The Metropolitan Police and the politics of public order, 1968-1981
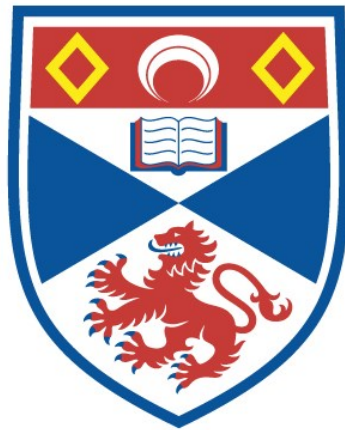
Jac St John

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
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2021

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Abstract

This thesis explores the development of public order policing between the late 1960s and early 1980s, situating it within the broader 'politics of public order' of the time. Using newly-released archival material – including significant tranches of documents secured through Freedom of Information requests – it explains how the Metropolitan Police developed its aims, methods, and capacity for maintaining public order and containing public disorder during this period, examining the shift from 'traditional methods' towards a paramilitary-style approach. It shows how this was developed through the adoption of new crowd control equipment, developments in training and tactics, and new methods of intelligence gathering and command and control. While these practices were developed within the Metropolitan Police, they were gradually exported to other police forces in an effort to strengthen national public order capacity, a process encouraged by the Home Office and gradually taken on by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

This thesis also shows how these changes in policing were influenced by a welter of competing cultural and political forms, many of which existed within, outside, and on the peripheries of policing institutions. In this sense, it pays attention to the contours of the politics of public order: an uneven and highly-fraught series of political contestations regarding the limits of police power, the limits of civil liberties, and the role of police in maintaining public order; contestations which played out within the Metropolitan Police, but which were shaped by a number of wider political and social contexts which provided the backdrop to these debates. As such, this thesis provides a deeper understanding of the politics of public order during the transformative period, joining recent scholarship in the field of criminal justice history in placing policing institutions within their broader social, cultural, and political context.

Acknowledgements

Bringing together this thesis has been a difficult journey and I am deeply grateful for the support I have received from friends, family and mentors. The first email I received from Jerry – having messaged him out of the blue to supervise a wildly ambitious project – was one of genuine enthusiasm and encouragement, something that continued throughout the course of my thesis and sustained me at difficult moments. It came as no surprise to me that, during my rare trips to St Andrews, our conversations in the street would be interrupted by students coming over to talk to Jerry, and it was clear that for many, like me, he has been a kind and supportive mentor. I also want to extend my thanks to Sharon, Natalie and Josh, who welcomed me at St Andrews and made the place feel less distant.

In much the same way, I also thank James Vernon, whose mentorship and friendship during my five months at Berkeley was one of the best parts of the last four years. James responded to my suggestion of joining him for a semester with immediate enthusiasm and encouragement, and watching him provide the same for many other postgraduates was, and continues to be, an inspiration. The generosity James shows to his students and junior colleagues may come naturally to him, but he also understands it to be his job and works to make it a priority. British History needs James and not just because of what he can tell us about Heathrow.

Thanks are also due to Martyn Frampton, Pertti Ahonen and Stephan Malinowski, whose teaching and mentorship spurred me on from Mile End to the Quarter Mile, and eventually on to graduate study. That my language skills prevented me from pursuing a PhD under Stephan's supervision is high among my many academic regrets, though the lessons he taught me during those two years in Edinburgh have stayed with me.

In the last ten years, few have provided more guidance, opportunity and friendship than Sam Raphael, who has led the way from the Cuillin to Wells Street. It would be impossible to thank him enough or repay him for everything he has done, particularly during the final stretch, though I know he will never ask me to. That said, I want to acknowledge how much I appreciate him.

Keeping these debts of male mentorship in perspective has been Grace Redhead, the best young historian I know. Her friendship and solidarity has been an important part of the

Acknowledgement of funders

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations from Archival Sources

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
CJ	Records of the Northern Ireland Office
HC DEB	House of Commons Debate
HL DEB	House of Lords Debate
HHC	Hull History Centre
HO	Home Office
MEPO	Records of the Metropolitan Police
NA	National Archives, Kew

Abbreviations in text

A2	Commissioner's Office
A7 Branch	Community Relations Branch, Metropolitan Police
A8 Branch	Public Order and Operations Branch, Metropolitan Police
A10 Branch	Complaints Investigations Branch, Metropolitan Police
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ALCARAF	All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism
ANL	Anti-Nazi League
APEX	Association of Professionals and Engineering Experts
BBC	British Broadcasting Company
BCPV	British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CIB	Criminal Investigations Bureau
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CRC	Community Relations Council
FOI	Freedom of Information
MACA	Military Aid to the Civilian Authorities
HMCIC	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Constabulary
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary

IMG	International Marxist Group
IRA	Irish Republican Army
NRC	National Reporting Centre
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUS	National Union of Students
PCB	Police Complaints Board
PNC	Police National Computer
PRO	Public Records Office
PRPB	Police Research and Planning Branch
PSU	Police Support Unit
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDS	Special Demonstration Squad
SOS	Special Operations Squad
SPG	Special Patrol Group
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
SYM	Southall Youth Movement
TUC	Trade Union Council
US	United States
VSC	Vietnam Solidarity Campaign
WIF	West Indian Federation

Introduction

The publication of the Scarman report into the April 1981 Brixton disorders represents an important watershed in the history of post-war British policing. The report was the result of a public inquiry, set up in the immediate aftermath of a weekend of disorder in the South London area of Brixton, a multi-racial and economically deprived part of the city. While it initially appeared that the inquiry would focus solely on the Metropolitan Police Force, whose relationship with Black residents in Brixton and in London more broadly had deteriorated significantly in recent years, its investigations soon took on national significance as they were overtaken by events. In July 1981, similar scenes of disorder broke out in towns and cities across the country, the scale of which was unprecedented in the post-war period.[1] For only the third time since its establishment in 1972, the National Reporting Centre (NRC) at New Scotland Yard was activated, coordinating the distribution of national police resources in the form of 'mutual aid' between forces.[2] Against the backdrop of the disorders that summer, the Scarman inquiry became a mechanism by which wide-ranging, long-standing, and fractious debates over issues of policing and police powers, racial discrimination, and multiple types of deprivation were ordered and institutionalised. Submissions of evidence were received from a range of locally and nationally based organisations and individuals, from senior police officers and police representative bodies to community organisers and civil society groups. When the Scarman report was returned and made public in November 1981, its proposals and recommendations set in motion or otherwise came to symbolise a series of reforms that would go on to have a significant impact on policing institutions and policing practice in decades to come.

On the one hand, the Scarman report was significant in that it highlighted the social context in which the disorders had taken place, noting that, 'most of the disturbances occurred in inner-city areas which share many of the features of Brixton: a high ethnic minority population, high unemployment, bad housing, lack of amenities, social problems

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[1] Martin Kettle and Lucy Hodges, *Uprising: The Police, the People and the Riots in Britain's Cities* (London: Pan Books, 1982). For a more recent account of the disorders, see Simon Peplow, *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

[2] Over a two-week period, 934 Police Support Units (PSU) were sent to nine separate forces. See Sir David McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1981* (London: HMSO, 1982), 5.

including family breakdown, a high rate of crime and heavy policing.'[3] Indeed, though the inquiry had been criticised and boycotted by a number of local groups who saw it as a way of pacifying political activism within London's Black communities, the report's acknowledgment that crime and disorder had its roots in social disadvantage was seen as an important counterpoint to the rhetoric of individual responsibility and punitive criminal justice then associated with the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher.[4] The liberal tone adopted in the Scarman report was reflected in a series of proposals and recommendations for police reform that called for long-overdue changes to recruitment, training, in-service supervision, discipline, and the handling of complaints against the police, offering a vision of policing that placed a greater emphasis on community consultation and accountability.[5] In the decade that followed, 'community policing' initiatives were championed as a way of fostering public support and restoring police legitimacy in the aftermath of the disorders, with independent researchers invited to observe, monitor, and map police practices in an apparent display of post-Scarman transparency.[6] Within the Metropolitan Police, this current of liberal policing culminated in a symbolic rebranding in 1988, as its name was changed from the Metropolitan Police *Force* to the Metropolitan Police *Service*.[7]

On the other hand, the Scarman report was strongly committed to the principle that the primary responsibility of the police was to maintain public order, and thus offered a series of proposals and recommendations intended to improve national police capacity in this area.

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[3] Lord Justice Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Enquiry* (London: HMSO, 1981), 30, 18-36.

[4] For an account of the community activism that took place alongside Scraman's inquiry, see Peplow, *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain*, 123-49.
For an assessment of the report's significance in the context of policing and institutionalised racism in modern Britain, see Stuart Hall, "From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence," *History Workshop Journal* 48 (1999): 188; Peplow, *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain*, 123-49. For a contemporary account of the 'law and order' politics adopted by Thatcher, see Michael Brake and Chris Hale, *Public Order and Private Lives: The Politics of Law and Order* (London: Routledge, 1992). And for a more recent and nuanced account of criminal justice policy under Thatcher, see Stephen Farrall and Will Jennings, "Thatcherism and Crime: The Beast That Never Roared?," in *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies*, ed. Stephen Farrall and Colin Hay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[5] Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Enquiry*, 120-51.

[6] For discussion of 'community policing', see John Alderson, *Law and Disorder* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984); Eugene McLaughlin, "Community, Policing and Accountability: A Case Study of Manchester, 1981-1988" (University of Sheffield, 1990).

[7] This was introduced following a review by the corporate identity consultants Wolff Olins, whose report *A Force for Change* made a series of recommendations to improve 'communication' and 'presentation' both internally and externally within the police. Rob Mawby, *Policing Images: Policing, Communication and Legitimacy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 42-44.

This included developing junior and command training, more effective protective and communications equipment for officers, efficient reinforcements in the form of 'mutual aid' between forces, and a review of police tactics; the latter point stemming from what the report recognised as the need for 'a more positive, interventionist role in quelling disorder in order to speed dispersal and reduce casualties'.[8] Indeed, Scarman cautiously accepted the decision by the Conservative Home Secretary William Whitelaw to furnish police forces with water cannon, plastic bullets, and CS gas, and his report gave weight to a significant overhaul in national public order capacity and a transition to more paramilitary-style tactics and equipment, in large part based on the recent experience of the Metropolitan Police. To more critical observers and commentators, therefore, the 1980s saw the police's supposed strategy of 'minimum force' and local control abandoned, as forces across the country committed to providing newly 'tooled up' and specially-trained Police Support Units (PSUs) for mutual aid during national public order operations, often deployed amid allegations of centralised political control.[9] This form of policing was most evident at the so-called 'Battle of Orgreave' during the 1984-85 miners' strike, an episode that continues to spark controversy and is the subject of ongoing calls for a historic public inquiry.[10]

The publication of the Scarman report and the tension many saw between its recommendations and their subsequent implementation transformed the then relatively small fields of academic criminology and policing studies into growing disciplines. While an edited collection on *The British Police* published in 1979 could claim with some justification that the nine contributors together represented the breadth of research on the subject at that time, by the end of the 1980s a large body of scholarship had emerged within the

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[8] Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Enquiry*, 155, 52-5.
[9] Martin Kettle, "The National Reporting Centre," in *Policing the Miners' Strike*, ed. Bob Fine and Robert Millar (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1985); David Waddington and Chas Critcher, "Policing Pit Closures, 1984-1992," in *Police and Policing in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Chris A. Williams (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Joanna Rollo, "The Special Patrol Group," in *Policing the Police: Volume 2*, ed. Peter Hain (London: Calder Publications, 1980); Martin Kettle and Tony Bunyan, "The Police Force of the Future Is Now Here," *New Society* (1980); Kettle and Hodges, *Uprising: The Police, the People and the Riots in Britain's Cities*; John Lea and Jock Young, *What Is to Be Done About Law and Order? Crisis in the Eighties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984); Phil Scraton, *The State of the Police* (London: Pluto Press, 1985); Sarah McCabe et al., *The Police, Public Order and Civil Liberties: Legacies of the Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 1988); Gerry Northam, *Shooting in the Dark: Riot Police in Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).
[10] 'Battle of Orgreave: Home Office rejects independent review', *Guardian* (2 March 2019); 'Policing during the miners' strike: independent review', Scottish Government [online]: Available at https://www.gov.scot/groups/independent-review-policing-miners-strike/ [accessed 3 September 2020].

significantly expanded field.[11] However, despite the flourishing of academic research on the subject of policing, 'community relations', and public order, many of these contemporary studies remained historically underdeveloped, often beginning with the events of 1981 and looking forward. Where changes prior to the 1980s did appear, it was often only briefly, described as emerging gradually from 'lessons learned' at key 'watershed events', the majority of which took place in London.[12] While some contemporary historians attempted to situate policing developments and debates during the 1980s within the *longue durée*, the lack of archival access created significant gaps in the more recent history.[13]

While this contemporary scholarship has been useful for mapping the broad contours of the changes in British public order policing, this thesis significantly develops these existing accounts, based as they are on a lack of detailed historical analysis. Using newly-released archival material – including significant tranches of documents secured through Freedom of Information requests (FOI) – it provides the first detailed account of how public order policing evolved within the Metropolitan Police from the late 1960s up until the early 1980s, highlighting the influence this had on national policing. As such, it offers the most complete account of how changes in equipment, crowd control tactics, intelligence gathering practices, and public and community relations initiatives were integrated into police strategy and the exercise of command and control for public order operations during a crucial period in the history of post-war British policing.

However, rather than provide a straightforward institutional history of public order within the Metropolitan Police – as more police-centric and 'insider' accounts have previously

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[11] Simon Holdaway, ed. *The British Police* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979). Cf. Robert Reiner, "Police Research in the United Kingdom: A Critical Review," *Crime and Justice* 15 (1992).

[12] See, for example, Mike King and Nigel Brearly, *Public Order Policing: Contemporary Perspectives on Strategy and Tactics* (Leicester: Perpetuity Press, 1996); David P. Waddington, *Contemporary Issues in Public Disorder: A Comparative and Historic Approach* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[13] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales, 1900-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Bernard Porter, "The Historiography of the Early Special Branch," *Intelligence and National Security* 1, no. 3 (1986); *The Origins of the Vigilant State* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987); Barbara Weinberger, "Police Perceptions of Labour in the Inter-War Period: The Case of the Unemployed and the Miners Strike," in *Labour Law and Crime*, ed. Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay (London: Routledge, 1987); *Keeping the Peace? Policing Strikes in Britain, 1906-1926* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); *The Best Police in the World: An Oral History of English Policing* (Aldershot: Routledge, 1995); Michael Brogden, *The Police: Autonomy and Consent* (London: Academic Press, 1982); "The Myth of Polcing by Consent," *Police Review* 22 (1983); "The Emergence of the Police: The Colonial Dimension," *The British Journal of Criminology* 27, no. 1 (1987); "An Act to Colonise the Internal Lands of the Island: Empire and the Origins of the Professional Police," *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 15 (1987); *On the Mersey Beat: Policing Liverpool between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

offered – this thesis joins recent scholarship in the field of criminal justice history in situating policing institutions within their wider social, cultural, and political contexts.[14] For example, Keith Laybourn and David Taylor have shown how the proliferation of motorised transport during the twentieth century transformed the British police and their relationship with the public, responding to and shaping road and traffic laws, both in conflict and in cooperation with policy makers and civil society groups.[15] Likewise, Chris A. Williams and Ben Taylor have centred the role of science and technology in the history of British policing, developing the historiography of police leadership, professionalisation, and innovation in the twentieth century, as well as the relationship between the Home Office, chief constables, and their representative body, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO, established in 1948).[16] In his recent two volumes of the *Official History of Criminal Justice in England and Wales*, Paul Rock has developed the high politics of criminal justice reform in post-war Britain, using privileged access to archival sources to explain how politicians, civil servants, and civil society groups gradually brought about changes to the laws and institutions of the criminal justice system. And lastly, in terms of the racial politics of policing, recent historians like James Whitfield, Chris Ferve, Kennetta Hammond Perry and Rob Waters have all built on the early work of scholars such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, to not only highlight practices of explicit and institutional racism within the police, but also show how Black political activism challenged how racialised ideas of 'community' and legal and effective citizenship were policed in post-war Britain.[17]

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[14] For a recent 'insider' account of the history of post-war policing, see Timothy Brain, *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A Turbulent Journey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Tony Moore, *Policing Notting Hill* (Hampshire: Waterside Press, 2013).

[15] Keith Laybourn and David Taylor, *The Battle for the Roads of Britain: Police, Motorists and the Law, C.1890s to 1970s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). See also Clive Emsley, ""Mother, What Did Policemen Do When There Weren't Any Motors?" the Law, the Police and the Regulation of Motor Traffic in England, 1900–1939," *Historical Journal* 36 (1993); Shane Ewen, "Policing, Planning, and the Regulation of Traffic in Post-War Leicester," *Midlands History* 28 (2003).

[16] Chris A. Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975: From Parish Constable to National Computer* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Ben Taylor, "Science and the British Police: Surveillance, Intelligence and the Rise of the Professional Police Officer, 1930-2000" (King's College London, 2015).

[17] James Whitfield, *Unhappy Dialogue: The Metropolitan Police and Black Londoners in Post-War Britain*, 2nd ed. (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2013); Chris Ferve, "'Injustice on Their Backs and Justice on Their Minds': Political Activism and the Policing of London's Afro-Caribbean Community, 1945-1993" (University of Dundee, 2018); Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 89-152; Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 165-207; Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race*. See also Gavin Schaffer, "Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965," *Twentieth Century British History* 25, no. 2 (2014). For contemporary

Building on this recent work, this thesis places changes in public order policing within a broader 'politics of public order', a term used here to describe the public and private contestations that occurred over issues of policing, protest, and their control. This definition develops and refines what David Downes and Rod Morgan have elsewhere called 'the politics of law and order' – a term they take to mean the 'contestation of the dynamics of crime, disorder, and their control' – and what David Garland has outlined as the politicised bureaucracy of policing and criminal justice.[18] As such, rather than focusing solely on the Metropolitan Police, the following chapters also examine the role of a number of other key players, highlighting how the Home Office, police representative organisations like the ACPO and the Police Federation, civil liberties groups like the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), senior members of the judiciary like Lord Scarman, and, of course, manifold protest groups and campaigns, together shaped debates and decisions over policing and its control in Britain during the late 1960s and early 1980s.

As will become clear, this framing shows that the evolution of public order policing within the Metropolitan Police and beyond was neither straightforward nor one-dimensional, and certainly did not begin in 1981. Rather, its historical development was uneven, with specific changes occurring sometimes in unison with, sometimes in opposition to, broader institutional trends, cultures, and pressures both internal and external to the Metropolitan Police. In particular, this thesis shows how changes within public order policing during the period took place within the context of a wider trend towards specialism, professionalism, and training *within* the force, and against a background of institutional conservativism, racism, and an idealised self-image of 'policing by consent'. It also shows how policing developed in response to pressures *outside* the Metropolitan Police, most obviously emerging from the changing challenges of protests and campaigns for greater police accountability, but also from the relationship between the Metropolitan Police, the Home Office, and ACPO. This last point is important since, in the absence of primary documents, previous accounts of the

scholarship, see Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Paul Gilroy, "Police and Thieves," in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, ed. CCCS (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

[18] Rod Morgan and David Downes, "Dumping the "Hostage to Fortune"? The Politics of Law and Order in Post-War Britain," in *Oxford Hanbook of Criminology*, ed. Mike Maguire, Rod Morgan, and Robert Reiner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 87; David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-26.

role of these institutions and bodies in shaping police policy during this period have been described as 'exist[ing] in a twilight world of speculation, charge, counter-charge and denial'.[19] Together, the evidence and contexts contained within this thesis provide a set of windows into the politics of public order which predated – and substantially shaped – the events of the early 1980s; an understanding of which is vital to any attempt to build a more complete picture of the ongoing contestations over the limits of police powers and the limits of civil liberties in the British liberal democratic state.

The Metropolitan Police, the Home Office, and the politicised bureaucracy of policing

Before turning to a review of the relevant literature, there is first a note on framing. While this thesis is primarily focused on events in London, it also aims to tell a national story. The decision to use 'Britain' at various points within this thesis is thus intended to speak to the politics of the period, rather than the accuracy of its relationship with policing institutions. Indeed, while police forces in England and Wales operate under the same forms of governance and legislation, forces in Scotland occupy a different constitutional position, accord to a different legal framework, and have their own institutions (namely, the Scottish Home and Heath Department and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland).[20] As a result, different scholars have thus taken different approaches to this issue, with Ian Loader and Aogán Mulcahy adopting the term 'England', Timothy Brain using 'England and Wales', and Charles Townshend preferring 'Britain'.[21] This thesis follows the latter, hoping to integrate the politics of public order into more recent histories of modern Britain, while acknowledging that this does not always fit with different national contexts.

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[19] John D. Brewer et al., *The Police, Public Order and the State* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 19. See also Charles Townshend, *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 138-43.

[20] Indeed, the recent work of scholars has done much to develop a distinct policing history of Scotland. See Angela Bartie and Louise Jackson, "Youth Crime and Preventive Policing in Post-War Scotland (C.1945–71)," *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 1 (2011); Neil Davidson, Louise Jackson, and David Smale, "Police Amalgamation and Reform in Scotland: The Long Twentieth Century," *The Scottish Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (2016); Neil Davidson et al., "Police and Community in Twentieth-Century Scotland: The Uses of Social History," *British Journal of Criminology* 57 (2017).

[21] Ian Loader and Aogán Mulcahy, *Policing and the Condition of England: Memory, Politics and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Brain, *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A Turbulent Journey*; Townshend, *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain*.

While ambitious in its scope, the primary focus within this thesis is nonetheless on the Metropolitan Police, and it is shown that, for a number of reasons, the force occupied a central role within the broader politics of public order. The first has to do with the size of the force and the area it policed, as despite problems of recruitment remaining a perennial concern for senior officers from the late 1960s onwards, the 20,000 to 25,000 police officers employed by the Metropolitan Police during this period represented roughly one fifth of all police officers in England and Wales.[22] The Metropolitan Police District (MPD) during this period broadly related to the area of Greater London, the 600 or so square miles of which were home to a gradually decreasing population of around 7 million people, as patterns of suburbanisation and outward domestic migration took place alongside inward international migration from Ireland, Europe, and the countries of the Commonwealth.[23] The capital's large, politically diverse and international population, as well as its place as the seat of government and home to numerous diplomatic missions, meant that the city inevitably attracted a large number of marches and demonstrations. While the Force only began recording the number of events requiring special arrangements (i.e. more than 50 officers) in 1970, Commissioners' reports during the first half of the decade showed an average of around 450 events each year, a number which rose to around 850 in 1979.[24] By the end of 1981, a

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[22] The total strength of the Metropolitan Police in 1968 was 19,976 officers, which was 5,441 below establishment. This include 16,859 uniformed officers and 3,100 members of CID. In 1975, Force strength was at 21,420 (5,208 below establishment), made up of 17,954 uniformed officers and 3,460 members of CID. Following the substantial increase in police pay recommended by the Edmund-Davis Committee in 1978, recruitment increased significantly, and by 1980 Force strength had increased to 25,161 (only 1,416 below establishment), with 19,571 uniformed officers and 3,185 members of CID. See Sir John Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1968* (London: HSMO, 1969), 84; Sir Robert Mark, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1975* (London: HMSO, 1976), 82; Sir David McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1980* (London: HMSO, 1981), 69; Lord Edmund-Davies, *Committee of Inquiry on the Police: Reports on Negotiating Machinery and Pay* (London: HMSO, 1978).

[23] The administrative boundaries of Greater London and the corresponding MPD were created with the passing of the 1963 Local Government Act, which was amended slighted with the passing of the 1974 Local Authorities Etc. (Miscellaneous Provision) Order. During the post-war period, suburbanisation and urban renewal saw the census record a drop in the population of Greater London from 8.2 million in 1951, 8 million in 1961, 7.5 million in 1971, and 6.7 million in 1981. For population data, see GLA Intelligence, 'Population Growth in London, 1939-2015' (January 2015), [online]. Available at: https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/population-change-1939-2015 [accessed 15 August 2020].

[24] Commissioners' reports record the following number events each year requiring special arrangements (excluding sporting fixtures): 1970 (500); 1971 (over 400); 1972 (470); 1973 (445); 1974 (406); 1975 (356); 1976 (393); 1977 (585); 1978 (750); 1979 (950); 1980 (250 occasions requiring more than 100 officers); 1981 (354 events requiring more than 100 officers). See Sir John Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1970* (London: HMSO, 1971), 11; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1971* (London: HMSO, 1972), 16; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1972* (London: HMSO, 1973), 11; Sir Robert Mark, *Report of the Commissioner of Police*

particularly turbulent year for policing in the capital, the Force had recorded 354 occasions where more than 100 officers were required, 25 of which required over 1,000 officers.[25] One of the central arguments of the thesis, therefore, is that between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, the Public Order Branch of the Metropolitan Police acted as the locus for public order expertise in Britain, based on its unique experience of handling such a large number of events.

While the MPD was divided into 24 Divisions and 83 Sub-Divisions, local crime control and law enforcement was supported by four main Departments: 'A' Department was responsible for the administration and operations of the uniformed force, including the work of the Mounted Branch (A5), the Community Relations Branch (A7), the Public Order Branch (A8), and, after 1972, the Complaints Investigations Branch (A10); 'B' Department was responsible for traffic and police transport, as well as a variety of technical support services; 'C' Department was responsible for crime, including the work of the various branches of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID); and 'D' Department was responsible for police personnel, administration, recruitment, and training.[26]

Given its size, resources, and experience, the Metropolitan Police has sometimes been described as playing the role of a national police force, providing reinforcements and expertise to 'provincial' forces.[27] As a number of historians of police leadership have shown, the establishment of the Hendon Police College in 1934 was significant in this regard, as,

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of the Metropolis for the Year 1973 (London: HMSO, 1974), 13; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1974* (London: HMSO, 1975), 13; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1975*, 32; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1976* (London: HMSO, 1977), 34; Sir David McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1977* (London: HMSO, 1978), 23; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1978* (London: HMSO, 1979), 7; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1979* (London: HMSO, 1980), 8; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1980*, 4; *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1981*, 5.

[25] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1981*, 5.

[26] In April 1968, the central Departments of the Force were subject to a major reorganisation following a nine-month study by P.A. Management Consultants, which was introduced to improve efficiency. See Richard Lowe, "Management Consultants and the Police," *The Police Journal* 44, no. 3 (1971). The staff of the four main Departments were primarily based at the Force headquarters at New Scotland Yard, which, in a sign of modernisation, moved from its old premises on the Victoria Embankment in 1967 to a newly constructed office block half a mile west on Broadway. See British Pathé, "Scotland Yard Moves," (1967). Within 'A' Department, A10 was replaced by the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) in 1977, while the Diplomatic Protection Group (A11) was added in 1973, after a siege at the Indian High Commission prompted a review on diplomatic and embassy protection within the Metropolitan Police.

[27] The term 'provincial; is not meant in a prioritise sense but is adopted from the language used at the time. On the subject of the place of the Metropolitan Police in a national policing context, see Robert M. Morris, "What the Met Brought to the Party - Reinforcement, Colonization, Specialisation and Fusion," in *Leading the Police: A History of Chief Constables 1835-2017*, ed. Kim Stevenson, David J. Cox, and Iain Channing (London: Routledge, 2017).

despite being a relatively short-lived experiment, which ended with the outbreak of war in 1939, over its five years of operation it provided a channel through which promising Metropolitan Police officers could progress to the senior ranks within provincial county forces. This established what Taylor has described as an 'officer class' among British police elites, who went on to professionalise, modernise, and in some senses standardise British policing during the post-war period.[28]

While the 'Hendon men' contributed to the proliferation of Metropolitan Police influence at an elite level, the rebuilding of the Metropolitan Police Training School on the same site during the mid-to-late 1960s contributed further to the Force's national influence, as in the decade that followed instructors from the eight District Training Centres across the country would regularly attend specialist training events and conferences, leading to the spread of Metropolitan Police practice and experience. In addition to this, the Metropolitan Police was also home to a number of units with national policing responsibilities, including Metropolitan Police Special Branch (covering political policing and countering internal subversion), INTERPOL (covering international police cooperation), the Criminal Records Bureau and the Police National Computer (both of which acted as national police database), and, after 1972, the NRC, a central control room at New Scotland Yard from which national police resources could be deployed during civil emergencies. As well as a centre of experience and technology, the size of the Metropolitan Police also made it a source of mutual aid, as during the mid 1960, when disturbances caused by Mods and Rockers at British seaside towns along the south coast looked likely to overwhelm small borough forces, officers from London were sent to augment local police strength.[29]

Another major reason for the unique importance of the Metropolitan Police within conversations of national policing is its constitutional position and its relationship with the Home Secretary and the Home Office. While the case of *Regina v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner ex parte Blackburn (1968)* confirmed that constitutionally the Home Secretary

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[28] Taylor, "Science and the British Police: Surveillance, Intelligence and the Rise of the Professional Police Officer, 1930-2000," 34-65. See also David Wall, *The Chief Constables of England and Wales: The Socio-Legal History of a Criminal Justice Elite* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1998), 210-35.

[29] These operations were coordinated by the Home Office, who organised for the British Transport Police to provide intelligence on the numbers and destinations of potential troublemakers travelling by train, while the Ministry of Defence provided two transport aircrafts to quickly convey the 240 reserve officers from Northolt Aerodrome in the north west London to the nearest trouble spots during the Bank Holiday Weekend of 1964. D.L. Brown, "The Hastings Disturbances," *The Police Journal* 39, no. 1 (1965).

could not issue an order to the Commissioner in respect of law enforcement, the Home Secretary nonetheless held an important degree of influence on policing matters through other means.[30] Unlike in other police forces, where the chief constable was accountable to a majority-elected Police Authority – a system of local governance introduced after the 1964 Police Act – the Home Secretary served as the Police Authority for the Metropolitan Police.[31] In this role, the Home Secretary was responsible for appointing the most senior officers of the Metropolitan Police – including the Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioners, and the Receiver – and this power of patronage allowed significant influence over the leadership of the Force. For example, the decision by the Home Secretary James Callaghan to appoint the vocal chief constable for Leicester City Police, Robert Mark, as Assistant Commissioner for 'D' Department in February 1967, was widely seen as a move intended to break-up what had become something of a 'closed shop' among senior officers within the Metropolitan Police, and though Mark's arrival was resented by some within the force, he went on to become Commissioner in April 1972.[32] Furthermore, Section 32 of the 1964 Police Act also afforded the Home Secretary the power to call on the Commissioner to carry out an inquiry into a policing matter related to the force, and while this power applied to all forces across England and Wales, the fact that policing matters in London received significant media attention, and since the Home Secretary was accountable to Parliament for such matters, this was only ever applied to events in London.[33]

Alongside these formal arrangements of oversight and accountability, the Home Office and the Commissioner's Office maintained close contact on a broad range of policing matters. As Kenneth Parker, former head of the Home Office Police Department (1961-1967) and later Receiver of the Metropolitan Police (1967-1974), noted in 1980:

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[30] The case arose from a private prosecution, where an individual applied for an order of mandamus that would compel the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to reverse a decision not to attempt to enforce parts of the 1963 Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act. The court upheld the Commissioner's discretion, with Lord Denning noting that, 'He [the Commissioner] is not subject to the orders of the Secretary of State, save for under the Police Act, 1964, the Secretary of State can call upon him to give a report, or to retire in the interests of efficiency.' See "R V. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Ex Parte Blackburn, Recent Cases," *Western Australian Law Review* 10, no. 4 (1972): 413.
[31] This arrangement only changed in 2000 with the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Authority
[32] Robert Mark, *In the Office of Constable* (London: Collins, 1978), 79-93.
[33] Arthur Evan James QC, *Report of Inquiry by Mr. A. E. James, Q.C. Into the Circumstances in Which It Was Possible for Detective Sergeant Harold Gordon Challenor of the Metropolitan Police to Continue on Duty at a Time When He Appears to Have Been Affected by the Onset of Mental Illness* (London: HMSO Smnd. 2735, 1965); Lord Justice Leslie Scarman, *The Red Lion Square Disorders of 15 June, 1974: Report of Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Scarman* (London: HMSO, 1975).

> Matters of great public and political interest, such as public order or community relations, are necessarily the subject of discussions between the Home Secretary and his senior officers and the Commissioner and his senior officers, and there is a continuous dialogue between the Home Office and New Scotland Yard.[34]

As a result, not only did the Home Secretary become involved in matters relating to the Metropolitan Police, but senior officers from the Force occupied an important role in influencing policy developments through their support and opposition. Indeed, more so than any other force, senior officers within the Metropolitan Police were consulted on proposed legislation, selected to join committees and working groups on national police policy, and appointed as members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary (HMIC), a Home Office-run body responsible for inspecting the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces across England and Wales.[35]

As will be seen, the way in which the Home Office exercised control over the Metropolitan Police appears as part of a broader process of rationalisation, standardisation, and professionalisation of policing in England and Wales, in aid of what David S. Hall has described as the 'creeping, or incremental, centralised control over the police organisation' during the twentieth century.[36] This had significantly escalated following the 1964 Police Act, which strengthened the power of the Home Office in national policing affairs. Between 1965 and 1969, Labour Home Secretaries Roy Jenkins and James Callaghan encouraged a series of amalgamations that saw the number of independent provincial forces reduced from 116 to 44, with a further merger in 1974 bringing the number of forces down to 43. At the same time, the Home Office continued to exert its influence through a number of channels, including: an expanded HMIC; the issuing of Circulars to police forces on 'best practice'; through Home Office representation on the Police Advisory Board and, after 1970, the Police Training Council; through the Home Office Police Department's Research and Planning Branch; and through its responsibility for the eight District Training Centres in England and

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[34] Kenneth A.L. Parker, "The Constitutional Structure of the Metropolian Police," *The Police Journal* 53, no. 4 (1980): 329.

[35] Following the recommendations of the 1962 report of the Royal Commission on the Police, HMIC was expanded from six inspectors to eight to reflect the new structure of police forces across eight regions.

[36] Wall, *The Chief Constables of England and Wales: The Socio-Legal History of a Criminal Justice Elite*, 11.

Wales and the National Police College at Bramshill.[37] If one of the central arguments of the thesis is that between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, A8 Branch of the Metropolitan Police acted as the locus for public order expertise in Britain, another is that this expertise and experience was gradually exported to provincial police forces as part of a process of national capacity building encouraged by the Home Office.

As such, the research presented in this thesis contributes important empirical evidence to illuminate what Garland has described as the politicised bureaucracy of policing in post-war Britain, the process by which 'penal agents' (police officers, judges, prison officials, policy-makers, and academics) influence crime control and criminal justice policy.[38] According to his reading, the 1970s were the beginning of a period in which 'a quite different set of criminological ideas had begun to emerge and to influence government policy', where 'penal welfarism' was gradually replaced by 'control theories'.[39] Penal welfarism, which Garland saw as the 'criminology of the welfare state', was based on a worldview in which crime was seen as a sign of an under-achieving socialisation process, and the role of the state was to assist those who had been deprived of the economic, social, and psychological provision necessary for proper social adjustment and law-abiding conduct.[40] Control theories, on the other hand, saw crime and delinquency as problems of inadequate control, rather than of deprivation, with the role of the state being to uphold restrictions and enforce discipline.

