigns Limited does not agree with everything it says and realises that some of its generalisations may not be easily accepted without further evidence. But we have published it for two reasons.

Firstly we feel that it should be made available to both the WCC and the British public. We have respected its independent status.

Secondly the scenario that John Downing paints is disturbing, frightening — and not at all improbable. Whatever the weaknesses of this Report, the onus is on the critics to show convincingly, if they can, that John Downing's scenario is not a real possibility for British society in the 1980s. We believe it is vital to shake off the complacency that surrounds the issues. We hope that this Report will provoke vigorous debate and constructive, radical proposals for change.

Now you do know!

Terry Lacey, General Secretary, WOW Campaigns Ltd.

## FOREWORD

Aneurin Bevan, ex-miner and M.P., once warned Winston Churchill in a memorable speech in the House of Commons, "not to wince before the lash falls". John Downing's report falls like a lash on the smug, the silent, the unconvinced and the uncaring people of Britain who either pretend that there is no racial prejudice in this country, or ignore the massive injustice, the daily violence and the sufferings that black people undergo. The author, in his preface, feels no hope that the mass of people here will face up to, let alone act on, the appalling reality of the racism that exists here and, because of this, he aims his report at the wider international readership. One is immediately reminded of the situation that pertained in Germany after the war with Hitler, when the overwhelming mass of the German people, having failed to challenge Hitler's murderous racist policies, tried to excuse their silence by pleading ignorance to what was going on in their country. The rest of the world judged them guilty of being accomplices to Hitler's atrocities against the Jews, adding that silence in such situations was tantamount to complicity. After reading this report, I am even more convinced that we in Britain are, for the most part, accomplices in the injustices suffered by black people here and that outside world opinion will condemn us for our appalling silence and our cold-hearted indifference to the racism that we harbour uncritically in our personal as well as national life.

This report covers the whole sweep of British institutions, government attitudes, jobs, schools, housing, welfare services, the courts, the police and the prisons in their dealings with black people. Fair treatment, a square deal, justice, is clearly not what blacks get. Drawing on researched statistics, the writer shows that racism repeatedly goes unchecked and unchallenged as far as attitudes to the overwhelming majority of blacks are concerned. When racism is exposed, as it is from time to time, white society prefers evasions, cover ups and excuses.

By sheer coincidence, I read this booklet as reports were coming in on my radio about the riots in the St. Paul's area of Bristol where black youths had resisted the police after some black youths had been arrested. The Home Secretary, when asked for his comments, said that the riots had taken him completely by surprise. He immediately went on to say that these were not race riots at all, since some whites had taken part in them and they were not aimed at the white community. It is this evasiveness,

tantamount to dishonesty, that this booklet condemns. The politician's first action was to allay white anxieties. He knows it is not a "race riot" even before a full investigation had been completed. Another ex Home Secretary called for special security squads to deal with the situation to avoid no-go areas being established in our cities. Martin Luther King said that riots were the outrage of an unheard people. Bristol convinces me once again of our refusal to listen to what black oppressed people are telling us about our white society.

This book should be read by church leaders, politicians and the leaders of the labour movement as well as by the general public. Church leaders in the United Kingdom, who usually do not read such reports, will never again be able to make the excuse — we did not know. A state of emergency exists in the United Kingdom from which there are two possible outcomes: the first is that blacks could have their grievances settled by being offered a justice that has so far been denied them. The second, which seems more likely, is that they will have to face even greater violence from a state which refuses to acknowledge the injustices perpetrated against its black citizens. Our indifference will rightly be judged by blacks in this country and the world at large as siding with those who commit racist crimes, just as our failure as a nation to act now will mean that democracy in this country is already being systematically destroyed.

**Colin O'Brien Winter**  
**Bishop of Namibia in Exile**

## PREFACE

In writing this report, I was faced with a dilemma. The prospects for most black people(+) in Britain are extremely bleak at the time of writing, and for me to tell this truth, in its stark reality, would mean the report would be dismissed by most Europeans. I was not worried about certain failure to persuade conscious, committed racists. What unnerves me is the mass of people, some in positions of power or influence, who will either not think about these pointed realities, or are happy to shelter behind convenient and conventional excuses for the oppressive conditions they know obtain in black communities.

What I am saying is that there seems scarcely any public will to face up to, let alone act on, these realities. Our liberal culture so renowned abroad has become more and more an outer shell, having within it a fast growing cynical and dismissive attitude toward justice. Among those conscious of how institutional racism has entrenched itself during the sixties and seventies, there is a deep fatalism born of the experience of having to swim exceptionally hard against the tide merely to stem this process, let alone roll it back.

In writing what follows, I have therefore been thinking as much of an international readership as of a readership in Britain. It is up to agencies of international opinion, such as the World Council of Churches, carefully to monitor racist developments in Britain, and to bring what pressure they can to bear on the situation.

I must also explain two other features of this report. I have written it on the assumption that its task is to identify as many strands as possible in the oppression of black people by the British system, since it is the fusion of white racism with several other economic and political forces which sustains that oppression. It would be an artificial and limited exercise to examine racism without reference to these forces. In treating the issues in this way, I am not diluting the specificity of racial oppression; nor implying that such economic and political forces do not also oppress large segments of the white majority; nor denying that there exists a tiny economically privileged minority within the black minorities: but the report's focus is the social condition, present and future, of the great majority of the two million black people in Britain in 1980.

I should warn readers that I have avoided 'race relations

(+) I use this term when referring collectively to peoples of African, Asian and Caribbean descent.

experts', conventional or radical. In my investigation, I have relied upon the testimony of black people themselves, and on the information contained in reports with a specific bearing on black oppression. There is an endemic failure in Britain to take seriously any statement from black people about their own experience, unless and until this experience has been confirmed by an official white-dominated research team spending considerable sums of money that might well have gone into black communities' own efforts. Even those few reports on the black situation which do try in draft to convey that situation faithfully, encounter a well-developed tendency among civil servants to doctor, more or less subtly, what eventually appears in print.

Although this report raises many questions to which conscious black readers will want much more detailed answers than I can provide, at least by its method it falls into neither of the traps above. From the uncommitted white reader, I ask a suspension (if only temporary) of instinctive disbelief that these harsh realities briefly summarised here, can be integral to the social fabric of this supposedly humane society.

**John Downing**  
March 1980

## **SECTION I: The British Economy: crisis and its repercussions on black minorities**

In this section of the report, I will dwell briefly on the acute problems of the British economy and the impact of government economic policy. I shall include some comments on the impact of micro-processors on employment. I shall then focus on several ways in which these developments directly (though not exclusively) affect black people, as regards jobs, housing, education, poverty, welfare and health. This impact, present and future, cannot be understood apart from what follows.

### I.a The severe crisis of the British economy

The deterioration of the British economy has deep historical roots in its cushioning through its former Empire. It is also part and parcel of the world economy, whose most affluent nations — the so-called OECD(+) countries — were in economic disarray throughout the seventies. The US giant itself has suffered from fast inflation, unprecedented interest-charges and collapsing investment-rates. Accounting as it does for 38 per cent of the OECD countries' total economy, its sickness is also their sickness. Indeed, unemployment in OECD countries stood at 18 million people in early 1980.

Yet Britain has been more sharply affected than most OECD countries. A survey of 1800 firms by the Confederation of British Industry in late 1979 indicated that the economy was then entering its worst recession since the slump of 1974-75. Inflation by early 1980 was moving at nearly 20 per cent a year. Chase Econometrics, a highly respected economists' unit in the USA, produced an identical analysis in 1980 both for that year and the decade ahead. So did the long-established Council of Economic Advisers in their 1980 annual report to the US President.

Now economic forecasting and weather forecasting are equally suspect to most people. Yet the degree of agreement concerning British economic prospects is striking. Internationally, a confidential OECD report leaked in November 1979 forecast a contraction in West Germany, Japan, France and Italy, as well as in Britain and the USA. Protectionism — putting high customs duty on goods from abroad, a major feature of the world economy in the depressed thirties — is quietly but quickly growing. An aspect of this in Britain is the growing recognition in private among senior policy-makers that the terms of entry into the EEC

(+) Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris

have also strongly contributed to Britain's crisis.

One of the few teams of economic analysts to try to discuss the impact of this stagnation on future unemployment in Britain has been the Cambridge Economic Policy Group. They have argued that for unemployment — about 2 million in 1980 including the unregistered unemployed — no fewer than 2¼ million additional jobs will have to be created. In turn they have pointed out that this expansion requires a 5 per cent annual growth in manufacturing and gross domestic product: both far higher than is presently conceivable. (Moore and others, 1978). Thus in late 1979 Conservative Employment Secretary James Prior, and Treasury Secretary, John Biffin, were quite correct when they predicted higher levels of unemployment still to come.

The only change that could be foreseen in early 1980 was economic expansion based on rearmament, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Already, global arms spending was increasing very fast: in constant prices it was 70 per cent higher in 1978 than in 1960. In 1978 it amounted to £212,000 millions, or £8000 per soldier — contrasted with £130 on education per school-age child (Sivard 1979). The Thatcher administration was bent on spending an extra £1 billion a year on defence from 1980 onwards. Such are governmental priorities; and perhaps such will be the real cost of economic 'recovery'.

### I.b The 'contribution' of British government economic policy

Throughout the Labour administration 1974-79 there was developed a programme of cuts in state spending. These cuts are a central feature of the 'monetarist' economic policy, in turn the fashionable straw that, internationally, policy-makers have been clutching at as the only means of economic recovery they could envisage. In a moment we shall see what effect these cuts have had, but it is important to understand how this policy of the Labour administration smoothed the path for the even more ruthless cuts of its successor administration in 1979.

The Thatcher administration had already fixed its detailed blueprint for Britain as early as 1976, and reiterated it in 1977 and 1978 (TAPP 1976-78). It started by cutting £3½ billions from state spending, and promptly set to work on a further £2 billions worth of cuts for early 1980. It cut personal taxes as well: 33 per cent of the funds released went into the pockets of the wealthiest 7 per cent. Just 2 per cent went to the poorest tenth of the British people.

The Thatcher administration also continued the yielding attitude toward oil companies in the North Sea that has consistently characterised Labour and Conservative governments — though not Norwegian governments in the self-same position. This has meant that huge financial revenues have been left in the oil firms' coffers. Yet in February 1980, two stockbroker firms in the City (Greenwells and Hoare Govett) estimated respectively that by 1983 either £2½ billions or £8.6 billions could be derived each year from the North Sea in revenue, given extra controls on profits by the British state. Whether their advice will be heeded, and whether any British government would do anything constructive with it if it were to collect more in revenue, remain to be seen however. The precedents are not encouraging.

To Britain's already precarious condition, then, have been added economic policies which reinforce a whole range of serious economic disabilities. Before examining how this process of reinforcement especially affects black people, there is a further long-term trend which demands comment.

#### I.c Micro-computers and future employment

"New inventions have often thrown sections of the labour-force out of work, but normally unemployment, though very painful, has eventually diminished again through expansion in other branches of the economy." This is the conventional defence of the introduction of silicon 'chips' into the factory and office, together with a claim that other countries are introducing micro-processors and becoming more competitive as a result.

But such thinking ignores the qualitatively different impact of micro-processors from previous technical innovations. Without venturing into full detail, it is already clear that they can drastically cut jobs in tool-making, the drawing office, design, the machine-tool industry, the motor industry, telecommunications and mail, cash registers, textiles, foundries, chemicals, petrochemicals, glass, ceramics, steel, assembly work, mechanical handling, warehousing, maintenance work — and last, but very far from least, clerical and office work (European Trade Union Institute 1979; National Computer Centre/AUEW-TASS 1979; International Metalworkers' Federation 1979; Counter-Information Services 1979). Changes to III-V compounds and to Josephson Junctions, the next phase in micro-processors, will allow between 10,000 million calculations a second, and one operation every 13 trillionths of a second.

The use of micro-processors is destined to double between

1980-85 (European Trade Union Institute 1979: Table XIII). One study referred to in this ETUI report predicts 8.7 millions EEC unemployed in 1985, and 10.6 millions in 1990 — but on the assumption that all workers displaced by the 'chip' will find jobs elsewhere. This assumption is manifestly absurd. Even if micro-processors were phased in gradually by one national government to ease their impact, the competitive pressures of the international system would engulf and sweep away this unilateral decision.

Thus to (a) the international recession, (b) the acute crisis of the British economy, and (c) the cuts imposed by successive British administrations, must be added the rapidly growing inroads of micro-processors. Even if there were to be a drastic switch in general policy based on changing policies regarding North Sea oil, the combination of these forces compels a sombre diagnosis of likely economic trends in Britain during the eighties.

#### I.d Jobs, unemployment and black people

Under this heading, an initial word of clarification is in order. In debates and struggles to protect jobs, the impoverishment and humiliation of unemployment are rightly judged the greatest evil. Yet in this conflict, two realities are nearly always lost sight of: (1) the sheer unpleasantness of most jobs; and (2) how state treatment of the unemployed has always been consciously calculated to make unemployment a destructive, fruitless experience, rather than an opportunity for alternative, life-enhancing activity. Thus we should never assume that a mere fall in unemployment is unquestionably good, even though unemployment as presently manipulated is an unqualified social evil.

The sectors in which black workers are concentrated demonstrate both points. They are the National Health Service (medical and manual staff), transport, textiles, foundries, the construction industry, catering, food manufacture, clothing, the post office, parts of the motor industry and the engineering industry, clerical work (PEP 1976; Unit for Manpower Studies 1976). By far the largest proportion of this labour is employed in unskilled and semi-skilled work, thus with least pay and prospects. Black workers are also much more likely to be doing shiftwork, especially nightshifts.

These sectors often have serious health or safety risks. The health service, naturally, exposes every level of ward staff to a variety of diseases. Transport workers suffer especially from shiftwork stress and ulcers. Textile workers suffer from lung



complaints, and deafness. Foundry workers suffer from lung complaints and heat stress. The construction industry kills more workers outright than any other single sector (about 40 per cent of the national annual total directly killed at work).

Catering workers suffer from dermatitis and heat stress. Food processing plants dealing in frozen foods cause skin complaints. The clothing industry employs many home-workers, whose working conditions are notoriously bad, and operates many 'sweatshops'. The motor industry is widely recognised as having an especially punishing labour-process. Engineering workshops often use machine-oils without protective gloves for their workers, and/or an oil-mist hangs in the air for all to breathe. Office work too creates stress, all the more so as automation and computerisation are increasingly bringing shiftwork in their train, in the drive to utilise expensive machinery as intensively as possible. Furthermore, Asian workers without English are exposed to greater safety risks when safety warnings are posted up in English only. Lastly, the higher numbers of black workers on all forms of shiftwork means their greater than average exposure to all the stresses it entails.

Yet one of the Thatcher administration's cuts was in the Health and Safety Inspectorate's finance, so forcing inspectors to cut their visits to each firm from every five years to every seven years. In addition, the Inspectorate was told to concentrate on small firms, further slowing down their impact on the national workforce as a whole. Last but not least, inspectors were told to be less stringent in their judgments, more conscious of the costs they might incur for the firms they visited, in a directive by James Hammer, Chief Inspector (*Guardian* 17.11.79).

These data have been included because they further round out the picture of the kind of jobs black people mostly do. To poor pay and prospects must be added high health and safety risks. The tighter limits on the Health and Safety Inspectorate will help to perpetuate these conditions.