This framing has since been taken up by subsequent scholars, who have used Garland's historical and sociological analysis to develop a more empirical account of how politicians, civil servants, and senior police officers contributed and responded to shifts in criminal justice policy during the post-war period. Rock's recent two volumes of *The Official History of Criminal Justice in England and Wales* has significantly developed the high politics of criminal justice reform during the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, showing that, bar a few notable exceptions – particularly Jenkins and Callaghan – Home Secretaries had less role in shaping criminal justice policy as is often expected, since they were rarely in the office long

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[37] The Police Staff College was set up in 1948 within the intention of improving professional knowledge and competence among senior and intermediate officers. The Police Research and Planning Branch (PRPB) was set up in 1964, tasked with developing new methods, equipment and techniques for policing and providing scientific and technical advice to the police. The PRPB was initially overseen by an Inspector of the Constabulary, though in 1970 a Deputy Chief Scientific Officer was appointed head of the Branch in 1970.

[38] Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, 24-5.

[39] Ibid., 15.

[40] Ibid.

and were often uninterested in the very lengthy process required for criminal justice reform. As a result, senior civil servants often had an influential role in crime and police policy, acting within a strong institutional culture. In responding to crisis, Rock suggests that the Home Office was often defensive, 'president-driven, legalistic, and, some would say, staid, formal and conventional', carrying a long historical memory.[41]

In similar terms, Ian Loader has argued that, in developing our understanding of the politicised bureaucracy of policing ad criminal justice policy, civil servants at the Home Office saw themselves as 'platonic guardians', patiently watching over the 'good society', protecting the relationship between the citizen and the state through careful and deliberative policy formation. The rule of this official mindset was that Government should respond to crime and disorder in ways that sort to preserve 'civilised values', and that rather than being led by public passions, crime and penal policy should be developed by administrators and strategic practitioners on the basis of expertise.[42] As Chapters Three and Four of this thesis will show, this official mindset dictated how civil servants negotiated questions of picketing legislation and the right to demonstrate during the 1970s, moderating their position between senior police officers and Minsters of State.

While Loader argued that the governing disposition of the 'platonic guardians' came into conflict with the 'authoritarian populism' of the Thatcher government, which rejected 'penal welfarism' in favour of what he described as 'a crime-fighting agenda that placed to the fore a greatly empowered, resourced and pretty much unconditionally backed police force', this thesis will show that this politicisation of policing did not just develop under the Thatcher government.[43] Indeed, as Robert Reiner and others have argued, elements of this 'law and order' politics were prefigured by culturally prominent senior police officers like Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Robert Mark and his successor, Sir David McNee, who not only used their position to influence policy in their private lobbying, but used their status and platform to provide social commentary on the national condition, identifying crises and

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[41] Paul Rock, *The Official History of Criminal Justice in England and Wales: Volume Ii: Institution-Building* (London: Routledge, 2019), [electronic copy]. See also *The Official History of Criminal Justice in England and Wales: Volume I: The 'Liberal Hour'* (London: Routledge, 2019).
[42] Ian Loader, "Fall of the 'Platonic Guardians': Liberalism, Criminology and Political Responses to Crime in England and Wales," *The British Journal of Criminology* 46, no. 4 (2006).
[43] Ibid., 574.

proposing police solutions to problems of law and order. [44] Using new archival evidence, this thesis significantly develops these existing accounts of the politicised bureaucracy of policing, showing how successive politicians, civil servants, and senior police officers together negotiated the politics of public order during a transformative period of post-war policing history.

From 'Traditional Methods' to Paramilitarism

While the previous section has situated the importance of the Metropolitan Police within national policing debates and offered an account of its place within the politicised bureaucracy of policing, the following section turns more specifically to the policing of public order, offering an overview of both contemporary and more recent accounts of its development prior to the urban disorders of 1981. For clarity, this thesis will focus on the policing of public order as it relates to three different types of events: political demonstrations, picketing during industrial disputes, and what is often referred to as 'community disorder', a term used during the period to describe tensions between the police and non-white communities. All three types of events were a rising cause for concern for politicians and police officers from the late 1960s onwards, as they increasingly showed their potential to threaten public order on a large scale.

While the policing of sporting fixtures and the concern for football 'hooliganism' during this period represents another important area of comparison, this has recently been the subject of a detailed study by Brett Bebber, who has developed contemporary sociological accounts though a 'top down' study of the subject.[45] Adopting a similar approach to this thesis, Bebber uses newly released archival material to show how successive governments, the police, football clubs, and social activists responded to concerns about the violence and public disorder associated with masculine working-class leisure from the 1960s onwards. Bebber shows that while 'public and political concerns of football violence were not

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[44] Ian Loader and Aogán Mulcahy, "The Power of Legitimate Naming: Part I - Chief Constables as Social Commentators in Post-War England," ibid.41, no. 1 (2001); "The Power of Legitimate Naming: Part Ii - Making Sense of the Elite Police Voice," *The British Journal of Criminology* 41, no. 2 (2001); Robert Reiner, *Chief Constables: Bobbies, Bosses, or Bureaucrats?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[45] For early sociological accounts of football 'hooliganism', see Ian Taylor, *Football Mad: A Speculative Sociology of Football Hooliganism*, ed. E.G. Dunning, The Sociology of Sport (London: Cass, 1971); "Soccer Consciousness and Soccer Hooliganism," in *Images of Deviance*, ed. Stanley Cohen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971); P. Marsh, E. Rosser, and R Harre, *The Rules of Disorder* (London: Routledge, 1978).

unfounded', the sensationalistic rhetoric of politicians and police officers elevated fighting on the country's football terraces into a moral panic.[46] As a result, while the state looked to control football crowds through transformations in stadium architecture, an increased police presence at matches, and harsher criminal prosecutions, Bebber argues that these measures were built on class-based prejudices that ultimately exacerbated rather than restrained football violence, creating what he describes as an 'illusion of control'.[47] With Bebber's recent publication in mind, this thesis contains its focus to the three areas identified above, exploring changes in the police response and the broader political debates they provoked.

As will be seen throughout the course of this thesis, between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, the term 'traditional methods', as it was used by police officers, politicians, and commentators, served two functions with regards to public order policing, often operating at the same time. The first was to refer to commonly understood policing tactics and strategies adopted during public order operations, which were broadly seen to involve unarmed, non-specialist officers attempting to control crowds through facilitation and containment, rather than prevention and dispersion. As Roger Geary noted in his 1985 study of the policing of industrial despites, 'traditional methods' as they developed during the 1960s and early 1970s meant that police engagement with crowds was limited primarily to 'pushing and shoving', though this did not preclude the rough treatment of demonstrators or pickets while they were arrested and removed from the crowd or bundled into waiting police vans.[48] These methods thus required the deployment of large numbers of police officers, who, working together in Serials and sometimes supported by mounted officers, formed static cordons to contain and regulate crowds, as *British Pathé* footage of a Committee of 100 demonstration in 1962 shows.[49]

While each officer was equipped with a standard issue truncheon as per their normal duties 'on the beat', no other specialist protective equipment was required, with 'mutual vulnerability' and the image of the traditional officer thought to keep tempers down. As

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[46] Brett Bebber, *Violence and Racism in Football: Politics and Cultural Conflict in British Society, 1968-1998* (London: Routledge, 2016), 39.

[47] Ibid., 124, 69-46.

[48] Roger Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes: 1893 to 1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 67-115.

[49] British Pathé, "U.K. "Hands Off Cuba" Clashes in Central London End in More Than 150 Arrests," (1962).

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir John Waldron noted in his first annual report in 1968, 'Traditional methods' meant that:

> the man in the front row of a police cordon may be working a foot patrol at Wimbledon on the day before and the day after he is called up for this special duty … we do not wear protective clothing, and do not make use of tear gas, water cannon, barbed wire barriers or any equipment that could be said to give rise to provocation to the demonstrators.[50]

Though the 1936 Public Order Act afforded chief constables the power to request that the Home Secretary ban demonstrations and processions in a given area for a specified period of time, this practice had drifted from favour after its use during the early 1950s, when Oswald Mosley's Union Movement were prohibited from marching through multi-racial working-class areas of East London.[51] As Callaghan informed his colleagues in the House of Commons prior to a large anti-war demonstration in London in October 1968:

> I have considered this situation with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, but he does not think it necessary to use his power under the Public Order Act 1936 to prohibit the demonstration. He will have a large force of police officers on duty, who will seek to facilitate peaceful demonstration. By using their traditional methods, they will enforce the law and arrest alleged offender.[52]

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[50] Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1968*, 9.

[51] The 1936 Public Order Act was hurriedly passed through Parliament in response to classes between police, anti-fascists, and supporters of Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF). For more on the policing of interwar politics, see Janet Clark, *The National Council for Civil Liberties and the Policing of Interwar Politics: At Liberty to Protest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Richard Thurlow, "The Straw That Broke the Camel's Back: Public Order, Civil Liberties and the Battle of Cable Street," in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, ed. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (Middlesex: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000); Martin Pugh, "The British Union of Fascists: The Olympia Debate," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 2 (1998); Jon Lawrence, "Fascist Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Inter-War Britain: The Olympia Debate Revisited," *Historical Research* 76, no. 192 (2003); Martin Pugh, "The National Government, the British Union of Fascists and the Olympia Debate," ibid.78, no. 200 (2005).

[52] 'Demonstrations, Central London (27th October)', HC Deb, Vol. 770 Col. 1598 (24 October 1968).

While crowds were largely classified and policed in terms of their purpose – whether an overtly political protest, an industrial action, a festival or a sporting event – when disorder broke out, police tended to adopt classical theories of crowd psychology and crowd behaviour.[53] These held that crowds would often behave irrationally, and events such as the Bethnal Green tube station fire in March 1943 (when 173 people were crushed to death and nearly a hundred injured) and the Bolton Wanderers' football ground disaster in March 1946 (when 33 people died and hundreds were injured) had informed police thinking on crowd psychology during the 1960s, showing that crowds in a panic could cause damage (in these cases to themselves).[54] Containment, therefore, was important, but the supposed irrationality of crowds also meant they were open to manipulation by 'agitators', particularly during political demonstrations. A less well acknowledged aspect of 'traditional methods', therefore, was the deployment of undercover officers, usually from Special Branch but, after 1968, increasingly from CID, who would track the movements of known individuals and remove their supposedly escalatory presence from the crowd through quick arrests. The fact that these forms of policing were less well acknowledged speaks to the public relations aspect of public order operations. Indeed, on this point, an often quoted encapsulation of the supposedly 'traditional methods' of British police was what Sir Robert Mark described as 'the art of winning by appearing to lose.'[55] Earning public sympathy was thus seen as an important part of the 'traditional methods', and this was actively pursued as part of police public relations exercises before and after major events.

In terms of national public order operations like those associated with industrial disputes, 'traditional methods' meant that requirements were first met by the local constabulary, who could then call on mutual aid from neighbouring forces if additional

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[53] For a contemporary account of how police approached crowds differently, see Peter Laurie's chapter on public order in his 1970 study of the Metropolitan Police. Laurie was a journalist who had been invited to 'ride along' and observe the police as part of a new relations strategy adopted at the end of the 1960s. See Peter Laurie, *Scotland Yard: A Study of the Metropolitan Police* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 103-26. For a more recent discussion of crowd psychology in the context of public order policing, see David Waddington and Mike King, "The Disorderly Crowd: From Classical Psychological Reductionism to Socio-Contextual Theory - the Impact on Public Order Strategies," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 44, no. 5 (2005).

[54] For a contemporary discussion of crowd psychology, see Hermann Mannheim, *Comparative Criminology: A Text Book, Volume Ii* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 645-50. See also B.E. Fisher, "Disasters and Major Incidents," *The Police Journal* 51, no. 2 (1978).

[55] Robert Reiner, "Policing, Protest and Disorder in Britain " in *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*, ed. Donatella Della Porta and Herbert Reiter (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 41.

manpower was required. Unlike in other countries, Britain had no national police force specifically trained for public order duties, as the local dimensions of policing precluded an equivalent to the *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité* (CRS, the French national police reserve) or the *Bereitschaftspolizei* (the public order units of the German police).[56] While the establishment of a national police force had been considered by the Royal Commission on the Police, set up in 1960 to review the constitutional position of the police and its relationship with the public, local control was thought to make the police more sensitive to local issues, whilst also ensuring that the police remained politically independent from centralised government.[57] As a result, 'traditional methods' involved maintaining the operational independence of the police, with senior officers afforded discretion in determining the balance between public order and law enforcement.

Alongside this literal meaning of 'traditional methods', the term also functioned as a way of legitimising police action by situating public order policing within an idealised image of a uniquely British policing tradition, one that Reiner has described as being based on principles of non-partisanship, the rule of law, a strategy of minimum force, and police accountability.[58] In many ways, therefore, the idea of 'traditional methods' formed part of the mythologised history of British policing.[59] In the post-war period, this was most famously associated with its fictional avatar, PC George Dixon, who first appeared in the iconic British film, *The Blue Lamp* in 1950, before returning in 1955 as the lead in the British Broadcasting Company's (BBC) hugely popular television series, *Dixon of Dock Green*.[60] While historians like Clive Emsley have cautioned against taking this 'indulgent tradition' as a direct representation

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[56] Olivier Fillieule and Fabien Jobard, "The Policing of Protest in France: Towards a Model of Protest Policing," in *Policing Protect: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*, ed. Donatella Della Porta and Herbert Reiter (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Martin Winter, "Police Philosophy and Protest Policing in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1960-1990," in *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*, ed. Donatella Della Porta and Herbert Reiter (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[57] Henry Willink, *Royal Commission on the Police* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1962).

[58] Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70-77. Mawby, *Policing Images: Policing, Communication and Legitimacy*, 155-63.

[59] This view is much advanced orthodox police histories and 'insider' accounts see G.A. Minto, *The Thin Blue Line: A Straight Look at the British Police Force* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1965); Thomas Alan Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales* (London: Constable, 1967); *The Conquest of Violence. Order and Liberty in Britain* (London: Constable, 1970); Sir Eric St Johnson, *One Policeman's Story* (London: Rose, 1978); David Ascoli, *The Queen's Peace: The Origins and Development of the Metropolitan Police, 1829-1979* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979). For a more critical engagement with this tradition, see Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 68-77.

[60] Richard Sparks, *Television and the Drama of Crime: Moral Tales and the Place of Crime in Public Life* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 25-30.

of reality, with Williams noting that crime and fear of crime meant that 'the 1950s did not look like halcyon years to those who lived through them', this cultural representation of British policing did appear to translate into significant public support.[61] The Royal Commission reported in 1962 that public surveys had suggested 'an overwhelming vote of confidence in the police', with 80 per cent of those sampled holding the British police to be 'the best in the world'.[62]

As Loader and Aogán Mulcahy have argued, the imagined ideal of a localised, consensual, and legitimate British policing tradition was an important reference point for the public and source of 'symbolic power' for the police throughout the post-war period, particularly in perceived moments of 'crisis'.[63] It is telling, therefore, that the first time the term 'traditional methods' was used in Parliament in a policing context was in 1968, when anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in London raised questions about the ability of the Metropolitan Police to maintain order.[64] Indeed, as this thesis will show, while public order policing underwent significant changes from the late 1960s onwards, references to 'traditional methods' provided a way of maintaining historical continuity, legitimising modern policing through its connection with the past. This contradiction was laid bare in the 1981 Scarman report, which, while simultaneously coming out in favour of a significant overhaul in national public order capacity and the adoption of riot control tactics and equipment, also noting that 'there should be no change in the basic approach of the British police to policing public disorder.'[65]

The notion of 'traditional methods' is thus contrasted with the term 'paramilitarism' or 'paramilitary-style policing', which equally serves as a description of certain forms of tactics and equipment, as well as a way of describing a broader policing philosophy. According to the criminologist Tony Jefferson, who during the late 1980s emerged as one of the strongest critics of paramilitarism, the practice involved 'specially trained and specially protected

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[61] Clive Emsley, "The English Bobby: An Indulgent Tradition," in *Myths of the English*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), 54; Chris A. Williams, "Police Governance – Community, Policing, and Justice in the Modern Uk," *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 3 (2011).

[62] Henry Willink, *Royal Commission on the Police* (London: HMSO, 1962), 102-5.

[63] Loader and Mulcahy, *Policing and the Condition of England: Memory, Politics and Culture*; Eugene McLaughlin, *The New Policing* (London: Sage, 2007).

[64] HC Deb, 'Grosvenor Square (Demonstrations)', Vol. 762 Col. 752 (4 April 1968); HC Deb, 'Demonstrations, Central London (27th October 1968), Vol. 770 Col. 1598 (24 October 1968); HC Deb, 'Crowd Control', Vol. 777 Col. 1548 (13 Feb 1969).

[65] Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Enquiry*, 154.

groups of officers, operating as highly mobile, quasi-military units, engaged in "search and destroy" missions against "enemy trouble-makers" or "ringleaders".'[66] 'Traditional methods' of large static cordons working to contain crowds with minimum force were now abandoned in favour of '"snatch squads": menacing teams of officers, unrecognizable in visored, "NATO-style" crash helmets and fireproof overalls, advancing behind transparent shields being banged by drawn truncheons, making "search" sorties into crowds of fleeing demonstrators for the purpose of arrest'.[67] This appeared most obvious during the policing of the miners' strike between 1984-85, the police response to the urban disorders of 1985, and the policing of New Age Travellers during the latter part of the decade.[68]

While Jefferson argued that these tactics and equipment carried an 'inherent capacity to exacerbate violence', others took a contrary position.[69] Most famously, police scholar P.A.J. Waddington argued that paramilitary forms of policing provided a way of improving command and control, as increased training and professionalism among officers enabled 'a more disciplined approach to disorderly and violent situations than was possible by traditional methods.'[70] Furthermore, Waddington suggested that the transition towards paramilitarism was largely exaggerated, as it only applied occasionally to very exceptional incidents of disorder, and that the police largely retained 'traditional methods' of accommodation and persuasion as they recognised that maintaining a reputation for impartiality and restraint was important to keeping disorder down. Waddington argued that the equipment most commentators associated with aggressive and offensive crowd control tactics – such as riot helmets, shields, and flame proof overalls – had been introduced primarily for police protection and had largely been incorporated into existing defensive methods. He also suggested that the introduction of more sophisticated planning, intelligence gathering, and surveillance had helped police avoid incidents of disorder, while training and

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[66] Tony Jefferson, *The Case against Paramilitary Policing* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 2. See also, "Pondering Paramilitarism: A Question of Standpoints?," *The British Journal of Criminology* 33, no. 3 (1993); "Beyond Paramilitarism," *British Journal of Criminology* 27, no. 1 (1987).

[67] *The Case against Paramilitary Policing*, 1-2.

[68] For policing of the miners' strike, see McCabe et al., *The Police, Public Order and Civil Liberties: Legacies of the Miners' Strike*. For policing of the urban disorders, see John Benyon and John Solomos, eds., *The Roots of Urban Unrest* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987). For policing of New Age Travellers, see Andy Worthington, ed. *The Battle of the Beanfield* (Teignmouth: Enabler Publications, 2005); *Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion* (Loughborough: Alternative Albion, 2004).

[69] Jefferson, "Beyond Paramilitarism," 51.

[70] P. A. J. Waddington, ""The Case against Paramilitary Policing" Considered," ibid.33, no. 3 (1993).

command and control had improved discipline and accountability, preventing the violence he associated with autonomous officers.[71] This view was broadly shared by Tony Moore, a former senior public order officer at the Home Office-run Police Staff College at Bramshill, who in 1992 completed a research degree examining the development of principles, policies, and operational lessons in public order policing.[72]

Alongside these changes in tactics and equipment, the term paramilitarism also came to symbolise the changes in national policing capacity, towards more centralised political control. The policing of the miners' strike in 1984-85 had seen the NRC at New Scotland Yard used to coordinate the deployment of national police resources and police intelligence across the country, which was used to undermine the National Union of Mineworker's (NUM) 'flying pickets'.[73] It was later revealed that PSUs deployed as part of mutual aid arrangements had undergone a programme of training outlined in the Public Order Tactical Options Manual, a secret playbook for public order operations that had been developed by the Metropolitan Police Public Order Forward Planning Unit on behalf of ACPO following the disorders of 1981. Critics increasingly expressed concern about the activities of ACPO, which was seen as a shadowy and undemocratic organisation that was either being used by the Conservative-run Home Office to force through changes to policing policy or was initiating these changes unilaterally.[74]

How then do we explain the transition from 'traditional methods' to paramilitarism, or at least the gradual integration of these two approaches? According to existing accounts, largely contemporary, but also more recent, the answer or answers could be found in three separate but interlinked debates taking place between the Home Office and the police service during the 1970s, with the Metropolitan Police playing a central role. The first of these was

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[71] "Towards Paramilitarism? Dilemmas in Policing Civil Disorder," *British Journal of Criminology* 27, no. 1 (1987); *The Strong Arm of the Law: Armed and Public Order Policing* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); ""The Case against Paramilitary Policing" Considered."; "Coercion and Accommodation: Policing Public Order after the Public Order Act," *British Journal of Sociology* 45, no. 3 (1994); *Liberty and Order: Public Order Policing in a Capital City* (London: UCL Press, 1994).

[72] Tony Michael Moore, "Policing Serious Public Disorder: The Search for Principles, Policies and Operational Lessons" (University of Southampton, 1992).

[73] McCabe et al., *The Police, Public Order and Civil Liberties: Legacies of the Miners' Strike*.

[74] Northam, *Shooting in the Dark: Riot Police in Britain*. For an overview of the development of ACPO, see Sarah Charman and Stephen Savage, "Singing from the Same Hymn Sheet: The Professionalisation of the Association of Chief Police Officers," *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 1, no. 1 (1998); Sarah Charman, "Lobbying and Representation: An Analysis of the Emergence of the 'Senior Police Voice' During the Late Twentieth Century," *Contemporary British History* 25, no. 2 (2011).

the need for a more effective response to rising crime, which, since the late 1960s, had contributed to what Emsley described as 'a marked change in the seemingly good relations between police and public'.[75] A dramatic increase in crime throughout the decade, particularly theft and burglary, had led to what Garland would later describe as 'a new experience of crime' for the middle classes.[76] For the 'anti-permissives' of the mid-to-late 1960s, restoring respect for law and imposing order was seen as vital, and while this initially appeared to have little impact on the politically 'bipartisan' issue of policing and criminal justice policy, the election of the Edward Heath's Conservative government in 1970 was a watershed in the politicisation of law and order.[77] In the decade that followed, crime, protest, and industrial action increasingly stood in for broader concerns about national decline and national crisis, with the Conservative Party occupying this ground and criticising the Labour Party for being weak on these issues.[78]

Problems of crime were exacerbated by chronic shortages in police manpower, with recruitment to the Metropolitan Police particularly badly affected by public sector pay freezes during the early and mid 1970s. The response to this was to trial new methods for more efficient policing, with Reiner noting that, 'the emphasis was on technology, specialisation, and managerial professionalism as the keys to winning the "fight against crime"'.[79] Perhaps the most famous example was the gradual replacement of manpower-intensive foot patrols with a model of 'team policing' and later 'unit beat policing', where officers deployed with handheld radios known as 'bat phones' or in police 'Panda' cars would respond quickly to incidents in their area following direction from the Information Room. While in 1967, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's report noted that a total of 834 police vehicles were

[75] Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 171.

[76] David Garland, "The Culture of High Crime Societies," *British Journal of Criminology* 40, no. 3 (2000): 359.

[77] For an example of bi-partisanship on this issue, see Richard S. Grayson, "Mods, Rockers and Juvenile Delinquency in 1964: The Government Response," *Contemporary British History* 12, no. 1 (1998). For more on the permissive society, see Stuart Hall, "Reformism and the Legislation of Consent," in *Permissiveness and Control: The Fair of the Sixties Legislation*, ed. National Deviancy Conference (London: Macmillan, 1980); Martin Collins, ed. *The Permissive Society and Its Enemies: Sixties British Culture* (London: Rivers Oram, 2007).

[78] David Downes and Rod Morgan, "'Hostages to Fortune'? The Politics of Law and Order in Post-War Britain," in *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, ed. Mike Maguire, Rod Morgan, and Robert Reiner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 187.

[79] Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 79.

fitted with police radios and the Force held another 663 personal sets, by 1976 the numbers were 2,903 and 7,403 respectively.[80]

Another innovation was the increasing deployment of crime oriented 'task forces' like the Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group (SPG), which had been set up in April 1965 as a way of tackling motor crime, housebreaking, and hooliganism, its first four, then six, units acting as a mobile reserve that could be deployed across London to augment regular police strength at a Divisional level.[81] While these new methods were regarded as successful in tracking and responding quickly to reports of crime, they were also seen to isolate officers from the law-abiding public and encourage a reactive 'fire-brigade' style of policing. This was felt particularly strongly among London's Black communities, as in the racial politics of Britain during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the fight against crime saw the police – and in particular, the SPG – increasingly resort to stop and search and saturation policing tactics in multi-racial neighbourhoods, part of what Hall and his colleagues identified as a moral panic over 'mugging'.[82]

Alongside concern for the rise in crime, the second debate taking place within the Home Office and police service at this time was how to respond to public disorder, as the 1970s saw a series of *cause célèbres* in London which seemed to expose the limits of the 'traditional methods' of the Metropolitan Police. One concern was the possibility of 'community disorder', since deteriorating relations between the police and sections of London's Black communities meant that routine interactions increasingly showed their potential to escalate into incidents of disorder.[83] The largest of these occurred at Notting Hill Carnival in the summer of 1976, when heavy-handed policing of the event provoked hostility from the crowd, leading to a series of running battles between police and crowds of predominately Black youths. Another challenge came in the form of political demonstrations, as the rise of the National Front (NF) was met by an anti-fascist movement committed to opposing its activities. In London and elsewhere, police and protesters clashed during a number of demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, most notably at central London's

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[80] Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1968*, 34; Mark, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1976*, 87-8.

[81] M.J. Keene, "The Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group," *Police Journal* 40 (1967).

[82] Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan Press, 1978); Gilroy, "Police and Thieves."

[83] For a recent account of this period, see Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985*, 165-207.

Red Lion Square in June 1974, and later in the multi-racial areas of Lewisham in August 1977 and Southall in April 1979. The SPG were increasingly drafted in for public order duties during this period, leading to criticism that they were being deployed as an unofficial 'riot squad'.[84] Meanwhile, police injuries at demonstrations led to the adoption of reinforced helmets and riot shields in 1977, along with the gradual jettisoning of strategies of containment in favour of crowd dispersal.

Disorder in London took place against the backdrop of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland, which for critics like Jefferson, was seen to provide 'a testing ground for a whole range of paramilitary techniques, equipment and weaponry', which was soon to be imported to Britain.[85] In a more nuanced account than that offered by more contemporary commentators, Georgina Sinclair and Williams have described a 'cross-fertilisation' of policing ethos, culture, and expertise between the empire and the metropole during the twentieth century.[86] While somewhat lacking in empirical evidence, they argue that, in the context of the perceived 'crisis' of the 1970s, this involved a convergence of *haute* policing and colonial counter-insurgency techniques, which were seen to enter through the training of British police officers at the Royal College of Defence Studies (formally the Imperial Defence College), where Major-General Dr Richard Clutterbuck, an expert on domestic counter-subversion, held the post of senior army lecturer between 1970 and 1972.[87] Indeed, Reiner later described the course as 'a breeding-ground for high-flyers', as ten per cent of the serving chief constables he interviewed during the late 1980s had attended the college.[88]

The third debate that proved influential in the transition towards paramilitary style policing emerged from concerns within the Home Office that police forces across the country were unprepared to respond to serious civil emergencies, particularly those associated with

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[84] Rollo, "The Special Patrol Group."; Michael Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry* (Nottingham: Pussell Press, 1980); Southall Rights, *23rd April 1979: A Report by Southall Rights* (London: Crest Press, 1980).

[85] Jefferson, *The Case against Paramilitary Policing*, 3. See also Paddy Hillyard, "The Normalisation of Special Powers: From Northern Ireland to Britain," in *Law, Order and the Authoritarian State*, ed. Phil Scraton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987). For policing in Northern Ireland during this period, see Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 54-71.

[86] Georgina Sinclair and Chris A. Williams, "'Home and Away': The Cross-Fertilisation between 'Colonial' and 'British' Policing, 1921–85," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 2 (2007).

[87] John Stalker, *Stalker* (London: Harrap, 1978), 19-21. For examples of Clutterbuck's writing during this period, see Richard Clutterbuck, *The Media and Political Violence* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981); *Britain in Agony: The Growth of Political Violence* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980).

[88] Reiner, *Chief Constables: Bobbies, Bosses, or Bureaucrats?*, 85.

industrial disputes. While the threat of nuclear attack had been the primary concern of contingency planners during the early 1960s, it was mass and mobile picketing during the 1972 miners' strike that reinvigorated debates around the provision of mutual aid between forces and the ability to control and organise national police resources. Indeed, it was in the wake of the so-called 'Battle of Saltley Gates' in February 1972 – when large numbers of pickets forced the police to close a coking depot outside Birmingham in the interests of public safety – that the Government's National Security Committee established the NRC at New Scotland Yard, with responsibility for coordinating police intelligence and mutual aid in the form of PSU. For critics like Tom Bowden, writing in 1978, 'the effect of these changes has been to amend significantly the British police tradition of locally based policing', with the economic crisis of the 1970s precipitating 'an ongoing drift towards a *de facto* if not *de jure* national police force'.[89]

Having established the place of the Metropolitan Police within the politicised bureaucracy of policing, and having identified the existing, albeit limited, explanations for the development of public order policing in Britain, it is clear that more empirical evidence is required if we are to understand these changes within a broader politics of public order. While previous research has developed the broad contours of this history – namely, a gradual drift away from 'traditional methods' towards paramilitarism, which took place in the context of the politicisation of policing – there remain significant gaps in terms of establishing what role different actors played in this process, what prevailing institutional cultures and pressures influenced their actions, and what resistance and support their was for these changes within and outside of policing institutions. This thesis is thus concerned with developing an account of the public and private contestations that occurred over issues of policing, protest, and their control during this period, and thus goes significantly beyond previous accounts that have simply mapped the outcomes of these contestations onto events in the future. With this in mind, this thesis engages with new materal, and develops new methods for securing material, in order to make a significant contribution to the fields of police and criminal justice history. As such, it joins the recent work of scholars who have highlighted the importance of rigorous

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[89] Tom Bowden, "Guarding the State: The Police Response to Crisis Politics in Europe," *The British Journal of Law and Society* 5, no. 1 (1978): 77.

and innovative archival research methods as an important tool for criminologists, rather than relying on theoretical abstractions.[90]

Argument and structure

Before outlining the structure of this thesis and a breakdown of its chapters, it is worth highlighting a number of themes that are developed at various points throughout its course. The first and perhaps the most obvious is that new challenges of protest and disorder (whether large demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, mass picketing or 'community disorder') highlighted the need for new approaches. In this respect, police reform in the area of public order responded to what Stephen Savage has described as 'system failure' (i.e. 'when things go wrong').[91] However, as this thesis will show, this did not necessarily mean jettisoning old methods and inventing new ones; often it was the case that 'systems failure' provided a space for pre-existing ideas to take purchase, or for old ideas to be more clearly codified. The second important theme is the negotiation that occurred during this period between effective crowd control in the short-term and police legitimacy in the long-term. While new technology and equipment may have been effective in dispersing crowds, police remained conscious of their image and the public reception of that image. The evocation of 'traditional methods' was important in this respect, as it sometimes acted as a restraining factor on changes to public order policing, but also helped to disguise clear shifts in policing aims and methods, since embedding them in the discourse of 'traditional methods' suggested continuity rather than change in policing. The third theme is the tension and contestation that existed around competing ideas of reform, which took place in the context of deep rooted institutional cultures of policing and policework. This thesis develops accounts of both the institutional conservativism and institutional racism of the Metropolitan Police during this period, and shows how this slowed attempts to develop community relations, which was itself embedded in racialised concerns of disorder. In so doing, it highlights internal divisions within the Force, particularly between the operational departments of New Scotland Yard and the policework of the Divisions. The final theme is that of political influence, which was brought

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[90] Paul Lawrence, "History, Criminology and the "Use" of the Past," *Theoretical Criminology* 16, no. 3 (2012); Thomas Guiney, "Excavating the Archive: Reflections on a Historical Criminology of Government, Penal Policy and Criminal Justice Change," *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 20, no. 1 (2018).

[91] Stephen Savage, *Police Reform: Forces for Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11.

to bear on policing during various moments of perceived 'crisis' in public order. A number of the chapters highlight the tension between political pressure and operational independence, particularly over the development of picketing legislation and the building of national police capacity. In these moments, the experience and expertise of the Metropolitan Police was often used as a blueprint for national policing developments, which sometimes provoked resistance from 'provincial' forces. Overall, these themes highlight the contested politics central to the development of public order policing from the late 1960s onwards.

In exploring themes, this thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Chapter One shows how the Metropolitan Police responded to the challenges posed by new forms of protest in 1968 by underpinning 'traditional methods' with improved training and mobility, advanced intelligence, and greater command and control. It shows that as Home Secretary, Callaghan gently exerted political influence on both the police and the media prior to and following a series of demonstrations, encouraging regional police forces to learn from the Metropolitan Police experience whilst attempting to ensure that the police received more favourable coverage in the press. This modernising of 'traditional methods' was widely seen as a success, as the Metropolitan Police were able to avoid the level of disorder seen elsewhere in Europe and the US during the late 1960s. The desire to ensure that police aims and methods enjoyed the broad support of the public was seen as especially important given the outbreak of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland, where paramilitarism appeared to undermine police legitimacy. Overall, this chapter highlights how senior officers within the Metropolitan Police sought to establish a balance between effective crowd control in the short term and police legitimacy in the longer term, a theme developed throughout this thesis.

Chapter Two examines police engagement with community relations during the late 1960s and early 1970s, which formed part of what Shamit Saggar has termed the 'liberal race relations settlement' of post-war Britain.[92] This term is used to described the consensus that emerged between the two main parties during the 1960s, based on the idea that restrictions on non-white migration would come alongside a series of mechanisms designed to encourage cultural pluralism, if not racial equality. While the Metropolitan Police had been slow and reluctant to engage with 'race relations', the 1968 Race Relations Act institutionalised the

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[92] Shamit Saggar, "Race Relations," in *Britain since 1945*, ed. Jonathan Hollowell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003).

series of previously *ad hoc* voluntary associations the police had tentatively and unevenly engaged with in previous years. The chapter argues that police engagement with community relations was particularly influenced by the experience of racial rioting in the US during the mid-to-late 1960s, with senior officers concerned that this could spread to Britain. Community relations offered a way of improving police legitimacy among Black and South Asian citizens in Britain, but also a means of gathering intelligence, which could then be fed back into operational policing. While reform-minded officers saw community relations as an important part of policing a modern multi-racial city, this chapter shows that its integration during the first half of the 1970s was undermined by hostility from within the police, borne of a conservativism undergirded by institutional racism.

Chapter Three steps outside of London to focus on how the police and the Government responded to mass, mobile, and secondary picketing during the early 1970s. The recent work of Taylor and Rosaleen Anne Hughes has shown how 'new union militancy', particularly during the 1972 miners' strike, led Edward Heath's Conservative Government to significantly develop contingency plans for civil emergency, with the Cabinet and the Prime Minister proposing changes to the law on picketing and stricter enforcement by the police.[93] This chapter shows how the Home Office resisted this political pressure and expressed concern that changes to the law or circulars encouraging stricter enforcement would compromise police operational independence and powers of discretion. This was seen to be an important aspect of the 'traditional methods' for picket line policing, with senior officers prioritising the maintenance of public order over strictly enforcing the law. In this respect, senior officials at the Home Office can be seen to defend 'traditional methods' of policing from political pressure, behaviour consistent with Loader's description of 'platonic guardians'.[94] Defending this tradition was seen to require a significant overhaul of national police capacity, which the Home Office and ACPO encouraged through strengthened mutual aid arrangements and centralised control of national police resources.

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[93] Rosaleen Anne Hughes, "'Governing in Hard Times': The Heath Government and Civil Emergencies - the 1972 and the 1974 Miners' Strikes" (Queen Mary, University of London, 2012); Ben Taylor, "Science and the British Police: Surveillance, Intelligence and the Rise of the Professional Police Officer, 1930-2000" (King's College London, 2015), 129-31. See also David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2006., 2006).

[94] Loader, "Fall of the 'Platonic Guardians': Liberalism, Criminology and Political Responses to Crime in England and Wales," 563.

Chapter Four examines the intersection between public order and police accountability, which represented a challenge for police legitimacy during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It shows that the police handling of demonstrations and the absence of an independent element within the police complaints process became increasingly contentious during this period, particularly as policing and protest became more confrontational and the police came under fire for a slew of corruption scandals that highlighted the limits of police accountability. As previous scholars have shown, the appointment of Mark as Commissioner in April 1972 was an important moment in the modernisation of the Metropolitan Police, as Mark initiated a series of internal reforms aimed at addressing police corruption and improving police relations with the public amid signs of a breakdown. This chapter highlights how issues of public order and police accountability reached a head after police clashed with anti-fascist demonstrators in Red Lion Square in June 1974, leading to the death of the young student Kevin Gately. It shows how this event led to a broad public debate around the limits of police powers and civil liberties, a debate Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins hoped to contain by appointing Lord Justice Scarman to lead a public inquiry into the disorders. This chapter argues that Scarman's hitherto largely overlooked inquiry provides a window into the contested politics of public order during the mid 1970s, which saw politicians, civil liberties campaigners, activists, and police representatives negotiate the balance between policing, protest, and their control.

Chapter Five focuses on the policing of Notting Hill Carnival between 1975 and 1977, and – developing the theme outlined in Chapter Two – examines the uneasy relationship between community relations and public order policing. It shows that though Notting Hill Carnival had traditionally been policed by a small number of officers from the local Division, racialised concerns of crime and the inability of the police to enforce the law meant that the 1976 event was met with a large police presence and ultimately ended in disorder. As Moore and Brain have previously argued, this was a 'watershed' moment for the Metropolitan Police, as the large number of officers injured led to the adoption of riot shields, significantly transforming the traditional image of public order policing in Britain.[95] However, the disorder at Notting Hill also highlighted the need for community relations to be integrated into

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[95] Brain, *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A Turbulent Journey*, 33; Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 163; Moore, "Policing Serious Public Disorder: The Search for Principles, Policies and Operational Lessons."

operational policing, and this chapter shows how this approach was trialled at the 1977 carnival, though was ultimately unsuccessful in preventing disorder.

Chapter Six focuses on the politics of public order as it relates to policing unions during the mid-to-late 1970s, a term used here to describe both the policing of unions and police unions themselves. Picking up the subject of picketing law developed in Chapter Three, it shows that, while Labour Minsters took power in February 1974 with the intention of strengthening trade union powers during labour disputes, Home Office officials once again resisted changes to the law that would compromise police powers of discretion. However, as mass action continued to be seen by trade unionists as one of the few ways to make picketing effective, strikes continued to pose a significant public order challenge for the police. This was most clearly shown at the Grunwick dispute during the summer of 1977, which saw a small strike at a photo processing laboratory in north west London escalate into a major *cause célèbre* of public disorder. Using newly released police files, this chapter significantly develops contemporary accounts of the policing of the dispute, which saw Special Branch officers deployed to infiltrate pickets and demonstrations, gathering intelligence that was fed back to A8 Branch at New Scotland Yard and the Police Department in the Home Office. It also shows how, as the dispute escalated, Commissioner McNee came under significant political pressure to take a tougher stance against the pickets and demonstrators, with Callaghan, now as Prime Minister, expressing concern that the dispute could bring down the Government. Finally, it shows how the Police Federation used the disorder as leverage in its public campaign to pressure the Government to accept demands for a significant increase in police pay, just one part of the increasingly fractions politics of policing that developed during the mid-to-late 1970s, which saw the Labour Government in fierce conflict with all ranks of the police service over issues of police accountability.

Chapter Seven focuses on the policing of two anti-fascist demonstrations, the first in Lewisham in June 1977 and the second in Southall in April 1979. As at Red Lion Square, these events raised questions of police powers and civil liberties, leading to renewed debate over the limitations of public order and race relations legislation. This chapter shows that the policing operation at both Lewisham and Southall was widely seen as confirmation that the police were abandoning 'traditional methods' and drifting towards paramilitarism, the result being a significant number of injured demonstrators, which included Blair Peach, a New Zealand school teacher killed by a member of the SPG. Picking up the 'paramilitarism debate'

between Waddington and Jefferson discussed in the introduction, this chapter highlights the tensions associated with paramilitary-style tactics as an (in)effective and (un)accountable form of public order policing.[96] It argues that the disorder, disorganisation, and loss of police discipline at these events was seen by some police officers as justification for a more specialist and 'professional' approach to public order policing, a desired for *internal* accountability (i.e. within the police command structure itself) that encouraged the adoption of paramilitarism. It shows that the experience of the Metropolitan Police in this area was gradually exported to police forces across the country, through training arrangements that strengthened national capacity. However, it also shows that the absence of *external* accountability – in this case, the inadequacies of the existing complaints process and the failure to establish a public inquiry into the disorder at either Lewisham or Southall – meant that changes in police tactics, equipment, and operational planning largely went without public scrutiny, the result being a continual deterioration in police legitimacy.

Chapter Eight shows how the urban disorder of 1980-81 initiated a major overhaul of national public order capacity, which built on many of the changes introduced since 1968. The major difference now was that the police were to incorporate specialist riot control equipment and offensive police tactics into their training and operations, developments that had received Scarman's approval following his inquiry into the Brixton disorders. Using newly-released archival material, it shows that the Home Office played a key role in encouraging these developments, which emphasised the need for the standardisation and centralisation of police resources. As had been the case throughout the 1970s, the Metropolitan Police was at the centre of this process, leading the way in building national public order capacity. This chapter significantly develops existing accounts of the relationship between the Home Office and ACPO in shaping police policy during this period, something previous scholars have described as 'exist[ing] in a twilight world of speculation, charge, counter-charge and denial'.[97]

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[96] Waddington, "Towards Paramilitarism? Dilemmas in Policing Civil Disorder."; *The Strong Arm of the Law: Armed and Public Order Policing*; ""The Case against Paramilitary Policing" Considered." Cf. Tony Jefferson, "Beyond Paramilitarism," ibid.27, no. 1 (1987); *The Case against Paramilitary Policing*; "Pondering Paramilitarism: A Question of Standpoints?."

[97] Brewer et al., *The Police, Public Order and the State*, 19.

Sources and methodology

The research for this thesis was primarily carried out in the archives of institutions, organisations, and individuals involved in the politics of public order, and the methods used have gone some way towards expanding these archives for researchers in the future. Given its unique constitutional position and relationship with the Home Office, the Metropolian Police, unlike other police forces in England and Wales, was included in the 1958 Public Records Act, which broadly stipulated that records selected for permanent preservation should be reviewed no later than thirty years after their creation and considered for transfer to the Public Records Office (PRO).[98] While the holdings of the PRO have since moved to the National Archives at Kew and the timeframe for review has now been reduced to 20 years, many of the Metropolian Police (MEPO) records referenced in this thesis were subject to further embargo, and were only made public in the last five to ten years. This was also true for the records of the Home Office, among which are files in the 'Queen's Peace' series (HO 325) – which includes correspondence between the Home Office Police Department and New Scotland Yard on issues of public order, the control of disturbances, and the organisation of procedures to deal with civil emergencies – as well as those generated by two public inquiries led by Lord Scarman during this period, the first into the disorder at Red Lion Square in 1974 (HO 233) and then into the events in Brixton in 1981 (HO 266).

While the passage of time has led to the release of significant tranches of important historical documents, it remains the case that many of the relevant MEPO and Home Office files listed on the catalogue of the National Archives continue to be retained by the originating department under Section 3(4) of the 1958 Public Records Act. This allows government departments to withhold records for administrative purposes, or indeed for 'any other special reason'. [99] For example, of the more than 1,000 files in the HO 325 series covering the period after 1950, almost half are at least in part closed or retained by the Home Office, meaning that it is not simply the case that the passage of time has yielded the opening of the official archive. In addition to this, in recent years it has emerged that both the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police – along with a number of other government departments – hold files that

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[98] 1958 Public Records Act [online]. Avaialble at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/6-7/51/enacted (accessed 22 September 2020). The Metropolitan Police Heritage Centre also contains records releasing to policing in the capital, though the archive is currently relocating, and its holdings have been inaccessible to researchers since January 2019.

[99] 1958 Public Records Act, Section 3(4).

are not listed on the National Archives' catalogue, a practice that makes it difficult to establish what is held about particular subjects. This was most clearly exposed in the case of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which in 2011 was found to have withheld tens of thousands of files relating to the British counter-insurgency campaign against the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya during the 1950s.[100] This says nothing of the fact that, outside of the Metropolian Police, other forces in England and Wales are not subject to the same legislation with regards to record management and their archives remain widely inconsistent. Indeed, while the 2012 report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel recommended that police forces be brought under the 1958 Public Records Act – a proposal supported by an official report published in November 2017 – these issues are still yet to be addressed.[101]

In response to the contraints of 'passive' archival research, which relies on government departments to proactively release official records, research for this thesis has also made use of the 2000 Freedom of Information Act, a piece of legislation which, as of 2005, has allowed members of the public to request access to withheld files. However, far from granting researchers full access to government records, scholars and journalists researching police and intelligence history have often been left frustrated by departmental decisions in favour of partial or non-disclosure. Indeed, freedom of information requests submitted as part of the research for this thesis were often delayed or rejected on grounds of 'law enforcement' (Section 31), with public authority decision notices sometimes offering the bizarre explanation that the release of public order files from the 1970s could weaken the ability of the police to maintain public order in the present day.[102] This is despite the fact that policing agencies in Britain now routinely publish public order manuals as part of general transparency.[103] And while public authorities are required under FOI legislation to conduct a 'public interest test' to consider the balance between disclosure and non-disclosure, some of these tests took more than eighteen months before a decision was made – amid numerous

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[100] Caroline Elkins, "Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 5 (2011); "Looking Beyond Mau Mau: Archiving Violence in the Era of Decolonization," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (2015).

[101] Hillsborough Independent Panel, *The Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel* (London: HMSO, 2012), 373; The Right Reverend James Jones, *'The Patronising Disposition of Unaccountable Power' a Report to Ensure the Pain and Suffering of the Hillsborough Families Is Not Repeated* (London: HMSO, 2017), 82-3.

[102] Emails between the author and the Home Office and National Archives.

[103] See, for example, Association of Chief Police Officers, Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, and National Policing Improvement Agency, *Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace* (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2010).

reminders of the statutory responsibility to provide updates every 20 working days – and a number of requests remain outstanding at the point of thesis submission.

In the face of these difficulties, a practice of meta-data requesting was developed early in the research process, both to ease the often time-consuming process of FOI and to help garner more successful results. Alongside the submission of regular requests for files listed on the National Archives catalogue, the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police were asked to provide a list of all items held on their record management system that contained key search terms, such as 'public order', 'disorder', 'demonstration', 'protest', 'A8 Branch', 'A7 Branch', and 'community relations'. They were also asked to provide a list of all previous requests that used these terms, redacting the personal information of the requester but including the date, description, and outcome of previous requests. This information was then used to make targeted requests for records known to be held and/or previously released, and a stronger public interest argument could be made for records previously withheld. This new methodology was instrumental in securing access to previously withheld and uncatalogued files, proving central to the ability of this thesis to move beyond existing accounts of the politics of public order during the period.

It also revealed changes in the application of freedom of information legislation since 2005, particularly with regard to the historic records of Special Branch. While the Home Office had been willing to release Special Branch files during the early years of the Act, a decision by the Information Commissioner in 2010 reversed this trend towards transparency via a broad reinterpretation of Section 23, which exempts information supplied by, or relating to, the security services.[104] Though legislators had deliberately excluded Special Branch from Section 23 of the Act – an absolute exemption that requires no public interest test – the Information Commissioner now accepted the argument of the Metropolitan Police that due to the intelligence sharing relationship between the security services and Special Branch, there is no way to disaggregate the sources of the information contained within Special Branch reports. Fortunately, with the help of Nicola Cutcher and Eveline Lubbers, I was able to establish contact with a number of investigative journalists who had received Special Branch documents during the early period of the Act – namely Solomon Hughes, Rob Evans, and

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[104] 'Decision Notice of the Information Commissioner's Office, ref. FS50219518' (27 May 2010) [online]. Available at: https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/decision-notices/2010/530306/FS_50219518.pdf

Martin Rosenbaum – and, after securing access to the records, we published digital copies online as part of the Special Branch Files Project.[105] Our website has proved to be an important resource for other researchers and campaigners interested in this subject, firstly in highlighting the inconsistency of the Home Office and Metropolian Police approach to the release of intelligence files, and secondly in archiving the political policing activities of Special Branch. This is particularly relevant as the activities of the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) – a unit of Special Branch set up in 1968 and discussed within Chapter One – currently forms the basis of a historic public inuiry into undercover policing, led by Lord Pitchford.[106] As such, this thesis is founded upon hard-won archival evidence, and it is hoped that the documents released as a result of this research will continue to help other researchers in the future develop a better understanding of both the history of policing institutions and the institutions that police this history.

Alongside this approach to securing documents, this thesis is also influenced by the methodological innovation of intelligence historian Wesley K. Wark, who challenged fellow researchers to 'adopt a more radical definition of the nature of intelligence archives, and to turn our sights from the question of explaining what secret agencies did or do, to how Governments think and act.' In pursuing this approach, Wark argued that 'the intelligence archive becomes the record of all those Government departments who receive, incorporate, digest and report on intelligence that comes to them from both secret and other sources.'[107] As such, this thesis has drawn on material held in a number of other archives, such as the historic records of ACPO, held at the Hull History Centre. This repository contains information on the annual conferences of the association and the minutes of its General Purposes and Sub-Committee, however, one challenge when dealing with these documents has been an institutional culture within ACPO that leans towards brief minute-taking. For example, a typical comment from the minutes of the Public Order Sub-Committee in 1978 notes: 'A long discussion ensued with diverse opinion concerning the role of the Subcommittee and the relationship to the Home Office.'[108] While the minutes record who was present at the

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[105] Special Branch Files Project [online]. Available at: http://specialbranchfiles.uk/ [accessed 1 March 2020].
[106] Undercover Policing Inquiry [online]. Available at: https://www.ucpi.org.uk/ [accessed 20 September 2020].
[107] Wesley K. Wark, "In Never-Never Land? The British Archives on Intelligence," *Historical Journal* 35 (1992). See also Christopher J. Murphy and Daniel W.B. Lomas, "Return to Neverland? Freedom of Information and the History of British Intelligence," *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 1 (2014).
[108] 'Minutes of the Public Order Sub-Committee on Tactics, Equipment and Instructor Training' (18 January 1978), HHC, ACPO DPO 2/5/6/1.

meeting, nothing is kept of which senior officers held what positions and why. Indeed, in 1992, when Tony Moore, a former senior public order officer at the Police Staff College at Bramshill, began a research degree to investigate principles, policies, and operational lessons in public order policing, he found that, 'it became clear how little thought had gone into the policing of public order over the years, particularly at a strategic level, and how little written material was available to senior officers who wished to improve their skills in this area of policing.' Explaining this, Moore noted that, '[this] lack of available material [is] caused by the reticence of many senior police officers in the past and their failure to adopt a constructive approach in which errors of judgement made in the spirit of professionalism during serious public disorder are readily conceded.'[109] The result has been that the views of senior officers have primarily been relayed via interviews some years later, and are thus influenced by the passage of time and an awareness that their responses will become public.[110]

Further to this point, it has been important during this thesis to remember the relationship between the author of police documents and their intended or likely known audience, especially as they travelled between the Metropolitan Police, the Home Office, Parliament, and the media. There is, of course, the obvious point that police reports meant for a public audience – such as press releases, Parliamentary reports, submissions to inquiries, and the Commissioner's annual reports – are a deliberate attempt by the police to communicate their narrative of events and their world view, to act as 'moral entrepreneurs' in naming crises and proposing solutions.[111] There is also the issue that institutions and departments – whether in Whitehall, New Scotland Yard, or ACPO – are not monolithic and are often competing for resources, reputation, and control. A report sent by A7 or Special Branch officers to their superiors is unlikely to be so candid about their failures as they are their successes. The tendency to embellish, which is most apparent in Special Branch reports, but also in the correspondence between Divisional Commanders and the central departments of New Scotland Yard, fits with what Christopher Dandeker has described as 'the independent part played by the self-interest of professional and bureaucratic experts in the expansion of the surveillance capacities of the organisations in which they are based.'[112] However, as

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[109] Moore, "Policing Serious Public Disorder: The Search for Principles, Policies and Operational Lessons," 4, 7.
[110] Reiner, *Chief Constables: Bobbies, Bosses, or Bureaucrats?*
[111] Loader and Mulcahy, *Policing and the Condition of England: Memory, Politics and Culture*, 62-3.
[112] Christopher Danderker, *Surveillance, Power and Modernity: Bureaucracy and Discipline from 1700 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 6.

Williams notes, reading internal documents critically can also tell us 'about expectations, preoccupations, and the underlying assumptions about what ought to be done', even if it cannot always tell us accurately what was, in fact, done.[113] Furthermore, the archive is not only made up of 'official' documents, and sometimes the most revealing insights appear in notes and comments on the reports and memorandum themselves, or correspondence between colleagues in the same department. These offer insight into the otherwise hidden relationship between and within institutions, allowing researchers to make sense of what Rock has described as the 'small structures and processes' that 'animate the very core of the routine politics of criminal justice.'[114]

These issues of access and the potential bias within sources say nothing of the significant gaps in the archival record, as Government departments and public authorities have, since the 1950s, destroyed documents in the interests of storage capacity and economic practicalities. During their recent research for the official history of criminal justice between 1959 and 1997, Rock, Downes, and Tim Newburn estimated that 98 per cent of Government files were destroyed over the years in a process known as 'weeding'.[115] The Metropolitan Police appear to have been particularly guilty of this practice, as it is surprising how few files remain on important subjects such as public order and community relations. Often the records that remain are those kept for administrative audits of staff numbers, resources, and annual budgets, and it is ironic that we know more about the cost of the filing cabinets in A7 and A8 Branch than we do about the material that filled them.

Reflecting the broad framing of the politics of public order, research has also taken place at a number of other repositories relevant to the subject. The archive of the NCCL is also based at the Hull History Centre, and its reports on demonstrations and campaigns on civil liberties and police accountability offer an alternative perspective on events from that given within police documents. Furthermore, research has also drawn on the correspondence and private papers of a number of former Home Secretaries – including Roy Jenkins (December 1965 to November 1967 and March 1974 to September 1976), Robert Carr (July 1972 to March 1974), James Callaghan (November 1967 to June 1970), and Merlyn Rees

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[113] Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975: From Parish Constable to National Computer*, 7.

[114] Paul Rock, "The Opening Stages of Criminal Justice Policy Making," *British Journal of Criminology* 35, no. 1 (1995): 1.

[115] "A Brief History of Record Management at the National Archives," *Legal Information Management* 16, no. 2 (2016).

(September 1976 to May 1979), which are held between the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the London School of Economic Library, and the Special Collections of the University of Leeds. Other sources consulted included records deposited in the Parliamentary Archives at the Palace of Westminster, Parliamentary debates available online via Hansard, newspaper reports available at the British Library newsroom and via the *Gale* online library, oral history interviews of former officers conducted by the Friends of the Metropolitan Police, and historic newsreel footage published online as part of the British Pathé Historical Collection. Overall, therefore, this broad range of sources is not always consistent in what it reveals about the events under discussion, and there are many questions unanswered – and unanswerable – given the incomplete scope of the documents. But the sources consulted for this thesis – including those bought into the public domain as a direct result of the research – together help to develop a far more complete picture of the politics of public order than previously possible.

Chapter One

Modernising 'Traditional Methods' of Public Order Policing

The 'Battle of Grosvenor Square' and the outbreak of 'the Troubles', 1968-72

This chapter shows how the Metropolitan Police responded to new forms of protest in 1968, which came at a time when the Force was undergoing a significant process of modernisation and reform. As demonstrations in Europe and the US broke down into confrontation and violence, senior police officers expressed concern that disorder would spread to Britain, particularly after the police were taken off-guard by a disorderly demonstration outside the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square in March 1968. This led officers at the newly created Public Order Branch (A8) to carry out a review of the aims and methods for public order policing, which now appeared outdated in the face of disorderly mass demonstrations. While research was undertaken into the different types of offensive tactics and riot control equipment used by police forces around the world, senior officers concluded that these methods were inconsistent with the celebrated 'traditional approach' of public order policing, based on the use of non-specialist, unarmed police operating according to a doctrine of minimum force. Senior officers were concerned that any transition towards overt displays of coercion would undermine the symbolic power of the police, based on the idea that officers acted as 'citizens in uniform', operating with the consent of the public. Importantly, however, they also recognised the need to underpin 'traditional methods' with improved crowd control training and mobility, advanced intelligence from Special Branch, and greater command and control of police resources.

This chapter also shows that as the Metropolitan Police underwent a process of modernisation, Home Secretary Callaghan gently exerted political influence on both the police and the media. Using his influence with ACPO, Callaghan encouraged regional forces to learn from the Metropolitan Police, a trend that would be repeated throughout the decade. The Home Secretary also met with leading newspaper representatives and the chairman of the BBC in an attempt to solicit more favourable coverage of protests for the police, highlighting the importance of representations of police behaviour for maintaining public support. This chapter concludes by showing that the modernisation of 'traditional methods' was widely seen as a success, distinguishing British policing from 'foreign' approaches to

public disorder. This became particularly apparent following the outbreak of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland, where the paramilitarism of the RUC appeared to undermine its legitimacy among large sections of the nationalist community. With policing in Northern Ireland viewed through a colonial haze – particularly following the deployment of troops in the summer of 1969 – efforts were made to 'Anglicise' the RUC, an export of British policing practices that develops a new angle to what Williams and Sinclair have described as the cross-fertilisation between policing in the colonies and the metropole.[1] While previous scholars, particularly Hillyard, have focused on how 'lessons' learned in Northern Ireland during the 1970s were exported to Britain during the 1980s, this chapter develops the more nuanced policy transfer outlined by Mulcahy.[2] This suggests that policing experience in Britain also influenced developments in Northern Ireland, particularly through the involvement of many of Britain's most senior officers in various investigations and inquiries during the late 1960s and early 1970s, However, as events in the Six Counties deteriorated, the situation was viewed as wholly different to British policing experience. Overall, this chapter highlights how senior officers within the Metropolitan Police sought to establish a balance between effective crowd control in the short term and police legitimacy in the longer term, and did so primarily through an enhanced focus on modernising – rather than rejecting – traditional methods of public order policing.

Modernising the Metropolitan Police and the new challenges of public order

In February 1967, the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police at New Scotland Yard moved from its three-building complex on the Victoria Embankment to a larger twenty-storey modern office block half a mile west on Broadway. The Metropolitan Police had held its previous site since 1890, but by the 1960s the requirements of modern technology and the significant increase in administrative staff had meant that Scotland Yard had outgrown its premises. Over a period of three weeks, convoys of removal vans conveyed the furniture, equipment, and records required to support the 18,500 officers and 5,000 administrative staff

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[1] Sinclair and Williams, "'Home and Away': The Cross-Fertilisation between 'Colonial' and 'British' Policing, 1921–85."

[2] Paddy Hillyard, "Lessons from Ireland," in *Policing the Miners' Strike*, ed. Bob Fine and Robert Millar (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985); "The Normalization of Special Powers: From Northern Ireland to Britain," in *Law, Order and the Authoritarian State*, ed. Phil Scraton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987); Aogán Mulcahy, "The 'Other' Lessons from Ireland? Policing, Political Violence and Policy Transfer," *European Journal of Criminology* 2, no. 2 (2005).

involved in policing Greater London.[3] At the same time, the revamped Press Bureau of the newly established Public Relations Department encouraged the press to cover this exciting new stage of modernisation for the Metropolitan Police, with a public relations specialist G.D. Gregory appointed to lead 'a task of image reconstruction'.[4] The relocation of Scotland Yard came alongside a significant reorganising of the Metropolitan Police, orientated around improving efficiency and rationalising the work of its central departments. In 1967, PA Management Consultants had begun a nine month study, with questionnaires sent to 2,500 officers and staff across the four main departments of the Force. The resulting report, accepted and put into action in April 1968, recommended merging the Receiver's and Commissioner's Offices, abolishing the intermediate command among the four Districts, and establishing a new Management Services Department, which was responsible for forward planning, research and development, and innovation in organisation and methods.[5] It also recommended a thorough reorganisation and rationalisation of Scotland Yard's centralised departments, with public order responsibilities transferred to a newly created A8 Branch.

Prior to the establishment of A8 Branch, the approach towards public order policing within the Metropolitan Police was characterised by an *ad hoc*, even amateurish, approach. Convention dictated that where an event required more resources than could be met by the local police Division, a small unit within the Commissioner's Office (A2), primarily responsible for royal events, would issue an Operational Order to arrange mutual aid from across the Force. There was no exact formula to the number of officers deployed for each large event and which largely depended on the size of the event and the type of crowd it was likely to draw. A military parade or the annual Remembrance Sunday wreath laying was a different type of operation to a political protest or demonstration, where more officers would be required in case arrests needed to be made. Nevertheless, most political demonstrations were orderly affairs, with close communication between the organisers and the police beforehand.

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[3] See 'London police strive to show the way', *The Times* (20 February 1967); 'Scotland Yard guard secret removal', *The Times* (21 February 1967); 'Operation Crowbar', *The Illustrated London News* (25 February 1967); 'Scotland Yard Moves', *British Pathé Historical Collection* (1967). Available at: https://www.britishpathe.com/video/scotland-yard-moves/query/scotland+yard+moves [accessed 9 March 2020].

[4] Steve Chibnall, *Law-and-Order News: An Analysis of Crime Reporting in the British Press* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), 72.

[5] Lowe, "Management Consultants and the Police."

Beyond this communication and cooperation, police assessments of political demonstrations were based on intelligence, and while this included reports from Special Branch and their network of informants, most information was 'open source', gleamed from newspaper reports and demonstration leaflets. In planning a public order operation, police personnel was organised in Serials, consisting of one Inspector, three Sergeants, twenty Constables and one radio operator, and each Serial would parade at their local police station before making their way to a meeting point in the area of the operation. While some Serials were conveyed in the affectionately named 'Green Goddess' buses, it was not uncommon during the 1960s to see officers from the outer Divisions travelling to public order events in central London via public transport. Since most demonstrations and ceremonies took place on weekends, public order duty was both a useful source of overtime pay and a tiresome and difficult job. Officers lamented the boredom and hunger associated with maintaining a police cordon for long periods of time in variable British weather.[6] Like many aspects of policework during this period, officers were expected to gain crowd control experience 'on the job' and the twelve-week basic training for new recruits primarily involved rote learning of the law, with little attention paid to policing demonstrations.[7]

These arrangements were exposed on Sunday 17 March 1968 when an estimated 10,000 people joined an afternoon rally in Trafalgar Square before marching through central London and onto the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square. While the march was initially relatively orderly, this changed quickly as demonstrators entered the square, where the large crowd became bottle-necked by a tight police cordon diverting the march away from the Embassy. Demonstrators soon spilled out into the gardens in front of the Embassy, and some began throwing flour and clods of earth at the thin line of police. Among the crowds of young British demonstrators were a small cohort of protesters representing the German *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, who had travelled to London to take part in the action, bringing with them recent experience of protest in Berlin.[8]

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[6] Weinberger, *The Best Police in the World: An Oral History of English Policing*.

[7] These experiences are reflected in interviews with former Metropolitan Police officers involved in the Grosvenor Square demonstration in March 1968. These interviews were conducted in 2007 as part of an oral history project by the Friends of the Metropolitan Police. Available at: https://www.metpolicehistory.co.uk/met-police-oral-history.html [accessed 1 March 2020].

[8] HC Deb 'Grosvenor Square Demonstration (German Students)' (29 April 1968), vol. 763 cc. 791-2.

Under pressure from the large number of demonstrators, command officers called for mounted police to be brought forward to help disperse the crowd, with British Pathé footage showing a rather haphazard mounted manoeuvre that caused demonstrators to scatter.[9] Over the next hour, the gardens at the centre of the square became the site of a series of pitched battles, as individual police officers led sorties in search of arrests. Of the 1,437 police officers deployed in connection with the demonstration, 145 received on-site medical treatment, with wounded demonstrators carried off for treatment by volunteer paramedics at the student-occupied London School of Economics.[10] Accredited observers sent by the NCCL to monitor the conduct of police and protesters recorded a number of instances of serious police misbehavior, including assault, wrongful arrest, and the fabrication of evidence. In a report later sent directly to both Home Secretary Callaghan and Commissioner Waldron, the NCCL's General Secretary Tony Smythe criticised the police's operational planning and suggested that the decision to use mounted officers had greatly inflamed tensions.[11]

While the demonstration of 17 March had officially been organised by an *ad hoc* committee representing a number of groups on the anti-war left, the driving force behind its activities had been members of the Trotskyist Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), an organisation that had been set up in the summer of 1966. The emergence of the VSC had represented a significant shift in the politics of the anti-war movement, which had previously been led by the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV), an umbrella organisation representing a number of political, religious, and labour groups. While the BCPV had adopted the genteel campaign strategy of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) – organising sponsored walks, teach-ins, televised debates, marches, and peaceful demonstrations – protests associated with the VSC were more disorganised, made up of various participating groups, some of which were willing to engage the police in violent confrontation.[12]

These shifts in the politics and organising activities of the 'new left' during the late 1960s clearly provoked concern among the police, who noted that young radicals, inspired by

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[9] Footage of the demonstration is available online at 'World in Action The Demonstration 1968' (undated) [online audio visual]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgbAsiW9Q3Y [accessed 1 March 2020].

[10] Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1968*, 40; "The Occupation of the London School of Economics," *Minerva* 7, no. 3 (1969).

[11] 'Report on the Demonstration in Grosvenor Square, London, on March 17 1968' (April 1968), HHC, Liberty Archive, DCL 640/4. HC Deb, 'Grosvenor Square (Demonstrations), 4 April 1968 vol. 762 cc. 731-41.

[12] Sylvia Ellis, "Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad: The Goals and Tactics of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Britain," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 21, no. 4 (2014).

events abroad, were now more willing to cause public disorder at mass demonstrations. As a Special Branch report from September 1968 noted:

> The climate of opinion among extreme left-wing elements in this country in relation to public political protest has undergone a radical change over the last few years. The emphasis has shifted first from orderly, peaceful, cooperative meetings and processions to passive resistance and 'sit-downs' and now to active confrontation with the authorities to attempt to force social changes and alterations of Government policy. Indeed, the more vociferous spokesmen of the left are calling for the complete overthrow of parliamentary democracy and the substitution of various brands of 'socialism' and 'workers control'. They claim that this can only be achieved by 'action on the streets', and although few of them will admit publicly, or in the press, that they desire a state of anarchy, it is nevertheless tacitly accepted that such a condition is a necessary preamble to engineering a breakdown of our present system of Government and achieving a revolutionary change in the society in which we live.[13]

While the police, and in particular Special Branch, were often prone to exaggeration, confrontational protest tactics had increasingly been adopted by left-wing groups across Europe and North America during the late 1960s. An emergent structural critique of the violence inherent within post-colonial and capitalist societies had contributed to a greater acceptance of violence and public disorder among social movements and protest groups.[14] Alongside these political convictions were practical considerations of how modern social movements should operate in an age of mass media, and demonstrators were increasingly aware that confrontational protests were rewarded with significant media attention. Public disorder thus became a reliable way of ensuring maximum publicity for a cause, while exposing the violent and coercive power of the state in the response it provoked from the

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[13] 'Special Branch report' (23 September 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

[14] Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, and Herbert Marcuse (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969); *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 2002); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin Classics, 2001).

police.[15] This emerging realisation amongst some protest groups of the strategic benefits of public displays of disorder and reactionary policing tactics necessitated, in turn, a period of reflection and review within the Metropolitan Police.

Building police capacity

The disorder in Grosvenor Square shocked senior officers within the Metropolitan Police, exposing weaknesses in existing practices for large-scale public order operations. As a result, one of the first tasks of Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Lawlor as head of the newly-established A8 Branch was to undertake a comprehensive review of existing procedures for crowd control and to make recommendations for improvements. Soon after the 17 March demonstration a working party was set up, bringing together the different parts of the Force involved in public order operations, including Uniformed Branch, CID, and Special Branch.[16] In their first meeting on 28 March 1968, members agreed that their plans for the Grosvenor Square demonstration earlier in the month had been outdated and insufficient, based on the experience of protests in previous years which, though 'noisy and militant in nature', had never contained 'such a large faction organised for and determined to provoke serious disorder'.[17] In particular, the working party noted that the new character of protests had exposed significant weaknesses in traditional crowd control tactics. For example, police cordons passively resisting the weight of pushing demonstrators had contributed to the significant number of police injuries and some officers had been unfamiliar with basic techniques. At a command level, officers had found that crowd dispersal tactics intended to alleviate pressure on police cordons had been poorly understood by police Serials and 'haphazardly organised' by middle-ranking officers. Furthermore, when mounted officers were brought forward to strengthen the police line, some riders had lost control as their horses were frightened by the sudden sight and sound of the disorderly crowd.

Recognising a need to update police capacity for the new challenges of public disorder, the working party carried out research into crowd and riot control methods used by police

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[15] Nick Thomas, "Protests against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: The Relationship between Protesters and the Press," *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 3 (2008). In the American context, see Daniel Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War': The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

[16] Membership included Chief Superintendent Fowler and Superintendent Hope (A8 Branch), Chief Superintendent Gilbert from A Division (Uniform Branch), Chief Superintendent Gerrard from the CID, and Detective Superintendent Lawrenson from Special Branch.