In many of these sectors, unemployment is also on the increase, aggravated in some cases as the use of micro-processors gathers momentum. Office work, which has been attracting increasing numbers of black school-leavers, has been losing jobs for some time, and is a prime area for 'chip'-unemployment. With the increasing closures of small inner city hospitals (London Community Health Councils 1980), black nurses, cleaners, kitchen staff and others are also losing their jobs. Jobs in public transport, textiles, foundries, catering in public sector establishments (schools, post office, local government), in cars, engineering and construction, are constantly decreasing. Women's

unemployment has been growing especially quickly; over 1973-78 it rose from about a sixth to nearly a third of total unemployment (MSC 1979b). This is directly relevant to our focus, since a higher proportion of black women, even Muslims, are at work than white women (PEP 1976: Table A22). Thus it is precisely in those sectors where black people are most likely to work that the highest redundancy rates exist. It is here that racist considerations are likely to govern decisions on dismissals, with white union officials often colluding with employers.

The exact national dimensions of black unemployment are not known — or if known, have not been revealed. A 1978 study in Lewisham, London, showed black school-leavers were three times more likely to be unemployed than white school-leavers (*Looking for Work* 1978). In Bradford in 1979, Asians formed 15 per cent of the unemployed as against the overall city rate of 6.3 per cent (CMBC 1979). Studies of particular localities have shown that there are also quite high rates of refusal, by young West Indians in particular (HCCR 1975), to register as unemployed, thus causing official figures to understate the true level of black unemployment.

This refusal to register to claim unemployment benefit cannot be dismissed as an act of perversity. The prime reason appears to be the combination of bureaucratic run-arounds — to claim supplementary benefits, for instance, means filling out three separate forms in three offices, often on three different sites — and hostile attitudes of a number of staff toward young black people. (This attitude is not confined to black clients, but they are especially prone to meet it.) Furthermore, to be registered may bring unemployment benefit, but it does not automatically bring a job. And if a black applicant gets a job, nothing guarantees it will measure up to the applicant's ability or interest.

Indeed, an earlier Political and Economic Planning survey (Daniel 1968), and the experience since 1970 of the black job agency, International Personnel (in Balham, London), both show conclusively how fully qualified black applicants are still unlikely to be given a job matching their capacity. Thus at one end of the labour-market black people are rejected as unqualified or inexperienced or unstable; at the other end, explicit racial discrimination comes into play.

A different dimension of black employment is their presence in small firms. This is most marked among West Indian and East African Asian workers, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers seem to be concentrated in larger firms. Small firms (employing up to 200) constitute a rather bigger sector in the British economy than in comparable countries, employing over 4

million people and accounting for a fifth of Gross National Product. Conditions in these firms often include very poor pay, bad working conditions, generally poor labour relations, little security — and for black workers, often racist abuse by white supervisors. Small firms also substantially under-report accidents (EHOA 1979: 27). Sometimes it is only when a struggle erupts that conditions emerge to public view — the 1979 strike at Fitters in north-west London was a case in point (BWSG 1979).

Yet the Thatcher administration, with its commitment to its small business constituency (TAPP 1976-78), quickly moved to reduce workers' rights in such firms, removing protection against unfair dismissal (Low Pay Unit Bulletin 1979). The unfair dismissal enactments centred on stripping workers of any rights of appeal against dismissal unless they had worked a substantial time for the firm; yet there is usually rapid turnover in these firms. In other words, firms such as Fitters are given a new licence, which has a direct bearing on the work experience and pay of many black workers, especially women.

It is safe to conclude that both the employment and the unemployment experiences of black workers are grim, but their prospects are still worse during the eighties. The overall condition of the British economy, and their location within it, leave no other plausible deduction to be drawn.

### I.e. Housing, homelessness and black people

We must begin by recognising the generally poor and deteriorating condition of the British housing stock, especially in poor urban areas. Over a million homes still lack an inside toilet or bathroom, and in 1979 another million, mostly built before 1919, needed at least £1000 to bring them up to a reasonable standard (EHOA 1979). 70,000 houses become unfit each year (English House Conditions Survey, Part Two, 1980), yet fewer houses each year are being included in slum clearance areas. Grants for renovation pass low-income homeowners by, because usually the money they are required to provide as a condition of the grant would take them their annual wages to repay a bank loan (were they allowed to borrow it in the first place). Rapidly inflating building materials costs accentuate this problem.

On taking office, the Thatcher administration at once cut council house building from 100,000 to 50,000 a year — and by 1980 it had slumped further to nearly 20,000. They also insisted on selling 5 million existing council dwellings, which will severely reduce local authority housing finance in the longer term to build

new ones. The private house-building slump is a direct expression of the general recession. Prices of private flats and houses were allowed to soar in 1972-73 and again in 1978-79; this new slump can only generate further inflation in house-prices.

This worsening situation has a number of consequences. On the one hand, the number of people in bad housing is increasing. In England and Wales, one child in seven lives in an overcrowded home, and nearly 3 million children in homes without one or more of a bath, hot water or inside toilet (Shelter 1979). People are being forced to wait longer and longer for decent accommodation. In Greater London alone, waiting lists for council housing rose 55 per cent between 1975-79, to 300,000 — with a 97,000 increase in 1979 alone. In urban centres such as Salford, Sheffield and Birmingham, there is only slightly less pressure on housing lists.

A second consequence is an increase in homelessness, though both unemployment increases and harsh council policies against single parent families in rent arrears have their part to play in this. (Council rents are scheduled to rise by up to 30 per cent during 1980.) Thus in Greater London alone, the year 1979 saw 17,000 families homeless.

At the same time, government policy on the homeless offers them no future. From the 23 government reception centres for the single homeless, only 34 out of the 8,000 individuals in them were rehoused by local councils in 1978 (CHAR 1979). These reception centres are often sub-standard barracks with systematically degrading admissions procedures and often appalling living conditions, whose inmates lose rights to normal social security entitlements.

The private hostels which account for another 30,000 single homeless, whose standards of provision or fire safety are often disastrously low, have no government body to check them, the Thatcher administration having specifically refused to fund an inspectorate for this purpose. Another 'avenue' for the homeless is the classic bed-and-breakfast allocation by welfare authorities, which entails people leaving after breakfast and not returning till nightfall (whether or not small children are involved). The alternative for families is the homeless hostel, sometimes desperately overcrowded to the point where brother and sister share the same bed (Shelter 1979).

These pressures on housing are certain to affect black people directly, given the jobs and unemployment-rates of the majority. Studies indicate (PEP 1976: Tables A76-78, B73-107; Phillips 1976) that whichever sector of the housing market black people are in, they tend to be forced to occupy the least desirable properties. Thus a relatively high proportion of Pakistanis are

owner-occupiers, but the houses they mortgage are generally very small and in poor repair when they buy them. Of those West Indians in council accommodation, a high proportion are shunted by many local authorities into the worst housing estates and the oldest flats. Black people are more likely to be in council flats than council houses. Private tenants also mostly get better accommodation if they are white, and black private tenants pay averagely twice as much for their accommodation. This operates differently in council housing, and mortgage repayment levels: in both, similar rates mask the fact that the quality of accommodation is normally a good deal less for black people than white. Lastly, having to live in overcrowded conditions is more likely to be black people's experience than white people's.

An emerging trend is that by 1986, a quarter of all households is expected to be single person households. This category is very badly provided for (CHAR 1979), and within its poorest sections are many young West Indians, in particular. This brings considerable pressure to bear on young black women, especially those in the bed-and-breakfast situation to have a child (and so to hamstring their own future mobility). For then they may qualify for a small council flat. This 'syndrome' is a direct result of governmental failure to provide for this rapidly growing sector of need. Young West Indians and Asians who leave home are quite likely to be unemployed or on very low pay, and to discover that accommodation is practically impossible to afford (Youthaid 1979). Only occasionally, as to some extent in Leicester, do local authorities respond to this need.

Parallel with poor jobs and unemployment for black people go poor housing and homelessness. Data are not available to detect the exact numbers of homeless black people, but it is certain that the proportion is growing all the time. Black tramps, almost unknown even ten years ago, are becoming a more familiar sight. They represent the far end of this spectrum of housing deprivation, yet their increasing visibility is an index of the overall pressures on black communities.

By contrast, Michael Heseltine, as Secretary of State for the Environment, was active in pressurising the largest housing associations in 1979 to make accommodation available to white people leaving the former Rhodesia. One such association, the North British, commented publicly on the unprecedented nature of this pressure...

### I.f Schooling and black people

Despite the hopes of many black children's parents, themselves schooled outside Britain, that the British school system would equip their children, at least, to take their rightful place in the society, the system has not operated in this way. To discrimination outside the school is added a complex package of racial oppression within the school. Its precise dynamics are as yet unstudied, especially the racial dynamics of the classroom; but the effects are clear enough.

There have been a series of inconclusive studies of relative academic performance by black and white schoolchildren. Overwhelmingly, in practice, the experience of black children themselves, and of teachers, is that their achievement is less than whites'. A crucial index of this is how many black school students are entered for Advanced Level examinations. One major study (Townsend and Brittan 1972: 56, 153) showed that only 1 in 5 West Indian sixth-formers, and a marginally larger proportion of Asian sixth-formers, were taking A-levels. At the other end of the scale, it is a matter of common knowledge that black pupils are leaving school semi-literate in noticeable numbers.

The origins of this last process are often easily visible. One, common in London in the early 1970s and still in force in other areas, is the heavy loading of black children into Educationally Sub-Normal (ESN) schools and streams, and into Severely Sub-Normal (SSN) schools. Once inside these, the prospects for a decent job or for rejoining normal schooling are slight.

Another causal factor is the loading of black pupils into 'Remedial' classes. A third is sometimes the 'Mixed Ability' class, an example of how an educationally progressive policy can become another label for a difficult teaching group — again, often with many black pupils in it.

Behind many of the initial placements of black children in poor schools or lower streams — not necessarily ESN or remedial — lies a supposedly more objective criterion: their Intelligence Quotient. This concept and the tests to assess IQ have been shown to be conceptual nonsense, and tightly bound up with racist/eugenicist 'scholarship' (Kamin 1978). In 1979 a California court pronounced IQ-testing unconstitutional because it had been shown to disadvantage Blacks and Mexicans. Yet it is still entrenched in pupil-assessment procedures in British schooling, and there seem to be very powerful interests backing its continuance, which may be inferred from the fact that Professor Eysenck, its leading British exponent, has had some of his research indirectly funded by no less than the United States

Central Intelligence Agency. (He was unaware of its real source.)

More recent developments in London are as follows. Firstly, there has been the creation of segregated units in schools or separate buildings. Black children are prominent by their presence in these units. In primary schools the units have been labelled Nurture Groups, Withdrawal Groups or Peripatetic Groups. In secondary schools they have been entitled Sanctuaries and Off-Site Support Centres. Collectively they are referred to as the Disruptive Pupils' Programme (ILEA 1979). The teacher: pupil ratio is 1:5, but the teacher is permanently with one class, which at secondary level means the children's education falls behind (since no teacher is omnicompetent). Subjects in most are restricted to English, Maths and Arts and Crafts (Francis 1979). Chances of rejoining normal schooling, though set out as an objective, are often slight. Indeed, over half of these units consider 'social training' as their real task. At a time of continual cuts, the government poured an extra £1.6 millions into these units in 1979. They are, fairly obviously, the successors to the ESN schools which declined in importance in London following black parents' protests in the early seventies.

Over and above this, a number of black pupils are, in some numbers, suspended from schools and simply sent home. For this, as for consignment to a Disruptive Unit, the teachers' and perhaps educational psychologists' decisions are sufficient. Insolence, swearing at a teacher, refusal to obey minor orders, are standard reasons. On the semi-authoritative Rutter scale, to be irritable, touchy or resentful under correction, are all indices of disruptiveness (Francis 1979). It is not clear whether the possibility of provocation from racist teachers (BPPA/RCRC 1978; Cottle 1978, ch. 3) is taken into account. There are cases where this decision has been taken without discussing it with the pupil's parents, or even informing them. They have no effective appeal right against such a decision. Further, what 'disruptive' means is rarely precisely stated. Some schools 'exclude' pupils — the same process, but without the formalities of suspension.

All these processes are often most frequently in operation during pupils' final year or two at school. There are instances of black pupils being sent home just before they are due to take exams. Additionally, when young black people who have been sent home meet together in cafes or the streets, the chances of their forming a natural target for police 'drives' is high. The alienation and resentment so well known in working class schools at this age takes a still sharper form, because the nonsense of schooling for unemployment and discrimination is all the more

glaringly obvious (not to mention the levels of racism in many teachers' attitudes). Truancy, schoolgirl pregnancy, and the element of actual disruptiveness, are all symptoms of this alienation.

It is essential that the school-job dimension is not the only aspect of schooling to be assessed, central as it is. The school can easily be a place where children are crushed, both by teachers and other pupils. Racist attitudes, abuse and attacks are quite frequent, to the point where black pupils' lives can be made a misery. In turn, this often directly affects their educational development.

It is easy to see how this can happen if a black child is scapegoated by its white classmates. Bitter experiences of school abound within black communities in Britain. But racism also occurs at the highest levels of educational policy-making and administration. One blatant case is the refusal of educational authorities to fund proper language training for Asian children. In a context where Asian cultures are often despised, and where in general language is vital to people's identity, this dismissal of the need for language-training is effectively an attack on Asians' right to social respect (Saifullah-Khan 1978, 1980). It can also often lead to the erosion of mother-tongue ability in Asian children, with a consequent gulf between parents and children, and potentially damaging effects on Asian children's self-esteem. Any proposal to spend money on remedying this situation is normally met with the reaction that the cuts certainly wouldn't allow extra money to be spent on them. A different study confirmed the low view of Caribbean language-forms among teachers (Edwards 1978), and its effects in poor school performance by West Indian children.

Another blatant case is the practice of bussing Asian school-children long distances from their neighbourhood schools, a practice mercifully now on the wane, but which has nonetheless blighted many young Asians' school experience. This exposed them to playground and bus-stop attacks, sometimes violent ones, because they were no longer together in sufficient numbers for security.

A more subtle instance is the teaching of Black Studies in schools, which has often, despite its obvious merits, become an excuse for not providing properly for black children's education in other subjects. Cultural identity and dignity depend on employability in British society at present no less than on knowledge of one's roots.

We must conclude by noting the general impact of cuts in state spending on education, especially black children's education. The

most visible impact for some years has been the sharp cutback in teacher training and employment. There are 15,000 teachers unemployed, who might potentially have been redeployed into much smaller classes in the most difficult inner city schools. The logic of the system does not work that way; indeed, one of the first casualties of the Thatcher administration's initial cuts was a programme designed to train as teachers black people with less than the usual formal qualifications. Whereas 1 in 25 school-children is black, only 1 in 700 teachers is black. Without suggesting that more teachers, or more black teachers, automatically means better education, there is no question that their absence makes improvement impossible.

A further effect of the cuts has been to perpetuate the use of old textbooks, many of which — in junior school stories, and secondary school history and geography textbooks — are written in racist terms, often defining colonialism as something natural or even noble (Proctor 1975; Dummett 1973). It is rare indeed to find books in use which express the achievements and dignity of Third World people, or begin to tell the truth about imperialism (NUT 1979).

Thus schooling represents a many-stranded arena of oppression of young black people, and one which is actually getting worse. Its impact may lead to severe ambivalence about being black, or at the extreme even self-hatred, as the children interviewed by Wilson showed (Wilson 1978a: ch. 5). Just as there are managers, trade unionists, housing officials, who struggle against racist policies and attitudes in work, so there are teachers cast in the same mould in schools. They will usually be the first to admit the loneliness of their campaigns.

### I.g Poverty and black people

Using the word 'poverty' to mean people living at or below 140% of the existing level of supplementary benefit, then even by 1977, roughly 14 million people were in poverty or at its edge (Low Pay Paper 28: 1979). The Supplementary Benefits Commission testified in 1978 to the fact that supplementary benefits are barely adequate to allow 'normal participation' in contemporary British society. Over 6 million people were then living at or below SB level. The numbers have undoubtedly risen since 1977 as a result of unemployment; if the trend toward women's unemployment noted in 1.d continues to rise, then many families will come to lose the second wage which keeps them financially afloat, and will also join the poor. Inflation, especially in food prices — a

large slice of a poor family's budget — has moved very fast as a result of the EEC's pricing mechanisms for food. These put an extra £2 billions on the British food bill in 1980 alone (Institute for Fiscal Studies 1980). Council house rents, public transport fares and domestic fuel charges have also soared.