[17] 'Report of the First Working Party on Public Order' (1968), 2, NA, MEPO 2/11228.

forces around the world, focusing particularly on those developed in the US and the former British colonies. This included a survey of various lethal and non-lethal weapons, such as CS gas, nerve gas (mace), water cannons, and a lubricated foam marketed as 'instant banana peel'. The group also considered various models of riot batons and firearms, taking note of the different scenarios in which they might be deployed. Despite this research, the working party found little that appeared appropriate for crowd control in London. Publications from the US started with the assumption that both police and demonstrators would be armed, something quite alien to officers in the Metropolitan Police. Registering the incompatibility of even the most basic lessons from US policing, the report noted that, 'It was common ground that the minimum force should be used against demonstrators at the onset – but the minimum in some cases was one bullet to kill the ringleaders in an attempt to disperse a crowd before using more bullets for more demonstrators.'[18] In other cases, CS gas was seen by British colonial forces as a 'first step' for dispersing protesters, and while some central London police stations held limited stocks of protective shields and CS gas, use of this equipment was strictly limited to the apprehension of violent persons or for hostage situations.[19] The working party thus came to the unanimous decision that none of the weapons considered should be adopted, so long as there was no escalation in the degree of violence used by demonstrators.

Their report instead advised that 'traditional methods, i.e. on a man to man unarmed basis', should continue, since the 'recent police experience abroad' – most likely a reference to disorder in Chicago, Paris, and Berlin – provided evidence that 'arming the police or resorting to tougher physical measures against demonstrators would provoke retaliation against police by like violence.'[20] The unarmed traditional methods of English policing were seen to have the support of Parliament and public alike, something the working party believed was understood by most demonstrators and acted as a limit on violent protest. While the report did note that officers 'did not overlook the possibility of conditions deteriorating through a worsening of political tensions or through example, advice or incitement from abroad', it concluded that 'the type of demonstration currently taking place in France,

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[18] Ibid. 4.

[19] 'Appendix A – Use of Tear Gas in the Apprehension of Violent Persons' (1968), NA, MEPO 2/11229; 'Provision of mattresses and protective shields for use in arresting violent persons (1961-1971), NA, MEPO 1/10155.

[20] 'Report of the First Working Party on Public Order' (1968), 4, NA, MEPO 2/11228.

Germany, USA etc. is the result of both sides being armed – both vieing (sic) with the other in violence'. Distinguishing the English police from those elsewhere in the world, the authors 'hope[d] the day will not come when it is thought necessary for police in this country to be armed and equipped in the manner of their foreign colleagues'.[21]

While eschewing the type of paramilitary equipment used by other forces, the working party articulated a strategy based on what they described as 'new ideas of control and deployment of manpower together with a better use of transport and communications.'[22] The working party found that the police were still adjusting to the introduction of hand-held radios in 1966, which had created a two-tier system of communication for public order operations. Serial Inspectors had been issued with radios, which allowed them to keep in touch with their supervising officer, otherwise known as the Sector Commander. Sector Commanders would also carry another radio, this one tuned to a different radio channel, which would allow command level officers to communicate. While this modern technology provided the chain of command though which orders were relayed and situation reports received, the working group found that the system was susceptible to information overload, at which point it was difficult to establish what was going on and how best to coordinate the police response.

The working party also found that the Urgent Communications Room set up in the new offices of New Scotland Yard was under-utilised and insufficiently equipped for multiple demonstrations, meaning that the Commander of Operations usually directed his deputies from the ground. It was suggested, therefore, that a new facility should be developed, which would act as a visual and communications hub from which the Commander of Operations could monitor and direct responses to simultaneous events.[23] The working party also noted that the new Operations Room should look to incorporate CCTV cameras into public order operations, as they offered a way of removing the 'feedback loops' that tended to slow the relay of information at the top of the police's command and control structure. As Williams has noted, '[CCTV] held out the attraction that the police institution could be better

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

coordinated in real time: that technology could help the organization integrate a collection of autonomous police officers into a unit that could react as one.'[24]

While practices of command and control were to be strengthened through the establishment of a new Operations Room, the working party also felt that a set of common minimum standards were needed among officers in terms of crowd control. The report made a series of practical suggestions to improve the handling and dispersal of disorderly crowds, including different types of police formations for various public order scenarios. This included Serials organising together to establish a 'double cordon' to resist crowd pressure, while a 'wedge' formation could be used to disperse crowds and clear a path through a mass of protesters. While these tactics were by no means new, senior officers wanted to ensure that an understanding of established streel-level tactics was shared across the Force, particularly as the VSC were planning a large anti-war rally for October 1968. After the working party's report was completed, a number of meetings were held over the summer to develop its crowd control recommendations into a one-day public order training course, and the months of August, September, and October saw regular courses held at the Metropolitan Police's recently constructed training facility in Hendon. During these sessions, Chief Superintendents with recent operational experience used a projected video of the 18 March disorder to teach crowd control manoeuvres and police formations to all Constables, Sergeants, and Inspectors expected to be deployed as foot Serials at the upcoming anti-war rally. This was a significant logistical undertaking and shows that senior officers were committed to building police capacity across the Force in preparation for the 27 October demonstration.[25]

While common minimum standards were being developed through the introduction of special training, the working party also recommended that more use should be made of the SPG on public order operations. All four units – each consisting of an Inspector, three Sergeants, and twenty-four Police Constables – had been deployed at the 17 March demonstration in Grosvenor Square, and the working party noted that its officers had provided a useful reserve force that could be radioed in to strengthen police numbers and respond quickly to the diversionary tactics of demonstrators or violent sections of the crowd.

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[24] Chris A. Williams, "Police Surveillance and the Emergence of Cctv in the 1960s," *Crime Prevention and Community Safety* 5, no. 3 (2003): 31-2.

[25] 'Minutes on the provision of public order training at the Cadent Training School in Hendon' (1968) NA, MEPO 2/11229. In May 1968, the Training School was moved from its original site at Peel House in Pimlico to a new facility in Hendon, north west London.

The experienced officers of the SPG had worked effectively to form 'arresting squads' – consisting of one Sergeant and ten Constables – who had successfully apprehended unruly protesters without drawing officers away from the police cordons.[26]

Developing the role of intelligence

While the working party's recommendations had focused on the introduction of common minimum standards in crowd control and a more effective system of command and control, the anti-war protests had also presented a new problem for traditional practices of intelligence gathering. As Special Branch Chief Superintendent Arthur Cunningham noted at a special conference on public order organised by ACPO during the late summer of 1968:

> The essential difficulty lies in the fact that we are not at present dealing with one single disciplined organisation but, under the umbrella of an Ad Hoc Committee, with a multiplicity of individual groups. These may all ostensibly subscribe to the main theme of the demonstration, but some pursue within it very different ends to those publicly stated by the organisers … Then there are groups within groups, ready to act independently of their parent body and making their tactical plans at very short notice.[27]

Police had found that many of the groups orbiting the Ad Hoc Committee were all too willing to disregard the instructions of demonstration marshals and act according to their own agendas, with one Special Branch report describing the anti-war movement as 'an uneasy coalition of warring factions' in which the 'tail [i.e. the most politically radical element] is wagging the dog.'[28] What was needed was a more detailed understanding of the views and intentions of the various groups that participated in demonstrations and the amount of support they held. It was to this end that Special Branch Chief Inspector Conrad Dixon proposed setting up the Special Operations Squad (SOS), a small group of officers sent undercover to infiltrate the anti-war movement and keep senior police officers and the Home

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[26] 'Appendix P – Demonstrations Involving Civil Disobedience or Serious Public Order' (1968), Ibid.

[27] 'Presentation by Mr. Cunningham on "Intelligence Gathering Problems for Major Demonstrations", ACPO Conference 25-27 September 1968' (undated), HHC, ACPO U DPO10/694/a.

[28] 'Special Branch report' (3 October 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

Office 'well informed' about its activities.[29] With a priority placed on secrecy, the unit was funded directly by the Home Office and authorised by Deputy Under Secretary of State James Waddell, the senior civil servant responsible for the Home Office Police Department.[30]

As Cunningham told other senior officers at the ACPO conference in 1968, the deployment of undercover officers 'is always a tricky assignment, involving a good cover story, a cover address for contact, and plenty or nerve and imagination on the part of the officer.'[31] But what distinguished the SOS from traditional practices of Special Branch surveillance and infiltration was the length of deployment, with undercover officers assuming a cover identity and assimilating themselves within target groups for a number of months and sometimes even years. Indeed, Cunningham warned of a particular danger in deploying infiltration of this kind, noting that:

> Use of an officer in this way exposes police to the accusation of acting as agent provocateurs, should the identity of the officer be exposed. To avoid this, those involved must be carefully instructed not to get themselves elected to any office in the organisation or to take any active part in planning operations which would bring the group into contact with the law.[32]

Following this limited guidance, by the summer of 1968 undercover officers from Special Branch's SOS were regularly attending the meetings of local VSC branches across London, while taking part in other activities such as distributing campaign propaganda and attending demonstrations.[33] Intelligence was fed back to Chief Inspector Dixon, who authored a series of weekly reports, which were then passed to Special Branch Commander Ferguson Smith. Given the political interest in the anti-war movement following the disorder of 17 March, the reports were also forwarded on to Waddell at the Home Office, who kept Callaghan informed on the police intelligence.

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[29] Mick Creedon, "Operation Herne: Report 1 - Use of Covert Identities," (2013), 4.
[30] 'Obituary: Conrad Dixon', *The Times* (28 April 1999).
[31] 'Presentation by Mr. Cunningham on "Intelligence Gathering Problems for Major Demonstrations" (undated), HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694/a.
[32] Ibid.
[33] 'Special Branch report' (10 September 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

Despite their partisan and often disparaging tone, the reports provide an insight into how Special Branch approached the practice of intelligence gathering for the purposes of public order. Particular effort was made to establish the degree of support and influence held by the patchwork of far-left groups involved in the Ad Hoc Committee, with Special Branch officers spending time mapping out the sectarian infighting of various groups on the anti-war left.[34] Indeed, by September 1968, Special Branch informed the Home Office that it had 'fairly comprehensive coverage … of the activities of the most extreme of the groups involved in the forthcoming October demonstration', an update no doubt intended to reassure the Home Office that its secret investment into clandestine operations had been a success.[35]

While the SOS had infiltrated many of the anti-war groups in London, Special Branch relied on provincial forces for intelligence on demonstrators visiting from across the country.[36] The 1960s had seen a gradual proliferation of small Special Branch units in other forces, whose activities were often directed centrally from London.[37] Prior to the large anti-war demonstration planned for 27 October 1968, Special Branch estimated that based on the information they had received more than 3,000 demonstrators would be visiting from outside London. Lists of the travel arrangements from each city and university town were drawn up, with one report noting that, 'coach operators are being co-operative and the police are reasonably confident that they will be able to make suitable arrangements to keep tab on all coach parties.'[38] This information was then passed by Special Branch to A8 Branch, where it was used to inform the operational planning for public order events. While Special Branch intelligence helped inform decisions about the size and disposition of personnel during a public order event, it was also used to stop and search coaches as they entered London, not only as a precaution to find 'offensive materials', but also, as Cunningham told the audience

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[34] At the time of writing, the 'Undercover Policing Inquiry' had revealed eight members of the SOS sent undercover to collect intelligence on the anti-war movement and their motivations for the 27 October demonstration. The agents also infiltrated a number of far-left groups orbiting the VSC, including the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation, the International Marxist Group, and the International Socialists. Deployment during this time ranged from 3 months to 3 years. See 'Undercover Policing Inquiry – Cover names' (2018): https://www.ucpi.org.uk/cover-names/.

[35] 'Special Branch Report' (5 September 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

[36] 'Letter from Brodie to unknown' (14 August 1968), Ibid.

[37] Tony Bunyan, *The History and Practice of the Political Police in Britain* (London: Quartet Books, 1976), 133.

[38] This is a technique also discussed in Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes: 1893 to 1985*, 99.

at the ACPO conference, as a means of slowing down those attending the demonstration and disrupting their activities.[39]

While intelligence was crucial for the operational planning of A8 Branch, Special Branch officers were also deployed on demonstrations themselves, operating undercover to follow potential targets and, in the words of one report, 'to keep watch on the leaders of the demonstrators and break-away groups.'[40] As Cunningham told his colleagues at the ACPO conference in the summer of 1968, 'Suitably attired, bearded, long haired officers are directed to stay among them [the demonstrators] to learn of any sudden spontaneous tactical diversion … transmitting the information to Uniform Branch as soon as possible.' For this purpose, Cunningham noted that, '[Special Branch officers] are obtaining specially adapted transceivers so that he can communicate his information without losing contact with the group in which he is interested.'[41] Indeed, like the working party's recommendations for the new Operations Room at Scotland Yard, the integration of Special Branch surveillance practices to inform real time operational decisions during public order events was being aided by new technology.

Political involvement in policing operations

While A8 Branch were adapting their approach to public order over the summer of 1968 and Special Branch were sending undercover officers to infiltrate the anti-war movement, Callaghan as Home Secretary took a particular personal interest in public order arrangements. A handwritten note by Sir Philip Allen, then Permanent Under Secretary of State, on a Special Branch report at the beginning of October confirmed that, 'In the last two or three weeks I have made a practice of showing these reports to the S. of S [Secretary of State].'[42] Perhaps more tellingly, the special focus on protest and demonstration at the ACPO annual conference in late September 1968 came at the behest of the Home Office, and senior officers from across the country were warned by the Assistant Undersecretary of State Herbert Stotesbury that, 'The Home Secretary himself has shown great personal interest and has recently

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[39] 'Presentation by Cunningham on "Intelligence Gathering Problems for Major Demonstrations"' (undated), HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694/a.
[40] 'Minutes on meeting at New Scotland Yard' (16 August 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].
[41] 'Presentation by Cunningham on "Intelligence Gathering Problems for Major Demonstrations", HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694/a.
[42] 'Special Branch report' (3 October 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

intimated that in his view every Force should be represented and that he would regard with disfavour any evidence of [a] lack of interest in the subject.'[43] Indeed, based on his dealings with the Home Office in preparation for the two-day conference, ACPO General Secretary Douglas Osmond, Chief Constable for Hampshire Constabulary, noted in a letter to a colleague, 'I can but surmise there is deep interest in high places and not a little anxiety.'[44] The conference was organised with the utmost secrecy, as the Home Office was concerned that if the media were to find out that senior officers were meeting with Special Branch and the Security Services it would only escalate tensions for the upcoming anti-war demonstration. In addition to Cunningham's presentation on Special Branch surveillance, the afternoon was dedicated to a special two-hour video presentation by Lawlor, which focused on the tactics of protesters at the 17 March demonstration and showed footage of the new crowd control techniques then being practised at the Metropolitan Police training facility in Hendon.[45]

Home Office documents also show that one of Callaghan's main concerns in the months leading up to the 27 October anti-war rally was the media's alarmist reporting of the possibility of disorder.[46] Worthy of particular criticism was *The Times* newspaper, whose front page on 5 September had carried news of a 'startling plot' 'uncovered by a special squad of detectives', whose investigations revealed that protesters were manufacturing 'Molotov cocktails' and 'amassing a small arsenal of weapons'.[47] Frustrated by this coverage and believing it significantly raised tensions, Callaghan asked Special Branch and the Security Services to investigate the likely source of these stories, the former concluding that press coverage was 'a carefully-constructed pastiche of information … spiced with inspired guesswork.'[48]

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[43] 'Letter from Stotesbury to Osmond' (19 June 1968); 'Letter from Aston to various Chief Constables and Assistant Chief Constables' (12 September 1968), HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694/a.

[44] 'Letter from Osmond to unknown' (16 August 1968), Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] 'Callaghan faces plot questions', *The Times* (6 September 1968); 'Memo from Mr. Waddell, "'The Times' on Demonstrations"' (5 September 1968); 'Special Branch Report' (5 September 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

[47] 'Terror Bombs, Guns Fear at London Rally', *Evening News* (4 September 1968); 'Militant plot feared in London', *The Times* (5 September 1968).

[48] 'Memo from Waddell' (5 September 1968); 'Special Branch Report' (5 September 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

Taking a more active role in securing measured and favourable coverage, the Home Secretary met with Lord Hill, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BBC, and both agreed that militant members of the anti-war and student protests had been given far too much media attention, with Lord Hill promising to pursue with discretion the issues raised.[49] Callaghan relayed a suggestion made by the Prime Minister that the BBC arrange a debate between three leading radical students and three 'tough, intelligent, moderate students', since it was believed that 'the intellectual destruction of the radicals would have a considerable impact on intelligent student opinion.'[50] One example discussed in Cabinet was the recent BBC television documentary 'Students in Revolt', in which foreign 'revolutionaries' were invited to London to discuss the global protests of 1968. Despite the considerable controversy caused by the programme at the time, Callaghan felt that it had been successful in influencing moderate student opinion and exposing the 'wooliness' of the radical leadership's thinking.[51] This reflected a broader Government policy of bolstering the moderate National Union of Students (NUS) in order to canalise support away from more radical student politics.[52]

While Callaghan's public response to concerns of protest and disorder during the summer of 1968 had been to express confidence in traditional police methods, events in Northern Ireland significantly raised concerns about the ability of the police to maintain order at the large anti-war demonstration planned for 27 October. On 5 October, a civil rights march in Derry descended into several days of rioting, after Loyalists and off-duty members of the Ulster Special Constabulary (a paramilitary reserve commonly known as the 'B-Specials') attacked demonstrations outside the city. Rather than provide protection for the demonstrators, the RUC was accused of using baton-charges and water cannon to disperse the crowd, which only inflamed the situation further.[53] As Callaghan came under pressure from the Conservative Opposition to guarantee the police were prepared for the anti-war demonstration in London, the Home Secretary wrote to Minister of Defence Denis Healey

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[49] 'Minutes of a meeting between the Callaghan and Lord Hill' (21 October 1968), Ibid.

[50] 'Minutes of Cabinet meeting' (17 September 1968), Ibid.

[51] For an account of the BBC programme, see Richard Ivan Jobs, "The Grand Tour of Daniel Cohn-Bendit and the Europeanism of 1968," in *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution*, ed. Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne, and James S. Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[52] 'Cabinet Office draft paper' (15 September 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

[53] Simon Prince, "5 October 1968 and the Beginning of the Troubles: Flashpoints, Riots and Memory," *Irish Political Studies* 27, no. 3 (2012).

with inquiries as to what role the army could play if the police were to lose control of public order. Healey, for his part, informed Callaghan that the suggestion that troops might be called upon during the October demonstration had created 'uneasiness' in his department, insisting that, 'it would be extremely undesirable for troops ever to be used in an active role once a demonstration had got out of hand', since 'the troops are not trained in riot control in this country'.[54] Nevertheless, Healey noted that unarmed troops could help fulfil traditional police roles such as providing security for Government buildings and creating road blocks, but that training would be needed first and any call for military assistance would require at least two or three days' notice.[55]

Callaghan's exchange with Healey clearly shocked some senior civil servants in the Home Office, with Waddell noting that, though such measures should not be totally ruled out, 'In present circumstances [the] use of troops would be disastrous,' since 'the dividends would certainly vanish.'[56] This comment suggests that those within the Home Office were firmly of the opinion that a successful resolution of the demonstration would benefit the police, as it would validate 'traditional methods' and secure further support from the public. Unlike the paramilitary response to disorder in Northern Ireland, the strategy of the Metropolitan Police was to avoid overt displays of force, something articulated by Mark's famous quip that the traditional police strategy was one of 'winning by appearing to lose'.[57] With this in mind, Callaghan and Commissioner Waldron met with ten leading media representatives in advance of the demonstration and arranged for television and newspaper cameras to have access behind police cordons to ensure sympathetic coverage of the demonstration from the police point of view. Having received information from Special Branch that the Ad Hoc Committee was in a dire financial situation, Callaghan also asked those present to prevent their journalists from offering payments to members of radical groups for contacts and interviews.[58] In attempting to secure favourable coverage for the police, the Home Secretary was bolstering their symbolic power, which was seen to derive from a general level of support for traditional aims and methods amongst the public.

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[54] 'Memorandum from Healey to Callaghan' (14 October 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].
[55] Ibid.
[56] 'Home Office memorandum, Demonstrations' (23 October 1968), Ibid.
[57] 'Robert Mark on Villainy, Virtue and "Vanessa's Loonies"', *The Listener* (4 August 1977).
[58] 'Minutes of a meeting between the Callaghan, Waldron, Allen, and ten leading television and newspaper proprietors' (18 October 1968); 'Special Branch report' (9 October 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

'A demonstration of British good sense'

In the seven months between the Grosvenor Square disorders of 17 March and the next major anti-war demonstration planned for 27 October, public order policing within the Metropolitan Police had undergone significant review, introducing a series of measures that went beyond ad hoc preparation to represent a permanent change in public order operations. This had taken place in a climate of international protest, which included considerable scenes of violence in Northern Ireland.[59] While the officers within A8 Branch had eschewed the offensive tactics and riot control equipment associated with paramilitary-style police forces, they articulated an approach that sought to maintain the 'traditional methods' of unarmed, non-specialist public order policing, underpinned by common minimum standards among officers, an improved system for command and control, and advanced intelligence. Public order planning over the summer of 1968 had seen a significant amount of political involvement from Callaghan, who had encouraged senior officers at the ACPO conference to learn the lessons from the recent experience of the Metropolitan Police. Callaghan had also sought to influence media reporting of anti-war protests and demonstrations, securing favourable coverage for the police. Significant preparation, therefore, had gone into avoiding a repeat of the disorder and loss of control at the 17 March demonstration, the October rally acting as a test of the aims, methods, and capacity of the Metropolitan Police for maintaining public order at large demonstrations.

On the morning of Sunday, 27 October 1968, as demonstrators amassed on London's Embankment for the start of the anti-war rally, Callaghan left his office and walked down through Whitehall to greet those in attendance.[60] The Home Secretary had requested that television monitors be set up in his office prior to the demonstration, providing direct access to the four CCTV cameras that had been installed specially along the route of the march, relaying a live-feed of the procession to the temporary control room in Scotland Yard. Minutes of a Home Office meeting on 8 October suggest that the original plan was for Callaghan and Waldron to stay in contact via a direct telephone line between the Home Secretary's office and Scotland Yard, but in her autobiography Shirley Williams, then Minister for Education and

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[59] Prince, "5 October 1968 and the Beginning of the Troubles: Flashpoints, Riots and Memory."
[60] 'Home Office memorandum' (10 October 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI].

Science, suggests that the Home Secretary ended up joining the Commissioner and Commander Lawlor in the control room in police headquarters.[61] With an estimated 100,000 people in attendance, 8,846 police (more than half of the uniformed Force) had been deployed to control the sprawling demonstration, shepherding the main body of the march through central London.[62] Despite the large police deployment, officers adopted a deliberately low profile to avoid confrontation and traffic was diverted along the route of the march so that demonstrators could occupy the full width of the road. While the vast majority of demonstrators continued along the official route of the march, which ended with a finale of speeches in Hyde Park, a group of around 5,000 protesters, mostly from Maoist and anarchist groups, pushed on to Grosvenor Square, accusing the Ad Hoc Committee of capitulation in avoiding the US Embassy, a site they felt should remain the focal point of the demonstration.

Given the extent of Special Branch infiltration and intelligence gathering over the summer, police were well prepared for the splinter group as it arrived at Grosvenor Square. Police cordons held fast as protesters joined arms and ran at the police line protecting the Embassy, with British Pathé newsreel footage showing police deploying the tactics learnt at the training college in Hendon, slowing the momentum of the protesters' charge by giving way at the point of contact and pushing inwards from the sides until the group had thinned out.[63] In preparation for the rally, Home Office documents show that it had been agreed that 'the Commissioner would be in charge of the police handling of the demonstrations, but the Home Secretary would be available to provide a second opinion if he was asked.'[64] While police operational independence was closely guarded, Shirley Williams' account of the demonstration from the temporary Operations Room makes the rather remarkable claim that Waldron asked Callaghan whether he should deploy mounted police to disperse the crowd outside the Embassy, the Home Secretary apparently calmly advising against such action.[65]

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[61] Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves* (Bath: Virago, 2010), 228.

[62] HC Deb, 'Demonstration, Central London' (7 November 1968) vol. 772 c. 1059.

[63] 'Grosvenor Square Anti-Vietnam Riots' (1968), *British Pathé Historical Collection* [online]. Available at: https://www.britishpathe.com/video/grosvenor-square-anti-vietnam-riots [accessed 9 March 2020].

[64] 'Home Office memorandum' (10 October 1968), HO 325/90 [released under FOI]; Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, 228.

[65] Ibid.

With only 74 police officers injured and 42 people arrested, the 27 October rally was celebrated in Callaghan's words as a 'demonstrations of British good sense'.[66] With the evening drawing in and the demonstrators slowly clearing from Grosvenor Square, Callaghan personally went to congratulate those officers still guarding the Embassy. In scenes that no doubt would have frustrated the more ardent demonstrators, the day ended with some of the remaining protesters, police, and members of public joining chorus for a rendition of Auld Lang Syne.[67] This became part of the mythology of policing and protest in 1968, with the image of an elderly gentleman playing the fiddle while a young women danced among the eclectic choir later used as the frontispiece of police historian T.A. Critchley's 1970 book, in which he claimed the British had miraculously 'conquered violence' as a result of national mores.[68] Days later, the police were celebrated in the House of Commons as 'the finest police in the world', and on 6 November, Waldron received a petition of over 300,000 signatures collected by the Greater London Council, congratulating his officers on their 'restraint, tact and good humour' in response to the protest.[69]

The outbreak of 'the Troubles': lessons from Northern Ireland

The October 1968 demonstration was the high point for the anti-Vietnam War movement in Britain and demonstrations the following year failed to draw the same large crowds. The attention of the Home Office was now firmly on Northern Ireland, where sectarian violence and rioting continued following the outbreaks of disorder in Derry in October 1968. But it appears that Home Office officials were at this stage underestimating the situation in Northern Ireland, noting in a 9 January 1969 meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Defence and the Security Services that, 'they could not envisage situations arising in this country which could necessitate the use of troops in … aid to the civil power'.[70] Indeed, Mr Clift of the Home Office Police Department later showed some frustration when he noted that the Ministry of Defence 'clearly remain unbelieving that the day will not come when the police

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[66] HC Deb, 'Demonstration, Central London' (7 November 1968) vol. 772 c. 137W.

[67] Laurie, *Scotland Yard: A Study of the Metropolitan Police*, 125.

[68] *Critchley, The Conquest of Violence. Order and Liberty in Britain.* Critchley was a senior civil servant at the Home Office, who acted as Secretary to the Willink's Royal Commission on the Police between 1960 and 1962.

[69] HC Deb, 'Debate on the Address' (30 October 1968) vol. 772 cc. 11-153; HL Deb, 'Address in Reply to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech' (31 October 1968) vol. 297 cc. 34-114. 'Greater London Council, Petition' (1968), NA, MEPO 2/10986.

[70] 'Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Ministry of Defence' (8 January 1969), NA, HO 325/130.

will have to turn to the Armed Services for help in coping with a "Grosvenor Square type" (the Ministry's term) demonstration'.[71] Despite the apparent optimism of Home Office officials, a series of Loyalist bomb attacks in April 1969 soon led the Ministry of Defence to announce that British troops stationed in Northern Ireland would be used to guard key utilities across the region, and by August 1969 the military where preparing to support the RUC in maintaining public order.[72]

It was hoped that the troops would not be long in Northern Ireland, and that a reformed police force in the region could restore confidence amongst the public. Just a week prior to the deployment of British troops, Lord Cameron had returned the report of his Inquiry into the policing of disorders between October 1968 and March 1969, and his findings contained some strong criticism of the RUC. Investigations had found evidence of 'unauthorised and irregular use of batons', indiscriminate use of water cannon on pedestrians for which there was 'neither reason nor excuse', 'assault and battery, malicious damage to property … and the use of provocative sectarian and political slogans'.[73] Nevertheless, Cameron's findings remained strongly qualified, as most officers were said to have acted with restraint and courage, despite insufficient personnel, incompetent leadership, inappropriate crowd control tactics, and poor communication.[74]

These matters became the subject of the Advisory Committee on Police in Northern Ireland, chaired by Lord Hunt, which was appointed to examine the 'recruitment, organisation, structure and composition' of both the RUC and the 'B-Specials' following Cameron's report. Reflecting the urgency of the task, the Hunt Committee returned its recommendations six weeks later, proposing that the 'B-Specials' be disbanded and replaced with a reformed Ulster Defence Regiment, while the RUC should be relieved of all military duties, since 'any police force, military in appearance and equipment, is less acceptable to minority and moderate opinion than if it is clearly civilian in character'.[75] Alongside these headline recommendations were proposals to improve police accountability and public

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[71] 'Note by Clift' (13 January 1969), NA, HO 325/130.
[72] David A. Charters, *Whose Mission, Whose Orders? British Civil-Military Command and Control in Northern Ireland, 1968-1974* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).
[73] Lord Cameron, *Disturbances in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: HMSO, 1969), 72-4.
[74] Ibid., 71-6.
[75] Lord John Hunt, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Police in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: HSMO, 1969), 21.

support, including establishing a representative police authority, developing a community relations unit, reforming the police complaints procedure, and changing the police uniform.

The Hunt Committee's recommendations for modernisation and 'normalisation' of policing in Northern Ireland were clearly based on an Anglicised model, with the experience and tradition of public order policing with the Metropolitan Police clearly influential here.[76] Indeed, Mark, then Deputy Assistant Commissioner 'B', had been appointed by Callaghan to serve on the committee, a role for which he had little enthusiasm. Mark's autobiography records his experience in Northern Ireland as one of shock at the methods and standards of policing, which were quite at odds with his experience in England:

> As time went on, we [members of the Committee] became more and more aware of the colonial system which had administered the province for years. Only its association in law with the United Kingdom and its representation at Westminster prevented it from being seen in realistic terms as in no different relationship to Great Britain than Cyprus, Aden or any other of the countless colonial territories from the great days of empire.[77]

Mark and members of the Home Office had baulked at the suggestion in the autumn of 1969 that officers from British police forces could be sent over to Northern Ireland to support the RUC. Aside from the fact that most forces were already below establishment, it was noted that British officers were not trained for armed policing, nor would it help sectarian tensions to have British police patrolling the streets.[78] While the 1970 Police (Northern Ireland) Act implemented the Hunt Committee's recommendation of disarming the RUC and disbanded the 'B' Specials, senior police officers and officials at the Home Office remained of the view that the situation in Northern Ireland was wholly different from events in Britain.

The Ministry of Defence felt somewhat differently and, by the summer of 1970, generals were expressing concern that 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland could arrive in Britain. A cross-Whitehall working party was set up in June 1970 under the chairmanship of

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[76] Aogán Mulcahy, *Policing Northern Ireland* (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2006), 30. See also Ellison and Smyth, *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland*.

[77] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 105-6.

[78] 'Possible use of police from Great Britain for service in Northern Ireland: advice to Home Office Ministers' (10 September 1969 – 1 October 1969), NA, CJ 3/73.

Major General Deabe-Drummond, tasked with considering what changes should be made to current Army tactical doctrine for dealing with unlawful assemblies and riots. The British Army had found themselves poorly prepared for public order duty in Northern Ireland, something Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, Arthur Hockaday, acknowledged in a candid memorandum to Eric Wright, a senior civil servant who had formerly held Hockaday's job at the Ministry of Defence but as of 1970 had been loaned to the Home Office Police Department. 'Up until now,' Hockaday wrote:

> we have thought mainly in terms of ill-educated mobs led on by vocal and unimaginative agitators – more often than not in a colonial context. Until the Northern Ireland troubles this was the type of opposition with which the British Army mainly had to deal, and against which it formulated its tactical doctrine for operations of this kind. Northern Ireland has shown, however, that in what purport to be civilised countries, demonstrations which start by being organised for peaceful purposes can be used by agitators to bring about tumult, riot and disorder.[79]

Events in Northern Ireland were not the only context for the working group. Hockaday noted that the response of the US National Guard to campus protests – specifically the recent shooting of four students at Kent State University on 4 May 1970 – had also provided the background for the review. It was noted that 'while we [the Ministry of Defence] do not envisage any requirements for aid of this kind to the civil power in Great Britain in the immediately foreseeable future, our recent experience has persuaded us that we ought at least to think about the possibility of maintaining law and order in Great Britain'.[80] Wright saw an opportunity for the police to reassess their own methods and capacity, and passing Hockaday's memorandum on to Allen, he noted: 'it has been very much in my own mind that police thinking is at least as much in need of refurbishing as military thinking.'[81] Allen, who

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[79] 'Letter from Hockaday to Wright' (25 June 1970), NA, HO 325/132. 'Eric David Wright', *Who's Who* (1 December 2017) [online]. Available at: https://doi-org.ezproxy.st-andrews.ac.uk/10.1093/ww/9780199540884.013.U40794 [accessed 1 March 2020].
[80] 'Director of Combat Development, Future Tactical Doctrine and Equipment Requirements for Operations in Support of the Civil Power' (31 July 1970), NA, HO 325/132.
[81] 'Note from Wright to Allen' (4 August 1970), NA, HO 325/132.

had served as Permanent Under Secretary of State at the Home Office since 1966, agreed, though in a hand-written comment on Hockaday's letter he noted that, 'formation of a view among Chief Constables may prove difficult, and we may have to put in a good deal of work on that.'[82]

Mark was again selected as the Home Office police advisor, though he recorded his experience on the Internal Security Tactical Doctrine working party more favourably in his autobiography than his previous trip to Northern Ireland.[83] Over the next few months, Mark joined Deane-Drummond and his colleague, Lieutenant Colonel Bastick, in travelling to France, Germany, Italy, Singapore, Hong Kong, the US, and Canada, meeting with senior police officers and military officials to learn of the arrangements for aid between the two organisations in countries of both the Anglo-world and Europe. While the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had been approached by the Home Office to provide an Inspectorate of Overseas Police to join the small working party on their travels, it has been noted that 'there would be positive advantage from the point of view of obtaining entry to the right people locally if a UK police officer rather than one with a colonial police background were to accompany the Chairman on the visits.'[84] The image of English policing was useful international currency and Mark was seen as its best ambassador. The working party's report was submitted in April 1971, though no record of it remains in the archive. According to Mark's autobiography, 'the resulting report did not recommend any change in our well-tried and fundamentally sensible and reasonable arrangements for co-operation between the army and the police in the homeland.'[85] Major General Deabe-Drummond would go on to publish a manual on the subject of military aid to the civil power in public order situations, though this was based on a deterioration of events in Northern Ireland.[86]

With Home Office officials keen to see the police carry out their own assessment of public order experience and capabilities, A8 Branch was asked to reconvene the public order working group to assess the changes implemented in the two years since its first report in

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[82] 'Handwritten note on Letter from Hockaday to Wright', Ministry of Defence (25 June 1970), NA, HO 325/132.

[83] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 111.

[84] 'Letter from [unknown] to Wright' (31 July 1970), NA, HO 325/132.

[85] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 111.

[86] Anthony Deane-Drummond, *Riot Control* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1975).