Most black people in Britain are somewhere within this 14 million. Although there are, as noted in the Preface, small and medium businessmen, shopkeepers and well-paid state officials (mostly in the 'race relations industry') within the black communities, these represent a tiny minority within a minority. In contrast to this tiny minority the growing number of permanent 1-parent families (a significant category among those dependent on supplementary benefits and council housing), include in their ranks a considerable proportion of young West Indian women. Many elderly Asians also very definitely fall within this category, as we shall see in section I.h.

Knowledge of the real conditions within black communities provides many instances of considerable poverty. Here we will cite just one, not chosen because it is an immaculate life-history, but because, warts and all, it faithfully conveys the intense pressures under which ordinary black people, neither saints nor villains, find themselves. It is the case of a West Indian man in south London, with three children dependent on him, deserted by his wife. He is living with another woman, and they have a fourth child from this relationship. He is almost illiterate, but coming to the end of a short training course. At its conclusion he will no longer get SB money for travel to college and similar expenses, and he will receive £35 a week all told (not including his rent, paid by SB). His flat leaks continuously whenever it rains. The council refuses to repair it because he cannot repay them. The struggle against the damp means that he has a huge electricity bill of £80. He cannot pay it, and they have received a letter threatening to cut their electricity supply off. Two of their children are enuretic, a symptom of this heavy pressure, and so laundrette bills too are large. He cannot get work, partly through lack of job-training, partly because he had a short period in prison for an offence he maintains he did not commit. In front of a college welfare officer, he, a grown man, cries at the prospect of the electricity supply being cut off.

If readers find themselves speculating that this is invented — or only part of the full story — or a suitably dramatic case — then I have no means of convincing them either of its truth or of its representative nature. There is a vacuum in their experience which will only ever be filled by going to the places where this is happening daily.

Yet one of the first moves by the Thatcher administration was to terminate the work of the research team set up by the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Wealth and Income, so that there would exist no agency with the right of access to government figures, which could therefore monitor wealth and poverty trends accurately and quickly. Civil servants in the Department of Health and Social Security were also instructed at that time to omit from then on any reference to the redistributive implications of policies, in their briefing of ministers. These changes reflect basic strategy.

Reactions to this poverty vary within black communities. Some elderly Asians fail to receive some benefits to which they are entitled because of language difficulties. Some young West Indians refuse to register for unemployment benefit. A few black individuals, sometimes given dramatic coverage by sections of the media, cheat on social security. The media are especially fascinated by the more disquieting activities of hustling and prostitution, which have become visible responses of alienated black youth. From 1972, the media took over the police innovation of referring to 'muggers', which rapidly became a second term, like 'immigrant' to stereotype black people (Hall and others 1978, chs. 1-4). This interest on the part of the media is not matched by a parallel interest in questioning the mores and mechanics of a society which puts able-bodied young people in a position where hustling is one of the few areas where they can exercise their wits. But the majority of black people soldier on quietly as best they can.

In the early sixties, the existence of real poverty in affluent Britain was conventionally denied as impossible. Due to a mass of research since then, this stance can no longer be maintained. Poverty is now excused, as an inevitable problem of recession, while at the same time its direct consequences — inability to pay fuel bills, etc. — are attacked as the moral failings of the poor. We have seen this too in the case of hustling, and in the next subsection we shall see how 'Welfare scroungers' are similarly pilloried in a way that puts all welfare claimants in the dock. Black people are particularly liable to be accused in this way of being guilty for their own disadvantage, and so even other poor sections of British society attack them as problem-makers.

#### 1.h Welfare, health care and black people

One inevitable effect of unemployment of up to 2 millions in this country is that the unemployed and their dependants all

become clients of the social security system, so a look at the working of this system is necessary. One important factor to take into account in this, is the way in which social security abuse has become the leading excuse for cutting supplementary benefit at a time of high unemployment. Neither the Thatcher administration nor its predecessor was concerned about the £300 millions or more unclaimed welfare benefit that people were entitled to each year. Both consistently refused to publish the A-Code, the handbook for social security officials detailing the public's entitlements to benefit. (Even a shortened public version of this was withdrawn in January 1980.) Nor did they seem concerned that £1 billion in tax was being evaded — not avoided — each year (the estimate of Sir William Piles, chair of the Inland Revenue Board till January 1980); nor again that those tax evaders who are caught are usually only made to pay back their fraud, whereas welfare fraud is punished in court.

Instead, welfare benefits came to be cut back at numerous points, while simultaneously the campaign was escalated against scroungers/fiddlers/cadgers. This happened throughout the seventies, and culminated in the 1980 appointment of over 1,000 new officials to join 4,400 already employed to root out social security abuse. The wildest estimate of how much might be saved in this way was £50 millions (Mr Prentice, Social Security Minister). How many might end up deprived of their entitlements in this purge, was left unestimated.

The plan was part of the concerted strategy by the Thatcher administration to discipline labour, and so cheapen its costs. The recuperation of British capitalism was said to depend on this strategy's success. Thus the Thatcher administration's use of its powers as ultimate financier against the state-financed motor workers and steelworkers (British Leyland and British Steel) in 1979-80 was equally part of the total Thatcher policy package. Both policies (TAPP 1977: ch. 6, C.2, G: ch. 17,J,S) were designed to attack labour simultaneously, at its strongest and its weakest points.

Meanwhile, certain popular media organs were especially active, as they always had been, in playing up the subjects of welfare abuse and the bullyboy truculence of these groups of workers (Golding & Middleton 1979; Philo and others 1977).

This overall context, including the media handling of the issues, is vital, for one of the standard racist forms of deflecting general grievances is to accuse black people of living off other people's taxes. (If they work, then they are predictably accused of taking white people's jobs!) The coincidence of rapidly rising permanent unemployment, government and media diversions

concerning welfare abuse, and a familiar image of 'lazy Blacks', point to an almost inevitable targeting during the eighties on the black communities in Britain as parasitic. The actual experience among black job seekers, as of their treatment at the hands of jobcentres and supplementary benefits offices, has been mentioned above. None of this figures, or is likely to, in the picture being painted.

Nor do many other features of the 'welfare state'. For example, a Birmingham study (Elderly of Ethnic Minorities 1980) showed that many elderly black people were living in dire poverty, because they were not entitled to full state pensions and had not taken out any private pensions either. The result was that they were having to be supported by their immediate family in the area, rather than by their extended family as in their original situation, and sometimes in very cramped conditions. This placed a considerable strain on their immediate family, given their knowledge — among Asians in particular — of the annihilating impact of geriatric wards on their elderly dependants. Daycentres and lunch-clubs for old people were generally unwelcoming toward them. The content of the meals-on-wheels was usually the equivalent of feeding highly spiced food to the average English pensioner, yet there was little willingness to cater for specific needs in this way. The situation of the black elderly is obviously destined to embrace a growing proportion of the black communities during the eighties.

A different example concerns the closure of nurseries and rundown of nursery places as a result of state spending cuts. A considerable number of young black single mothers are immediately made unable to work or study, and are thrown back on to welfare dependence and incarceration in the home.

A final example concerns the relegation of a large number of black children to 'care'. The word, like so many others in this area — compare Sanctuaries, New Commonwealth, Jobcentres — is a euphemism, often indicating its opposite. Children and teenagers are put into 'care' compulsorily by social workers, which means into residential homes or sometimes into private fostering arrangements. This may happen because the pressures already noted, and many others not noted, cause acute depression in black mothers. This is often defined as schizophrenia or a psychotic state, so that their children are quite simply taken away from them. To already existing suffering is added still more.

The precise numbers of black children in care are not made available, but within black communities they are known to be considerable and on the increase. *West Indian World*, for instance, regularly features such cases in its columns, often

illustrating a chilling inhumanity by welfare officials. The 'community homes' they are placed in — formerly called 'approved schools' — are usually a long way away from their home base, and this can have an additionally disturbing impact on black children marooned in white areas. Education in them is usually very poor indeed, as the Education Inspectorate testified in 1980 (HMI 1980). A similarly disastrous experience is often the lot of West African student parents' children in private foster-homes, the least regulated sector of fostering (Ellis and others 1978: ch.5).

In general, social workers have been encouraged neither by their training nor their social services directorates, to be alert to varying cultural identities among their clients — let alone to the ways in which their clients form these identities afresh in response to their experience of racism. The furthest the Commission for Racial Equality has ever gone in publicly prompting social services departments is in encouraging awareness of ethnic cultures; that not all needs are the same among social workers' clients (CRE 1978; Husband 1980).

We must now turn to aspects of health care provision for black minorities. Under 1.d we noted how damaging to health are many jobs black people do, and also how they are losing jobs fast in the closure of small inner city hospitals. These closures have the further effect of reducing standards of health care, usually poor anyway, in depressed urban areas where there are usually few general practitioners.

The story does not stop here, however. There are cases of dangerous drugs being administered to black women patients in London. The notorious Depo-Provera, a 3-month injectable contraceptive drug, is one. Its immediate side-effects can be very unpleasant, including period-interference, depression, migraine, hair-loss, but it is also possibly carcinogenic and can lead to long-term infertility or even sterility. It has been given to black women in London, and to some white women in Glasgow, usually without any explanation or warning of its dangers. How widely it has been administered is not yet known (Barton 1978). Another injectable contraceptive being used on black women, Novesthisterone, has unpleasant side-effects on periods, dizziness, headaches and weight-gain (Brixton Black Women's Group 1979).

Further still, there are signs that black women are possibly being sterilised without their consent or knowledge. There are reports of this being done to Asian women in Bradford and to West Indian women in London. One interviewed had had the operation at 16 years old in a south London hospital, without knowing at the time what had happened to her, and being unable

to understand her infecundity afterwards. By its nature, this is a particularly difficult issue to follow up, but like experimentation on black and Third World women, involuntary sterilisation is common enough elsewhere to make it very plausible that a number of doctors are engaged in similar 'testing-out procedures' in Britain (CARASA 1979).

Less dramatically, but still painfully, many Asian women in hospitals and surgeries go through isolation and misery as a result of hospitals' lack of language provision. To be seriously ill, or even to have a baby in hospital, with no one to speak with, is unnecessarily unpleasant, and would be very dangerous in any emergency. Many hospitals make little or no provision to ensure there are staff available with the main south Asian languages (Wilson 1978; WCCR 1978). Over and above this, many Asian women feel it horrifying to be examined by male doctors or to undress in front of them. This revulsion is so strong that some shun medical attention for much longer than is safe (Horne 1978). There are enough women doctors to cater for these patients, but many hospital administrators could not care less about this question.

The final aspect of health and health care is psychiatric. This was touched upon above in discussing care-orders on children. It represents an ultimate barbarity, that those whose oppressive experience has overwhelmed them in depression or even deeper mental suffering, are treated in the way they are by many psychiatric units.

For a start, many psychiatrists effectively assume a universal culture (namely British culture) and thus are culturally insensitive to the specifics of Asian or Caribbean culture (Rowell & Rack 1979; Littlewood & Lipsedge 1978). For West Indian patients to speak in terms of religion or traditional obeah-magic, or to feel acutely oppressed, or to hold conversations with themselves, can even lead to their being over-diagnosed as psychotic. Certainly, 'paranoid schizophrenia' — the psychiatrists' version of the classical 'chip-on-the-shoulder' stereotype of West Indians — is a very frequent diagnosis (Lipsedge and Littlewood 1978). The growing number of quite youthful black women in psychiatric wards reflects this process.

One study in an east London hospital showed West Indian psychiatric patients were more likely than white patients to be seen by junior staff; and more likely to be given major tranquillisers; more likely to be administered Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT) frequently (6 times); and even more likely to be given ECT in the absence of depressive reactions, a peculiar treatment pattern. These findings showed that in the case of West

Indian patients the psychiatric staff were accustomed to providing less experienced diagnosis, and physical rather than psychotherapeutic treatment (Littlewood and Cross 1980).

The final element in the picture is the power, already mentioned, of certain professional officials to require that people receive psychiatric treatment in an institution. This power means that social workers may split up families, with Asian mothers sometimes not even knowing where their children are 'in care', on top of suffering from their own depression. At the extreme, the 1971 Immigration Act empowered people defined as insane under the Mental Health Act to be deported back to their country of origin. 'The end of the treatment...'



## SECTION II: Black People and the Development of State Repression in Britain

### II.a Introduction: the general dynamics of the process

In section I, many of the mechanisms of oppression of black communities were surveyed. The growth in state repression in Britain, within the state's liberal shell, is sufficiently serious to demand a separate section of this report to itself.

Given the initial launching pad of student demonstrations and social unrest in the late 1960s, the three main stimuli toward a more sophisticated and ruthless state power in Britain have been (1) the crisis in Northern Ireland from 1968, (2) grassroots workers' organisation from the early 1970s, and (3) the perception of the black population in this country against the backdrop of black rebellion in the USA. The links between these developments must be grasped to understand the situation.

The resurgence of republicanism among the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland has brought the British state face to face with a major armed insurrection inside its own legal frontiers, and this has happened at a time when the imperial role of Britain's army was declining sharply. In January 1978, for instance, the armed forces were in the position of merely seconding some 613 officers to the Third World, 196 of them to Oman at the strategic south-east tip of the Arabian peninsula to fight the Omani Liberation Front, another 228 to Middle East oil countries, and 101 to Brunei (SRB 5 April 1978). This was in distinct contrast to the turn of the century, when half a million British and Empire troops were sent to fight the Boers in order to hold on to British economic ascendancy in southern Africa.

Leading army strategists argued that the Northern Ireland conflict, involving urban guerrilla warfare 'at home', represented the future location and type of combat that would be the armed forces' major concern in the future. Thus Northern Ireland, conveniently separated from the British mainland by sea, and easily stereotyped via classic English folklore as the place where stupid religious fanatics blow each other up, has been — amongst other things — a major testing ground for the British army's new role.

This role, we must be clear, was not to be confined to repressing the republican movement's struggle — a struggle far wider than that of the Provisional IRA — in Northern Ireland. Civil unrest in Britain, including major strikes and demonstrations, was equally in the minds of the army strategists. Their leading spokesperson, protege of Field Marshal Lord Carver himself, has been Lieutenant General Sir Frank Kitson. From March 1980 the second in command of the UK land forces, and Inspector General of the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve, Kitson was previously

in most of the major postwar flashpoints of British colonialism: Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Oman and Northern Ireland. Thus his career spans and reflects the changing British army role.(+) In 1971, at the end of his period in Ireland, he published a strategy book for the army's future, setting out in some detail what domestic counter-insurgency involved. He was then made commandant of the Warminster infantry training school for four years, spent two years commanding the Second Armoured Division in West Germany, and from 1978-80 was commandant of Camberley Staff College.

His views have more implications for the future, therefore, than the average citizen's.

They were given considerable support in the minds of some policy-makers by the industrial unrest of the early 1970s. The supreme symbol of this unrest in their minds was the confrontation outside the giant Saltley power-station on the outskirts of Birmingham during the 1972 miners' strike. A thousand police were drafted in to force a path for lorries carrying coal to the power-station. The outcome was crucial to the miners' bargaining strength, and looked like going against them, until ten thousand Birmingham workers happened to arrive at the key moment in a sympathy march, and blocked the entrance. Some troops were available at the ready, but were not deployed. The miners won.

That humiliating reverse for the state's forces seems to have haunted military and Home Office strategists, even more than the 1974 general strike by protestant workers in Northern Ireland which blocked the government's policy for an imperceptible reunification of Ireland. Taking these and other episodes (such as flying pickets and the 1977 Grunwick strike) together, however, the strategists concluded that effective methods of controlling these challenges must be urgently hammered out for the future.