1968.[87] While demonstrations in London had not reached anywhere near the same level of disorder seen in Grosvenor Square, the working party once again considered the options available for specialist riot equipment, including personal protective equipment and crowd dispersal weapons. But once again it was 'traditional methods' that prevailed; the events in Northern Ireland and the findings of the Cameron Inquiry no doubt fresh in their minds. In terms of police personnel, the working group praised the establishment of common minimum standards in crowd control tactics, and it was noted that throughout 1969, all of the 16,000 Constables, Sergeants, and Inspectors from Districts across the Metropolitan Police had attended the one-day public order training course at Hendon.[88] This course had also been incorporated into the syllabus for all new recruits entering the Force as part of their twelve-week basic training. Following encouragement from the Home Office, the experience and expertise of the Metropolitan Police was gradually being exported to other forces, as Training Officers from the Home Office Regional Training Centres at were invited to attend special crowd control seminars at the facility in Hendon.[89]

The working party also noted that the mobility and experience of the SPG had increasingly proved useful in public order operations during 1969 and 1970, concluding that there was further need to expand their activities. While the original four units of the SPG had been joined in November 1969 by a fifth unit, the working party's recommendation meant that a sixth unit was later set up in April 1972.[90] Despite this enthusiasm for the SPG, the working group also recognised that their deployment had been met with criticism from some civil liberties campaigners and protest groups, and it was stressed that the SPG should try to 'avoid any suggestion that they are riot troops'.[91] Another development since 1968 had been the deployment of CID officers in plain clothes at demonstrations, who now operated in pairs as an intelligence gathering or arresting unit.[92] The increased cooperation of A8 Branch and Special Branch following the planning for the October 1968 demonstration was judged to be a success, as was the exchange of information between the A8 Branch and provincial forces.

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[87] Its first meeting was held on 15 July 1970, and its members met on nine occasions.
[88] 'Minutes on the provision of public order training at the Cadent Training School in Hendon' (15 July 1969), NA, MEPO 2/11229.
[89] 'Letter from Osmond to all Chief Constables' (1 October 1968), HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694/a.
[90] 'Report on A8(2) Special Patrol Group', Staff Inspection Unit A3(2) Branch (December 1973), MEPO 2/11546 [released under FOI].
[91] 'Report of the Second Working Party on Public Order' (1971), 19, NA, MEPO 2/11228.
[92] 'Appendix A, Notes for CID Briefing at Public Demonstrations' (6 November 1970), Ibid.

This had been strengthened following a series of Special Branch courses for provincial officers at New Scotland Yard, in which A8 Branch had taken a direct part. Communication between forces had become particularly important during large demonstrations, and it was noted that roadblocks had been used effectively to detect and arrest visiting demonstrators in possession of 'offensive materials'. However, once again mindful to keep the public and Parliament onside with police methods, the working party cautioned against roadblocks becoming a routine measure, noting that 'definitive intelligence' was required for such action.[93]

In terms of command and control arrangements, the working party found that use of CCTV at the 27 October demonstration had been a significant success and that, 'there is no doubt that these facilities were invaluable to the officer in command and they contributed to the successful outcome of the operation.'[94] The temporarily installed CCTV cameras thus became a permanent fixture along the demonstration routes of central London, which as of April 1971 were fed into the new purpose-built Operations Room at Scotland Yard.[95] By 1972, there were nine fixed cameras used for public order events and A8 Branch were working to incorporate Traffic Branch's network of cameras into the system, a move that would significantly widen the police's scope for surveillance and monitoring.[96] Furthermore, as of September 1970, A8 Branch had taken responsibility for the operational use of the newly purchased Metropolitan Police helicopter, as reports from overseas forces noted that such equipment was useful for crowd control situations.[97]

Finally, the working party noted that since 1968 improvements in the catering facilities for 'operational feeding' had 'done much to improve morale', perhaps showing recognition that bored, frustrated, and hungry officers did not necessarily make for the most amicable negotiators in crowd control situations. The working party noted that, 'The importance of this subject is such that a position has been provided in the Operations Room for a representative of the Metropolitan Police Catering Staff to be available for immediate consultation', and when the Metropolitan Police were drafted in under mutual aid arrangements to help police

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[93] 'Report of the Second Working Party on Public Order' (1971), 14, Ibid.
[94] 'Report from A8 Branch' (30 October 1968) NA, MEPO 2/9956.
[95] 'Report of the Second Working Party on Public Order' (1971), 19, NA, MEPO 2/11228.
[96] 'Letter from Boon to unknown', (13 July 1972) NA, MEPO 25/7.
[97] 'Application by A8 Branch for an increase of one Sergeant and one Constable to the staff of A8(1)' (undated), MEPO 2/11546 [released under FOI].

the Springbok demonstrations in Leicester, senior officers noted that 'our catering was the envy of other forces'.[98] While catering arrangements might seem like a trivial point, responding to the needs of officers would lead to some of the defining changes in years to come. As demonstrations and protests became increasingly disorderly throughout the 1970s and a growing number of officers sustained injuries, concerns about workplace safety and the morale and confidence of officers would lead to the most significant changes in the appearance of the police on public order duty, with riot shields and reinforced helmets introduced following the disorder at Notting Hill Carnival in 1976. For the time being, however, the Metropolitan Police were maintaining 'traditional methods', with Northern Ireland seen as an example of the perils of paramilitary style policing and a loss of public confidence it entailed.

Conclusion

Senior police officers would later identify the Metropolitan Police response to the anti-war demonstrations of 1968 as evidence of a distinctly English style of public order policing. In a November 1969 address to American police chiefs and criminologists, HMCIC Eric St. Johnston noted that despite the challenges posed by mass demonstrations the previous year, 'traditional methods' had once again proved to be a success: 'It is, I feel, right to say that public confidence in the ability of the Service in this respect has been more than fully justified, particularly as a result of the way in which the police handled the disturbances outside your Embassy in London last year.'[99] Indeed, St. Johnston was right to note that public support for the police had been widely expressed after the successful resolution of the October 1968 demonstration, with the police lauded as 'the finest police in the world' and Callaghan characterising the event as 'a demonstration of British good sense'.[100] But this was not, as some would suggest, simply the result of a set of favourable national mores that allowed the British to conquer violence.[101] This chapter has shown how this image of policing was carefully constructed and maintained by both the police and the Home Office, who understood that belief in a doctrine of 'policing by consent' and minimum force was an important source of

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[98] 'Report of the Second Working Party on Public Order' (1971), 20, NA, MEPO 2/11228.

[99] Sir Eric St Johnson, "The British Police Experience," *The Police Journal* 42, no. 11 (1969): 499.

[100] HC Deb, 'Debate on the Address' (30 October 1968) vol. 772 cc. 11-153; HC Deb, 'Demonstration, Central London' (7 November 1968) vol. 772 cc. 137W.

[101] Critchley, *The Conquest of Violence. Order and Liberty in Britain*.

symbolic power for the police on protests and demonstrations. This explains why officers at A8 Branch rejected specialist crowd control equipment in their review of public order methods, and why Callaghan attempted to secure favourable coverage for the police from the media. It also explains why the Home Office were keen to keep English police far removed from the sectarian violence and disorder that erupted in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, where the paramilitary methods of the RUC were seen as illegitimate by large sections of the population and the military policing of the British Army was viewed through a colonial haze. In order to sustain the symbolic power of the 'English Bobby', its image needed to be understood as distinct from continental or colonial methods of policing, something that both senior officers and officials at the Home Office were keen to maintain.

However, what this description glossed over was that 'traditional methods' were underpinned by an enhanced system of command and control during this period, based on improved systems for communication, mobility, and advanced intelligence. These recommendations had been made in 1968 by the first working party on public order, which was overseen by officers at the newly established A8 Branch. As such, the recommended changes fit within a broader process of reform and modernisation then taking place within the Metropolitan Police, orientated towards updating traditional methods to meet new challenges of modern urban policing. These recommendations were consolidated by the second working party on public order in 1970, which provided a framework for public order operations during the following decade.

Finally, this chapter has shown how the Home Office encouraged other forces to learn from the experience of the Metropolitan Police in terms of public order. At a senior level, this took place through the appointment of Deputy Assistant Commissioner Mark to committees and inquiries on policing in Northern Ireland and the gentle cajoling of ACPO to act as a forum through which the Home Office could communicate and influence Chief Constables. At a lower level, it can be seen in the training the Metropolitan Police provided to colleagues from provincial forces, put on by officers at A8 Branch, Special Branch, and at the Force training facility in Hendon. As Chapter Eight will show, this relationship between the Metropolitan Police, the Home Office, and ACPO became a more pressing concern during the early 1980s, after urban unrest across England showed the need to build national police capacity.

Chapter Two

Community Relations and Public Order, 1968-1974

'Soft' and 'hard' policing and the politics of 'race relations', 1968-74

This chapter examines police engagement with community relations during the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly its relationship to racialised concerns of public disorder. This new area of policework was taken on by the Community Relations Branch (A7), established following the reorganisation and modernisation of the Metropolitan Police in April 1968. It argues that the police turn towards community relations can be seen as part of what Shamit Saggar has called the 'liberal race relations settlement': a term used to describe the consensus that emerged between the two main parties during the 1960s that restrictions on non-white migration would come alongside a series of mechanisms designed to encourage cultural pluralism, if not racial equality.[1] While the Metropolitan Police had been slow and reluctant to engage with 'race relations' initiatives during the 1960s, the establishment of A7 Branch was seen as a significant new initiative. It coincided with the passing of the 1968 Race Relations Act, which institutionalised the previously *ad hoc* local and national voluntary associations that had emerged during the 1960s, bringing them together under the Community Relations Council (CRC). This chapter argues that police engagement with community relations was particularly influenced by the experience of racial rioting in the US during the mid-to-late 1960s, with senior officers concerned that this form of disorder could spread to Britain. Following recommendations for urban police reform in the US – particulary those made by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1968, also known as the Kerner Commission – community relations was not only seen as a way of improving deteriorating police legitimacy among Black and South Asian citizens in London, but also as a means of gathering intelligence, for feeding back into operational policing, particularly in the context of maintaining public order.

However, while reform-minded officers saw community relations as an important part of policing a modern multi-racial city, this chapter shows that its integration was undermined by significant internal hostility, borne of a conservativism undergirded by institutional racism.

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[1] Saggar, "Race Relations."

Officers of all ranks complained that community relations relegated policework to the sphere of social services, undermining policing authority. A7 Branch found that principles of prevention and cooperation ran contrary to an occupational police culture that emphasised reactive law enforcement and saw police interactions with Black people all too often governed by force and suspicion.

The failure to integrate community relations into operational practice became particularly obvious during the early 1970s, as the police responded to what Stuart Hall and his colleagues identified as a 'moral panic' around 'mugging' with increased 'stop and search' and saturation policing operations in multi-racial areas.[2] The result was that the first half of the 1970s saw a series of important conflicts centred around Black social spaces in London, where routine police operations increasingly showed their potential to escalate into public disorder. Cases such as the Mangrove Nine (arrested in August 1970), the Metro Four (arrested in May 1971), the Oval Four (arrested in March 1972), the Brockwell Park Three (arrested in June 1973), the Swan Disco Seven (arrested in September 1974), the Cricklewood Twelve and the Stockwell Ten (both arrested in March 1974) were seen by many as mounting evidence of a racist and violent state, with Black people subject to suspicion and brutality on street corners and in social gatherings, and then denied justice in the courtroom.[3] Anger and frustration at racialised policing would eventually lead to significant public disorder at Notting Hill Carnival, a subject discussed in Chapter Five.

Establishing the Community Relations Branch: a new approach to 'race relations'

As the recent work of historians has shown, contested ideas of community were at the heart of debates around the politics, practices, and institutions of social democracy and decolonisation in post-war Britain.[4] This discourse had been adopted and developed by academics, activists, and policymakers alike, as they attempted to explain significant changes

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[2] Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*.

[3] Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985*, 165-208.

[4] Chris Waters, ""Dark Strangers" in Our Midst:' Discources of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (1997); Radhika Natarajan, "Organizing Community: Commonwealth Citizens and Social Activism in Britain, 1948-1982" (University of California, Berkely, 2013); Camilla Schofield and Ben Jones, ""Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It": Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of "Race" in Britain after 1958," *Journal of British Studies* 58 (2019). For a more broad overview of locating community in post-war Britain, see Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me? The Search for Community in Post-War England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

in the social organisation and composition of urban populations. To these observers, the construction of high-rise social housing projects and sprawling suburbs was thought to have led to social dislocation and isolation, while the 'rediscovery of poverty' in these areas during the 1960s showed that working-class families had been left behind by the 'affluent society'.[5] Patterns of domestic resettling had also come alongside significant international migration, as the post-war period saw the arrival of large numbers of people from the Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, and parts of Europe. While the structural place of most migrants within the economy and working-class neighbourhoods meant that they were often the subject of discussions around community and integration, Chris Waters has shown that racialised ideals of national identity meant that Black people in Britain – primarily at this stage arriving from the Commonwealth Caribbean – found themselves at the forefront of these debates, particularly following the outbreak of racially motivated rioting by white residents in Notting Hill during the summer of 1959.[6] Throughout the 1960s, the discourse of community often stood in for concerns around the compatibility of 'immigrant' (Black) and (white) British cultures, a framing that helped to sustain what Kennetta Hammond Perry has described as the 'mystique of British anti-racism': the widely accepted belief that there was no native British racism.[7]

The Metropolitan Police were slow and reluctant to engage with the broader discourse of community relations during the 1960s. According to James Whitfield, this can be explained by a general institutional conservativism, which made the Force hostile to external ideas, particularly those it considered critical of police practice.[8] The police in this period displayed something of a siege mentality, as they saw themselves as significantly understaffed and facing problems of rising crime and disorder. As a result, any additional responsibilities for community engagement were viewed with general scepticism and hostility, as was any new measure or piece of legislation that could be seen to be even slightly critical of the police. As Waldron reflected on his career within the Metropolitan Police during his final report as Commissioner in 1972, the Force was 'basically conservative, it approves of methods and

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[5] Selina Todd, "Family Welfare and Sociall Work in Post-War England, C. 1948-1970," *English Historical Review* CXXIX (2014); Rodney Lowe, "The Rediscovery of Poverty and the Creation of the Child Poverty Action Group, 1962-68," *Contemporary Record* 9 (1995).

[6] Waters, "'"Dark Strangers" in Our Midst:' Discources of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963."

[7] Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race*.

[8] Whitfield, *Unhappy Dialogue: The Metropolitan Police and Black Londoners in Post-War Britain*.

people it knows and understands; it is watchful of change'.[9] However, on issues of 'race relations', this institutional conservativism was undergirded by (and sometimes used to disguise) institutional racism, as the recent work of Chris Ferve has shown.[10] Commissioner Simpson had reluctantly responded to public criticism of the police following racial violence in Notting Hill during the late 1950s by appointing an 'immigrant liaison officer' at Scotland Yard, but this channel of communication had initially only been extended to the High Commissioner of the West Indian Federation (WIF). When the WIF fell apart in 1961, no effort on the part of the police was made to re-establish the arrangements with the newly independent countries, and communication was only resumed after Black representative organisations complained of increased racial discrimination following the passing of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act.[11] The new legislation restricted migration from the so-called 'New Commonwealth' and was widely seen as official recognition that the increasing presence of Black people in Britain had become a problem. In the years following the Act, Black representative organisations recorded a significant increase in racial harassment and brutality at the hands of the police.[12]

The other side to the 'liberal race relations settlement' was a series of new mechanisms designed to encourage cultural pluralism, if not racial equality. The 1965 Race Relations Act outlawed discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, or ethnic origin in public places in Britain, amending the 1936 Public Order Act to make incitement to racial hatred a criminal offence. Both Commissioner Simpson and Deputy Commissioner Waldron had been deeply hostile to the Labour Government's proposals for the 1965 Race Relations Bill, with Simpson taking a lead in lobbying the Home Office to ensure that the police were not required to enforce the new laws against discrimination. Simpson argued that the new legislation would be 'widely resented by large sections of the public' and police enforcement would only serve to damage police relations with the public.[13] Waldron was very much of the same opinion, complaining that the Act was the result of the Labour Party's 'intellectual left wing'

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[9] Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1971*, 9.

[10] Ferve, "'Injustice on Their Backs and Justice on Their Minds': Political Activism and the Policing of London's Afro-Caribbean Community, 1945-1993."

[11] Documents relating to the police liaison with West Indian representatives during the 1960s are available at the National Archives, see MEPO 2/9854.

[12] Joseph Hunte, *Nigger Hunting in England?* (London: West Indian Standing Conference, 1966). See also Ambalavaner Sivandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean Struggles in Britain," *Race & Class* 23, no. 2-3 (1981): 119-20.

[13] 'Letter from Simpson to Guppy' (7 December 1964), NA, HO 376/3.

and that it would 'give the National Council of Civil Liberties and other troublemakers ample opportunity to stir up racial animosities in order to upset police and authority in general'.[14] The result was that complaints under the Act were handled by the non-statutory Race Relations Board, while the police had to apply to the Director of Public Prosecutions before trying an individual on charges of incitement to racial hatred.[15] The result was that the police were largely removed from the new 'race relations' legislation, which was significantly de-fanged as an effective sanction for addressing widespread racism in Britain.

While these records show that both Simpson and Waldron were deeply hostile to 'race relations' initiatives, there were some reform-minded officers who looked ahead for how the police could engage with the new politics of community relations and its structures for improving racial tensions. Following the Labour Government's 1965 White Paper on *Immigration from the Commonwealth*, the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants had been set up to fund and coordinate a series of previous *ad hoc* voluntary associations aimed at improving 'race relations'.[16] This had led to the establishment of the part-time role of Divisional Race Relations Liaison Officer, a position taken up by middle-ranking officers who represented the police on the various Voluntary Liaison Committees that were then being set up in a number of London boroughs.[17] These consultative structures allowed Black people to raise issues of racialised policing, which in the mid 1960s centred around the police crackdown on house parties and 'shebeens', a form of policing reminiscent of the crackdown on 'drinkers' and 'spielers' in the East End of London during the mid-twentieth-century.[18] A police report from one police-community meeting in Notting Hill in March 1966 notes that Walter Rodney, then a young graduate student at the School of Oriental and African Studies, was among many local Black residents who raised issues of over-policing and corruption. In reporting back to Scotland Yard following the meeting, the local

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[14] 'Comments by Deputy Commissioner Waldron on 1965 Race Relations Bill', (undated), MEPO 2/10489.

[15] Simon Peplow, "The 'Linchpin for Success'? The Problematic Establishment of the 1965 Race Relations Act and Its Conciliation Board," *Contemporary British History* (2016); Schaffer, "Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965."

[16] *Immigration from the Commonwealth, Cmnd. 2739*, (London: HMSO, 1965).

[17] F. R. Merricks, "The Development of Community Relations in the Metropolitan Police," *Police Journal* 43 (1970): 32.

[18] A shebeen was an illicit bar or club where alcohol was sold without a licence. Given the effective 'colour bar' in many white-run establishments, shebeens were an important part of Black culture and social life in London during the 1960s. See Jason McGraw, "Sonic Settlements: Jamaican Music, Dancing, and Black Migrant Communities in Postwar Britain," *Journal of Social History* 52, no. 2 (2018).

Race Relations Liaison Officer noted that, 'Rodney is a sincere and highly intelligent man and I thought his "few words" highly appropriate'.[19]

Reform-minded officers like the Race Relations Liaison Officer in Notting Hill may have been aware of Michael Banton's pioneering study, *The Policeman in the Community,* which had been published in 1964 to considerable acclaim.[20] Banton had been an early and influential scholar in the field of 'race relations' during the 1950s, but during the early 1960s he had turned his attention to developing a sociology of the police, carrying out observational research among rural and urban police forces in both Scotland and the US.[21] Banton's conclusion was that the police were not primarily a law enforcement and crime detection agency but were rather one of a number of institutions (like the monarchy and the church) geared towards maintaining social control. Banton felt that, compared to the US, the police in Britain mostly recognised their role as 'peace officers' rather than 'law officers' and this had contributed to the sacred status of the police in Britain. However, Banton warned that this status would deteriorate if the police leaned too keenly towards law enforcement and crime detection, evidence for which could be seen in the police response to rising crime rates during the early 1960s.[22] Banton's book received a favourable review in *The Police Journal* from Philip Knights, then Assistant Chief Constable for Birmingham City Police, who argued that though Banton's conclusions might come as a shock to some officers, they would be important to recognise if the police in Britain were to avoid the breakdown in police relations with the public that appeared to be developing in the US.[23]

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[19] 'Chief Inspector to Assistant Commissioner 'A' Hill' (14 March 1966), NA, MEPO 2/9854.

[20] Michael Banton, *The Policeman in the Community* (London: Tavistock, 1964).

[21] *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Johnathan Cape, 1955); *White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People Towards Coloured Immigrants* (London: Johnathan Cape, 1959). For an account of how 'race relations' scholars shaped ideas of (white) British national identity, see Waters, "'"Dark Strangers" in Our Midst:' Discources of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963."

[22] Banton, *The Policeman in the Community*, 123.

[23] P.D. Knights, "Recent Book: Police and Public: The Policeman in the Community," *The Police Journal* 37, no. 11 (1964): 561. Two years later, Knights would go on to win *The Police Journal's* essay prize for an article that proposed the police recognise their new social responsibility and adopt more of a service role within the community. See "The Queen's Police Gold Medal Essay Competition: Police in a Changing Society," *The Police Journal* 39, no. 12 (1966). This speaks to a wider point, which suggests that some police leaders and police authorities in the Midlands seem to have been more receptive to the new forms of 'community relations' than police officers within the Metropolitan Police. It was the Harmondsworth area of Birmingham that John Lamber chose for his study of police relations with the Black communities during the mid-to-late 1960s, the resulting report of which came out strongly in favour of the new 'community relations' approach in policing. John Lambert, *Crime, Police and Race Relations: A Study in Birmingham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

While some reform-minded officers were reflecting on the new role of the police in a modern multi-racial society, there is little evidence to suggest that these ideas had any impact on the Metropolitan Police during the mid 1960s, where reform was instead orientated around improving efficiency in response to rising crime. Initiatives like 'unit beat policing', motorised patrols, and the establishment of the SPG all suggested a focus on reactive policing, rather than improving police relations with the public through proactive engagement. The police response to concerns of racialised over-policing and under-protection was always to deny such claims as an unfounded, politically motivated attack. When Joseph Hunte of the West Indian Standing Conference published a report in April 1966 documenting a number of racist incidents involving the police in Lambeth and north London, the police refused to accept the claims as legitimate.[24] Indeed, Arthur Evans, General Secretary of the Police Federation, complained to reporters that 'race relations were not a serious police problem … [though] it is sometimes made into a problem by self-appointed organizations who purport to act on behalf of immigrants.'[25] When research was carried out at the end of the 1960s to establish what role community relations could play within the Metropolitan Police, officers concluded that:

> …there appears to have been an almost total absence of any policy instigated solely with the intention of maintaining high level community relations. The police have always assumed that they have a good working relationship with the public although at times it appears to have been more apparent than real.[26]

The establishment of A7 Branch as part of the reorganisation of the Metropolitan Police in April 1968 was thus an important new initiative. 'In many ways,' Commissioner Waldron noted in his annual report for the year 1968, 'the formation of a special community relations branch indicates a new and very different approach to what is basically an old problem'; namely, how could the police maintain an effective working relationship with the public. What was different now, Waldron acknowledged, was that, 'Police can no longer afford to remain withdrawn and play a waiting game, but must be extroverted and prepared

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[24] Hunte, *Nigger Hunting in England?*

[25] 'Police Deny Allegation of "Nigger Hunting"', *The Times* (28 April 1966).

[26] 'A7 Branch, Police-Community Relations Project' (March 1970), 15, NA MEPO 28/9.

to go more than half-way to make contact with sections of the public which would have been unheard of only a few years ago.' Anticipating potential resistance to this approach, Waldron conceded that, 'It is not going to be easy, and many inhibitions and cautious procedures long hallowed by time and past attitudes will have to be abandoned.' However, he concluded that, 'a promising start has been made and I am confident that a firm foundation is being established which will be of immense value in years to come.'[27]

The establishment of A7 Branch reflected the institutionalisation of community engagement within Britain's social democratic state, which came alongside further restrictions on 'New Commonwealth' migration via the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act, the result of a Bill that was rushed through Parliament in three days. In the summer of 1968, Home Secretary Callaghan announced the establishment of the Urban Programme, an *ad hoc* system of urban aid intended to provide financial assistance to struggling communities.[28] Launched in the wake of Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech and criticism of the Labour Government for its Commonwealth Immigration Bill, the Urban Programme was explicitly aimed at alleviating racial tensions, as 'inner city' areas were becoming a locus for racialised concerns about crime, unemployment, and multiple types of deprivation. The same year, the 1968 Race Relations Act established the CRC, a statutory body responsible for promoting harmonious community relations and whose work would be supported by a formal network of local community relations councils across the country. One of the first tasks of A7 Branch officers was to organise how the police would engage with these new consultative structures designed for racial integration, a role that would be taken on at a Divisional level by newly appointed Community Liaison Officers.

Could it happen here? The influence of the United States

While the establishment of A7 Branch came as a response to the institutionalisation of community relations initiatives in Britain during the late 1960s, police engagement with this new area of policework was also influenced by events in the US, which loomed large within the racial politics of post-war Britain.[29] The importance of American experience in the field of

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[27] Waldron, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1968*.

[28] John Edwards and Richard Bately, *The Politics of Positive Discrimination: An Evaluation of the Urban Programme, 1967-1977* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1978).

[29] Robin Kelly and Stephen Tuck, eds., *The Other Special Relationship: Race, Rights, and Riots in Britain and the United States* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

'race relations' was acknowledged in the establishment of A7 Branch, as A7(1) also took responsibility for the Metropolitan Police's liaison with Visiting Overseas Forces. The demands of the Cold War and Britain's 'special relationship' with US had meant that there were a significant contingent of American soldiers and airman stationed in Britain during the 1960s, and Chief Superintendent Merricks, the newly appointed Commander of A7 Branch, noted in an internal memorandum that:

> It has been found that the contacts and information obtained when dealing with members of Visiting Forces, particularly at a high level, has proved extremely useful in the Race Relations Field and insofar as the Americans are concerned have been a valuable source of contact when examining the racial problem now pertaining in the United States.[30]

The mid 1960s had seen civil unrest escalate into significant rioting in Black and Latino neighbourhoods across the US, reaching a high point during the 'long, hot summer of 1967'.[31] These events had led President Lyndon B. Johnson to establish the Kerner Commission in July 1967, whose remit was to provide recommendations on policing reform and 'race relations'.

As a number of other historians have shown, the association of the Black Power Movement with the racial disorder in the US meant that the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office became increasingly concerned that radical Black politics in Britain represented a potentially dangerous and subversive force.[32] As a result, Special Branch began targeting groups such as the Radical Action Adjustment Society and the Universal Coloured People's Association, whose leadership were the first to be prosecuted for racial incitement under Section 6 of the 1965 Race Relations Act.[33] But while the intelligence apparatus of the state

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[30] 'Revised function, establishment and administration of A7 Branch' (11 June 1968), 4, NA, MEPO 2/11208.

[31] Malcolm McLaughlin, *The Long, Hot Summer of 1967* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[32] On the British Black Power movement and its international dimensions, see Anne-Marie Angelo, "The Black Panthers in London, 1967-1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic," *Radical History Review* 2009, no. 103 (2009); R.E.R. Bunce and Paul Field, "Obi B. Egbuna, C. L. R. James and the Birth of Black Power in Britain: Black Radicalism in Britain 1967–72," *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 3 (2011); Simon Prince, "'Do What the Afro-Americans Are Doing': Black Power and the Start of the Northern Ireland Troubles," *Journal of Contemporary History* (2015); Rob Waters, "Black Power on the Telly: America, Television, and Race in 1960s and 1970s Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 4 (2015).

[33] Records of the case, including Special Branch evidence, can be found at NA, DPP 2/4428. See also Schaffer, "Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965."

focused on Black Power groups in London, community relations was identified as a way of countering the radicalising potential of this small number of individuals. This had been the recommendation of the report of the Kerner Commissioner, which was published in February 1968 to considerable media and public attention.

While no record of the report of the Kerner Commission was found in the Metropolitan Police files retained at the National Archives, it is hard to imagine that it was anything other than required reading for officers within both A7 and A8 Branch.[34] The report was referenced by a number of MPs during the Parliamentary debates of the 1968 Race Relations Bill, with comparisons drawn between the US and Britain in terms of deteriorating police with Black people and levels of social and economic disadvantages.[35] While many of the recommendations of the Kerner Commission were intended to build riot control capacity among urban police forces – improving police equipment, operational planning, and command and control – A7 Branch officers would have been attuned to the importance it placed on community relations initiatives to aid public order policing. The Kerner Commission had found that police departments had little understanding about the causes of unrest within primarily Black and Latino urban areas and that officers had poor relations with people living in these segregated neighbourhoods. As a result, the report found that local police generally lacked reliable intelligence or means of responding effectively to rumours once disorder broke out. The report thus recommended that the police should take a more active role in inner-city communities, working with 'responsible' Black leadership to gather intelligence and disseminate police information during a disorder.[36]

The racial rioting in the US provided the backdrop for the special public order conference held by ACPO during the summer of 1968, with Deputy Chief Constable for Hampshire, H.J. Phillips, asked to address senior officers on the basis of his recent six-month trip to the US. Prior to the conference, ACPO General Secretary, David Osmond, had written to Phillips to inform him that 'your talk is awaited with much interest', since the police

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[34] When Scarman carried out his inquiry into the disorders in Brixton, he received a copy of the Kerner Commission's report. See NA, HO 266/69. A May 1982 article in the *Economist* discuss cussing 'Britain's riots: lessons from abroad' noted that, 'The report of the commission on civil disorders (known as the Kerner report) … had since become compulsory reading for senior policemen and urban planners in Britain. See *Economist* (15 May 1982).

[35] HC Deb 'Race Relation Bill' (23 April 1968) vol. 763 cc. 53-198.

[36] National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington DC: United States Government, 1968), 172-73, 269.

generally felt that 'patterns in American usually spread across the Atlantic.'[37] While Phillips acknowledged that the histories of 'race relations' between the two countries were very different, his lecture warned that, 'if you look at some of the areas around Brixton and Notting Hill Gate in London, and I have no doubt parts of Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford and other towns and cities, you can see there replicas on a smaller scale of what are described as ghettos in the cities of America.'[38] Phillips noted that experience of the US showed that deteriorating 'race relations' had created a climate of hostility and sense of grievance among Black communities towards the police, the result being that large-scale disorder had escalated from routine law enforcement operations. While police racism and brutality were not mentioned as a cause for deteriorating relations, police distance from the public was seen to be the main problem in the US, which had resulted from an unwillingness among the police to become involved in community matters, exacerbated by the transition towards motorised patrolling.[39]

While community relations was still a rather nebulous and poorly understood concept within the Metropolitan Police at the end of the 1960s, what is clear is that it quickly came to be framed as a response to potential problems of racial disorder, a point made clear by Merricks in a January 1970 article in *The Police Journal.* Attempting to explain the new role of community relations in modern urban police, Merricks reflected on how changes in the social organisation and composition of London's population during the 1950s and 1960s had led to a significant deterioration in police relations with the public, which now showed signs of a breakdown. While changes in urban planning, motorised patrols, and rising crime and disorder had placed a strain on good relations, the most significant challenge Merricks identified was that:

> …in the last 10-15 years an entirely new community problem has been
> introduced due to the influx of large numbers of citizens from the New
> Commonwealth whose social, economic and cultural patterns are not always
> readily absorbed within the old existing order … and although the vast majority
> are law-abiding and reasonably content, there exists among the remainder a

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[37] 'Letter from Osmond to Phillips' (13 September 1968), HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694.
[38] 'Transcript of speech on "Disorder in America"' (undated), HHC, ACPO U DPO 10/694.
[39] Ibid.

small minority of agitators and extremists who seek to promote discord, and who see and even search for, evidence of discrimination at every turn.[40]

Merricks went on to note that, 'because of the excessive coverage given by the mass media to the claims of these extremists, the police/community relationship suffers'. The result was 'distrust and misunderstanding among the immigrant community', something the police now recognised as 'one of the most difficult and challenging tasks in the field of police/community relations that this Force has ever had to face.'[41] Merricks concluded by noting that, 'There is an absolute necessity in this situation for the police to know far more about the troubles of the community and equally for the community to know more about the difficulties of the police.' However, anticipating hostility toward community relations within the Force, Merricks added that, 'since so many community problems are a latent threat to public order it further behoves the police service, if only out of prudent self-interest, to identify causes and seek energetically to find effective solutions.'[42]

While this account of community relations appeared to fit within a relatively benign and democratic policing model, the role of Community Liaison Officers within Districts also carried an important intelligence-gathering function. As Commissioner Waldron noted in internal memorandum:

> The Chief Inspector's job is to keep his ear to the ground, maintain contact with all immigrant communities both official and splinter groups and make certain that if there is trouble, whether it comes from discontented or resentful immigrants or from the stupid behaviour of a policeman, he is the first to know about it and remedy the situation.[43]

While still very much in its infancy at the beginning of the 1970s, the rebranding of 'race relations' as community relations was seen as a new approach for the Metropolitan Police, based on lessons learned in the US. Reform-minded officers like A7 Branch Commander

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[40] F. R. Merricks, "The Development of Community Relations in the Metropolitan Police," *The Police Journal* 43, no. 1 (1970): 30.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] 'Waldron, Note 6' (13 May 1970), NA, MEPO 28/9.

Merricks held it up as a 'virtually untapped field' through which the police could re-establish relations with the 'rank and file of immigrant communities', rather than with their 'so-called "leaders"'.[44] While this proactive approach departed from traditional ideas that police officers should remain aloof from the public at large, it maintained the long-established belief that Black people and their standards of behaviour were primarily responsible for poor relations, with Merricks noting that police officers should now 'actively encourage and assist immigrants to have a sense of citizenship and recognise their responsibilities.'[45] It also offers some support for the criticisms made by radical Black activists during the period, who suggested that the police and the Home Office would use the consultative structures of the 'race relations industry' as a means of managing Black communities and channelling their political activities into a more easily controlled institutionalised form.[46]

Police work not social work! Police hostility towards community relations

While the establishment of A7 Branch was seen as an important new initiative among reform-minded officers, it quickly became clear that community relations was an unpopular and poorly understood concept within the Metropolitan Police, with many officers regarding it as an example of how police were becoming too 'soft' in their relationship with the public. In an October 1969 exchange between Assistant Commissioner 'A' Andrew Way and the Receiver's Office, an official (possibly the Receiver himself, Kenneth Parker) expressed concern that, 'unless some effort is made to define specific aims [of the Community Relations Branch and its officers within the Divisions], we shall see the Force disintegrate into some sort of second-class ombudsman, with subsequent loss of authority.' Criticising the community relations approach more broadly, the official at the Receiver's Office cited 'grave doubts as to whether it is right for the police to become too deeply involved in all these aspects of public, civic and community life,' rhetorically questioning whether the future of the police was 'to become yet another "social work" agency?'[47]

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[44] 'Departmental Organisation – Job Analysis', A7 Branch (1 April 1969), 3-4, NA, MEPO 2/11208.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Sivandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean Struggles in Britain."See also Rob Waters, "Integration or Black Power," *The Political Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (2018).
[47] 'Minute 34' (17 October 1969), NA, MEPO, 28/9. It is difficult to establish from the signature who made this comment. It is possible it was Kenneth Parker, who was Receiver between 1967 and 1974. However, Parker was otherwise known as a reformer, having previously served as head of the Home Office Police Department

Assistant Commissioner Way was quick to retort that these comments were 'typical of the super-cautious approach to any new development which has for so long hampered the development of new ideas of policing', suggesting that they were 'a good indication of the stuck-in-the-mud attitude to entry into new fields which A7 will have to face in the future'.[48] This assessment proved all too correct, as hostility and apprehension towards community relations was found to be commonplace within the Force when two A7 Branch officers conducted an investigation into attitudes at the end of 1969. Over 100 officers from various ranks were interviewed, including uniform and specialist departments, and the authors concluded that from this evidence, 'it was clear that the underlying principle of community relations was not generally appreciated.' One third of officers interviewed seemed to display what the authors described as 'resentment' to the idea of community relations, noting that, 'They saw the situation almost entirely in "we" and "them" terms and spoke as though they were in constant conflict with an entirely criminal community.'[49] Officers were found to place continual emphasis on the enforcement of law and frankly noted that the public would only respect the police if a strong line was taken at all times. When the subject of 'race relations' was brought up, the interviewers noted that:

> …there was constant re-iteration that coloured people contributed largely to their own difficulties by behaving awkwardly and aggressively when approached by police and many officers believed there was no special need for police to become involved in race relations.[50]

These views found some sympathy in the newly promoted Assistant Commissioner 'A' James Starritt, who replaced Way following his retirement at the end of 1969. In a comment on the above report, Starritt noted that, 'Many coloured immigrants are inarticulable whilst many can hardly speak the language. It is hardly surprising that they are unable to understand why we do not give them all the help they seek.'[51] Despite the assumption among officers that

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between 1961 and 1967, overseeing the significant modernisation introduced first via the 1960 Royal Commission and then via the 1964 Police Act. See 'Obituary: Kenneth Parker', *Independent* (4 October 1995).
[48] 'Way, Minute 36' (30 October 1969), NA, MEPO, 28/9.
[49] 'Police-Community Relations Project', 30, NA MEPO 28/9.
[50] Ibid. 31.
[51] 'Starritt, Minute 36' (17 April 1970), NA, MEPO, 28/9.