The position of black communities in this overall picture was rather different. Overwhelmingly, they represented no organised challenge to existing law and order. Yet for the thirty years since there has been any substantial black presence in Britain, they have been the targets of police harassment, discrimination by the courts, and particular oppression in prisons and similar institu-

(+) This combination of colonial, Northern Ireland and 'race relations' experience is very frequent at the top of these agencies. General Cressey, Northern Ireland army head till 1979, had previously been in Kenya, Aden and Oman. His successor, Lawson, had been in Aden, and the Congo during Belgian decolonisation. Sir Maurice Oldfield, security co-ordinator in Northern Ireland from 1980, had previously been head of M16, and before that in Palestine and Malaya. Sir Kenneth Newman, commandant of Bramshill police staff college since 1980, had previously been in Palestine, head of 'community relations' in the Metropolitan Police, and chief constable of Northern Ireland till 1980.

tions. New forms of policing have been tested out on them, since the army was still used cautiously in strikes on the mainland (e.g. Saltley) — perhaps half a dozen times during the seventies. This was still half a dozen times more than during the 1960s, and does not include the major army-police exercises around Heathrow airport to deal with imaginary terrorists.

Because of their degree of separation from the white majority, it has been possible to use and test more aggressive forms of policing on the black communities. In this sense, their long-established role as targets for racist harassment by the police fitted them well for more strategic purposes. In this context, the 'mugging' image discussed in I.g has served law enforcement strategists well, further enabling them to plan drastic actions against black communities — we shall see how in II.d — without fear of major public reaction.

It should not be forgotten that Enoch Powell, whose forecasts have so often become the basic assumption of government policy-planners, has long publicly argued that the black rebellions in US cities in the 1960s, and the republican insurgency in Northern Ireland, will be reproduced in Britain's black urban areas. His own reasons for this forecast are as obvious as the fact that his named solutions are totally repressive. Nonetheless, both Labour and Conservative administrations, aware of the variety of forces surveyed in Section I of this report, have seriously contemplated his predictions, and have begun to organise accordingly. This is despite the fact that Catholics are 1 in 3 of the Northern Ireland population, black people and Hispanics 1 in 5 of the US population, but black people in Britain are at best 1 in 28 of the population.

In this Section, we will focus on certain major aspects of the increase in state repression and how it is affecting black people. Such repression as we have already seen, also takes place in the areas of state housing, state education, state welfare and health care provision, and this reality must not be lost sight of in assessing the material within this Section. Here, however, we will concentrate on developments in immigration control administration, developments in surveillance and the army's domestic presence, developments in policing, the courts, prisons, and the state's relation to fascist groups such as the National Front.

## II.b Developments in immigration control

This might seem a sidestep from the matters discussed above, were it not for the fact that for black communities immigration

control has so far been one of their most widely experienced forms of state repression. Despite repeated legislative action, from the first Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1902 to the Pakistan Act of 1973, (which redefined Pakistani immigrants' rights after Pakistan's withdrawal from the Commonwealth), British immigration control continues to be a major racist operation.

With the passing of the Labour administration's measures against Commonwealth immigrants in August 1965, and its hasty law against British citizens of Asian descent in March 1968, mass primary black immigration came to an end. The overwhelming majority of black people entering Britain since then have been dependants of those already here. The 1971 Immigration Act was partly designed to limit the growth of existing black minorities, for it gave the state the administrative power to fix quotas as it chose for any nationality. An examination of the aptly entitled Control of Immigration Statistics over 1973 to 1978 clearly shows this policy in operation in the first six years of the Act's existence. They indicate how the quotas rise and fall from year to year. Thus certain less developed European countries, such as Spain, Portugal and Finland, figure in larger than average numbers from 1973-75. Colombia had nearly a thousand entrants between 1974-77, then dropped away. The Philippines had 2798 entrants in 1976-77, then the numbers fell again. Most quotas are quite tiny, medium cases being Egypt (averaging 105 a year 1973-78) or Turkey (averaging 86 a year over the same period). Few work permits were issued to people from the Caribbean or south Asia: in 1978 for instance, Bangladesh was allocated 14 one year permits, Jamaica 8.

Thus fresh labour-power was provided, but in the shape of an ethnic and linguistic jumble, sedulously avoiding concentrations of West Indians and south Asians. In turn this reduced the likelihood of any major political unification among migrant workers or the build-up of a numerically powerful mobilisation of the existing black communities. In the 1980s, with the accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal to the EEC, and the EEC's likely extension of free movement of labour to Turkey, future immigrants to Britain will most likely be from these four countries, for they have a combined population of nearly 100 million (though some of them will no doubt be attracted to more affluent EEC nations than Britain).

However, there is more to British state immigration controls than this. When the 1971 Act cancelled the previous right of black Commonwealth members to citizenship after five years' residence in Britain, it created a situation where any black person walking the streets might be a post-1971 Act entrant. White immigrants

did not stand out as such; black people wore no tag or lapel-button to indicate the date of their entry to Britain. Since the Act also gave the police the right to stop and search people in the street, or break into private premises without a warrant, if they had 'reasonable grounds' to suspect the presence of illegal immigrants, the police had carte blanche to harass black people on this pretext.

This they have repeatedly done, raiding Asian houses in the middle of the night, and stopping even teenage pupils on their way to school and taking them to the station for questioning. There is no legal redress for this harassment. They have been particularly active in some areas, such as Southall, in forcing Asian women and girls to submit to strip-searches. The humiliation felt by anyone who is strip-searched is especially sharp for Asian women. The notion of someone outside your most immediate family seeing you naked or touching your body, especially its most personal areas, is very deeply shaming to women from these cultures. Sometimes women cannot face going out of the house for weeks afterwards. The significance of their actions is not lost on the police.

At airports as well, black people are regularly subjected to vaginal or anal examinations by immigration officials under pretext of a search for drugs, or checking for diseases, or at one time — until protests cancelled this excuse — to satisfy the officer that the woman was a virgin. It must be stressed that this loathsome behaviour, though congruent with the National Front and Powellite sympathies of many immigration officials, is perfectly legal under the 1971 Act.

Other practices include abusive questioning, separating parents and children and grilling them separately on details of their application form for entry; and a readiness to interpret the slightest such deviation, or the most marginal indication of a willingness to work during a holiday trip, as evidence of duplicity, and therefore a reason to refuse admission. In their time, British immigration officials have preferred to shuttle destitute British citizens of Asian descent around the world's airlines for weeks at a time rather than let them in.

Those who have been refused entry but who succeed in registering a rapid appeal against refusal, are kept in special detention centres, Harmondsworth near Heathrow airport being the best known. Conditions in these centres are pointlessly harsh, with inmates not allowed to rest on their beds during the day, with great difficulty of access for relatives, with inappropriate food, one telephone, and an extremely unpleasant attitude on the

part of the Securicor guards. (The use of private police for public purposes is a dimension of contemporary policing not covered in II.d; that it should begin with black people is typical of the process.) The objective is clear: to grind in the message that black people are not wanted in Britain (Moore and Wallace 1975). The message is intended to spread out from those treated in this way, to as wide an audience as possible, nationally and internationally. State policy and immigration officials' attitudes are at one with each other. This hostile treatment arises because those who apply for immigration control work are given the necessary scope by the immigration rules to act out their prejudices. They are not bending the rules.

From 1968 to 1979, successive governments mounted fresh campaigns against smaller and smaller quantities of black immigrants. Illegal immigration was the first, though even according to the *Daily Telegraph* in 1970 (a leading bugler in this foxhunt) the numbers involved were minute — perhaps 6,000 a year in the previous decade, it surmised. From 1976 a campaign emerged from the Inner London Education Authority, and spread to the Department of Education and across other local education authorities, to charge overseas students higher fees than home students and to impose overall limits on their numbers in any college. Later, the Department of Education began to put the same pressure on universities through the University Grants Committee. In fixing new immigration rules in November 1979, the Thatcher administration codified a number of these targets: a tight control on black people entering as visitors and then becoming students; a ban on Asian men entering as fiancés in arranged marriages; and a police purge on 'overstayers' of their permitted period in Britain.

The point of rehearsing these details here is precisely that they are details. Their very pettiness reveals the truly obsessive lengths to which British governmental power will go in its search to plug the tiniest loophole. Deporting a 7-year-old girl, whose mother had died, back to Bangladesh, is only one of countless examples of this racist obsession. A 1979 Department of Health and Social Security circular urged doctors to notify the DHSS of 'ineligible applicants' for medical treatment — i.e. illegal immigrants. Such a case at St Bartholomew's hospital in London revealed the pooling of computerised information in this area between the DHSS and the Home Office.

Now that these loopholes are all plugged, there is only one area of 'give' which remains: deportation. Since 1969 this has been urged by Enoch Powell and the National Front, and many

Conservative MPs (+) would support it. The combination of increasing unemployment and future labour-power from the Mediterranean countries mentioned already points in this direction.

If it happens, it will not happen at a stroke. After all, the 1971 Act already included discreet provisions for 'repatriation' of black people in certain categories. When the loopholes are plugged, the state will probably begin to harry the black communities. The most likely official instrument — the unofficial instrument, in effect, is the National Front — (see II.f) for this strategy will be a new Nationality Act. From 1976, the Home Office has been trying to frame such a law in a way which leaves undisturbed British people born outside the country as a result of their parents' Empire connections. In 1977, the Labour administration published *British Nationality: Discussion of Possible Changes*. Cmd. Ppr. 6795. At the time of writing, the Thatcher administration had promised, drafted but not yet produced in public, a Nationality Bill. These are designed, not to clarify the rights of British citizens, but are to whittle down the varying citizenship rights existing within black communities. There is no point speculating about the mechanisms which will be used, but Labour's Green Paper made this intention obvious (Dummett 1977). It is within this context that the original intention to include a question about ethnic origin in the 1981 Census should be considered.

One final observation: black people are the chief target of this of future opposition to the status quo. They are not the only target. As other western European governments know, temporary workers on one-year permits are more amenable to bad conditions, poor pay and harsh labour-discipline. If they lose their jobs they can lose their right to stay, and so their capacity to provide for their dependents. If the majority in a factory, they are likely to be more 'docile'; if a minority, the home labour-force may find it hard to gain their solidarity in industrial action. The overall effect in firms and industries where they are concentrated is that any effective resistance to management is usually reduced.

(+) Harvey Proctor, Conservative MP for Basildon, has made a thoroughgoing attempt to take over Powell's mantle in this respect: "The solution to race relations is when our indigenous people see that the New Commonwealth population is declining rather than increasing." (*Week in Westminster*, Radio 4, 15.3.80). He insists support is growing for his view.

### II.c Developments in surveillance and in the Army's domestic presence

Unlike the apparatus of immigration control, the Army has not yet been used against black people in Britain itself (the colonial centuries are a different story). Indeed, the effects of high black unemployment have included the irony of some young black men joining up and being sent to fight republicans in Northern Ireland. However, it is important briefly to survey the development of counter-insurgency planning, including the army's role, since the late 1960s. Only so can we appreciate the potential for its use against black people inside Britain in the future.

In the introduction to this Section we noted the major importance of the Northern Ireland crisis as a legitimisation of growth in state repression, as well as being a rehearsal ground for civil unrest in Britain. This development of the Army's role has taken several forms: army-police liaison and contingency planning, the Territorials (TAVR), Home Defence, surveillance, and computerised records.

Permanent regional army-police liaison committees have been in existence throughout Britain since 1972. There have been several major joint army-police exercises against imaginary terrorists at Heathrow airport. The importance of effective liaison between them was a particular public commitment of Sir Robert Mark, head of the Metropolitan Police 1972-77.

On the other hand, there has been a strong concern in the highest quarters that the public should not resist these developments on any significant scale. Thus the army has only been mobilised as a strike-breaking force in local situations and/or situations of high public anxiety such as the 1977 firemen's strike. At the same time, auxiliary forces have been quietly built up. The Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve (TAVR) stood at 60,000 in 1977. Its members get £300 a year tax free, and £100 uniform allowance. After 1972, Civil Defence was retitled 'Home Defence' and organised to cope with civil unrest rather than nuclear attack. The Easingwold Home Defence College in Yorkshire, run by the Home Office, provides regular courses for local councillors, council officials and the police. Its principal said in 1975 that "the full possibility of the present internal threat is only just sinking in" (SRB 8, October 1978).

Even within Northern Ireland itself, the army has been increasingly taking a secondary role to the police, especially since 1976. The policy has been to 'civilianise' control (which as we shall review in the section on prisons, has meant to 'criminalise'

numerous aspects of the republicans' struggle). The army there also organised at one time 'Community Relations Representatives', army officers who served on local community committees concerned with playspace for children, etc. Apart from the obvious public relations function, this policy enabled the collection of a mass of ordinary information on who was who in the neighbourhood (Rolston 1979). The modern conception of intelligence-gathering within army and police relies heavily on the merits of a comprehensive picture of the community — and 'comprehensive' can include the colour of someone's front room carpet. The objective is to have such full information as to be able to plan to detach the committed activists from their social base.

Very considerable planning to control civil unrest has taken place in Britain. After 1972, the Heath administration set up the National Security Committee, including representatives from the Home Office, the Ministries of Defence, Environment, Employment, Industry, Transport, Health and Social Security, and the Treasury, to co-ordinate this planning. From 1975 it was renamed the Civil Contingencies Committee. It has secured the mapping of every motorway, high street, bridge and port in the country. Ninety-five percent of the telephone network can be immobilised except for incoming calls, leaving 5% operational for strategic communication (SRB 2, Nov. 1977). As early as 1970, at least one major phone-tapping agency was installed in London opposite Chelsea Barracks. Mostly used by the security services, it can handle 1,000 phone-conversations simultaneously probably by using a combination of computerised voice-recognition and tapes.

Thus surveillance and the future role of the armed forces in civil unrest were being carefully developed throughout the 1970s. Should the police fail to intimidate black communities or strikers sufficiently, there is a further line of 'defence'.

### II.d Changes in policing

Practically the first act of the Thatcher administration on taking office in 1979 was to increase both army and police pay. What had been happening within the police force to justify their confidence in it (since pay-unrest was quite general in Britain)?

To answer this question, we must examine the following areas: changes in police organisation and equipment; aspects of the law with a special bearing on police freedoms; changes in the public political presence of the police; and throughout, the implications of these changes for black people. For after the immigration

'service', the police ranks highest in the eyes of the black community as the agency of state repression most bitterly resented by them.

Let us set the scene by recording formally the two most frequent grievances against the police within black communities. The first is that the police harass and brutalise them. The second is that the police consistently decline to protect them against racist attacks. Experiences of these two kinds are legion within the black community, and some have appeared in print (IRR 1979; Humphry 1972; Labour Movement Enquiry 1977). They include such actions as accusing a 13-year-old boy doing a paper round of having stolen his new birthday bicycle, taking him to Stoke Newington police station and beating him up; such as smashing down a door in Ladbroke Grove on a pregnant woman, causing her to miscarry; such as pushing down an elderly black woman who opened the door to them in Brixton and trampling over her as they raced into her house. The list of such incidents — and these are not the worst — is very, very long indeed.

People who see the police as the only barrier between themselves and anarchy will always play down these incidents. Those who are ignorant of the situation that exists — and the police themselves — will dismiss these accounts as invented. Others try to isolate such events as the doings of a few sadists. What this last argument totally misses — the other two positions constitute impermeable attitudes — is the way such sadists are supported within police ranks. Ellerker and Kitching, the two Leeds policemen eventually proved guilty of repeated extreme violence against David Oluwale, a black tramp (Phillips 1972), had set up an arrangement whereby if he was brought in, their colleagues accepted the prerogative of these two to 'deal' with him. (Oluwale eventually met his end in a Leeds canal in highly suspicious circumstances.) In Hackney, London, in the late seventies, two members of the local police began carrying guns whilst off-duty (in plain clothes) and terrorising the local black community. One black man narrowly survived after being shot in the stomach. The two policemen were simply warned off further action by their colleagues.