Black people were largely responsible for poor relations with the police, the report did note that some interviewees were privately candid in their criticism of fellow officers who they regarded as unnecessarily tactless and brusque in their interactions with members of the public, particularly Black people.[52]

The authors of the A7 Branch report recommended that greater education in community relations was needed if these attitudes were to be overcome within the Force, particularly for new recruits and officers undergoing their two-year probationary period. A7 Branch officers found that the limited racial awareness sessions that had been introduced as part of the thirteen-week basic training at the end of 1964 were given little priority within a course that placed high emphasis upon the law enforcement aspects of police work. The authors quoted from a recent report by the Metropolitan Police Working Party on Police Training, which had found 'an almost complete absence of subject matter which enables a probationer to understand his role in social and humanitarian terms', and that the focus on police powers and duties within the course was seen to contain 'the inherent danger of creating an authoritarian approach which, particularly in the present climate, is but one facet of his function.'[53]

These findings reflected research then being undertaken by academic sociologists such as Maureen Cain and John Lambert, who found that police occupational culture prioritised law enforcement rather than the service aspect of policing and that Black people were often treated with force and suspicion.[54] Lambert's study of police and 'race relations' in Birmingham, published in 1970, had been carried out between 1966 and 1967 at a time when unit beat policing was being introduced. Lambert was concerned that deteriorating police relations with Black people in Britain saw significant parallels with the US and his findings recommended that the police recognise the extent of prejudice and discrimination within their ranks. He proposed that police training should include 'group discussions on the nature of prejudice and its effects, the airing of attitudes and opinions about coloured people and policies for immigration'.[55] Lambert also suggested that middle ranking officers take a

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[52] 'Police-Community Relations Project', 33, NA MEPO 28/9.
[52] Ibid. 34.
[53] Ibid. 43.
[54] Maureen E. Cain, *Society and the Policeman's Role* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Lambert, *Crime, Police and Race Relations: A Study in Birmingham*.
[55] *Crime, Police and Race Relations: A Study in Birmingham*, 201.

stronger leadership role in addressing racist attitudes amongst their subordinates and that 'means must be found whereby the police get a feedback from communities and peoples to whom they are strangers, whose customs, culture, and needs will be remote from the police officer's experience.'[56]

This research was part of a gradual engagement between a small number of senior officers and sociologists working on policing and police work, who came together via a series of conferences organised around police-community relations during the early 1970s.[57] While the overlap of interests was often on police administration, with reform-minded officers interested in how policework could be professionalised and made more efficient through training and crime statistics, the Anglo-American focus of these conferences and the context of the early 1970s ensured that 'race relations' – now rebranded as community relations – was often on the agenda. An early sign of the police carrying out their own research in this area can be seen in a 1972 article written by then Superintendent Geoffrey Dear, which addressed the subject of 'Coloured Immigrant Communities and the Police'.[58] Dear had recently completed a police-funded degree in law at University College London and his paper was part of his research for the Senior Command Course at Bramshill. Dear described patterns of migration into Britain during the post-war period and identified a series of problems facing second generation migrants, including unemployment, educational underachievement, racial discrimination, and 'cultural conflict'. The last of these was an area in which the police should become involved and Dear identified two important benefits to community relations initiatives:

> The first has been the education of police officers concerning immigrants and there is room for gainful work in this respect. The second has been the education of immigrants as to the role and responsibility of the British police, and there is room for even more profit to me made here.[59]

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[56] Ibid., 205.

[57] C.F.O Clarke, *Police-Community Relations* (London: Ditchley Foundation, 1970); Michael Banton, "The Sociology of the Police," *The Police Journal* 44 (1971); *Police-Community Relations* (London: Collins, 1973); "The Sociology of the Police Iii," *The Police Journal* 48, no. 299-315 (1975). See also G.J. Dear, "Coloured Immigrant Communities and the Police," ibid.45, no. 2 (1972); John Alderson and Philip John Stead, eds., *The Police We Deserve* (London: Wolfe, 1973); Banton, *Police-Community Relations*; "The James Smart Lecture: Policing a Divided Society," *The Police Journal* 47, no. 4 (1974).

[58] G.J. Dear, "Coloured Immigrant Communities and the Police," ibid.45, no. 2 (1972).

[59] Ibid., 149.

A failure to integrate: deteriorating relations between police and Black people

Despite the hopes of some reform-minded officers that community relations initiatives would improve police relations with Black people, the first half of the 1970s saw a series of important conflicts centred around Black social spaces in London, particularly youth clubs and dance halls.[60] Many of these incidents followed a similar pattern, whereby a routine law enforcement operation involving a small number of officers would escalate amid allegations of racial stereotyping, harassment, and police brutality, during which time a crowd would gather, tension would increase, and more police reinforcements would be called. While the police publicly claimed that these incidents were escalated by groups of Black youths overreacting to police carrying out their lawful duties, critics argued that this hostility was provoked by heavy-handed policing tactics.[61] The internal reports produced by A7 Branch during this period show that some officers recognised this problem, though since community relations faced a hostile reception among many officers, recommendations for reform saw little translation into operational practice.

When Chief Superintendent Kenneth Newman transferred from west London's B Division (Notting Hill) to become Commander of A7 Branch in the summer of 1972, he found internal resistance to be a significant problem to the development of police-community relations. As he noted in a report sent to the newly appointed Commissioner, Sir Robert Mark, 'At present some CLOs [Community Liaison Officers] are facing an upward battle on two fronts – police and community.'[62] Part of the reason for this was that community relations still lacked credibility within a police occupational culture that emphasised law enforcement. As Newman noted:

> Many officers fail to see the need for police to take an active role in improving relationships with all sections of the public … the majority are, at the best, apathetic. At worst, they are antagonistic towards police involvement and

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[60] Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985*, 165-208.

[61] Compare the evidence submitted to the 1977 Parliamentary Select Committee on Race and Immigration investigation into *The West Indian Community* by the Institute of Race Relations and the Metropolitan Police. Session 1976-77 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, *The West Indian Community, Vol. 2 Evidence* (London: HMSO, 1977).

[62] 'Report from Newman Mark' (14 February 1973), NA, MEPO 2/11208.

equate it to a 'soft' policy of policing. What is more, the greater the activity in the way of training the more confirmed they become in their opinion. These officers have a very narrow conception of the police role – as law enforcement officers and nothing else. The type of work performed by the CID, Traffic Patrol, and Special Patrol Group places emphasis on the law enforcement side of police duty and fosters such attitude.[63]

Newman's report also showed how ingrained institutional conservativism was underpinned by police racism, as much of the hostility towards community relations was seen to be the result of the 'widely held' belief that it was 'solely directed to appeasing the vocal black minorities'.[64] This hostility had been difficult to overcome, as A7 Branch officers found that 'the greater the emphasis given to training in connection with black people, the more may the attitude of some policemen harden.'[65] While Newman noted that the worst incidents of police racism could be credited to a small minority of police officers 'whose manner and behaviour reflect adversely on the Service in disproportionate ratio to their numbers', he also raised concerns that contemporary political debates around immigration had precipitated a hardening of attitudes among a wider number of officers 'already disenchanted with understanding immigrant problems.'[66] The wider context for this was the so-called Ugandan Asian 'crisis' in the summer of 1972, which had begun after Uganda's leader, Idi Amin, ordered the expulsion of tens of thousands of Ugandan residents of South Asian descent, who, as British passport holders, were entitled to come to Britain.[67] The far-right NF had been able to capitalise on the rise in anti-immigration racism the event provoked, organising provocative street demonstrations in multi-racial areas and blaming Black and South Asian residents for poor living conditions and rising crime. Newman accepted that the question of how to tackle police racism was a significant challenge for community relations within the Metropolitan Police, though he felt that to admit this publicly 'would cause more harm than good', as it would exacerbate the current crisis in confidence within the police. Instead, he suggested

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] See Yumiko Hamai, "'Imperial Burden' or 'Jews of Africa'?: An Analysis of Political and Media Discourse in the Ugandan Asian Crisis (1972)," *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 3 (2011).

that, 'It is a problem that has to be stalked in wary fashion and solutions must be found under the guise of training.'[68]

Another important point Newman raised in his report to Commissioner Mark concerned how the police were responding to reports of crime in areas of high 'immigrant' population, notably Brixton and Lewisham. In these areas, saturation policing and stop and search operations had been escalated in response to the 'mugging crisis' of the early 1970s, but these had had a negative effect on relations with Black people. Newman noted that:

> There is some evidence that the strategies for cutting street crime, (the stop etc) in certain areas are in fundamental conflict with the strategies designed to minimise tensions in an immigrant area (i.e. avoid stops, reduce surveillance, ignore youth groups), a strategy that sometimes has to be adopted if the tranquillity of an area is to be restored. Clearly we cannot sidestep the problem of crime in these areas but study in this Branch is necessary to see whether some compromise can be reached between the short-term necessity for aggressive patrolling and the long-term dangers in terms of public order that this type of patrolling produces.[69]

This research was later published by Newman as a report titled 'The Policing of Racially Sensitive Areas', in which he called for significant reforms in the way the police responded to incidents that were likely to escalate into disorder.[70] Newman argued that the measures used 'to diffuse a tense situation in areas of dense immigrant population [were] in direct conflict with the measures traditionally adopted to contain and prevent serious crime', and that the Metropolitan Police needed to adopt a new strategy for policing racially sensitive Divisions.[71] According to Newman, this new strategy required two elements: the first was that command policies needed to be developed for different policing scenarios (such as arrests, breaking up social gatherings, and searching premises), which would guide senior officers on the balance between short-term measures to contain crime and more long-term measures to defuse

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[68] 'Report from Newman Mark' (14 February 1973), NA, MEPO 2/11208.
[69] Ibid.
[70] This report is quoted at length by Tony Moore, see Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 153-61.
[71] Newman, 'The Policing of Racially Sensitive Divisions' (1973), unpublished, 4-5, quoted in ibid., 156.

tension. For example, Newman warned that, while the 'vigorous patrolling practices' of the SPG had 'law enforcement gains', they created 'tension and hostility', which made large-scale disorder significantly more likely. The second element of this strategy was that there needed to be an integrated community relations programme in 'racially sensitive areas', where respected representatives from Black communities could be enlisted to prevent the spread of rumours.[72] Newman pointed out that there was a tendency to regard 'community relations programmes as somewhat peripheral to the main operational activities of the Force', and instead insisted that they should be viewed as 'an integral part of law enforcement'.[73]

Newman's report recommended that a working party be set up to consider these matters, with the intention of integrating community relations more fully with operational policing in multi-racial areas. This was particularly true for the work of officers from CID, as Newman felt that the recent developments in community relations had largely passed them by.[74] In a note sent to Commissioner Mark in July 1973, he argued that:

> To some extent there is a polarisation in the Force between community relations oriented personnel on the one hand and law-enforcement oriented officers on the other. Sometimes this leads to a lack of co-ordination, if not a conflict, between operational activities and community relations programmes … we [at A7 Branch] would like to see it [community relations] co-ordinated into overall Divisional strategies which should be concerned not only with the immediate crime problem, but with longer term considerations concerned with the maintenance of public order and community support for the police.[75]

While Newman's calls for reform resulted in a Detective Chief Inspector being added to the staff of A7 Branch in November 1973, with responsibility for coordinating the community relations approach within Divisional CIDs, it appears that little came of his suggestion of a working group to bring law enforcement and community policing into closer synergy. Police historian Tony Moore, who in 1973 was a Chief Inspector in Islington, notes that, 'Little, if

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[72] Quoted in ibid., 156-7.
[73] Quoted in ibid., 159.
[74] 'Proposed increase of establishment of A7(3) Branch by one Detective Chief Inspector' (undated), NA, MEPO 2/11208.
[75] 'Newman, Note 2' (11 July 1973), NA, MEPO 2/11208.

anything, changed as a result of Kenneth Newman's paper', which Moore only encountered when he joined the Police Staff College at Bramshill in 1982.[76]

While Newman left the Metropolitan Police in the summer of 1973 to become Deputy Chief Constable of the RUC, communication between A7 Branch and the rest of the Force continued to be a problem at various levels.[77] A report produced by the new A7 Branch Commander Chief Inspector Hunt noted in April 1974 that the work of Community Liaison Officers was still not taken seriously in many Divisions and often criticised as a 'soft alternative to real policing'.[78] In some cases, Community Liaison Officers were found to be insufficiently invested in their role, which still carried little respect with a Force that focused on law enforcement. Hunt noted that some officers were hostile to the Area Inspectors sent by A7 Branch to provide training, as they were seen to have been sent by Scotland Yard to 'spy' on their activities. Furthermore, in was noted that some Divisional Commanders were reluctant to inform A7 Branch of operations taking place in their area and Community Liaison Officers often found out about police action through complaints by community representatives. While Hunt noted that 'ignorance and apathy' was somewhat weakening at the command level, he felt that 'there are still a good many die-hards who are openly antagonistic and many more who are merely tolerant.' Officers 'on the street', ranking from Inspector down, were still found to misunderstand community relations and hold it with suspicion, and training sessions were often dismissed as a waste of police time and resources.[79] Despite these problems, Hunt's report showed that the police approach to these attitudes was still one that avoided addressing the issues head-on:

There are two methods to inducing people to take food that they do not fancy.

First, keep feeding it to them even though their stomachs reject it until

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[76] Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 159.

[77] More research is needed to establish what influence Newman's experience of community relations in London during the early 1970s had on his leadership in Northern Ireland, where community relations was advanced as a way of overcoming sectarian tensions and low levels of confidence in the RUC among nationalist communities. This research would develop understandings of the cross-fertilisation of ideas between policing in England and Northern Ireland, which is often understood in limited terms as public order lessons imported to 'the mainland' during the 1980s. See Mulcahy, "The 'Other' Lessons from Ireland? Policing, Political Violence and Policy Transfer."

[78] 'Report by Hunt on "In-service communications in community relations"' (27 April 1974), NA, MEPO 2/11208.

[79] Ibid.

eventually their stomachs become accustomed to their fare – the puke theory. Secondly, feeding it in such low doses that they are unaware of it and hoping they acquire the taste. All CLOs [Community Liaison Officers] favour the second method, accepting the fact that the process is a much more lengthy one.[80]

These reports from within A7 Branch clearly show that while Scotland Yard was aware that community relations initiatives faced considerable hostility and resistance from within the Force, senior officers were reluctant to address these issues for fear of damaging morale and provoking further resistance. The result was that the over-policing and criminalisation of Black people, particularly Black youths, continued apace during the 1970s, and emerged as a key part of the racial politics of the decade. According to Paul Gilroy, the early 1970s saw the emergence of a new racial discourse around 'Black criminality', which suggested that crime, disorder, and anti-police hostility were an inherent part of Black culture. While these racist narratives became part of the institutional culture of the Metropolitan Police, Gilroy also showed how the experience of racialised policing led to deep-seated anger and frustration among Black people in London, which was increasingly manifest in disorderly protest in the latter half of the decade, most noticeably at Notting Hill Carnival in 1976, a subject discussed in Chapter Five.[81]

Conclusion

This chapter has given an account of the troubled beginnings of community relations initiatives within the Metropolitan Police during the early 1970s and highlighted the problems they faced from opposition within the Force. It has shown that the police reframing of 'race relations' under the banner of community relations during the late 1960s reflected a broader discourse in public policy debates throughout the decade, where contested ideas of community formed part of the politics, practices, and institutions of social democracy and decolonisation in post-war Britain. It has shown how reform-minded police officers, influenced by the work of academic sociologists, looked to community relations as a way of addressing deteriorating public confidence in the police, particularly among Black

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[80] Ibid.
[81] Gilroy, "Police and Thieves."

communities. While this was in line with a broader trend towards encouraging the assimilation of Black people, an important influence here was the US experience of racial rioting during the summer of 1967, which some police officers saw as a forecast for events in Britain. This link with the US would continue to be a theme during the early 1970s, with the Government's 1973 White Paper on *Police Immigrant Relations* warning of 'a small minority of young coloured people … anxious to imitate behaviour amongst the black community in the United States'.[82] In this context, therefore, community relations was increasingly framed as a means of maintaining public order, with officers at A7 Branch insisting that these principles needed to be integrated into operational policing.

Importantly, this chapter has also shown that, despite these intentions, community relations was regarded with hostility from many within the Force, who dismissed its actions as 'soft' and akin to 'social work'. This hostility was in part a result of institutional conservativism within the Force and an occupational culture that emphasised law enforcement. However, internal documents from A7 Branch show how this was undergirded by police racism, which meant that Black people were seen as responsible for deteriorating relations, and multi-racial areas were targeted with 'stop and search' operations and saturation policing on account of racialised ideas of criminality. While sociologists such as Lambert and Banton had called for a strengthening of leadership in addressing racism within the police, this chapter has shown that senior officers within A7 Branch were concerned that public recognition of these problems would damage already wavering police morale and that confronting police prejudice head-on would precipitate a hardening of attitudes. As a result, community relations remained tacked on to a predominantly reactive and non-consensual form of policing, in which racism was a known and accepted part of police culture. The result was that as police relations with Black people deteriorated during the 1970s, routine police operations showed their potential to boil over into outbreaks of public disorder (a subject discussed in Chapter Five).

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[82] Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, *Police/Immigrant Relations in England and Wales* (London: HMSO, 1973), 47.

Chapter Three

Policing and Picketing, 1970-1974

Maintaining public order or enforcing the law, 1970-74

While the previous two chapters have focused on how the Metropolitan Police responded to public order concerns associated with mass demonstrations and deteriorating 'race relations', this chapter examines the impact of industrial action on national policing capacity and debates around the law on picketing. It shows that as strike action and labour solidarity presented a significant challenge to Edward Heath's Conservative Government – particularly during the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes – political influence was brought to bear on the police to contain mass, mobile, and secondary picketing. While most large-scale picketing took place outside of London during the first half of the 1970s, Home Office officials continued to use their close relationship with senior officers in the Metropolitan Police to establish the 'police view' on proposed legislation. This chapter shows that while members of the Cabinet called for changes to the statute law to restrict trade union action, the police and the Home Office maintained that the issue was not the law, but rather police capacity to enforce it within the boundaries of traditional policing methods. Changes to the statute were thus opposed on grounds that they would compromise the independence and operational discretion of the police in controlling labour disputes, with Home Office officials defending the need to prioritise the maintenance of public order over a strict enforcement of the law. The resulting developments reflected these contradictory pressures: on the one hand, the Home Office encouraged a significant overhaul of national policing capacity for civil emergencies, based on strengthened mutual aid arrangements and centralised control of national police resources and intelligence through the establishment of the NRC at Scotland Yard; on the other hand, these developments in capacity were shaped by continuing resistance to the adoption of a more paramilitary approach. The location of the NRC at Scotland Yard was not simply a decision based on resources, but also reflected the close relationship between the Commissioner's Office and the Home Office. This would become a major point of contention during the 1984-85 miner's strike, when the Conservative Government were accused of mobilising national police resources to break the strike.

This chapter builds on the recent work of Taylor and Hughes who have shown how industrial action between 1970 and 1974 transformed civil contingency planning in Whitehall, building on the existing infrastructure of what Edgerton has outlined as the 'warfare state'.[1] This chapter makes a distinct contribution to this literature by focusing on the role of the Home Office, where civil servants found themselves in conflict with decisions made by the Cabinet to amend the law and encourage police to adopt a tougher line on picketing. As such, it develops Loader's account of the institutional culture among civil servants at the Home Office during the 1970s by showing how they attempted to maintain 'traditional methods' for policing labour disputes.[2] The official mindset of the 'platonic guardians' was that policing policy should be determined by administrators (civil servants) and strategic practitioners (police officers), and not by political passions. This theme is also taken up in Chapter Six, where is it shown that the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police came under significant pressure from the Labour Government to contain mass picketing at the Grunwick dispute during the summer of 1977.

'New union militancy' and the 1972 miners' strike

During the 1960s and 1970s, the acceptable practice of picketing in labour disputes was determined by a number of factors, including trade union guidelines, legislation, Home Office Circulars, judicial decisions, police discretion and, more indirectly, public opinion. Until the 1980 Employment Act, the law on picketing had remained more or less the same for more than a century, with Section 7 of the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act and Section 2 of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act making peaceful attempts to persuade a person to abstain from work permissible. Any attempt to use threats or intimidation for this purpose was prohibited, but since these were civil laws, the police had no power of arrest for offences under the 1875 or 1906 Acts and proceedings were instigated by the aggrieved person.[3] Despite the rise of 'wildcat strikes' (industrial action not officially recognised by the union) during the 1960s and bipartisan agreement for more order in industrial relations, the

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[1] Hughes, "'Governing in Hard Times': The Heath Government and Civil Emergencies - the 1972 and the 1974 Miners' Strikes."; Ben Taylor, "Science and the British Police: Surveillance, Intelligence and the Rise of the Professional Police Officer, 1930-2000" (King's College London, 2015), 129-31. See also Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970*.

[2] Loader, "Fall of the 'Platonic Guardians': Liberalism, Criminology and Political Responses to Crime in England and Wales."

[3] 'Metropolitan Police General Orders, Section 49 – Public and Other Events' (undated), NA, HO 325/99.

Donovan Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations which sat between 1965 and 1968 devoted little attention to picketing, concluding that the current law was 'reasonably satisfactory'.[4] The reality of picket line policing, therefore, was that the vast majority of prosecutions arose from offences under other statutes dealing with obstruction, assault, malicious damage, and breaches of the peace, with statistics collected by the Home Office in November 1970 showing the small number of prosecutions under the 1875 Act in the previous five years.[5]

While there had been no change to the statue law during the 1960s, judicial judgements had significantly strengthened the hand of the police in interpreting the criminal law to diminish trade union immunities during labour disputes. In the case of *Piddington v. Bates* [1961], the court found that the police had acted in accordance with their legal duty when they arrested the defendant at a picket outside the small Free Press printing factory in London, after he refused to follow police instruction that two pickets at each of the two entrances were sufficient to make the case on behalf of the striking workers. In the case of *Tynan v. Balmer* [1967], the defendant, chairman of the strike committee at the English Electric Company in Liverpool, was charged with obstructing the highway after he refused to follow police orders to stop the peaceful and well-managed picket he was leading from walking round in a continuous large circle at the entrance to their workplace.

The precedent set in these two cases gave police the power to restrict the number and activity of pickets at a single location based on a reasonable anticipation of a breach of the peace or obstruction of the highway, even if no crime had yet been committed. These wide-ranging powers under the criminal law gave police considerable discretion in controlling pickets, meaning that the experience of picket line policing often varied considerably between regions and at different times during disputes. While it was not uncommon for police to be criticised for adopting a tough line that prevented effective picketing in the eyes of trade unionists, police often exercised their powers carefully, favouring communication and cooperation. As Geary's study showed, in some areas police established informal arrangements with trade unionists in which they agreed to stop vehicles entering picketed

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[4] Lord Donovan, *Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 1965-1968* (London: HMSO, 1968), 213, 875.

[5] Only seven prosecutions in 1966, six in 1967, three in 1968, one in 1969, and six in 1970 'Note from Wright to Hilary' (13 November 1970), NA, HO 325/99.

premises and facilitate communication by striking workers in return for limited numbers and general cooperation.[6] Indeed, there was some evidence of solidarity between police and miners, as both jobs were felt to be hard work and significantly underpaid.[7] Recognising the sensitive role of the police in labour disputes, the General Orders of the Metropolitan Police noted that, 'Great discretion, tact and forbearance, and strict impartiality must be exercised by police, and when practicable only officers of experience should be employed.'[8] In the eyes of the police, respectable trade unionists were seen as different from the political agitators who officers sometimes encountered during mass demonstrations and protests.

These *ad hoc* existing arrangements were soon to come under considerable political interference, as Edward Heath's Conservative Party took power in June 1970, promising to confront the power of the unions and bring order to industrial relations. Heath's Government wasted no time in introducing a controversial Industrial Relations Bill, which looked to significantly restrict trade union immunities, to bolster formal union leadership to prevent unofficial strike action, and to establish a National Industrial Relations Court to enforce these practices.[9] The Industrial Relations Bill faced fierce opposition from both the Trade Union Council (TUC) and the Labour Party, and by the end of the year the Government had twice been forced to declare a state of emergency in response to strikes by dockworkers and 'go-slows' in the state-run electricity supply industry. The dockworkers' strike in the summer of 1970 saw picketing law and its supposed limitations become a live issue within Government, with the Home Office instructed by the Cabinet to canvas Chief Constables in affected areas to report on their experience and make recommendations that could inform new legislation.[10] A working group was soon established, which reported back tentative suggestions that if a new law were to be introduced, it should consider introducing a limit to the number of official pickets at each site and clarify for the police what constituted threatening or intimidating behaviour.[11]

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[6] Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes: 1893 to 1985*, 84.

[7] Andy Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 78.

[8] 'Metropolitan Police General Orders, Section 49 – Public and Other Events' (undated), NA, HO 325/99.

[9] Peter Dorey, "Individual Liberty Versus Industrial Order: Conservatives and the Trade Uion Closed Shop, 1946-90," *Contemporary British History* 23, no. 2 (2009).

[10] 'Note from Wright to Maudling' (13 November 1970), NA, HO 325/99.

[11] 'Extract from the minutes of No. 1 NW Region Chief Constable's Conference held on 16.12.70' (undated), NA, HO 325/99.

Other senior police officers took a different view, expressing concern that changes to the law could upset the delicate balance in picket line policing. When HMCIC Sir John McKay found out that the Chief Constables' recommendations had been referred to ACPO's General Purposes Committee for review, he contacted the Home Office to suggest that given the climate of industrial unrest during early 1971, it would be politically unwise for the police to appear to be considering 'girding themselves for battle' by asking for additional statutory powers, particularly as this would offer little more than the wide discretion then afforded under the common law.[12] The Home Office duly asked ACPO President Sir Derrick Capper to bury the issue by referring it back to the police working group, who were instructed to collect more information from other forces affected by the strike. On account of Home Office advice, when the Industrial Relations Bill became law in August 1971, the minor extension of the picketing law contained in Section 134 of the 1971 Act – which prevented picketing at or near an individual's home – represented little change in the way of substance. By the end of 1971, the Home Office had come to the firm conclusion that 'the law [on picketing] is best left well alone; and that there is nothing to be gained – and something to be lost – by the issue of any Home Office advice on the matter.'[13]

Despite this conclusion, the issue would soon arise again as, by January 1972, the Government was facing an all-out strike by the NUM. In their first national strike since their defeat in 1926, the NUM organised mobile 'flying pickets' to undertake secondary picketing at power stations, steel works and distribution depots across the country, with a call for solidarity made across the labour movement.[14] With picket lines spread out across different police forces, Chief Constables were asked to provide the Home Office with regular updates of any disorder or threat of disorder connected with the strike, and as smaller forces found themselves short of sufficient personnel to deal with large numbers of pickets, arrangements were hastily made to bring in officers from neighbouring forces.[15]

While the largest picketing took place in parts of Derbyshire, Yorkshire, South Wales, and Scotland, a number of power stations and coal depots in London were picketed by

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[12] 'Note from McKay to Hilary' (25 January 1971), NA, HO 325/99. On 21 February 1971, 100,000 trade unionists and supporters joined a 'Kill the Bill' march through London, the largest labour demonstration in the post-war period. '100,000 march in peaceful protest against unions Bill', *The Times* (22 February 1971).

[13] 'Notes following meeting of No. 1 NW region conference on 14.12.71' (undated), NA, HO 325/99.

[14] Arthur Scargill, "The New Unionism," *New Left Review* 92 (1975).

[15] 'Copy of Telex message to Chief Constables' (13 January 1972), NA, HO 325/232. 'Note of a meeting held at the Home Office on 9 March 1972' (15 March 1972), NA, HO 325/103.

members of the NUM, and a floating picket was established on the River Thames to prevent fuel-carrying ships from breaking the strike. In preparation for this action, A8 Branch had issued instructions to all Divisional Commanders that 'close watch should be kept on [power stations and coal depots within their area] and the activities of pickets, should they appear, must be closely supervised by police.' Aiding A8 Branch in their preparations were Special Branch, which contacted Chief Constables in mining areas across the country to request advance intelligence on 'flying pickets' travelling to London.[16] While picketing in the capital was relatively minor, 15 February saw more than 10,000 demonstrators attend a march and mass lobby outside Parliament in support of the miners' strike. The Operational Order for 15 February called for the deployment of more than 700 officers from across the Force, and though the demonstration was mostly peaceful, some disorder occurred outside Parliament, with undercover Special Branch officers reporting that 'the most vociferous faction of this group consisted of extreme left-wing elements of the student/anarchist type'.[17]

The role of students in the miners' strike had received significant attention in a number of national newspapers, who reported that support among students at the University of Essex and the LSE had contributed to a number of disorderly protests on picket lines in Essex and Doncaster. This prompted Heath to request a report from the Security Services on the activity of left-wing student groups, though the intelligence assessment ultimately concluded that 'the outcome of the strike is unlikely to be affected by the students' interest in it.'[18] This shows something of Heath's paranoia during the strike, as the Prime Minister and a number of other colleagues remained convinced that industrial action had been orchestrated by communist infiltration of the NUM. Health remained reluctant to accept the Security Service's assessment that the picketing had been *ad hoc* and chaotic, with miners surprised by the solidarity they received from the wider labour movement.[19] In his official history of MI5, Christopher Andrew suggests that anxiety about subversion was mainly found among Ministers, with Home Office officials and members of the Security Service acting as a

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[16] 'Instruction on picketing during the national miners' strike' (14 January 1972); 'Telephone message to various Chief Constables' (12 January 1972) [released under FOI].

[17] 'Operational Order No. 7/72, NUM march and lobby of Parliament, 15 February 1972' (11 February 1972) [released under FOI].

[18] 'Report on Student involvement in the miners' strike'(26 January 1972), NA, HO 325/102.

[19] 'Note [title redacted]' (24 February 1972); 'Handwritten comments by Heath on note from Allen to Armstrong' (25 February 1972), NA, PREM 15/986.

restraining influence on ongoing pressure to go beyond its charter in investigating subversion and industrial unrest.[20]

As mobile and mass picketing proved increasingly effective during the NUM strike, members of the Cabinet expressed continual frustration at what they saw as the limitations of the law.[21] While the media amplified reports of violence and intimidation, telexes received by the Home Office from forces across the country showed that this was relatively rare, with reports of disorder or threats of disorder reported at just 14 of the 948 picketing events recorded between 17 January and 14 February.[22] Pressure was renewed on the Home Office to issue a Circular during the strike to advise police on the common law as outlined in *Piddington v Bates* [1961] and *Tynan v. Balmer* [1967], with the intention being that it would encourage senior officers to enforce stricter limits on the number of pickets at each location. Home Office officials, however, warned Home Secretary Maudling against such a move, which was largely seen as unnecessary and would likely be regarded as an attempt by the Government to exert pressure on the police to adopt a harder line against the miners in an attempt to break the strike. As Waddell noted in a memorandum to Maudling during the midst of the strike:

> There is little doubt that the police could generally find sufficient legal cover for breaking up the large groups of pickets through which staff are sometimes now having to run the gauntlet to get to work … But there are strong arguments against our doing any such thing. If the police attempted to deal with a militant crowd of pickets without having sufficient police officers available the result could be disastrous; either the police would come off worst or they would have to use an extreme degree of force. We have some experience of this happening in the provinces, and if it happened in connection with the miners' strike picketing all over the country would take place in an increased atmosphere of violence. The consequences would be bad for the general public order situation and also, I venture to suggest, politically. Chief constables would interpret a

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[20] Christopher Andrew, *Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of Mi5* (London: Penguin, 2010), 587-99.
[21] See 'Cabinet Meeting, First Conclusion, Minute 3' (11 January 1972); 'Third Conclusion, Minute 3' (20 January 1972); 'Fourth Conclusion, Minute 4' (27 January 1972); 'Sixth Conclusion, Minute 3' (10 February 1972), NA, CAB 128/50.
[22] 'Telexes received from English and Welsh Constabularies' (17 January – 14 February 1972), NA, HO 325/101.

Home Office Circular issued at this juncture as an invitation to take a stronger line with the pickets; and it would be impossible to conceal the fact that a Circular had been issued.[23]

The Home Office position was that the law was sufficient since it afforded police maximum discretion in controlling pickets in the interests of public order, and that senior officers should maintain their operational independence and rely on local experience in negotiating labour disputes, rather than strictly control picket numbers. It also demonstrates that the Home Office priority was to maintain police relations with the public, rather than achieve the political objectives of breaking the success of the strike.

This strategy would come under immense scrutiny following the events outside the Saltley coke depot in Birmingham on 10 February. Mass picketing had begun at Saltley on 4 February, as members of the NUM attempted to stop non-unionised drivers from transporting the large fuel reserves out of what was then the only major distribution point still operating in the area. NUM members had arrived from mining towns in South Wales, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and the North Midlands, matched by increasing numbers of officers from the local Birmingham police force. Despite the presence of up to 1,000 miners during the first week of mass picketing, the strikers had been unable to stop all the lorries from accessing the depot, as the police formed cordons through which the vehicles could pass. Contrary to the exaggerated claims of violence issued in the press, a report sent to Maudling on 7 February noted that, 'In the lulls between vehicle arrivals there is plenty of good-humoured backchat between the official pickets and the policemen, but when a lorry comes along the 500 [pickets] surge forward and bottles and brickbats have been thrown at the police.'[24] While 21 people were arrested for public order offences at Saltley during the first week of picketing, the local police felt they had enough officers on-hand to control the situation.