As regards lack of police protection against racist assaults, perhaps the worst instance is the position of the Bangladeshi community in Spitalfields, east London (Duffy 1980). This writer can testify, having lived in that borough, that these attacks have been going on at least since 1965. By 1978 the Bangladeshis had been made so anxious by them that they could not even attend night-classes at the local Further Education college, because to do so meant leaving their immediate area at night. Such a collapse of

law and order in a white residential suburb would have been handled with dramatic action by the police; not so for Bangladeshis in Spitalfields.

Let it be clearly understood: the decline in law and order, and in respect for it, finds its source in a number of instances in the police themselves. I am not even referring to the fact that in London alone between 1972 and 1980 about 800 officers, some very senior, were compelled to resign because of corruption enquiries; or that Operation Countryman, set up in 1979 to investigate the same problem in the Metropolitan Police, has met with persistent non-co-operation from the police. Primarily I have in mind evidence such as the reactions of the Brixton community to 'saturation' policing of the area. In a Lambeth Borough enquiry into this during the winter of 1979-80, droves of black people giving evidence said time and again that they were not against being stopped and searched or questioned, or having their houses searched — their objection was to the hostile racist attitudes of the police, their abusive language and violent behaviour: their lawlessness.

This feature has been constant for the last three decades with regard to black people, but has undoubtedly become more systematic and officially sanctioned during the seventies. It is part and parcel of more general trends.

Organisationally, the most striking change in policing during the seventies has been the development of the Special Patrol Groups. The first such group was formed in 1965, but very much as a mobile task force concerned with crime prevention. Sir Robert Mark, Metropolitan Police Commissioner 1972-77, was particularly impressed by the role of the SPG in Northern Ireland. Following the watershed year 1972, the number of police forces with SPG units jumped from 15 to 24. From being a crime prevention squad, the SPG was reconstructed as the British version of the paramilitary squads which in France and elsewhere are a 'Third Force' between conventional police and the armed forces. It was felt that as a police detachment the SPG would have higher public acceptability than a separately constituted brigade.

The SPG is armed, as the public discovered when its trained marksmen shot dead — rather than immobilising — two Pakistani teenagers with imitation guns who held up some staff in India House in London 1975. For doing so, in addition to being publicly congratulated, one policeman was awarded a medal for bravery! The SPG has been used in saturation policing of many black communities, including those in Brixton, Peckham,

Lewisham and Stoke Newington. In Brixton it has closed off streets, stopped and searched passers-by, invaded houses and conducted mass arrests (430 in one 1979 operation, of whom at least twice as many were black — 40 per cent — as their presence in the area would have suggested as likely). The SPG's most notorious exploit to date, however, was in Southall, with a major Indian community, just before the 1979 General Election. The fascist National Front had booked an election meeting in the town hall, and during the day Asian demonstrators, having informed local police of their plans, indicated their objection by their presence on the streets. Later they were joined by large contingents of mostly white anti-racist demonstrators from inside and outside the area.

Accounts from observers and participants (outside the police themselves) are unanimous in their horror at the violent military-style operation mounted by the police and spearheaded by the SPG. The atmosphere was virtually one of civil war, and one demonstrator, a teacher, was actually killed. With repeated charges on horseback, wild batoning of demonstrators, invasions of a first-aid centre and a community centre with atrocious violence against those inside, the SPG had finally come of age.

Sir David McNee, head of the Metropolitan Police, stated in public that the problem in Southall had been that "Asians gave way to extremists". He added that so far as the SPG was concerned, "I still back them to the hilt". In 1980, its 200-strong membership in London was further strengthened by another 60 members and 9 senior officers.

Other organisational developments in the police have included the establishment in 1972 of an Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit as part of the Metropolitan C.I.D. This is in addition to the Immigration Service Intelligence Unit at Harmondsworth. In early 1979 they had a combined staff of 65.

The other, not unrelated development has been the increase in size of the Special Branch, the political police division in Britain founded a hundred years ago as the Irish Special Branch (against militant Irish nationalists). In the early 1960s their numbers were well under 300 in Britain. By mid-1978 their numbers had risen to 1,259 in England and Wales. According to those Chief Constables' annual reports which make any reference to Special Branch duties, their activities seem to focus on aliens, immigrants and Irish republicans (SRB 13: August 1979). Within activist circles in the labour movement their surveillance activities are notorious, especially during major strikes; in the 1950s this was their basic role. The growing counter-insurgency dimension of British policing is also indicated by the links forged since 1972

between Bramshill Police Staff College and the Institute for the Study of Conflict (SRB 2: November 1977), an explicitly ultra-right research establishment specialising in such studies, and partly funded by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

Apart from these reorganisations, there has been a pronounced development in the equipment available to the police. Over and above well-publicised advances in long-distance and night-time photography, there has also been the adoption of computers and helicopters in policing. The national police computer in Hendon, London, installed in 1974, was still the largest police computer in western Europe in 1980, with a capacity of 40 million records. In addition, the Metropolitan C.I.D. have their own computer, installed since 1977, with a capacity of 1.3 million records. The Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit and the Special Branch both have fixed quotas on this machine. (The official Data Protection Committee, set up in 1976 by the government, is refused access to this computer.) The latest development is a very large new computer for the Greater Manchester police force.

These changes in policing technology reflect the main strategy in intelligence work noted in II.c, the gathering of comprehensive detailed information about the population. They must be understood in a western European context, for regular meetings, at Secretary of State level and below, have been taking place between the British Home Office and the Interior Ministries of West Germany, France and Italy, since 1976.

Thus a related development in France is directly relevant to grasping the significance of police computer uses in Britain in the near future. In the late 1970s, the French state proposed to put virtually the entire population on a major computer link-up between social security records, car ownership records, immigration records and criminal records (the SAFARI proposal). The plan was met with a huge storm of protest and officially cancelled. The French state's latest plan (1980) is to produce computerised workers. The computer would be run by the Ministries of the Interior and of Immigration. The records would contain details on about 40 questions concerning immigrants' personal and family affairs. The project is explicitly designed to allow police to expel up to 200,000 a year if they are out of work or considered a threat to public order. It also represents a 'softly softly' approach to the original intentions of the SAFARI project. Thus, once again, the black population is used as first whipping boy, and the racist gullibility of the white majority is quietly deployed against it.

The use of helicopters by the police has been under development for some years in Britain. Most days of the week a police

helicopter flew on training runs over Stoke Newington in the period 1977-80. In Corby, the steel town threatened with closure of its furnaces, police helicopters began monitoring public movements. They are now a standard feature on every major demonstration, both for control purposes, and to make photographic records of demonstrators.

However, the major change in police equipment has been in the use of guns. Special Patrol Groups are armed, as are the Anti-Terrorist Squad and the Embassy Protection Squads. The strategy has been to arm the police gradually, with the same end in view as the development of the SPG rather than the overt creation of a Third Force: gradual changes are gauged as being more acceptable to the public than dramatic ones. The result has been that by 1977, up to 200 police were moving armed on London's streets in any one day. In 1971 guns had been issued under 2,000 times to the police in Britain. In 1978, they were issued well over 7,000 times. (These figures do not include the guns carried by the SPG or the special squads mentioned above.) These developments in police hardware were introduced under the additional stimulus of the massive increase in the technology of repression in US policing following the black urban rebellions of the sixties (CRCJ 1975).

The development of policing in Britain has also taken place in the context of particular laws, new and old. The 1971 Immigration Act's carte blanche for police harassment of black people has already been referred to, but it does not stand alone. The other major instrument of police harassment of black people is the so-called 'sus' law, the provision of the 1824 Vagrancy Act that empowers the police to arrest and charge anyone they consider is behaving suspiciously (Demuth 1978). Used extensively against the unemployed in the 1930s, it is now used equally intensively against the black population. In 1978, 44 per cent of those arrested in the Metropolitan Police area were black, and the London conviction rate was almost 85 per cent. Magistrates, in other words, were solidly supporting the police in this endeavour. In Birmingham the same process is in force, but under a particular city bye-law (Good Rule and Government Bye-Laws, Birmingham, 1914, Rule 5: Committing a disorderly act to the annoyance of residents or passengers), or section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936.

Future possibilities are suggested by the Prevention of Terrorism Act, first passed in late 1974 immediately following the Birmingham pub bombing by an IRA unit, and then revised in 1976. This Act, under the heading of protecting the public against bombs, permits suspects to be detained without charge for 48

hours, or, with the Home Secretary's permission, up to 7 days. From November 1974 to February 1979, 3802 people were detained for varying periods, yet only 58 people were ever charged with offences under the Act. (203 were charged with other offences.) For 3,500-odd people, such deprivation of public freedom has been made possible through playing on public anxiety about bombs.

Such utilisation of public fears is being increasingly developed in western Europe. A 1980 Italian law, which could be taken as a model elsewhere at some point, makes people liable to be held for up to 12 years before trial on charges of terrorism or subversion. Because of their perfectly reasonable fears of being the victims of terrorism, many people do not pause to consider the implications of the 'protection' the state is offering them against it. 'Subversion', often linked with the word terrorism, is a particularly vague term. In Britain for example, the growth of nuclear installations has led to widening security vetting of their personnel, once more to counter 'terrorism and subversion'. How is the latter term defined in this case?

It has been defined as 'undermining' parliamentary democracy by 'political, industrial or violent means' (SRB 5: April 1978). This definition is open-ended, to say the least, and if extended by precedent to Britain as a whole would offer the most alarming scope for surveillance, harassment and even detention, of perfectly peaceful and non-violent political activists.

Another recent straw in the wind is that in 1979 a number of local councils quietly began to include in their bye-laws the right to demand that the police be given 7 days' notice of demonstrations, with details of routes, numbers expected, and organisers' names. The Metropolitan Police now have a general form to summarise information covering forthcoming political meetings and demonstrations, even when they are not expected to constitute a potential 'disorder'.

The final development of the police has been in their new role as a public pressure group in favour of more stringent laws and law enforcement. As early as August 1970, the *Daily Telegraph* recorded that the police were calling for a register of migrants and their dependants. Police Superintendents, for instance, have repeatedly called for much stricter picketing laws. Their Association's president has called for magistrates to be given more power to monitor sentences and to be able to lengthen them if necessary. The Association of Chief Police Officers has called for juries to be able to bring in majority verdicts of 8 : 4 instead of 10 : 2 as at present; or alternatively, for strict and universal jury-vetting. The Judges Rules, the guidelines which to some degree currently



protect anyone arrested or charged from incriminating themselves — the right to silence, etc — have been under constant attack by the Police Federation.

The police have included in their public pronouncements their pearls of wisdom concerning the position of black people in Britain. Sir David McNee, Metropolitan Police Commissioner from 1977, indicated his view in 1979: "Policing a multi-racial society is putting the fabric of our policing philosophy under greater stress than at any time since the years immediately after the Metropolitan Police was established in 1829." He was therefore comparing the present period with the last protracted period of popular rebellion in Britain at the height of the Chartist movement. His accuracy as a historian is neither here nor there; but his definition of the situation is pivotal to understanding the police mentality in the 1980s.

## II.e The Courts and the Prisons

Side by side with changes in the army's role and in policing, have gone changes in the courts and the prisons. These institutions still retain considerable public confidence in Britain, especially in the middle classes, largely because of a continuing acceptance that law enforcement is impartial, and that only genuine villains are normally ever put inside. A mass of TV police and courtroom dramas reinforce this view. But here, our focus is on the diminishing rights of suspected or convicted lawbreakers to civilised procedures; and on how black people are becoming 'criminalised' within this process.

The most visible development in the courts has been the attack on the jury-system, a feature of the English legal process with high international repute. The most serious attack on it has been in Northern Ireland, where on the argument that juries could be too easily intimidated they were abolished as a norm from 1976 onwards, and a system of courts established since then known as Diplock courts (after the high court judge whose commission report urged jury abolition in the region).

In Diplock courts, not only is there no jury, but evidence from un-named sources is admissible. This and the absence of juries certainly together produce a higher conviction-rate, but equally obviously deprive the accused of meaningful protection against false or inaccurate charges. Their use in Northern Ireland against a whole variety of offences easily sets a precedent for their introduction into Britain.

That this is far from impossible is shown by several other recent moves. The demand for tighter jury-vetting or for 8 : 4 majority verdicts was noted in the previous section. Jury-vetting itself, it transpired during an Old Bailey trial in autumn 1979, has been in operation for a number of years. In the same trial, the decision of the selected jurors to declare defendants not guilty was publicly attacked by the judge, in an outburst which might have been considered a personal quirk were it not for its general context (and the blunt refusal of the Lord Chancellor to take any action against the judge in question). From the later 1970s also, defendants in magistrates' courts had their right to demand a jury trial restricted to the most serious crimes (excluding a 'sus' charge, for instance).

We should not fetishise the jury-system — a study in Birmingham in 1975-76 indicated that black people were 12 to 15 times less likely to serve on juries than would have been expected from their numbers in the area concerned (Baldwin & McConville 1979: 80-81, 97-99). Certainly, too, there are cases where white jurors have openly exposed their racist attitudes. At the same time, the attack on juries, like the other developments we have surveyed in this Section, threatens to alter the system for the worse rather than reforming it for the better.

The effect of magistrates' courts and of the juvenile courts on black people's 'criminalisation' in the public mind, and indeed their conviction-rates, still await serious studies; studies calculated to examine, not excuse what happens. What can be said without any doubt, however, is that custodial sentencing in the courts has been increasing and that black people are being consigned in increasing numbers to custodial institutions.

There is no question but that Britain's prison population is proportionately the largest in the EEC outside West Germany (which has something of a tradition in this respect). By 1980 it rose to 44,000, two thousand more than the Home Secretary in 1975 claimed would be the maximum feasible for the buildings concerned. Sentences also increased in length by 50 per cent between 1966 and 1975 (PROP Evidence to the May Commission 1979). Unfortunately comparative figures were not available to the writer concerning the juvenile population in borstals and detention centres, but for Britain itself between 1968-78 their numbers rose from 2319 to 7175 in both sets of institutions taken together; a threefold increase.

Officially, this should not be happening. The 1969 Children and Young Persons Act, heralded at the time as the route to a constructive, de-criminalised approach to young offenders, rested this reputation on two key sections (5, 7) which were never

brought into force. These sections were vigorously opposed by the Magistrates Association, the court Clerks Association, and the Police Federation. Thus Britain has in fact an increasingly custodial policy (Nellis 1979) — except in cases such as the late Sir Denis Lawson, former Lord Mayor of the City of London, who was merely required to pay back the £6 millions he had acquired in illicit share-deals!

It is difficult to find out exactly what numbers of black people are affected by these developments. In prisons, the Home Office prisons department tends to shift black prisoners around at intervals, so that an informal census from inside can be quite difficult to organise. The 1978 Prison Statistics for the first time gave figures for prisoners born in the 'New Commonwealth'. These figures comfortably show black people in prisons at about their proportion in the population. Yet these figures necessarily, and perhaps intentionally, understate how many black prisoners there are through counting them under this heading. In some prisons there are sometimes up to 20 or 30 per cent; at one time, Wormwood Scrubs fell into this category.