This changed dramatically when, in an effort to increase the effectiveness of the picket, Arthur Scargill, then a relatively unknown NUM representative from Barnsley who was working independently of the NUM leadership, made a call for solidarity from across the

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[23] 'Memorandum from Waddell to Maudling' (unknown), NA, HO 325/407.
[24] 'Note to Maudling' (7 February 1972), NA, HO 325/232.

labour movement. On 10 February, the day after the Government had decided that a state of emergency would have to be introduced to restrict electricity consumption, an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people gathered outside the gates of the coking depot at Saltley, facing down 800 local police. Due to the size of the mass picket, Chief Constable Capper, who was overseeing the police operation at the time, decided that the depot should be closed in the interests of public safely. Maudling received the news of Capper's decision while in a Cabinet meeting discussing the law on picketing. It was clear that some of his colleagues were furious: the minutes recorded the event as 'a victory for violence against the lawful activities of the Gas Board and the coal merchants', representing 'disturbing evidence of the ease which, by assembling large crowds, militants could flout the law with impunity because of the risk that attempts to enforce it would provoke disorder on a large scale.'[25]

The police were heavily criticised for giving in to the miners and not using the law to limit their numbers outside the factory gates. Heath later claimed that the police had been 'weak' and 'frightened of a scrap with the pickets,' complaining that, in making his decision to close the gates, Capper 'did not consult anyone, least of all the Home Secretary, about the new, "softly-softly" approach, and it was to prove disastrous.'[26] Recording the event in her memoirs, Margaret Thatcher, who was in the Cabinet meeting when news from Saltley arrived, noted that the event was 'a frightening demonstration of the impotence of the police in the face of such disorder'.[27] The future Prime Minister later wrote that, 'from then on many senior policemen put greater emphasis on maintaining "order" than on upholding the law. In practice, that meant failing to uphold the rights of individuals against the rule of the mob.'[28] Maudling was later more moderate in his assessment, accepting that Capper's decision to interpret the law with discretion was based on concerns that a harder stance against the pickets and demonstrators would alienate the police from those that had joined in solidarity from the local community. He concluded that Capper's decision to close the gates and call on Scargill to peacefully disperse the crowd was the right course of action, since 'the numbers of strikers involved was so great, and feelings were running so high, that any attempt by the relatively small body of police who could be assembled to keep the depot open by

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[25] 'Cabinet Meeting, Sixth Conclusion, Minute 3' (10 February 1972), NA, CAB 128/50.
[26] Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 350-53.
[27] Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1985), 340.
[28] *Path to Power* (London: HarperCollins, 1985), 212.

force could have led to very grave consequences.'[29] He also recalled that following the events of Saltley, colleagues had questioned why he had not sent in troops to support the police. His reply was to ask, 'If they had been sent in, should they have gone in with their rifles loaded or unloaded?' a response that revealed to his critics the potentially disastrous reality of calling in the army to aid the police.[30] This comment held particular significance since less than two-weeks prior to the events at Saltley, soldiers from the British Army deployed in support of the RUC in Northern Ireland had opened fire at a civil rights demonstration in Derry, killing 14 people. While Maudling's own account of his moderation may have been developed in the course of writing his memoirs, it matches the position held by Home Office officials at the time, who defended police discretion to prioritise order given their limited capacity.

New contingency arrangements

Although Saltley did not directly affect the outcome of the strike, its political significance was considerable. Scargill and the NUM had forced a very public defeat on the Government and the industry management, with televised footage of a depot manager locking the gates becoming symbolic of the police's public surrender and the power of the unions.[31] While the 1972 miners' strike is sometimes seen as a highpoint of industrial violence, historians have shown that the reality was much more restrained, with Jim Phillips arguing that the focus on 'top down' accounts of the strike mistakenly portray what was in fact a fairly traditional labour dispute as a 'victory for violence'.[32] However, this sense of crisis was significant in reviving the debate over the law on picketing, with the Cabinet ordering the establishment of a working party to review the law and make recommendations.[33] Despite the experience of the strike, the Home Office position remained unchanged, with officials privately expressing concern that 'any approach to criminal law which is motivated by the desire "to do something" for the sake of appearances seems inherently dangerous.'[34] Home Office officials felt that Ministers

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[29] Reginald Maudling, *Memoirs* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1978), 161.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Clutterbuck, *The Media and Political Violence*, 23.

[32] Jim Phillips, "The 1972 Miners' Strike: Popular Agency and Industrial Politics in Britain," *Contemporary British History* 20, no. 2 (2006).

[33] The Home Office was represented on the committee by Hilary and included representatives from the Department of Employment, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Scottish Office, the Lord Chancellor's Office, and the Attorney General's Office.

[34] 'Letter from Carr to Maudling' (3 March 1972), NA, LAB 43/680; 'Note from Wright to Waddell' (28 November 1972), NA, HO 325/233.

were failing to understand the police position in negotiating a balance between public order and law enforcement, noting that, 'As matters stand, the police cannot win; HMG [Her Majesty's Government] are in a position to have it all ways and can shelter behind the police should any particular incident not be handled in a manner which (with hindsight) they regard as unsatisfactory.'[35] Indeed, when interviewed in 2004, Sir Phillip Allen recalled that Ministers were 'pretty spineless and confused' in trying to change the law: 'Ministers wanted something to be done but they did not have a clear grasp of the law on picketing and the powers of the police.'[36]

Meetings with Chief Constables after the 1972 strike had convinced Home Office officials further that the major difficulty for the police had been enforcement, not the limits of the existing law. Police chiefs explained that mobile and mass picketing had stretched police resources to their limits and many officers in provincial forces had been found to be unfamiliar with even basic crowd control techniques.[37] Home Office officials later noted that:

> What emerged from the meeting was the possibility that in some future emergency it might be necessary to organise mutual aid on a larger scale than had hitherto been contemplated; and that in certain circumstances (e.g. determination by HMG to secure certain objectives in the national interest) a measure of central coordination might be essential to ensure the success of the operation.[38]

Existing mutual aid arrangements were outlined under Section 13 of the 1964 Police Act, which noted that Chief Constables could pool resources for a common purpose but also that the Home Secretary had the power to direct them to do so if considered necessary. While preparations for these arrangements had largely been left up to Chief Constables, the Home Office came together with Assistant Commissioner Mark and the new ACPO President Peter Wright to consider how mutual aid arrangements could be strengthened in case of another

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[35] 'Note from Wright to Butler' (27 December 1972), NA, HO 325/407.
[36] Hughes, "'Governing in Hard Times': The Heath Government and Civil Emergencies - the 1972 and the 1974 Miners' Strikes," 87.
[37] 'Notes on meeting with Chief Constables' (15 February 1972), NA, HO 325/232; 'Note of a meeting held at the Home Office on 9 March 1972' (15 March 1972), NA, HO 325/103.
[38] 'Note of a meeting held at the Home Office on 9 March 1972' (15 March 1972), NA, HO 325/103.

national strike. As Taylor has recently shown, the solution proposed was that each Force should be required to prepare to have 15-20 percent of their establishment in reserve as PSUs, a model for mobile police deployment that had recently been established following a review of civil defence plans by the Home Office and the Police War Duties Committee in 1970.[39] PSUs had been devised as a cost-efficient replacement for the previous larger arrangements of Police Mobile Columns, with each unit comprised of one Inspector, three Sergeants, and 30 Constables, a size easily conveyed on mass in a large coach, supported by a command vehicle and police motorcyclist.[40] In a letter to the new ACPO President Peter Wright, Allen noted that these plans for updating civil defence arrangements for policing purposes should be put to the ACPO General Purposes Committee at their upcoming meeting, alongside a discussion of how each Force would meet 'the need for more (albeit discreet) training in the techniques of crowd control'.[41]

While Chief Constables recognised the importance of such training given the challenge posed by mass pickets, not all were happy with the Home Office recommendations. Civil servants recorded some apprehension from those who felt that 'Met police techniques of crowd control (mostly exercised in urban areas and seldom on miners) will not necessarily be a good guide to action on a coalfield or at a depot in the middle of nowhere.'[42] Furthermore, some Chief Constables warned that officers in non-metropolitan forces were often drawn from the working-class communities they now policed on the picket lines, stressing that the policing of labour disputes would have to remain sensitive to local situations. Despite some apprehension, Wright contacted Allen following the meeting of the ACPO General Purposes Committee to inform him that Chief Constables had accepted the new arrangements for mutual aid and PSU, though they hope they would never have to be put into operation.[43] As a result, throughout 1972 and 1973 police forces across the country were encouraged by the Home Office and HMIC to prepare PSUs with public order training based on the recent experience of the Metropolitan Police, with Home Office officials writing to the Ministry of Defence to request that air fields and training grounds be made available for discrete crowd

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[39] Taylor, "Science and the British Police: Surveillance, Intelligence and the Rise of the Professional Police Officer, 1930-2000," 129-31.
[40] 'Police War Duties Committee, Report on Police Mobile Columns', (undated), NA, HO 353/40.
[41] 'Letter from Allen to Wright (23 March 1973), NA, HO 325/103.
[42] 'Notes on meeting with Chief Constables' (15 February 1972), NA, HO 325/232.
[43] 'Letter from Wright to Allen' (17 April 1972), NA, HO 325/103.

control exercises. In July 1973, Avon and Somerset Constabulary were supported by a Metropolitan Police training officer who ran a two-day public order training at a local RAF ground, with 70 servicemen recruited to play the role of pickets during practical exercises. [44] While PSUs provided the new form of mutual aid, command and control of police resources was also updated. Where local disputes required small reserves from neighbouring forces, this would be organised under existing mutual aid arrangements and agreed by the Chief Constables involved. When local disputes escalated, calls for mutual aid would be overseen by one of ten Regional Police Commanders, a position inherited from civil defence planning and usually held by the Chief Constable of the largest Force in the region, who also held the chair of the regional conference for Chief Constables. In situations of national civil emergency where the Regional Police Commanders found themselves overwhelmed, the coordination and deployment of police resources would be directed by a new Police Information Centre, soon renamed the NRC.[45] In order to ensure that central Government had immediate access to Chief Constables during a total communications breakdown, it was decided that the NRC would be based at New Scotland Yard and staffed by officers from the Metropolitan Police, giving it access to the Police National Computer. While the NRC was officially under the control of the ACPO President, any decision to activate it would be made in consultation with the Home Office, which would be represented by a senior civil servant and a member of HMIC.[46] In addition to information passed by Chief Constables, the NRC would receive intelligence reports from Regional Special Branches and the Security Service, which would inform the deployment of police resources nationally.

The new PSUs saw their first deployment during the dockworkers' strike during the summer of 1972.[47] A police report on their operation at Neap House Wharf in Trent and Humber noted that the system of mutual aid between nine forces in the region had worked very satisfactorily and 'although it was envisaged that his type of assistance would function fundamentally in wartime it is clear that PSUs are the best medium of providing additional police personnel in peacetime activities of this kind.' The report recommended that officers should be drawn from volunteers and should be fit and trained in crowd control techniques,

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[44] 'Letter from Steele to Ormrod' (9 July 1973), NA 325/136.
[45] In Scotland, the work of the NRC was done by the Central Coordinating and Intelligence Unit of the Edinburgh Police.
[46] 'National Reporting Centre – History' (undated), HHC, ACPO U DPO/8/1/1
[47] The localised nature of the strike meant that the NRC was not activated.

while each Force should draw up lists of accommodation to support PSUs deployed in mutual aid.[48]

The use of PSUs piqued considerable interest among contingency planners in various Whitehall departments who wanted to know more about the Home Office plans to develop police capacity for industrial disputes. In a note titled 'Our best seller', Home Office officials noted 'the quite extraordinary myth which has gained currency in Ministerial circles about the report on the Scunthorpe affair', with excited gossip spreading that the Home Office had secretly revived mothballed civil defence plans to break the strike. The Home Office officials gently mocked their colleagues in the Department for Energy who were anxious to get a copy of the police report for their Minister, mildly lamenting 'the modest and intrusive interest in our affairs'.[49] While Home Office officials appear to have been less prone to the fantasies of crisis as others elsewhere in Whitehall, by the end of the year significant improvements in national policing capacity had been made as a result of the review of contingency arrangements following the 1972 miners' strike. In a message to the Prime Minister, the new Home Secretary Robert Carr noted that, 'Strictly speaking, responsibility for law enforcement is a matter for the chief officer of police, but in practice we have done a great deal to ensure that the police service operates as one unified service, effectively under central control, if the need should arise.'[50]

Political pressure on the police

Despite the developments to policing capacity in the year following the 1972 strike, concerns around contingency arrangements re-emerged as Heath's Government faced the prospect of further industrial unrest. In January 1973, the Prime Minister messaged the Home Secretary seeking further reassurance that the Home Office was doing all it could to prepare the police for 'severe picketing' in the coming year.[51] In a pressing letter, Heath repeatedly asked:

> Have all police forces learned all the lessons that can be learnt from the success
> of the Lincolnshire Police against dockers' mobile pickets? More generally, what

[48] 'Supplementary Report on the police operation at the Trent and Humber ports in the Scunthorpe Division of the Lincolnshire Constabulary between 20 July and 21 August 1972' (29 September 1972), HO 325/233.
[49] 'Note from Wright to Waddell' (1 December 1972), NA, HO 325/233.
[50] 'Note from Carr to Heath' (11 December 1972), NA, HO 325/233.
[51] 'Letter from Heath to Carr' (29 January 1973), NA, PREM 15/1669.

more can be done to ensure that the organisation of mobile police forces and the exchange of intelligence on a national basis is as good as it can be? What power will the new National Information Centre at New Scotland Yard have to take charge of operations as soon as it becomes clear that national control is needed? Are you satisfied that enough is being done to secure an increase in the numbers of Special Constables so that more regular Police can be freed for anti-picket duty? Are you satisfied that the Police are taking sufficient account of the advice given by the Attorney General in his speeches [in which he confirmed the powers of the police to limit picket numbers under the common law]…What is the position with regard to the use of Servicemen to help maintain law and order?'[52]

In their internal correspondence following this intervention by the Prime Minister, Home Office officials showed their frustration at the pressure they felt they were under to encourage the police to pursue more offensive tactics and abandon traditional methods. In a note to the Home Secretary, one official lamented that:

As we have always made clear, there is no way in which it can be guaranteed that the police will always be successful if there is further mass picketing. Police methods in this country are based on the assumption that the police in general have the support of the community. It would not be possible for the police to disperse large crowds of miners if they were determined to defy authority.[53]

Home Office officials clearly felt that prioritising law enforcement over maintaining public order meant jettisoning traditional methods of policing. In a separate note to the Home Secretary the same official warned that this change of strategy 'would run the risk of getting into a situation where tear gas and baton charges were commonplace means used by the police for dispersing demonstrators'.[54] Following this advice, Carr's response to the Prime Minister pushed back on suggestions that the police had failed to sufficiently enforce the

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[52] Ibid.
[53] 'Note to Carr' (31 January 1973), NA, HO 325/233.
[54] 'Note to Carr', (31 January 1973), NA, HO 325/136.

criminal law against pickets during the 1972 strike, explaining that 'the miners owed the success of their picket of power stations last year not so much to the effects of violent picketing (including intimidation by numbers) but to the cooperation they received from the TGWU [Transport and General Workers Union] and ASLEF [Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen].' Reiterating the limits of traditional methods against mass picketing, Carr noted, 'as I have consistently said, if pickets assembled again in large numbers it might well be physically impossible for the police to secure free passage all the time for those who wished to continue working.'[55] Notwithstanding this caveat, Carr reassured the Prime Minister that the Home Office was continuing to encourage police forces to develop mutual aid arrangements for public order operations, whilst emphasising the improvements made in intelligence sharing both regionally and nationally through the NRC.[56] These changes were framed as an important move towards national standards and coordination in public order policing, transforming previously autonomous and *ad hoc* arrangements to improve national police capacity.

Given these developments, Home Office officials were both frustrated and concerned at Heath's suggestion that arrangements should be made for the deployment of Servicemen to maintain law and order in the event of mass picketing, a practice known as Military Aid to the Civil Authority (MACA).[57] Contingency plans for MACA had been reviewed after the 1972 strike with the Ministry of Defence cautiously suggesting that, as a last resort, the Army could, in a future national emergency, be used to guard vulnerable points, support the police in enforcing road blocks, and provide military helicopters to track mobile pickets. However, officials within the Ministry of Defence had complained that 'all too often requests originate at official level with what appears to be inadequate consideration or examination of the political, legal, and practical limitations of Service involvement [in aid of the civilian authorities]'.[58] The re-emergence of this suggestion in 1973 provoked considerable disquiet amongst both the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence, with Ian Gilmour, then Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, writing to the Prime Minister to inform him that his

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[55] 'Letter from Carr to Heath' (8 February 1973), NA, PREM 15/1669.
[56] The details of the new mutual aid arrangements and the role of the NRC were formally issued to all Chief Constables via a Home Office Circular in April 1973. 'Home Office Circular No. 69/1973: Mutual Aid – "DRAFTSMAN"' (16 April 1973), NA, HO 325/294.
[57] 'Prime Ministers personal minute No. M8/73' (29 January 1973), NA, HO 325/233. See also file 'Military aid to the civilian authorities (MACA)' (1974-1977), NA, DEFE 70/367.
[58] 'Memorandum on the Use of Armed Forces in Civil Contingencies' (27 April 1972), NA, DEFE 70/367.

officials regarded the deployment of the military for civilian policing as 'provocative in principle and counter-productive in practice'.[59] However, facing continual pressure on this issue from the Prime Minister, Carr, who agreed that deploying troops to maintain law and order during an industrial dispute would be a 'disastrous situation', concluded that such eventualities should at least be planned for and the Home Office wrote to Chief Constables to establish what arrangements currently existed among each of the forces for cooperation with the Army.[60]

While political pressure encouraged the police to build national capacity to control picketing activity, judicial decisions in a number of high-profile cases during this period also strengthened the hand of the police to broadly interpret the criminal law to control picketing activity. In considering *Broome v. DPP* [1973], a case in which a trade union official involved in a building workers' dispute in Stockport was arrested for peacefully obstructing the highway after he refused to move out of the way of a lorry that wanted to pass, the House of Lords had found that although the law gave pickets the right to invite people to stop and listen, it did not entitle pickets to compel them to do so, even if done so in a peaceful matter.[61] In the case of *Kavanagh v Hiscock* [1974], it was found that police officers were acting in the execution of their duty when they pre-emptively prevented pickets from approaching and addressing the driver and passengers of a coach leaving a building site during the 1973 electricians' strike, since they had reasonable grounds to believe this would lead to obstruction of the highway or a breach of the peace.[62] In the most controversial case of all, the trial of the 'Shrewsbury 24' saw building workers sentenced for up to three years in prison on charges of conspiracy to intimidate, despite dubious evidence and the fact that the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act stipulated a maximum of three months for trade disputes.[63] While the Conservative Government had refrained from introducing new legislation to restrict picketing activity – potentially as a result of the advice of Chief

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[59] 'Letter from Gilmour to Heath' (15 February 1973), NA, PREM 15/1669.

[60] 'Handwritten comment on note to Carr' (31 January 1973), NA, HO 325/136; 'Letter from Wright to all Chief Constables' (23 March 1973), NA, DEFE 70/367.

[61] The Magistrates had initially dismissed the charge of obstruction, but the Divisional Court and the House of Lords upheld the charge. See Broome v. DPP [1974] UKHL 5.

[62] Kavanagh vs. Hiscok [1974] QB 600.

[63] The anomaly was created since Section 3 of the 1875 Act stipulated that the prison sentence imposed in a trade disputes case was limited to three months or to whatever longer period is laid down in statue for punishment of the crime to which the conspiracy related.

Constables and the Home Office – interpretations of the existing law were repeatedly showing the wide-ranging powers of the police in exercising their discretion.[64]

The 1974 miners' strike

At the beginning of 1974, it looked as if the arrangements introduced since the 1972 strike would be put to the test, with the NUM balloting to escalate a national overtime ban that had already induced a domestic fuel crisis over winter of 1973-1974. With a full-scale strike appearing likely, Home Office officials met with senior police officers from across the country – including senior officers in the Metropolitan Police, the ten Regional Police Commanders and representatives from ACPO and HMIC – to discuss their plans for national picketing. Those at the meeting agreed that the atmosphere on the picket line had changed considerably in recent years, noting that while in the past it was found that local policeman were able to come to a reasonable compromise with local workers, the use of 'flying pickets' meant that this was no longer the case and convivial relationships were sometimes lost. Concerns were also raised about strikers being joined by 'a "militant tail" of students, extremists etc., who would turn out at any point where industrial trouble was taking place.'[65] But in the face of these changes, it was noted that intelligence sharing between regional Special Branches had greatly improved since the NUM strike two years earlier, cooperation no doubt encouraged by the threat of the IRA's new bombing campaign in England. The Home Office informed the Chief Constables present that Ministers were especially keen for the police to use information on the travel arrangements of pickets to stop their transportation before they reached their destination, provided satisfactory grounds could be found under the 1972 Road Traffic Act.[66]

Acknowledging that one of the difficulties the Government had encountered in facing down the miners in 1972 was the support they retained amongst the public, the Home Office

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[64] Indeed, it is now clear that the Information Research Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had been involved in producing a controversial documentary tiled 'Red under the Bed', which aired during the trial of the 'Shrewbury 24' (and was said by lawyers of the defendants to be in contempt of court). Documents also show that Heath as Prime Minister was pleased with the work of the documentary and also that the National Federation of Building Trades Employers wrote to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to complain that the law was not being sufficiently enforced and provided the Home Secretary with a dossier of cases of alleged infringement of the law. See 'Woodrow Wyatt's TV programme, "Red Under the Bed" (1973-1974), NA, PREM 15/2011. For an account of these allegations and the call for the release of further documents, see HC Deb 'Shrewsbury 24 (Release of Papers)' (23 January 2014), col. 479-518.
[65] 'Note of meeting to discuss mutual aid between police forces in the event of a miners' strike' (1 February 1974), NA, HO 287/2194/1.
[66] Ibid.

suggested that Chief Constables could learn from the favourable news coverage the Metropolitan Police had received after the 1968 demonstrations in Grosvenor Square, when it had been arranged for television cameras to film from behind police lines, an angle seen to provide more sympathetic footage to the police. It was also suggested that Chief Constables should consider deploying Special Constables to take over duties of routine patrolling, though this idea was abandoned when it was noted that among the police forces in the northeast many of the locally-drawn Special Constables were themselves staunch union members.[67] The question of military aid was discussed and the police were informed that though the Armed Services would be available to provide logistical support (such as accommodation, transportation, and catering), the use of troops to suppress disorder was not being considered.[68] In preparing for the 1974 strike, Home Office officials were confident that the police could rely on the newly strengthened mutual aid arrangements, and it was agreed that the NRC would be activated immediately in the event of a strike and its activities 'would enable the Home Secretary to keep colleagues and Parliament informed about the events, and, no less important, to exert a proper degree of influence without interfering with police operations.'[69]

With the NUM's strike ballot returning a majority of 81 per cent in favour of escalated industrial action, Heath responded by calling a General Election under the slogan 'Who Governs Britain?', an attempt to strengthen his beleaguered Government and gain a mandate for firm negotiations with the unions. Recognising that reports of picket line violence could damage the Labour Party's electoral chances, the NUM issued a series of guidelines intended to contain picket line activity, including stipulations that the number of pickets in any local situation should not exceed six, that these pickets should be nominated by a local branch or lodge official, and that each should be identified by an armband or another badge. It also stated that any potentially disruptive element from outside the industry should be dismissed from the scene, an attempt to avoid an association between striking workers and the so-called 'rent-a-mob'.[70] When the NUM strike officially began on 9 February 1974, Chief Constables

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[67] Ibid. This approach had also been used during the policing of industrial disputes in the 1920s and 1930s following the passing of the 1923 Special Constables Act. Morgan, *Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales, 1900-1939*, 113.

[68] 'Note of meeting to discuss mutual aid between police forces in the event of a miners' strike' (1 February 1974), NA, HO 287/2194/1.

[69] Ibid.

[70] 'NUM lays down strict code for picketing', *The Times* (9 February 1974).

across the country were alerted via Police National Computer that 'Operation Luddite' was underway and that the NRC had been activated. In order to avoid any ill-feeling among provincial Chief Constables who might resent being directed by a national control centre based at New Scotland Yard, John Nightingale, Chief Constable for Essex, was picked to oversee operations on the basis of being a 'senior, respected provincial chief officer whose advice would be accepted by other Chief Constables.'[71] On account of the NUM's picketing guidelines, the 1974 strike was smaller and more orderly than expected and the NRC was maintained on a 'monitoring' footing, keeping the Home Office informed about developments, but not required to take control of national police resources. Despite this, HMIC officials later concluded that 'useful lessons' had been learnt from the exercise, and they were 'ready to act if the need had arisen.'[72] Heath's electoral gamble, however, had not paid off, and the result returned a minority Labour Government under Harold Wilson.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that, while some within Heath's Government had suggested that the challenges posed by organised labour between 1970 and 1974 necessitated the introduction of new legislation to control picketing, Home Office officials emphasised the maintenance of public order over law enforcement as an essential part of the 'traditional methods' of picket line policing. However, this required a significant increase in national police capacity, which was developed through an effective system of mutual aid and centralised control of intelligence and the allocation of resources. The Metropolitan Police played a key role in this process, providing crowd control training to regional forces and hosting the NRC at Scotland Yard. This ensured that the police retained maximum flexibility in exercising their operational discretion, something senior officers regarded as their greatest power in controlling picketing activity. Judicial decisions during this period had interpreted the law to significantly strengthen the hand of the police in this regard, with a broader interpretation of the criminal law diminishing trade union immunities.

In this respect, the behaviour of officials at the Home Office is consistent with that identified by Loader, who suggested that civil servants saw themselves as 'platonic guardians'

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[71] 'Letter from Baker to Mills' (11 February 1974), NA, HO 287, 2194/1.
[72] 'Letter from Baker to Mark' (11 March 1974), NA, HO 287/2194/1.

in overseeing crime and penal policy during the 1970s. The rule of this official mindset was that the Government should respond to crime (and public anger about crime) in ways that seek to preserve 'civilised values'.[73] While Thatcher would later claim that decisions by senior police officers during the 1972 miners' strike to prioritise order over law enforcement 'meant failing to uphold the rights of individuals against the rule of the mob', officials at the Home Office held their ground in maintaining that police policy should be determined by administrators (civil servants) and strategic practitioners (police officers), not political passions.[74] Although officials had avoided the introduction of changes to the law on picketing during Edward Heath's Conservative Government, the February 1974 General Election occasioned new debate on this issue, as Wilson's Labour Party took office committed to repealing the 1971 Industrial Relations Act as soon as possible, its manifesto having promised a new Employment Protection Bill 'to give new rights to unions in collective bargaining, including new safeguards for peaceful picketing.'[75]

The tensions between law enforcement and public order, operational independence and political influence speak to the broader politics of public order discussed during this thesis. While these issues had been on display during the anti-war demonstrations in London in 1968, they were most often apparent during large labour disputes, which were seen to represent a significant threat to the stability of the Government. While the building of national capacity through strengthened mutual aid arrangement and the centralised control of police resources had offered a way of avoiding a departure from 'traditional methods', it also provided the framework for greater political involvement in national public order policing, a subject discussed in Chapter Eight.

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[73] Loader, "Fall of the 'Platonic Guardians': Liberalism, Criminology and Political Responses to Crime in England and Wales," 563.

[74] Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 212.

[75] Labour Party, "Labour Manifesto 1974 (October)," in *British General Election Manifestos, 1900-1974*, ed. F.W.S. Craig (London: Macmillan, 1975), 458.

Chapter Four

Public Order and Police Accountability

The 'Battle of Red Lion Square' and the Scarman Inquiry, 1974-75

This chapter examines the intersection between public order and police accountability, which represented a significant challenge for police legitimacy during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This period saw the Metropolitan Police become embroiled in a slew of scandals involving corruption, police racism and abuses of power, which led activists, civil liberties campaigners and MPs to call for reform to the internal police complaints process. While the police remained strongly defensive when faced with external criticism, disorder at protests and demonstrations led senior officers to look for new ways to counter the spread of information that would damage the image of the police. As previous scholars such as Reiner, Loader and Mulcahy have noted, the appointment of Sir Robert Mark as Commissioner in April 1972 represented an important moment in the modernisation of the Force, as Mark soon initiated a series of internal reforms aimed at improving police legitimacy.[1] Building on this work, this chapter shows that Mark's leadership style demonstrated a recognition that it was better for the police to take the initiative in engaging with reform, rather than have changes imposed upon them, as he increasingly showed his willingness to act as a moral entrepreneur on issues of law and order.

These issues converged at the 'Battle of Red Lion Square' in June 1974, which saw clashes between police and anti-fascist demonstrators end in the death of the student Kevin Gatley. This chapter shows how the event led to a broad public debate around the limits of police powers and civil liberties, shining a spotlight on the long-standing inadequacies of existing mechanisms for police accountability. With the reform-minded Roy Jenkins back in the Home Office, Lord Justice Scarman was appointed to lead a public inquiry into the disorders, with a view to improving the policing of mass demonstrations in the capital. This chapter argues that Scarman's inquiry offered a way of institutionalising the broader politics of public order during the mid 1970s, as in the controlled setting of the inquiry the views of

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[1] Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 89; Loader and Mulcahy, "The Power of Legitimate Naming: Part I - Chief Constables as Social Commentators in Post-War England."

activists, civil liberties campaigners, and police officers could be ordered and organised. The resulting report made a series of proposals and recommendations designed to preserve 'traditional methods' of public order policing alongside greater accountability, both of which were seen as important for police legitimacy. However, as subsequent chapters in Part Two will show, the limitations of Scarman's report into the disorders at Red Lion Square and the unsatisfactory implementation of its recommendations meant the public order and police accountability continued to be points of contention into the second half of the 1970s.

Campaigning for police accountability

Concern over police accountability had been one of the main factors that led to the appointment of the 1960 Royal Commission, after a series of corruption scandals during the late 1950s raised questions about public confidence in the police.[2] The Commission's mandate included an investigation into the existing internal police complaints procedure, and its subsequent report recognised that, 'a system in which the investigation of complaints is the concern of the police alone may not have the appearance of justice being done.'[3] While a minority on the Commission recommended that public trust could be restored by the appointment of an independent Commissioner of Rights to review complaints in certain circumstances, a majority ultimately concluded that that the existing process was 'fair and thorough', noting that 'many of the records testify to the patience of the police under great provocation from unreasonable members of the public.'[4] The Commission had been persuaded by police representatives that civilian control would undermine police confidence, and the report concluded that, 'above all we think that the interests of the public can best be served by resisting any innovation which may weaken the strength and resolve of the police in their fight against crime.'[5] Instead, the Commission's recommendations, which were enacted via Section 49 of the 1964 Police Act, noted that all complaints against the police should be recorded and investigated, and that where judged necessary (or upon the direction of the Home Secretary), this investigation could be undertaken by an officer from another Division or police force. The subsequent legislation also noted that where the investigation

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[2] Chris A. Williams, "Rotten Boroughs? How the Towns of England and Wales Lost Their Police Forces in 1964," in *Urban Corruption*, ed. J. Moore and J.B. Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

[3] Willink, *Royal Commission on the Police*, 125.

[4] Ibid., 124-5. See also HC Deb 'Royal Commission on the Police (Report)' (9 May 1963) vol. 677 cc. 680-799.

[5] Ibid.

showed evidence of a criminal offence having been committed, the report should be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions, whose officers would decide whether to try the case, rather than the police.[6]

Having had their recommendations for an independent element within the police complaints process ignored, the NCCL continued to provide an important advocacy and watchdog role in protecting civil liberties against the growing powers of the police. In the field of public order, the NCCL produced cards to inform demonstrators of their rights in case of arrest, provided advice and expertise to members of the public in bringing complaints, and regularly sent accredited observers to monitor public demonstrations.[7] In 1963, the NCCL was instrumental in revealing a pattern of corruption at the heart of Soho CID, after Detective Sergeant Harold Challenor was found to have planted an 'offensive weapon' on a NCCL member during an unprovoked arrest at a demonstration during Queen Frederika of Greece's visit to the UK. Further investigations by the NCCL revealed more than twenty similar instances of framing and the fabrication of evidence by Challenor and his colleagues, and the NCCL led the way in pressuring the Home Office to establish an independent investigation into corruption. As a result of its campaigning, Home Secretary Henry Brooke eventually acquiesced and established an inquiry under Section 32 of the 1964 Police Act, though the full extent of the corruption was largely passed over as the inquiry focused instead on why Challenor had been able to continue on duty while suffering with mental illness.[8] With systemic corruption left untouched, the NCCL criticised the Challenor inquiry as a 'whitewash', nonetheless continuing to campaign over broader issues of police accountability.[9]

While the NCCL positioned itself as an independent and impartial pressure group, the police were largely suspicious and hostile to its activities, often ignoring or curtly dismissing their inquiries. As Chapter Two has shown, Assistance Commissioner Waldron had warned the Home Office that the 1965 Race Relations Act would 'give the National Council for Civil

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[6] Section 49, 1964 Public Act. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/48/section/49/enacted [Accessed: 9 March 2020].

[7] Files relating to the NCCL's monitoring of policing at demonstrations during the earlier part of this period can be found at the Hull History Centre, see 'Filing case. Police and demonstrations' (1958-1966), HHC, U DCL/130

[8] James QC, *Report of Inquiry by Mr. A. E. James, Q.C. Into the Circumstances in Which It Was Possible for Detective Sergeant Harold Gordon Challenor of the Metropolitan Police to Continue on Duty at a Time When He Appears to Have Been Affected by the Onset of Mental Illness*.

[9] Mary Grigg, *The Challenor Case* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

Liberties and other trouble-makers ample opportunity to stir up racial minorities to upset the police and authority in general.'[10] The police certainly felt that the NCCL were on the wrong side of the law and in his 1977 publication, *The Signs of Crime: A Field Manual for Police*, former Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Powis warned that policemen on duty should be cautious of 'political radicals and intellectuals, especially if they "spout extremist babble", and are in possession of a "your rights" card (as supplied by the NCCL), [since] these people are particularly likely to make unjust accusations against the police.'[11]

On account of this suspicion and ill-feeling, when the NCCL raised concerns about police behaviour at political demonstrations, their concerns were often dismissed. For example, after Tony Smythe, General Secretary of the NCCL, sent a report on the policing of the anti-war demonstration in March 1968 to the Commissioner's Office and the Home Office, he received what he described as a 'frivolous response' from Commissioner Waldron, leading Smythe to lament that, 'the inevitable rejection of any complaint, no matter how well-intentioned, is instrumental in widening the gulf between demonstrators, independent observers … and the police.'[12] Sharing the same hostility and suspicion of his predecessors, Commissioner Mark later labelled the NCCL 'a small self-appointed pressure group with a misleading title', revealing in his memoirs that he intervened to stop senior officers from cooperating with the group's inquiries, a move he claimed was 'widely popular with both CID and branch officials.'[13]

Despite police hostility to the NCCL, the group found favour among a number of MPs, who continued to ask questions on their behalf in the House of Commons. Indeed, in July 1969, NCCL supporters in Parliament were instrumental in putting forward an all-party motion calling on the Home Secretary James Callaghan to amend the 1964 Police Act so as to include an independent element representing the public during police investigations. While Callaghan insisted that the police needed to be protected from unfounded allegations that damaged their reputation and wasted their time, he agreed that a working party would be

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[10] 'Observations by the Commissioner and Solicitor on the proposed amendment to Police General Orders' (undated), NA, MEPO 2/10489.