However, borstals and detention centres may at the time of writing be even more significant. That there is a disproportionate loading of young black people, predominantly of Caribbean origin, into these institutions, is certainly the experience of the black communities themselves, as of experienced social workers, community workers and probation officers. In London, if Stamford House Remand Centre and its 'sister' institution, Cumberlow Lodge, are any index, then the proportion of black boys and girls being processed through the courts must be very high in relation to their numbers in the population. Both institutions regularly have a third or more black inmates. A 1979 study in the West Midlands (WMPACS 1980) indicated that probation officers' main work with black people in the region was during and after custodial sentences. A third of those in borstal, a quarter of those in detention centres, a quarter on parole, in the officers' caseloads, were black. In certain areas (North and South Birmingham) the borstal rates were almost two-thirds of their borstal case-loads. In Wolverhampton, over 50 per cent of those sent to detention centres were black. Another study by a probation officer cited in this report indicated that Handsworth courts tended to recommend black clients for custodial sentences much more often than for social enquiry reports or any form of intermediate treatment.

Even within this situation, there are important differences. The 'Eton' of the borstal system, Gaynes Hall, where inmates can study for A-levels, rarely if ever has black inmates.

The processes behind this horrifying weighting that is taking place cannot be ascribed either to alienation and urban stress (the 'soft' version) or exaggerated criminality (the 'hard' version) among young black people. They are solidly located within the court system itself. This awaits serious study in relation to black people, but the following considerations are central to understanding its general operation.

Firstly, there is a noticeable tendency among social workers to put black children into 'care'. In doing so, they are usually legally advised by court officers, themselves quite often former policemen. What 'care' can mean was noted in I.h, but it should also be realised that a 'care' order is in practice often simply the first step toward much more serious encounters with the courts in future. We have just noted how rarely black clients are recommended for intermediate forms of treatment such as supervision orders (the equivalent of probation, but under a social worker's tutelage). Lawyers, sometimes with a very close working relationship with court 'officials' engage in the normal practice of trying to get sentences reduced in return for a 'guilty' plea (Baldwin & McConville 1977). Such lawyers may have had little or no previous relation with black clients. Thus black clients may be pressurised into pleading guilty through inexperience, even though they may only be there in the first place because a policeman has arrested them on a 'sus' charge or some total fabrication. (Good arrest-rates, whatever police public protestations to the contrary, are helpful to police careers.)

Thus not all the responsibility for this heavy loading of young black people in particular into custodial institutions need rest with magistrates. But the bench is practically all-white, and it is patently tolerant of 'sus' charges and ready to sentence people accordingly. Another standard practice is to refuse bail, thus putting people in jail for perhaps months at a time because of court backlogs. Such people may eventually be found not guilty. Despite occasional official statements that "something must be done about these delays between charge and trial", use of this effective detention without trial is a favourite weapon in the judicial armoury. In the period immediately before the 1977 royal jubilee long weekend, black defendants were refused bail in especially large numbers, because police chiefs decided there might be disorder in black communities during the celebrations. (The police themselves maintained a discreet but major alert.)

A classic instance of magistrates in action which received some publicity after a time — how many such cases every receive any? — was the court trial of 342 people, overwhelmingly black, found guilty after the police rampage in Southall in 1979. At one point

even some people called purely as witnesses were being bound over to keep the peace! Defendants with numerous respectable witnesses to testify their innocence — doctors, St. John's Ambulance Brigade people — were nonetheless found guilty. Sometimes even later police testimony in the very long series of police trials actually supported the versions of defendants earlier found guilty (*Searchlight* 56: 1980). The publicity probably began to have its effect, for later defendants in the series began to be acquitted in some cases. Till then, one magistrate had a 93 per cent conviction rate. Even so, no appeal by those previously convicted had been successful up to February 1980. The objective of this exemplary series of trials seems to have been to operate reprisals against a representative sample of the Southall Asian community in particular.

In the end, it is only the police's assurance that the magistrates will normally support them, which makes it worth their while to arrest black people in the large numbers they do. Magistrates' courts used to be officially known as 'police courts'. The change of name has made no difference to the reality. The Juvenile Courts set up under the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act are not dissimilar in practice.

The judges of Britain represent no advance on magistrates. We have already noted judicial reaction to disclosures of jury-vetting, and the contribution of Judge Diplock to British justice. It was Judge Widgery, later to be appointed Lord Chief Justice, whose investigation of the Army slaughter of 13 unarmed demonstrators in Derry in 1972, led to no prosecutions. It was Judge McKinnon who in 1978 acquitted John Kingsley Read, leader of a fascist group, of incitement to racial hatred, and wished him luck. (Read had acclaimed the murder of an Indian boy in a speech with the comment "One down, a million to go".) It was Judge Comyn who in 1980 set free the killer of an Asian man, because a technicality forced him to sentence for three years or release the killer (*Guardian* 4.3.80). (The Asian victim had merely sat opposite his killer in the London Underground; the killer claimed that his victim had smiled at him, and that he had interpreted this as a homosexual advance. He killed the passenger with a single violent kick to the head.)

Life in custodial institutions for black inmates also has yet to be studied properly (Letter from Prison, *Race Today*, January 1971). Nonetheless, some indications are emerging. In the riots which have come to characterise British High Security prisons (Hull 1976, Gartree, near Leicester, 1978, Wormwood Scrubs 1979), black and Irish prisoners have suffered especially badly in the reprisals by prison officers (many formerly in the army).

Indeed the Gartree riot was over the 'liquid cosh', i.e. the administering of tranquilliser drugs and depressants to prisoners, which takes place on an increasing scale nowadays (*PROP Bulletin* 2.6 Winter 1978-79) as a purely disciplinary measure. Prisoners' anger at this policy boiled over in the Gartree riot, triggered by the 'liquid cosh' being administered (it so happened) to a black prisoner. This aspect of the riot was sponged clean from the national media: despite the considerable turnout of press photographers and a TV crew at the press conference at which his father (a black pastor) spoke, no picture of his father or sister ever emerged in public or reference to their colour in the stories that were printed. Indeed, the TV crew would only interview the press conference organiser.

Racism in prisons takes additional forms. In detention centres such as Aldington, with sometimes over 20 per cent black inmates, these latter are rarely allowed to pass first time the test which regrades all boys after their first three weeks there. Black prisoners tend to be sent to prisons where parole-rates are generally low, not to the open prisons where they are much higher. Racist white inmates are quite often encouraged to attack black inmates by certain prison officers or borstal staff. Another tactic is to put a black prisoner in a cell with one or two racist whites. The Home Office decreed in 1979 that it was permissible to cut the locks of Rastafarians in prison — the very symbol of their rejection of white oppression. Since prison officers and similar staff are virtually impossible to sue or restrain from abuse in other ways, their treatment of black prisoners, their unfavourable 'landing' reports on them, are effectively out of control. Not every prison officer, any more than every policeman, teacher, social worker or magistrate, falls into this category; the point is that the custodial system gives considerable leeway to those in authority to exercise their racism with impunity.

This is particularly alarming in view of the secret formation in 1978 of the MUFTI squads — Minimum Use of Force Tactical Intervention Squads. They were set up after the Hull prison riot in 1976 "Don't Mark His Face" 1979, and up to the time of writing have been deployed in Gartree, Styal, Hull, Lewes, Camp Hill, Brixton, and — with the heaviest violence — in August 1979 in Wormwood Scrubs. Doctors were stitching from 10pm to 2am, eventually running out of stitching material. At first the Home Office denied both the incident and the existence of the MUFTI squads, and sacked a prison visitor for leaking the news to the press. The squads have been trained on 73 sites, very much along the lines of the SPG and the Army in Northern Ireland. They are a formal, even more dangerous version of what used to be called

'the heavy mob' in prisons, groups of officers especially detailed to restore order violently. Black prisoners will be extremely vulnerable to these squads.

Lastly, we should note the effects of criminalising political resistance in prisons in Northern Ireland. Since the Labour administration's decision in March 1976 that republican prisoners should no longer have political status, they were redefined as criminals. It was the other side of the coin of retiring the army, putting control back into the hands of the police, and instituting Diplock courts. The prisoners decided to refuse to wear prison uniforms, since they were now a badge of criminal status. In turn, the prison authorities in Long Kesh prison camp refused to allow them any other clothes, so that they were reduced to wearing the blankets off their beds even in the coldest weather. When this protest proved ineffective, they took the further step of refusing to empty their faeces buckets, and instead smeared the contents over their cells, the one method of discomforting the prison staff they could find. Conditions in H-block in Long Kesh prison camp are, according to the Cardinal of Ireland, atrocious. Once 'subversion' is defined as criminal, consequences such as this easily follow.

Accounts of racial oppression in Britain, present and impending, which omit consideration of the courts and custodial institutions, are seriously incomplete. These institutions, together with the media (see III.b), are actively producing a second, 'criminal' image to set beside the definition of black people as perpetually 'immigrants'. Either way, they are defined as outside British society's normal pale, unworthy of normal rights. The fact they are so severely oppressed by courts and prisons in Britain, is not, apparently, enough.

## II.f Fascist Groups and the State

A great deal of the popular opposition to impending repression in Britain has concentrated its attention on fascist groups, especially the National Front, in a 're-run of Hitlerism' model. Without a doubt fascist groups in Britain have a consciously pro-Nazi core (Billig 1978), but their followers are essentially drawn to support them by their violent hostility to black people. Some accounts of NF electoral support have argued the group attracts a protest vote, but leave it totally unexplained why voting fascist should be the chosen form of protest.

Others have correctly pointed to the fact that the state, as we have seen consistently throughout Section II, has been develop-

ing its repressive mechanisms in many areas — and unlike small fascist groups, has the power to do so in the present. This opinion tends to dismiss fascist groups as irrelevant.

An accurate assessment, while recognising the much greater strengths of the second analysis, cannot proceed simply to dismiss fascist groups as irrelevant. For one thing, it is clear that the state provides these groups with considerable protection at certain points. A Special Branch Officer, interviewed on the TV current affairs programme *World in Action* in 1978, stated publicly that through infiltrating their ranks he had knowledge of numerous plans to attack black people in the street, burn down Asians' shops, etc. Yet no one was prosecuted or even publicised as a result. When the NF's national organiser decided to do a one-man march in Hyde, Manchester, in 1977, half a million pounds were spent on police and police helicopters to protect him. A constable on duty at the Southall demonstration against the NF admitted later in court that they had been told to bar from the National Front's 'public' election meeting in the Town Hall anyone who had not been cleared by the National Front themselves.

Additionally, fascists or fascist sympathisers are to be found in the police, prison service and allied professions, not to mention their considerable presence in some local government offices, such as housing and social security. Here they are able to put their prejudices into practice. Knowledge of fascist groups in other countries demonstrates this standard overlap, especially in law enforcement agencies, and the extent to which in some circumstances fascists are deployed covertly to undertake actions which the state's forces do not wish to be seen to undertake themselves.

Thus our concern must be, not an artificial choice between the two, state repression on the one hand, or fascist groups on the other, but their inter-relation. Officially, both Labour and Conservative hierarchies have condemned the National Front, yet at the same time their laws against black immigration have only fallen seriously short of the National Front's proposals in respect of admitting dependants of those here, and deportation. Indeed, as we have seen, their competition with each other to check black immigration in the 1960s set up the situation in which Powellism and the National Front could flourish. Their condemnation of the National Front is akin to their earlier condemnation of Enoch Powell: for the violence of his language — hardly the central issue.

Furthermore, in a number of key marginal constituencies, the National Front can make for substantial uncertainty as to the

outcome for either party, and thus often has a disproportionate effect on the kind of speeches made nationally by senior politicians to get TV attention. They are certainly anxious to avoid any suspicion of being 'soft' on black immigration. Since neither the Conservative nor Labour party any longer has an urban mass base, a party which erupts out of the lower depths, even if fascist, is a phenomenon which unnerves them. They have no confidence in how to deal with it, and so try to cut the ground from under its feet by stealing its platform. One reason for the Thatcher administration's general election vote in some inner city areas in 1979 was its image as hostile to black immigration.

The contradictory relation between the state and the National Front can best be grasped by an analogy. It is as though a shopkeeper, afraid of thefts and attacks, were to take in a savage alsation dog as a guard dog, keeping it hungry at night to increase its dangerousness. The animal would undoubtedly be extremely effective in frightening off prospective petty criminals, while at the same time always holding the menace of possibly turning on its owner. In the last resort, the owner knows he has the power to put it down if it were to savage him rather than simply terrorise others. They have a tense relationship, but effective from the owner's point of view.

There is little doubt that for British administrations, the existence of a major target for public discontent (outside themselves, the EEC, the oil companies and other transnationals) has a decided virtue, provided that discontent merely simmers rather than completely boiling over into severe public disorder. The black communities have become such a target, accused effectively of making a difficult economic situation worse by their demands on the economy. The history of the British Empire, ingrained in British culture from the designation 'Great' Britain downward, made it certain they could be cast in this role. The policies of successive British governments have cemented it. To the functional advantages of alternating party governments, in terms of channelling off public resentment at regular election intervals, is added a continuing 'issue' which is local, immediate and visible to the average members of the white public.

### II.g Conclusions to Section II

Analysing these processes of growing state repression is akin to being aboard a ship in a dense fog and detecting the first frightening shapes of trouble looming up over ahead out of the mists. For the black communities, as for republicans in Northern

Ireland and for groups of strike-activists on occasion, what is looming up out of the mist has already been directly seen and experienced. They have been involuntarily stalking horses for the majority of the population. For the circles of power in Britain, there is no doubt that for repression to be localised in this way is of the greatest advantage, for it means that the worst effects of the system are still mainly concentrated in quarters that lack the concern or solidarity of the majority. Yet the information in Section I indicates that this localisation may not continue to be the case in Britain during the eighties. In this event, the mechanisms of control have been tried and tested — though there is massive mileage left in the 'politics of repatriation' before these mechanisms need be fully deployed against the majority.

The growing changes we have seen in immigration control enforcement, in the army's domestic role, in policing, in court procedures and prison organisation, together with the running sore of the National Front, collectively point in this direction. It is an apt but bitter commentary on the character of British policy-making and policy-makers that so much attention and thinking should be lavished on methods of repressing protest rather than on removing gross inequalities of privilege and power — inequalities which are seen at their most acute in state treatment of black communities.

## SECTION III: 'Constructive' Institutions and Policies

### III.a Introduction

The bleak picture drawn so far will no doubt be rejected out of hand by some, especially if they have a stake, real or imagined, in the existing order. A few may use the inadequacies of existing information on a number of topics discussed as a reason for querying an array of details, attempting to discredit the report as a whole. Still others may concede that there are serious grounds for 'disquiet', but that the report has paid no attention so far to the agencies and policies which exist to alleviate these problems.

Those who claim there are no real problems for black people in Britain are themselves part of the problem, and I do not propose to address them here. Those who are reassured by the existence of apparently constructive institutions and policies, must be ready to take a hard look at them to see whether they are indeed fulfilling their proclaimed objectives. Section III of this report is an introduction to that exercise.

We will begin with comments on some core institutions in Britain (parliament, the law, the civil service, schools, media, trade unions). We will then examine certain economic and social reform programmes (Manpower Services Commission programmes, the Commission for Racial Equality, urban deprivation programmes, educational experiments), and lastly, we will note the activities of the poverty lobby, academics, and radical political organisations.

### III.b Core Public Institutions

Those who accept the conventional view of British society will usually cite a whole battery of institutions which enable its aggrieved members to gain redress for their troubles: parliament, the media, trade unions, the welfare state in the short term, free education in the longer term. Indeed, Britain is often contrasted with military dictatorships or soviet-type societies as a place, not without faults, but where faults can be publicly aired and where the will exists to solve them. Apart from its oversimplification of the dynamics of these other regimes, this view of Britain is a good deal too rosy to apply to the black population's experience in particular, as Sections I and II illustrate.

We have seen how it has been precisely successive parliaments which have voted in immigration laws designed not to administer immigration as such, but to check black immigration, ignoring in the process certain fundamental tenets of good law, such as the right of appeal. We have seen how welfare state agencies have

often defined black people in practice, and how even welfare benefits are being reined back by inflation and government refusal to keep them at a reasonable level. We have seen how the supposedly neutral law is administered and enforced in harsh ways against members of black communities. The similarly neutral civil service, in the shape of the Home Office in particular and many local government departments in general, has been seen to be distinctly partial in the case of black people. Thus central institutions of British government have often been, not in favour of black people, nor neutral, but somewhere between hostile and neglectful toward them.

The contradictions which certainly exist in British state policy toward black communities are often taken as proof of British large-heartedness, according to the classical liberal image of the country. Admittedly, British society does not operate like South Africa or Nazi Germany (hardly something to pride oneself on). But it must be understood in its own terms, and the racism within it must not be loosely compared with other countries' and pronounced 'not guilty' by comparison. Its virulence works by other mechanisms, and is not pre-set within certain limits. This last recognition is noticeably absent from most thinking on the subject among the white British.

Let us though examine some of the other institutions so far left out of account, particularly the law, the media and the unions.

As regards the law, there are three aspects not yet examined which need to be: the Race Relations Acts, the immigration appeals machinery in the 1971 Immigration Act, and the Police Complaints Board. There have been three anti-discrimination Acts, 1965, 1968 and 1976. The second and third extended the law to cover several major aspects of racial discrimination — but pointedly excluded a number of enforcement procedures common in similar laws in the United States. The result is that the law has bark but no bite. In addition, like all such legislation, it operates piecemeal, a case at a time, and therefore can never achieve major structural change in favour of black rights. Paradoxically, this law has an image, sedulously fostered by certain media, of being a draconian 1984-style thought-control enactment, outlawing prejudiced thoughts, and giving black workers a right of appeal on discrimination grounds (against redundancy, inability to get council housing, etc.) denied to white workers. Thus the Acts have only marginally affected black rights, but have often increased white workers' racist resentment: the worst of both worlds.

The appeals machinery in the 1971 Immigration Act against refusals to admit is obviously better than no appeals machinery.

However, it is exceptionally difficult to operate from the immigrants' home country, since a minute degree of agreement on details often has to be established between the applicant there and their relatives in Britain. The tone of the procedures in Britain is normally very legalistic and the would-be immigrant effectively has to prove he was not attempting to deceive the immigration officer — i.e. is guilty till proved innocent (Moore and Wallace 1975: ch. 5). Furthermore, for people deemed to be overstayers there is no appeal or legal process of any kind, e.g. no access to bail procedures, since they are defined as illegally present in Britain in the first place. Over 6000 such people were arrested in Britain between 1973 and 1979. In 1978 there were over 250 in prison on this ground at any one time, before being deported. Appeal to the Home Office is possible in this case, but is very rarely successful.

Lastly, another form of appeal, this time against the police. The procedure since 1977 has been that the local police hand complainants a leaflet outlining the procedure, and warning them they can be sued for 'false or malicious' complaints. Cases which complainants still bring are locally investigated, and a report sent to the Police Complaints Board. In 1978 this Board only disagreed 15 times out of nearly 12000 with the local police, and thus initial police opposition to its inception has swung to warm approval. The two largest categories of complaint were police assaults and breaches of the Judges Rules (right to silence etc.). Even in Northern Ireland where a government Report (Bennett Report 1979) confirmed police violence during interrogation at Castlereagh station, only 19 policemen were prosecuted in the whole of Northern Ireland during the period 1972-78. Sir Kenneth Newman, then in charge, formally denied all the charges of police violence on TV. There was a smear story in the media against the doctor who originally exposed these abuses. Of such calibre is the thin blue line between order and anarchy.

Police liaison officers' role with black communities should be understood within the context of the army Community Relations Representatives in Northern Ireland, noted in I.L.C., namely public relations and/or surveillance.

A brief word is in order on appeals within prisons. The rules specify that if a prison officer considers a prisoner intends to break a variety of rules, he may take disciplinary action against him ('sus' for prisons). The Prison Visitors' Boards have very extensive powers of intervention into prisons if they choose to utilise them. The composition of these Boards makes it exceptionally unlikely they would every use such powers; those actively concerned to redress prisoners' grievances stick out like a

sore thumb.

Perhaps the first point to note concerning the media is the infinitesimal number of black journalists. Hiring token black people would obviously not change this, but there is a conspicuous lack of awareness among editors of the value of looking for promising black recruits and training them. Trevor MacDonald, the first black TV news reporter, after considerable broadcasting experience in Trinidad, had been working part-time for the BBC for years before ITN eventually hired him.

This reflects the low priority the media have placed on reporting racism, as contrasted with their close relation with the state, in focussing almost exclusively on 'immigration' — or, more latterly, 'mugging' (Hartmann & Husband 1973; Downing 1975; Hall and Others 1978: chs. 1-4). In practice, the media have rarely allowed black people to air grievances. On the contrary, the media have diffused to the mass of the population a view of black people as causing problems and flooding into the country. Studies (Hartmann & Husband 1973; Studlar 1974, 1977) show conclusively that attitudes to black people do not vary over Britain with their presence or absence; yet the media are the only common source of information about them both inside and outside of areas containing a black presence. So far from being an agency of redress for black people, the media in general have been an important strand in their oppression.

Naturally, as in every other sector, there are committed anti-racists in journalism. The changing fortunes of the 342 defendants in the Southall trial after their treatment began to receive some publicity, are a case in point. Yet even allowing for this, there are signs of increasing pressure on the media from on high, as might be expected to be the case in line with other developments in state repression in Britain.

The most salient example, but as in every other instance an example which is isolated at peril from more general developments, is the new control imposed on the media, especially broadcasting, in their coverage of Northern Ireland since the situation erupted in 1968. Several commercial channel TV documentaries on Ireland were made, but denied permission to be screened by the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The BBC, with a more centralised organisation, came to require that its journalists should get express permission from the Editor of News and Current Affairs before seeking any interview with any member of the Provisional Republicans. After an incident in 1979 when a BBC film crew shot a film without dialogue of a Provisional IRA roadblock in a village, the British press claimed it had filmed large scale military exercises. The Northern Ireland

Office, the Army and the RUC knew the truth of the incident within 24 hours, yet kept silence. The police seized the film — unshown to the public — Mrs Thatcher condemned the BBC publicly, the programme editor was threatened with the sack, and he and the head of current affairs were reprimanded. All future reference to Northern Ireland by BBC journalists had then to be personally passed by the BBC controller in Northern Ireland. This was calculated to make journalists think many times before reporting on Northern Ireland, and to ensure all future coverage was non-controversial.

The most acute crisis within the UK's frontiers has been the Northern Ireland crisis. Its prompting of controls not usually found necessary is a guide to what may take place in future crises concerning the black communities of Britain, were the disturbances to arouse the interest or conscience of campaigning journalists. Indeed, as the episode concerning the Gartree black prisoners' press conference in I.I.f shows — and there is other evidence of this — media organisations already avoid issues whose publication might influence opinion inside black communities. (The objective of the press conference, and the riot at Gartree itself, had not been to stress that a black prisoner was the occasion of the riot.)

Other signs of the times for journalists during the late seventies were the deportation of two American investigative journalists, Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball, and the trial of three radical journalists, Aubrey, Berry and Campbell (who were acquitted eventually). The Metropolitan Police began issuing special police press cards for briefings during demonstrations and street conflicts, such as the Notting Hill Carnival. The established media were given them; radical newspapers were denied them. A newspaper which announced the jury had been vetted in a trial was ordered by the judge to be investigated by the Fraud Squad, and a BBC television film on jury vetting was referred by him to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Thatcher administration, spurred by the Aubrey-Berry-Campbell trial and its desire to boost the surveillance agencies' morale, tried but failed to legislate a Protection of Official Information Bill to replace Section 2 of the 1911 Official Secrets Act. This Bill would have kept the Blunt affair secret; the 1911 Act would have saved Nixon from the Watergate disclosures. The proposed Bill would have extended without limit the number of officials allowed to stamp 'Secret' on papers; would have banned disclosure of phone-tapping; and would have made it an offence to reveal how information was classified or who had authority to



classify it. The Bill was lost; the mentality and the intention remain.

As regards trade unions, from the point of view of black people the assumption that they at least stand for workers' solidarity has taken some criticism. True, there have been spectacular instances of support, such as the mass pickets in support of black workers in the long Grunwick strike in 1977; but in general the organised officialdom of the labour movement has contented itself over the past three decades with public calls for racial harmony or condemnations of the National Front. No more in this sphere than in most others has it actively engaged its membership in dialogue to confront racism within trade union ranks.

Indeed, the main tendency has been a lack of policy, simply letting black workers join unions if they wished. Black workers' strikes have quite often been neglected by union officials, or even actively opposed by them (as in the long Leicester Imperial Typewriters' strike in 1973). In a number of factories where shop stewards have a say in selecting workers for training, white stewards have sometimes colluded with management to bar training opportunities to black workers. Similarly, a number of local secretaries of craft unions are known to use their powers to exclude black applicants for apprenticeships. The issue of black unemployment, far higher in areas of relatively high employment than the local rates, has rarely attracted union concern at any level (PEP 1974: ch 7). It is to be hoped that some regional projects, such as the trade union liaison project in Nottingham, are adopted elsewhere, and do not remain isolated endeavours.

As for the other core institution, the school, we have already seen in Section I.d how it has been a disastrous experience for a very large number of black children.

Thus the core public institutions of British society presently offer no real hope, rather the reverse, to black communities. Whether they offer very much hope to a large number of other people is also open to question, but their role in relation to the black minority is uncomfortably clear.

### III.c Reform Programmes

Over the past twenty years there has been a great outpouring of experimental policies designed to address people's anxieties about urban deprivation — implicitly or explicitly including black communities. In addition, there has been in existence since 1962 the then National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, renamed the Community Relations Commission in 1968, and

again renamed as the Commission for Racial Equality in 1976 on its merger with the former Race Relations Board set up in 1965. These need examining in more detail than is possible here, but we will at least establish some basic guidelines for their analysis.

Theoretically the most constructive policy programmes with a direct bearing on black people have been the activities of the Manpower Services Commission in relation to unemployment since 1975. Employment exchanges were brightly retitled as Jobcentres (no more the case than previously), and TOPS (Training Opportunities) courses, Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) courses, Job Creation, Work Experience, Special Temporary Employment Programmes (STEP), all proliferated. What did they signify?

Firstly, it is important to recognise they were mostly operated by former Department of Employment staff (now the Employment Services Division of the M.S.C.). These people naturally brought with them whatever prejudices, in some cases considerable, that they had already. New recruits were trained by them and were fed — even if they did not always accept — existing procedural prejudices.

Secondly, it must be recognised how many of these programmes were directed toward the young unemployed. In every case of major state action to combat unemployment from the thirties onwards, a particular target has been potentially volatile youth. This was marked in the case of the New Deal in the USA, where from the Civilian Conservation Corps (forestry work, etc) to army recruitment at World War Two, priority was always given to young men. The work programmes instituted have always been in the main for a few weeks or a few months, relatively inexpensive to run, but diffusing the notion that action of a constructive kind was underway by the government. The cluster of unemployment policies in Britain noted above has been no exception to this general rule. Thus, the political objective of promoting stability among the least committed to the system, must not be lost sight of in any account of them.

Thirdly, for such young men, these programmes were preferable in the immediate term to loafing around or being put into a worse situation in a borstal or community home. While they offered little in the way of permanent employment for most people at the end, they were temporarily attractive as an alternative to other possibilities.

What did they involve? YOP courses mostly lasted just 2-3 weeks (75 per cent of them), and took the form of Employment Induction Courses for 16-19 year-olds. Work Experience on Employers' Premises (WEEP) usually lasted 6 months. Some

evidence suggested young workers were quite often retained at the end of this period — but that older workers might be shed instead! Employment was not expanded but redistributed within the working class. One MSC survey found that 100 YOP places created 13.16 new jobs for young workers, but cut 7.9 jobs for older workers. STEP involved no training, was up to 52 weeks' work, and was open to people aged 19-24 who had been registered as unemployed for at least 6 months. (This naturally excluded a number of young black people not registered as unemployed.) If aged 25 or over, the period of registration had to be at least a year. Such employees were of course, amongst other things, subsidised labour for their employers.

Aid to new or existing small firms in the inner city has been trumpeted by successive administrations as another answer to unemployment in those areas. Yet one study of the actual impact of small firms (Fothergill & Gudgin 1980) found this was only their effect in the very long term, and that new small firms often start by reducing jobs in other firms. The Islington Economy Group examined the relation between jobs needed and the role of small firms in that inner London borough, and found the borough would need no less than 8,000 new jobs at once to cancel its dole-queue, plus another 2,000 a year to hold this situation constant. This rate of expansion was never envisaged as a result of small firms' activities. They also noted that Islington had no shortage of skilled labour (Brimson 1980).

Often, too, there is at present a mismatch in the inner city, since the jobs and Work Experience available are in office and retail work, yet young men usually want to enter electronics or mechanical trades.

Thus these unemployment programmes are hardly designed to achieve anything structurally different. As one Liverpool study put it: "Special job schemes such as Community Industry and Job Creation have merely diverted attention from the extremes of economic and social decay which have been allowed to accumulate in the city. They have provided only temporary work of doubtful quality with little or no training. Worse, they have reinforced the low status of the unemployed by separating them from the normal job market. The same applies to the Youth Opportunities Programme which does not even offer wages; rather an unwanted raising of the school leaving age" (South Liverpool Personnel 1979: 13). Indeed, there is no government department whose task it is directly to expand employment. What programmes exist are designed in large measure to remove some of the political sting of unemployment. Once out of these courses the trainee finds that jobs are still largely unavailable.

To this extent, measuring the number of black people on these courses tell more about those who run them up and down the country, than it does the prospect for black employment.

Other programmes have been tried since 1968, such as the Urban Programme, the Community Developments Projects, the Urban Deprivation Unit and Inner City Partnership schemes.

The first aspect of their operation which must be registered is that despite them, the conditions outlined in Section I are still in force, especially in black communities. The second, is that they have almost all been controlled by the Home Office — the same government department which is dedicated to controlling black immigration.

The Urban Programme was a hastily thought out measure in response to Powell's 1968 series of speeches. It offered relatively small sums of money in most instances to inner city community projects, and of this only about 5 per cent ever went to black projects (John 1978). Often these grants had the effect of creating acute competition between different groups in the scramble for scarce funds. Moreover, a great deal of energy and time of committed people were used up in the laborious process of application for these grants (Bridges 1975; John 1978). One Leicester activist with considerable experience in this area, and cautiously favourable to the possibilities in the Urban Programme, commented that in terms of providing a 'crashpad' for homeless black youngsters, and in terms of education in the ways of government for the Leicester pressure-group involved, the exercise had been worthwhile. This usefully indicates the limits of the reforms possible within the Urban Programme, as well as its attractiveness to many groups conscious of particular urgent needs.

The Community Development Projects — action and research projects on urban poverty — present an interesting contrast case. Many of them were 'colonised' by young radicals who defined their brief in a manner far differently from that of the Home Office authorities. The Projects were wound up and closed. The Urban Deprivation Unit, using a philosophy that blamed deprivation on the inadequacy of the poor, represented the more carefully chiselled successor instrument of the Home Office in this field (Bridges 1975). Inner City Partnership schemes are special allocations of central government funds to especially 'deprived' areas, such as Islington and Hackney in London, and Liverpool. Yet there is often no particular reference to black people's needs in these schemes (South Liverpool Personnel 1979: 13).

These programmes are not tailored to create the considerable

structural changes that are necessary to alter the position of black communities in particular. They allow the government of the day to point to what it is doing for areas of disadvantage, but in addition they present a peculiarly painful dilemma to those who want to see real change, but who do not fall into the trap of waiting passively for a social cataclysm to arrive which will solve all problems. For such people, often the most committed and active anti-racist campaigners, these schemes offer small but tangible improvements in return for massive investment of their time and energy. That is their dilemma. It is a dilemma which might be less, if there were more such campaigners in the first instance.

Finally, these programmes typically exist to mop up problems created by existing policies. They are not designed to encourage the analysis of those policies in the first place. Providing a hostel for black homeless young people is less to the point than changing policies on council house building and the necessary qualifications for entitlement to it.

In education there have also been a number of experiments to meet the new situation. Here we will comment on two, multi-cultural education and 'feeder courses'.

Multi-cultural education (James 1979) can mean anything. Its intention is to sensitise schoolchildren to the validity of cultural differences, as a step toward their mutual respect. Thus it does not address the question of racial oppression directly, and is always capable of being diverted into 'Hinduism today, Islam on Friday'. Its purpose is worthwhile, but distinctly limited. It is an instance of the 'ethnic pluralism' approach which will be commented on again below.

'Feeder courses' at Further Education colleges are designed to give students without formal qualifications a year's study to prepare them for courses in social work, teaching or social science/humanities degrees. Quite often black mature students are welcomed on to them. Again, a positive step in itself, but one which urgently needs matching by science and engineering feeder courses with the same welcome. Siphoning black people into 'community' professions is a very limited endeavour. Precisely the same has been done for black people in the USA since the urban rebellions of the late 1960s, and to Catholics in Northern Ireland since 1968.

The final institution which must be assessed in this context is the Commission for Racial Equality (aside from its legal role in administering anti-discrimination laws). Previous studies (Dummett & Dummett 1969; Hill & Issacharoff 1972; Katznelson 1973) have indicated the strategic nature of the CRE structure

and its local committees up and down the country, as an official shock-absorber for black protest. In practice, what black protest there has been has largely ignored this institution, and still probably most black people know little or nothing of its activities. It has always had exceedingly moderate personnel, usually ex-politicians, in leadership positions, such as the Labour Frank Cousins, the Liberal Bonham-Carter, the Conservative David Lane, or Professor Alan Little.

Paradoxically, what public image it does have is that of the 'immigrant's friend', an image the central body seeks to avoid in case it is accused of partiality. Some of the local committees, anxious to justify their existence, make radical noises from time to time to indicate they have a power-base. Most may seem content with active subservience to the local Town Hall.

The official philosophy at the centre of the CRE, which has been emanating out through its official contacts with leading educational administrators, social services and health services directorates, and other-bodies of this kind, is the promotion of ethnic cultural pluralism (compare multi-cultural education). While this might help to dent the white majority's self-image as owning the right to a culturally homogeneous society, it is a dangerous delusion to foster among social policy-makers that the problems of racial oppression in Britain can be reduced to the persistence of this particular white self-image. It is much less of a minefield than to face up to racial oppression in all its dimensions, but this focus of 'multi-ethnicity' easily becomes a 'culturalist' quagmire.

As regards the Commission's own priorities, a glance at how it has spent its money over the period 1968-78 is most revealing (CRC/CRE 1968-78). Averagely over those years, 45.7 per cent of its budget has been spent on the central administration of the CRC/CRE itself. Another 31.7 per cent on average over those years has been spent in paying local community relations officers and their full-time assistants. Thus on average, 77.4 per cent of the budget has gone simply on paying people's salaries, varying from 87 per cent in 1969-70 to 69 per cent in 1975-76. This understates the full picture, because another 5.5 per cent on average has been spent on its information and research activities, which once more largely went on salaries. For a long time, the only money available for projects (averagely 8.5 per cent over the period 1970-78) had to go to local committees only. In 1974-75, the then CRC began a Self-Help budget which had risen to 9 per cent of the total budget by 1977-78 (or £452,095). This helped to fund 17 projects over Britain as a whole, and usually created the same

kind of intense competition for small sums as was set up in the Urban Programme.

The conclusion is inescapable: since around four-fifths of the CRE budget has always gone on itself, and overwhelmingly on its central administration staff, the main beneficiary of its existence can only be itself. Assistance to local communities is a fraction of its own budget, and 'meagre' is a lavish description of its size.

### III.d Lobbyists, Academics and Radicals

My comments here will be very brief, focussing on the poverty lobby, academic writing on racism in Britain, and the organisations of the radical Left.

There is without doubt a well-organised poverty lobby in Britain, consisting of bodies such as Shelter, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Low Pay Unit, the Campaign for Homeless and Rootless, the National Council for One-Parent Families, and others. Their reports and pressure are invaluable. Yet they share a curiously uniform approach in one respect: they seldom if ever refer to the often disproportionate numbers of black people affected by the policies they attack, nor — consequently — do they analyse how racism operates in their campaign area *over and above* poverty, bureaucratic neglect, etc. One could be forgiven for wondering whether the one advantage of extreme hardship was that at least racism no longer operated at that level! In this sense, by its own degree of neglect, the poverty lobby oddly makes its own minor contribution to the failure of policies to meet black communities' needs.

Academic writing in this area has been prolific. During the period 1975-79 alone, well over forty books and major articles were published directly on black communities, black children in schools and other 'race-related' issues. They might, in principle, have contributed a major storehouse of information and perspectives which could be drawn on by enlightened activists and officials. Most of this literature fell well outside this possibility, however. About a quarter of the books were compilations of different essays on highly specific topics. Such volumes serve a well-known function in academia, providing rapid publications for career-conscious academics. Harsh as this may sound, it is an aspect of academic writing which must be recognised, for it means the primary concern of the writer is often acceptability to particular professors, and/or the acceptability of published work within an academic career. These need not drive researchers to stress accuracy or relevance as such.

The main powerhouse of writing has, inevitably, been the well-funded Ethnic Relations Research Unit of the Social Science Research Council. First located at Bristol University under the direction of the conservative race-relations academic, Professor Banton, it then moved to Aston University in Birmingham in the late 1970s under Professor Rex, who has a rather more radical image. The work of the Unit in its Bristol phase was to a large extent based on the ethnic and cultural pluralism model, doing studies of different Asian or Caribbean communities and their cultural adaptations to Britain. In its Aston phase it may possibly be more open to the developing alienation of black communities and the origins of this alienation in government policies and the workplace, since Rex's own sociological style leads him to emphasise the realities of racial conflict as a counterweight to emphasis on class. Whether and how it will take up any of the seriously under-researched themes which kept surfacing in Sections I and II, are another matter, as are the nature of its communication links with black communities. All these questions are vital to its relevance.

When government departments commission research from outside bodies or individuals, they have a tendency to avoid researchers with some experience in this area. This is not necessarily a bad thing in itself: two of the best books on racism published recently are by Wilson (1978) and Cottle (1978) neither of them with previous interventions on British racism. Yet it is often the case that researchers are chosen precisely because they are *not* liable to be attuned to any of the real issues in racism. Instances include the management-oriented research on employment organised through the London Business School, and funded by the Department of Employment (the Minority Groups Project); or the work on the Birmingham police done via a researcher at Cranfield Institute of Technology "Shades of Grey".

Normally, therefore, the bulk of academic writing in this area presents no threat to policy-makers' settled habits. Dissonant material can be, and is, easily dismissed as either biased, or — more skilfully — on methodological grounds. Indeed, a growing trend within academic writing, the so-called socio-biology, offers direct support for contemporary racialism in Britain (Barker 1979/80).

Organisations of the radical Left (the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the Militant Group, the International Marxist Group) have been intermittently active in campaigning against racism. The Communist Party has concentrated its efforts on contributing to the activities of the local committees of the Commission for Racial Equality, and within the official

echelons of the trade union movement. The other groups have usually steered clear of official bodies, except in specific campaigns. None of them has usually prioritised racism, tending to regard it as an external virus injected artificially into the working class by a scheming bourgeoisie. Not, that is, until the rise to some prominence of the National Front. At this point, most of these organisations read its rise as a re-run of the Nazis, and thus the campaign against fascism — populist fascism, rather than against the strengthening of state repression — included a more vigorous campaign against racism. (There were also tendencies at times to try to appeal to black people and women, both having movements outside the organised Left.)

The biggest expression of this was the Anti-Nazi League, which at its height in 1978 mobilised 80,000 for a march of several miles through London to Hackney's Victoria Park. This was a major achievement, which along with vigorous anti-National Front demonstrations did much to demoralise the National Front and to re-establish an anti-racist presence. Yet many of the actual issues, the deep penetration by racism into the daily fibre of British society, were left out of account by Anti-Nazi leaflets and posters. Racism was presented — very effectively — as a series of vicious lies mostly perpetrated by fascist conspirators. The practice of racism, rather than the rationale for explicitly racist beliefs, was left largely out of the picture. There was an implication that solidarity action began and ended with demonstrations, especially if they involved violent clashes with the National Front or the police defending them.

### III.e Conclusions

In this third Section, the shortfalls — and worse — of supposedly constructive institutions and policies have been reviewed, some very rapidly indeed. The objective in doing this has not been to claim that no action is in hand among the white majority to oppose racial oppression. The purpose has been to make it clear, in relation to the growing apparatus of that oppression, that no one can be remotely comfortable with what is underway as constituting an effective set of countermeasures.

Some of the institutions, such as parliament and the media, we saw to be critically flawed in their record on this score. Others, such as trade union establishment or anti-discrimination laws, we saw to be marginal to the solution in most respects. Others again, such as unemployment and urban deprivation programmes, we saw to be closer to public legitimacy exercises than to reconstruc-

tions of collapsed opportunities for basic rights (work, housing, etc.). Still others, such as academic specialists on 'race relations' or the poverty lobby, we saw often to have particular axes to grind, which are not the axes of the black communities themselves.

Thus, complacency signifies ignorance or worse, in this sphere. Usually worse. Let me illustrate what I mean through the reactions of a specially convened group of senior civil servants in 1980 to a commissioned report on a London black community. Its writer was urged by various members to include some comment explaining lawful methods of racial discrimination, so that no reader could mistakenly assume that all racial discrimination was unlawful. Another experienced woman official objected to any measures being proposed in the report which would assist this community positively, seemingly oblivious to the parallels between the proposed recommendations and the positive discrimination measures for female workers which she herself was paid to administer! Several objected to the term 'the racist National Front' (even though it was pointed out that the BBC Overseas Service always uses it). "We are here to serve the entire community" they pronounced sententiously. And a civil servant spent many, many working hours smoothing over any statements of jagged fact in the report.

If evidence is needed of black people's future under Britain's system of racial oppression, no one need look further than Liverpool 8 or Butetown, Cardiff. Any notion that white racism will melt over the generations is categorically disproved by these multi-generational black settlements (Abdee 1972; South Liverpool Personnel 1979).

### IV General Conclusions

The major deficiency in this report, and why it is an incomplete statement of the realities of racial oppression in Britain, is that it has consciously excluded any discussion of black resistance. What and how to write on that subject is a task for black people. Yet the report cannot end without this vacuum being emphasised: black people are not simply acted on, they act.

There may, too, be some readers who complain that I do not discuss splits and problems within black communities, including for instance the question of sexism. It is absorbing how easily red herrings are manufactured when it comes to facing the facts of white racism — how people will even, though male chauvinist to

the core, divert to sexism rather than grasp the necessary nettle.

This report has focussed on various mechanisms of racial oppression, an oppression less overt but no less actual than South Africa's even though it employs a largely different set of instruments, some of them a great deal more sophisticated. These mechanisms have been developed over nearly twenty years in systematic form, though their roots are often far deeper. There is an essential continuity in policy, between Conservative and Labour administrations, for what change has taken place has been largely in the same direction. At the same time, this report has repeatedly stressed the 'lift-off' process since the Thatcher administration took power in May 1979, with its blueprint for Britain's future (TAPP 1976-78).

We must conclude by reference to some international dimensions of this issue. The same British state examined in this report is also involved up to its neck in southern Africa. The Thatcher administration, like the Labour administration before it, is explicit up to a point in its argument for not opposing South Africa except verbally. It claims that control of the Cape sea-route by a pro-Western government is essential for western Europe and the USA. If the USSR were able to dominate oil cargoes by controlling the Cape, runs the argument, it could dictate terms to the West. This unthinkable possibility excuses warm continuing relations between Britain and South Africa.

The true picture, as often, has more to it than this straightforward scenario.

Firstly, not only is Britain still South Africa's major trading partner, but South Africa contains the following proportions of known mineral deposits: platinum (86%), chrome ore (83%), vanadium (64%), gold (49%), manganese ore (48%), fluorspar (46%), uranium (17%), asbestos (10%), nickel (10%), zinc (9%), and others in smaller quantities which may always turn out to be larger (Mezger 1978). Zimbabwe has chrome, gold, copper, nickel, platinum and asbestos, and from UDI in 1965 to 1980 became more and more dominated by South Africa (Stoneman 1978). (The Brandt Commission on North-South relations was centrally concerned with the future stability of oil and mineral supplies from the Third World.) Namibia is the source of South Africa's uranium, with the uranium mine at Rossing being presently the largest in the world.

This last point requires a little expansion. As of 1980, on present consumption, all published uranium stocks will be exhausted by 2000. Given the Thatcher administration's unswerving commitment to nuclear power-stations, whatever their

proven safety-risks (Three Mile Island!), whatever the hazards of transporting nuclear waste weekly in trains through the heart of London, whatever the problems far into the future of storing nuclear waste safely, anything is clearly preferable to the Thatcher administration than dependence on miners and the Middle East for fuel — or realistically slowing down fuel consumption. These strategic deposits in southern Africa are a lifeline to the present system. It became known in March 1980 that as far back as 1968 the then Labour government struck a secret deal to obtain annual uranium supplies from Rossing mine to fuel half the British nuclear power industry (Guardian 11.3.80).

The only other major available source is Australia, and there it is plumb in the middle of Aboriginals' land. Having been moved off once from other land because it was full of phosphates, the political repercussions within Australian politics of a second enforced move mean this source of supply is potentially very unpredictable.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that at the final conclusion to the Zimbabwe constitutional conference, Lord Carrington specifically mentioned a Namibian settlement as the next target. His (cited in TAPP 1978: 175): when he said that "to enlist Western support, South Africa has to produce the conditions in which that support can be forthcoming amongst those of us who wish to help." He also said that the repressive measures of that month (i.e. not Soweto a year previously) "had saddened bewildered and horrified us". (Writer's emphases.) Nor is it surprising that during the Zimbabwe conference Carrington could allow the Smith-Muzorewa regime to cut off Zambia's maize and to bomb camps in Mozambique and Zambia, to force concessions from the Patriotic Front. Nor is it surprising that the Smith-Muzorewa army was allowed by Lord Soames to run riot before the 1980 general election, including the use of terrorist bombs against church targets to discredit Mugabe's forces, and in attempts on Mugabe's own life.

For while the British state accepts change — since it cannot avoid it — it insists on change that takes place strictly under its control, at its pace and by its criteria of what is reasonable. The population of these southern African states is not the judge, in British eyes — or American, or French, or West German, or Japanese eyes — of what is reasonable.

Not only is racial oppression in Britain and in southern Africa linked by being within the policy of the same state, but it is linked in the sense that the eventual liberation of southern Africa will have a powerful effect on the fate of the black minority in Britain.

In the same way, a final liberation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh from neo-colonialism would be a major step guaranteeing more secure rights for Asians in particular, the black minority in general.

The future is extremely bleak; yet 'where there is oppression, there is resistance'. The tide of Third World self-determination may ebb and flow, in and out of Britain. Yet its development this century has been so spectacular, that the main issue is much less the immediacy of its success than working for the solidity of its construction for the longer term.

In the shorter term, the build-up of racial oppression in Britain is neglected or denied at peril, especially given the absence of any major thrust against it from within the white working class. Other highly racist countries — South Africa, Nazi Germany — have had their own specific dynamics. There is no need to assume Britain must pattern itself on either; it is busy evolving its own racist model right now.

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