[11] David Powis, *The Signs of Crime: A Field Manuel for Police* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1977).

[12] 'Report on the Demonstration in Grosvenor Square, London, on March 17 1968' (April 1968), HHC, Liberty Archive, DCL 640/4; 'Letter from Tony Smythe to Private Secretary M.A. Clayton' (19 March 1968), HHC, Liberty Archive, DCL/348/6.

[13] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 132-32.

established to consider the issue of reform.[14] While the police had long been critical of an independent element, something Callaghan was no doubt aware of given his days as a Parliamentary representative for the Police Federation, the working party's inquiries were soon made more urgent as November 1969 saw *The Times* newspaper publish a major *exposé* into corruption within South London CID, whose officers were accused of acting as a 'firm within a firm'.[15] Matters soon got worse for the Metropolitan Police, as the subsequent police investigation into CID corruption faced obstruction, leaks, and vanishing evidence, leading the Home Office-appointed investigator, HMIC Frank Williamson, to resign in frustration.[16]

While these problems provided the backdrop to the working party's deliberations, when its report was returned to Callaghan's successor, Reginald Maudling, in late 1971, it recommended little substantive change to the existing framework. Instead, the working party suggested that Police Authorities should develop their supervisory role under the 1964 Police Act, that chief officers should be encouraged to use officers from other forces to conduct investigations of serious complaints, and that more care should be taken to explain the outcome of a case to the complainant.[17] Compounding frustrations at these paltry recommendations, Maudling refused to publish the working party's report, a move criticised by MPs as indicative of the lack of transparency around police accountability.[18]

With the chance for reform missed, the police continued to face criticism for the time taken to investigate complaints, the derisory number of complaints that were found to be substantiated, and the fact that where claims were substantiated officers were often simply moved between Divisions on a policy of interchange or allowed to resign, rather than face charges under the police disciplinary code.[19] In keeping with a wider institutional hostility toward external criticism, senior officers within the Metropolitan Police often curtly dismissed allegations of police malpractice as the fabrications of those intent on undermining the police's role within society, particularly when those claims were made by Black people and those on the political left. Nevertheless, momentum for reform continued to build,

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[14] HC Deb 'Complaints Against the Police (Independent Inquiries)' (24 July 1969), vol. 787 c. 787.

[15] 'London policemen in bribe allegations', *The Times* (29 November 1969).

[16] Files relating to this case have recently become available at the National Archives, see HO 387/2255.

[17] These recommendations were introduced via Home Office Circular No. 108/1972, TNA, MEPO 2/11196.

[18] HC Debate, 'Complaints Against Police (Investigations)' (2 December 1971), vol. 827 cc. 652-7.

[19] For example, of the 5,671 complaints made against the Metropolitan Police during 1972, only 4.2 per cent were substantiated. HC Deb, 'Metropolitan Police (Investigation of Complaints)' (11 April 1973) vol. 854 cc. 1469-78.

particularly after the report of Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration recommended that 'the Secretary of State should take urgent steps to introduce a lay element into enquiries into complaints against the police.'[20] Following this, a Private Member's Bill was introduced by Labour MP and NCCL supporter Philip Whitehead which attempted to give effect to the Select Committee's recommendations. As debate within Parliament showed substantial support for reform among MPs on both sides of the House, the new Home Secretary, Robert Carr, announced in February 1973 that another working party would be established to reconsider the introduction of an independent element.[21]

This momentum for greater police accountability came alongside significant changes within the Metropolitan Police, as the Force responded to concerns of a breakdown in public relations with the public during the early 1970s.[22] The appointment of Robert Mark as Commissioner in April 1972 was heralded as a major transitional moment in police reform, as Mark took office with the expressed intention of clearing up corruption at Scotland Yard and restoring public confidence in the police.[23] Following the fiasco of the previous investigation into CID corruption, June 1972 saw the establishment of A10 Branch as a new independent department responsible for investigating all 'serious complaints' against officers within the Force.[24] At the same time, CID was brought under the control of Uniform Branch with the Divisions, a reorganisation intended to bring order and discipline to what had recently been exposed as a wayward branch of the police, following public scandals involving corruption among the Drug Squad and the Obscene Publications Squad.[25] Upon taking office, Mark also informed Maudling of his support for the introduction of an *ex post facto* review within the complaints process, and his opinion would later prove influential in encouraging

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[20] Report of Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Police/Immigrant Relations, vol. 1, para. 328.

[21] HC Deb, 'Police Acts (Amendment) Bill' (23 February 1973), vol. 851 c. 945.

[22] W.A. Belson, *The Public and the Police* (London: Harper and Row, 1975).

[23] 'New chief of Metropolitan Police is a reformer of vision', *The Times* (4 November 1971); 'Immigrants pin their hopes on Mr Robert Mark', *The Times* (28 April 1972); '"Hard-line" Yard CID chief retires early', *The Times* (13 January 1973).

[24] The threshold for what was judges a 'serious complaint' was determined by the type of allegation, the number or rank of the officers involved, and the extent to which the complaint had become the subject of publicity. HC Deb, 'Metropolitan Police (Investigation of Complaints)' (11 April 1973) vol. 854 cc. 1469-78.

[25] For a contemporary account of corruption, see Barry Cox, John Shirley, and Martin Short, *The Fall of Scotland Yard* (London: Penguin, 1977). For a more recent account of the scandals involving the Obscene Publications Squad, see Paul Bleakley, "Cleaning up the Dirty Squad: Using the Obscene Publications Act as a Weapon of Social Control," *State Crime Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019).

representatives from ACPO and the Police Federation to accept an independent element, though some undoubtedly remained more reluctant than others.[26]

Unlike his predecessors, Mark's view was that the police should lead the way in reform, anticipating that they were better off in control of the process rather than have changes imposed upon them. Epitomising this new proactive approach to restoring police legitimacy, May 1973 saw Mark relax the rules on police relations with the press, since it was felt that the centralised Public Relations Department was often too slow in responding to allegations that damaged the reputation of the police.[27] Mark had been keen to introduce reform in this area for a while, as following the disorder at the Mangrove demonstration in August 1970 (a subject discussed in Chapter Five), Mark had written to Waddell at the Home Office to inform him that Scotland Yard needed to 'consider improving the present rather irritating situation in which by the time the truth is known the press and the public have lost interest.'[28] Mark felt that the news media was an essential medium for maintaining what he described as 'the goodwill, co-operation and support of members of the general public,' and the new policy allowed the police to take the initiative in framing events for more favourable coverage.[29] As if to symbolise the Metropolitan Police's new frank and honest engagement with the public via the media, June 1973 saw Mark deliver a Dimbleby Lecture televised by the BBC in which he strongly criticised a morally corrupt group of 'bent coppers and crooked lawyers' who were profiteering from crime and aiding criminals to escape prosecution; rotten apples in an otherwise healthy barrel.[30] Mark's bold leadership intended to demonstrate the police's commitment to putting their own house in order, restoring public support and police legitimacy. However, despite these changes during the early 1970s, the police increasingly came under significant criticism from some sections of the public, particularly for their handling of political demonstrations.

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[26] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 200.

[27] Sir Robert Mark, "Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1973," ed. Metropolitan Police Force (London: HMSO, 1974), 112-14. TNA, MEPO 4/286; ibid.

[28] 'Letter from Mark to Waddell' (11 August 1970), NA HO 325/143.

[29] Mark, "Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1973," 112-14. TNA, MEPO 4/286.

[30] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 144-62.

The National Front and the 'Battle of Red Lion Square'

By the time Mark was in the Commissioner's Office, one area of near 'constant concern' was the public order challenge posed by the NF and their anti-racist and anti-fascist opposition.[31] The NF had been established in February 1967 and since then had remained committed to stopping immigration and beginning the repatriation of non-white Commonwealth citizens settled in Britain.[32] Following the far-right strategy developed by Oswald Mosley's neo-fascist Union Movement during the early 1950s, the NF put forward candidates in local and national elections and leveraged its status as a political party to organise 'public' meetings in local authority premises, a provision established under the 1949 Representation of the People Act. NF meetings were in reality only open to NF supporters, who were often bussed in from other areas to hear speakers champion the imperial and anti-immigration causes that formed the basis of the far-right's reimagining of post-colonial Britain: white minority rule in South Africa and Rhodesia; a fear of left-wing subversion; and a racialised conception of citizenship.[33] Alongside its initially rather unsuccessful electoral strategy, the NF achieved significant notoriety by promoting these causes through provocative street demonstrations, events that were often held in multi-racial urban areas where poor living conditions and rising crime rates could be blamed on non-white immigration. While NF membership had initially grown slowly, the party received a significant boost in support following the Ugandan Asian 'crisis' in the summer of 1972, and reflecting a broader mainstream politicisation of anti-immigration racism in Britain, the February 1974 General Election saw the NF field 90 candidates in constituencies across the country, with the Party receiving a total of 113,843 votes nationally.[34]

The rise of the NF was met by an anti-fascist movement drawn from left-wing groups of various hues, many of which had been involved in anti-fascist organising during the 1950s and 1960s. While the wider strategy of the anti-fascist movement relied on publicly protesting

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[31] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1972* (London: HMSO, 1973), p.11, NA, MEPO 4/220.

[32] For histories of the NF during this period, see Chapter 1 in Nigel Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Chapter 1 in Ryan Shaffer, *Music, Youth and International Links in Post-War British Fascism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Chapter 10 in Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

[33] Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); "Enoch Powell against Empire: The New Commonwealth, the Kenyan Asian Crisis, and the Burdens of the Past," *Historical Studies* XXVI (2015).

[34] F.W.S. Craig, *Minor Parties at British Parliamentary Elections, 1885-1974* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 60-64.

the NF's views, more militant groups were commitment to physically denying the NF a platform on which to promote its politics and disseminate its propaganda, disrupting their activities wherever possible. This was seen as particularly important as Section 6 of the 1965 Race Relations Act had proved to be an impotent weapon against the far-right, its enforcement undermined by restrictions such as proof of intent, the requirement of the Attorney General's consent to bring a charge, and what many held to be a sympathy for anti-immigration politics among an almost exclusively white police force. Furthermore, the NF's leadership had simply modified its language to re-articulate racism as a legitimate concern for immigration, a move made more politically acceptable by the fact that the 1962 and 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Acts were seen to provide official recognition that non-white immigration was a problem for Britain.[35] As NF organising precipitated a significant rise in racial prejudice, racial harassment, and racial violence, physical opposition took on an important element of self-defence among anti-racist groups, exacerbating long-standing claims discussed in Chapter Two that non-white communities were over-policed and under-protected.[36]

Similar to the state's response to anti-Jewish fascism during the 1930s, police and politicians primarily framed NF organising as a problem of public order. However, since the NF were committed to cooperating with the police – whose role it was to ensure that legal meetings and demonstrations could proceed uninhibited and that public order was maintained – those demonstrating against the NF were often blamed for provoking disorder. This was perhaps unsurprising, since some more militant groups were not only committed to disrupting the NF's activities, but also ideologically opposed to the police, regarding any cooperation with officers in planning a counter-demonstration an act of political compromise. Nevertheless, there was little recognition of the diversity of opinion within the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement, and the police often responded to the disorderly tactics of some groups with indiscriminate force.

These issues came to wider public attention on 15 June 1974, when anti-fascists clashed with police during a counter-demonstration organised to protest a NF march through central London. The NF march had been organised under the banner 'Stop Immigration, Start

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[35] Schaffer, "Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965."
[36] Satnam Virdee, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," *Race & Class* 58, no. 1 (2016); A. Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2013).

Repatriation' and, in line with the its strategy of presenting itself as a legitimate political party, the event had been planned in cooperation with the police. Indeed, it would appear that the NF's leadership had an unusually close relationship with Special Branch, with Detective Sergeant Ian Bryan the first to be contacted by the NF leadership about its plans to demonstrate.[37] While Special Branch passed the information on to officers at A8 Branch, it soon emerged that the anti-racist civil rights organisation Liberation had caught wind of the NF's plans, and were now organising a counter-demonstration to take place in the same area.[38] Liberation march organisers did not at this stage contact the police and it was only as the event gained support from groups across the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement that A8 Branch officers learned of the event through advertisement in left-wing publications, leading to a hastily arranged meeting with the march organisers.

Based on previous experience, it was decided that the police should facilitate the two opposing demonstrations, which both planned to end with a meeting at Conway Hall in Red Lion Square. The police would maintain clear separation between the marches along different routes through central London but, given the likelihood of disorder, the police strategy was to contain any clashes within the controlled area of Red Lion Square.[39] As Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gerrard would later explain, 'the arrival in a limited area of two controlled marches [was] a far more efficient way of handling a situation than having a march being harassed along the route by the opposition.'[40] With this in mind, the Operational Order for 15 June 1974 called for the deployment of some 900 officers – including 25 mounted officers, 30 members of CID, and four units of the SPG – the majority of which were held in reserve in and around Red Lion Square.[41]

While the two marches began as orderly and well-organised – with estimates of 800 people joining the NF march and 1,500 people attending the Liberation event – this assessment changed dramatically when the anti-fascist march entered the square.[42]

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[37] 'Letter from Webster to Bryan of Special Branch' (7 May 1974), NA, HO 233/58.
[38] 'Liberation booking information at Conway Hall', NA, HO 233/58. Liberation was formerly known as the Movement for Colonial Freedom, which had close links to the Communist Party of Great Britain. See Josiah Brownell, "The Taint of Communism: The Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Labour Party, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1954-70," *Canadian Journal of History* 42, no. 2 (2007).
[39] 'Note by Diver' (11 June 1974), NA, HO 233/58.
[40] 'Minutes of proceedings at a public inquiry to review the events at Red Lion Square on the 15th June, 1975, first day', 38, NA, HO 233/2.
[41] 'Operational Order: Conway Hall Meeting and Demonstration' (13 June 1974), NA, HO 325/97.
[42] 'Transcript of R/T messages from 15.26 p.m. to 17.00 p.m.', NA, HO233/57.

Unbeknown to the march organisers, members of the far-left International Marxist Group (IMG) had planned to stage a mass picket in front of Conway Hall, intending to obstruct the NF's meeting. Presented with a police cordon preventing them from achieving this objective, IMG supporters pushed against the line of officers, leading to a violent clash involving units of the SPG and mounted police.[43] Police Serials had been ordered to clear the square and make arrests, but this had the undesired effect of disrupting the Liberation public meeting and dispersing anti-fascist demonstrators in the direction of the NF march, which had been stopped by its police escort a few streets west of the square.

Officers in the police escort suddenly found themselves under-resourced and caught between two crowds of opposing demonstrators in an area they had not anticipated and, after a variety of objects and smoke bombs were thrown at the NF by the anti-fascist crowd, senior officers had ordered mounted officers and members of the SPG to clear the demonstrators from the roadway, leading to considerable crushing and a number of violent arrests.[44] While the police had been successful in keeping the two opposing demonstrations apart and the NF march had made its way on to Conway Hall, senior officers had clearly lost control of the operation and disorder had spread to the surrounding streets. Some 47 police officers had been injured and 51 arrests had been made, but witnesses reported overzealous and heavy-handed policing against anti-fascist demonstrators, particularly by members of the SPG.[45] Though smaller in scale than the 'Battle of Grosvenor Square' in March 1968, the disorder took on additional significance since during the course of the events outside Conway Hall, Kevin Gately, a Warwick University student attending the Liberation march, had been fatally knocked to the ground, having sustained a heavy blow to the head.[46]

Gately was the first person to die on a demonstration since 1919 and, as a result, calls for a public inquiry came almost immediately from MPs, civil liberties campaigners, and organisations involved in the counter-demonstration.[47] The police were strongly criticised for their handling of the event, which some argued was indicative of the aggressive paramilitary-style approach increasingly used against left-wing demonstrations.[48] These allegations were

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Scarman, *The Red Lion Square Disorders of 15 June, 1974: Report of Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Scarman*, 18.

[46] Ibid., 10-11.

[47] 'MP calls for inquiry into demonstrations', *Times* (17 June 1974).

[48] 'Murdered by the Police', *Socialist Worker* (22 June 1974).

quickly countered by the police, who instead blamed anti-fascist demonstrators for the provocative scheduling of the counter-demonstration and attempts to break through the police cordon.[49] While many commentators and observers fell between these two sides, there was a broader question of how the police should respond to the growing problems associated with NF organising and the counter-demonstrations it provoked, and whether the 1936 Public Order Act afforded the police sufficient powers. Some suggested that the disorder could have been avoided if the police had banned the counter-demonstration, while others suggested it was the result of the failure of the police to take sufficiently firm action against the NF in the past, whose actions were clearly in contravention of Section 6 of the 1965 Race Relations Act which prohibited incitement. In an effort to bring order to this wide-ranging and contentious debate, Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins announced that an independent inquiry would be established under Section 32 of the 1964 Police Act.[50]

Before the inquiry could begin, the police conducted their own internal investigation into Gately's death and a coroner's inquest was set up to establish how, when, and where Gately had died, and whether anyone was to be charged with responsibility.[51] Two post-mortem examinations had concluded that Gately had died of a cerebral haemorrhage caused by a blow to the head, though it had not been possible to determine what had caused this, whether a blunt object or the result of a hard fall onto the pavement. The police investigation, led by Commander Roy Habershon of A10 Branch, concluded that there was nothing to suggest that the police had any involvement in the incident and instead claimed that Gately was party to a number of criminal offences, including 'tak[ing] part in a frenzied and violent attack upon a passive police cordon.'[52] According to Habershon, the incident was being manipulated by 'organisations with varying political axes to grind', who had subjected the police to 'the grossest vilification' in alleging police culpability in Gately's death.[53]

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[49] 'Storm over Battle in Red Lion Square' *Daily Mail* (17 June 1974); 'Uproar over Mob Battle', *Daily Telegraph* (17 June 1974).

[50] HC Deb, 'Disturbances (Red Lion Square)' (17 June 1974) vol. 875 c. 32; HC Deb, 'Disturbances (Red Lion Square)' (28 June 1974) vol. 875 c. 566W.

[51] The Inquest was held under Section 32(e) of the 1926 Coroner's Amendment Act, covering incidents where 'the death occurred in circumstances the continuance or possible recurrence of which is prejudicial to the health and safety of the public or any section of the public'.

[52] 'Report by Habershon on the death of Kevin Gately' (4 July 1974), 3, NA, HO 233/89. Commander Roy Habershon had led the CID investigation into the Angry Brigade bombings between 1971 and 1972, later becoming the first head of the Metropolitan Police Bomb Squad. See Brian Harrison, "Habershon, Roy," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Online: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[53] 'Report Habershon' (4 July 1974), 15, 22-3, NA, HO 233/89.

Habershon's investigation was somewhat undermined, however, when photographic evidence was produced at the coroner's inquest showing that two officers had in fact drawn their truncheons in the area of Gately's death at the time the police cordon had broken. Neither officer had reported this to their Serial Inspector or during the A10 investigation. As a result, Habershon was asked to carry out a second investigation, though his subsequent report concluded that no further action was necessary. The report noted that both officers were judged to have been sufficiently 'ashamed of having attempted to mislead by their false statements', and Habershon appeared to find mitigating circumstances in the fact that one of the officers was a the young probationer who had previously been deployed on riot duty during a four year engagement in Northern Ireland as part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery.[54] Habershon's investigation, had it been seen by those critical of the internal police complaints process, would likely have been regarded as typical of the lack of rigor that went into collecting evidence, the occupational solidarity that prevented robust discipline, and the defensive institutional culture that saw victims blamed and legitimate complaints disregarded. Similarly disappointing for those who held the police in some way responsible for Gately's death, the inquest ended with the coroner strongly encouraging the jury to consider a judgement of 'misadventure' rather than accident, a recommendation they followed in a majority verdict that effectively absolved the police of any wrongdoing.[55]

The Scarman Inquiry: institutionalising conflict

With the internal investigation and the inquest now complete, those looking for greater police accountability turned to the public inquiry. More cynical observers suggested that the inquiry had been announced by the Home Secretary as a way of defusing the considerable controversy that had emerged from the disorder, allowing tempers to cool by showing that something was being done about the many issues raised. However, others saw the move as a more genuine desire for accountability. Indeed, this was the first of such inquiries to be established since the Challenor case in 1964 and the announcement took place in the context of a significant shift in attitudes at the Home Office. The surprise election of Wilson's Labour Party in the February 1974 General Election had meant that Jenkins – previously Home

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[54] 'Ibid., 4.

[55] 'Transcript of the Inquest into the death of Kevin Gately' (24 August 1974), 422-3, NA, HO 233/59.

Secretary during Britain's 'liberal hour' between 1965 and 1967 – had resumed office, aided by Alex Lyon as Minister of State, a West Yorkshire MP with an even more liberal, indeed radical, reputation.[56] Jenkins had a history of concern for police accountability and as Home Secretary had been instrumental in bringing Mark, previously Chief Constable of Leicester, to Scotland Yard as Assistant Commissioner in 1967, believing that the insular nature of the Metropolitan Police had prevented it from dealing successfully with corruption. Furthermore, Labour's slim majority after the February 1974 election had also raised the influence of its left-wing backbench MPs, some of whom, like Lyon, held strong views on police reform. Labour MP for Southall, Sidney Bidwell, had himself participated in the Liberation march on 15 June 1974 and had strongly criticised the police for their actions on the day.[57]

While Jenkins did not return to office with quite the same reformist zeal that characterised his earlier years – his mind instead focused on Britain's membership of the European Economic Community – his tenure witnessed some important changes in criminal justice policy, favouring civil liberties against the largely unchecked power of the police. Soon after taking office, Jenkins announced that a committee would be appointed to carry out an urgent review of the law and procedure governing the identification of suspects in criminal cases, as problems in this area had been highlighted by the grave miscarriages of justice seen in the Dougherty and Virag cases.[58] In the Virag case, a conviction had been issued after an identification parade saw eight witnesses, including five police officers, positively identify Mr Virag as the perpetrator of a series of offences, despite the defendant having an alibi. In the Dougherty case, Mr Dougherty had been misidentified by two witnesses on the basis of photographic evidence, the defendant also having an alibi to counter the claims of the witnesses. Soon after this announcement, Jenkins ordered that the case of two men convicted of the murder of a sub-postmaster in Luton in 1969 should be referred back to the Court of Appeal, following new evidence that cast doubt on their previous conviction.[59] Both reviews were a significant embarrassment for the police, whose lead role in the prosecution process

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[56] Rock, *The Official History of Criminal Justice in England and Wales: Volume Ii: Institution-Building*, [digital copy].

[57] HC Deb, 'Disturbances (Red Lion Square)' (17 June 1974) vol. 875 c. 32.

[58] 'Mistaken Identities', *The Times* (9 April 1974).

[59] The case eventually saw five appeal hearing during the 1970s, though all were dismissed. In July 1977, Detective Chief Superintendent Kenneth Drury, senior investigating officer on the case, was jailed for eight year for corruption. Following the publication of Sir Ludovic Kennedy's book, *Wicked Beyond Belief*, the two men were released from prison by order of Home Secretary William Whitelaw, though it took until July 2003 for their convictions to be quashed. See 'Dead men finally cleared of murder', *Guardian* (1 August 2003).

had come under significant criticism in recent years by organisations like the NCCL and the law reform pressure group JUSTICE, who since the Challenor scandal had campaigned for more independence and oversight in criminal investigations and prosecutions.[60]

Jenkins' appointment to lead the inquiry into the disorder at Red Lion Square was Lord Justice Scarman, a previous chair of the Law Commission who had recently overseen a two-year inquiry into disorders in Northern Ireland during the summer of 1969.[61] Scarman's remit was to review the events and actions which led to the disorder on 15 June 1974 and to consider whether any lessons could be learned for the better maintenance of public order when demonstrations took place. Broad in its terms, this remit suggested that Scarman's inquiry would not only look to establish an official narrative and explanation for the events, but that its scope for recommendations would provide the parties represented at the inquiry an opportunity to publicly raise issues of aggressive policing, a general lack of police accountability, and problems with the police enforcement of 'race relations' legislation. This chance appeared even more opportune when, in July 1974, prior to the start of the inquiry, Jenkins took the police by surprise and announced that it was his intention to bring a long absent independent element to the police complaints process, an issue that had been shelved by his predecessor, Robert Carr, following the return of the working party's report at the end of 1973. Speaking before Parliament, Jenkins promised that the independent element would be brought into operation *while* the complaint was being investigated, a proposal that went significantly beyond the *ex post facto* review that had only reluctantly been accepted by ACPO and the Police Federation during the working party's consultations.[62]

While Mark publicly welcomed the announcement of an inquiry into the disorder at Red Lion Square, he was privately much more critical, later lamenting that it had only been introduced 'to placate criticism and defuse the situation', with Labour's minority Government 'unable to run the risk of offending its extreme left in case it should bring it down.'[63] He was particularly concerned that his officers would be asked to go before the inquiry and give evidence without legal representation, though he recognised that refusing participation would make the police look like they had something to hide. Explaining his public response as

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[60] In 1970, JUSTICE had published an influential report highlighting the problems with the prosecution service JUSTICE, *The Prosecution Process in England and Wales* (London: JUSTICE, 1970).

[61] Justice Leslie Scarman, *Violence and Civil Disturbances in Northern Ireland in 1969* (Belfast: HMSO, 1972).

[62] HC Deb, 'Police (Complaints)' (30 July 1974) vol. 878 c. 144W.

[63] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 167-8.

one of stoic pragmatism, Mark later noted that his conclusion had been that 'nothing could be worse than to appear to have an enquiry imposed upon the force' and so 'there remain[ed] only one sensible course of action, to get in first and demand an enquiry, though well aware that it will almost certainly be a waste of money, time and manpower.'[64]

Mark was much less willing to accept Jenkins' proposals for reform to the police complaints process, which he later claimed had been announced without consultation, 'like a rabbit from a hat on the last day before the dissolution of Parliament.'[65] Mark felt that an independent body acting alongside the police was impractical, bureaucratic, and open to political manipulation, immediately writing to Waddell at the Home Office to say that he 'would do everything in his power to oppose it both publicly and privately.'[66] Broader questions around police powers and accountability thus provided the context in which Scarman's inquiry would take place, and while some hoped that the hearings would provide a measure of long-awaited scrutiny of police practice, the police reluctantly approached it as an opportunity to build public support for its aims and methods in controlling public disorder.

Six parties had applied for representation at the inquiry's public hearings, including the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and his Force, the NF, and a number of groups involved in the Liberation counter-demonstration.[67] Written submissions were also submitted by the NCCL, with recommendations for how the police should engage with demonstrators in the future.[68] Given the divergent politics of the various parties represented at the inquiry, it was unsurprising that despite Scarman's best efforts to ensure that the cross-examination of witnesses followed the inquiry's remit, the hearings became an investigation not just into events and actions that led to the disorder, but a contestation over what constituted legitimate behaviour within the spectrum of democratic politics and what role the police should have in upholding and enforcing these principles.[69] In many ways the inquiry appeared to re-enact, albeit it in an institutionalised form, the politics displayed during the demonstration of 15 June.

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 202.

[66] Ibid., 205.

[67] This included the London Area Council of Liberation, the Union of Students at Warwick University and the NUS (of which Gately was a member), the IMG, and the little-known Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist).

[68] 'Written submissions of the NCCL to the Scarman Inquiry', NA, HO 325/32.

[69] The transcript for the inquiry is available at the National Archives, NA, HO 325/2 to HO 325/28.

Scarman's inquiry took place in the shadow of events in Birmingham, which in November 1974 was scarred by the political violence of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Following the death of an IRA member in a premature explosion in Coventry, the Republican movement in England had planned to hold a funeral march in Birmingham. The announcement caused outcry in Parliament, with Jenkins called on to ban the march under the 1936 Public Order Act and make the IRA a 'proscribed organisation'. While Jenkins said he supported the decision of Coventry, Birmingham, and Solihull District Councils to ban for one month any procession in connection with the funeral, he informed the House that, 'while it might understandably assuage certain feelings to introduce a ban [on the IRA as an organisation], it would if anything make the security services' position more difficult.' Bans had previously been introduced in Northern Ireland via the 1973 Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act, but Jenkins noted that, 'on the best advice available to me from the police and the security service … experience in Ireland [sic] does not suggest that a ban is a complete answer to our problems.'[70] Jenkins' assessment soon changed dramatically, however, when on 21 November members of the IRA planted bombs in three Birmingham pubs, which prematurely exploded killing 21 people and injuring 182 others. Within four days of the bombing, Jenkins had announced that the IRA was to be proscribed within Britain, with Section 2 of the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act granting the police the power to arrest anyone seen to display support for the organisation in a public place.

When Scarman's report was made public in February 1975, it was widely reported in the press as a vindication of the police, with strong criticism reserved for the IMG.[71] While the inquiry had found no evidence as to the specific cause of Gately's fatal injury, the report concluded that the disorder had been started by the IMG's 'deliberate, determined, and sustained attack on the police cordon', and that 'heavy responsibility rests on those who instigated and led the assault.'[72] While the operational decisions of Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gerrard, the senior officer in charge of the demonstration, had been the subject of much criticism during the hearings and the inquiry team – consisting of David J.

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[70] HC Deb, 'James McDade (Funeral Procession)' (19 November 1974), vol. 881; 'Sinn Fein plans guard of honour for bomber as councils ban march', *The Times* (21 November 1974).

[71] 'Marxists blamed for "riot" death', *Guardian* (28 February 1975); 'Marxists started Red Lion Square riot when they viciously attacked police, judge finds', *The Times* (28 February 1975); Editorial, 'Verdict on a riot', *Daily Telegraph* (28 February 1975).

[72] Scarman, *The Red Lion Square Disorders of 15 June, 1974: Report of Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Scarman*, 7.

Belfall of the Home Office Police Department and HMIC Sir John Maxwell Hill – had expressed their own private concerns, the report concluded that these rested too heavily on hindsight.[73] As for the deployment of SPG units and the use of mounted officers on political demonstrations, the report provided a clear endorsement of the traditional methods employed by the police for crowd control, with Scarman insisting that he was 'not prepared to make any recommendations which would have the effect of reducing the ability of the most lightly equipped urban police force in the world to deal swiftly and decisively with disorder.'[74] He did, however, make a number of recommendations to improve police planning and training and, in particular, noted that command officers should always consider strategic consequences and safety precautions before dispersing a crowd and that, wherever possible, warnings should be given to allow demonstrators to disband peacefully.[75] Indeed, in the years that followed, Scarman's report was given prominence during the Senior Command and the Inspector's Development Courses at the Police Staff College at Bramshill, where students were asked to analyse the incidents leading up to the disturbances and consider how they could have been avoided.[76]

On the subject of law reform, Scarman concluded that the principle of the law and the balance that it struck between freedom, public order, and the right of passage had not been shown by the disorders to be unsound. He felt that supporters of both demonstrations had been free to march in a peaceful manner and that it was only the failure of some to exercise sufficient restraint that had led to disorder. While it had been suggested prior to the inquiry that the Commissioner should have the power to order the cancellation of one demonstration where two opposing events were planned to march in the same area, Scarman suggested that this 'superficially attractive' proposal would inevitably draw the police into the political arena and should thus be rejected.[77] The report concluded that Section 3 of the 1936 Public Order Act already afforded police the power to ban demonstrations in a specified area if it was thought necessary to prevent serious disorder, and this alone should determine the police decision. While Scarman was sympathetic to police requests for additional powers to

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[73] Ibid., 28-29, 40.
[74] Ibid., 41.
[75] Ibid., 35.
[76] 'Witness statement of Deputy Assistance Commissioner Geoffrey Dear' (22 June 1981), NA, HO 266/119.
[77] Scarman, *The Red Lion Square Disorders of 15 June, 1974: Report of Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Scarman*, 38.

confiscate 'offensive' objects like placard staves and banner poles and to require a minimum period of notice before a demonstration took place, his report concluded that the existing law was sufficient. Scarman was harshly critical of those who suggested that the police should have banned the NF march on account of its political character, claiming that such proposals were a 'menace to our liberties' and would lead to a 'police state'.[78] However, his report did call for a significant strengthening of the law on incitement, so as to make it an effective tool for policing demonstrations. Scarman felt that in its current form Section 6 of the 1965 Race Relations Act was 'an embarrassment to the police', its effectiveness undermined in practical terms by the requirement of proof of intent and the Attorney General's prior consent for prosecution.[79]

Where Scarman's report was less favourable to the police was in his criticism of what he described as a 'striking failure to report facts.'[80] While rejecting allegations of widespread police misconduct, his report noted that none of the allegedly violent arrests that took place were reported to the senior officers present, none of the police identified in photographs as having drawn their truncheons had reported doing so to their Serial Sergeants, and all senior officers who gave evidence at the inquiry claimed to have seen no incidents worthy of reporting. The experience of the inquiry had convinced Scarman of the need for an effective complaints process enjoying the confidence of the public, and as such, his report lent strong support to Jenkins' announcement that the Home Office would be revising the procedure to include an independent element.[81] More rigorous oversight was also necessary since Scarman's report noted that, 'Public inquiries cannot, and should not, be held after every disorderly demonstration,' a passage that would later be evoked by future Home Secretaries to justify their refusal to initiate an inquiry.[82] Indeed, Scarman's report stressed that police officers concerned with public order needed to develop a continuing capacity for analysing, assessing, and learning from their own operations and that these mechanisms for accountability needed to enjoy the confidence of the public.

While it was only later, following his chairmanship of the inquiry into the Brixton disorders in 1981, that Scarman would develop his widely-held reputation as a humane,

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[78] Ibid., 19.
[79] Ibid., 35.
[80] This was in contrast to the mounted officers who were praised as 'scrupulous' in this regard. Ibid., 24.
[81] Ibid., 38.
[82] Ibid., 42.

caring, and liberal-minded judge, his report on the disorders at Red Lion Square became an important treatise on the balance between police powers and civil liberties. While the report was often held up as example of moderation and fairness, the limitations of this liberal ideology were apparent in its failure to reckon with the wider impacts of NF racism, which was not limited to provocations of public disorder, but included more everyday instances of racial prejudice, racial harassment, and racial violence. A glaring omission from the inquiry, either as a represented party or in the submission of recommendations, was any group representing the interests of the Black and South Asian citizens most targeted by the NF. While these issues were beyond the remit of the inquiry – limited, as it was, to establishing the events and actions that led to the disorder at Red Lion Square and making recommendations for policing political demonstrations in the future – it was indicative of the state's response to NF racism during the 1970s, which continued to be seen as primarily a concern of public order.

While Commissioner Mark had initially been sceptical that any good would come from the inquiry, he continued to take a pragmatic approach to the publication of its report. In a lecture to graduates of the National Police College at Bramshill in March 1975, Mark noted that Scarman had provided a strong defence of the Metropolitan Police's traditional approach to public order.[83] However, his lecture also raised concerns that this tradition was under threat, not so much from a small minority of extremists all too willing to use force to further their political aims, but rather from the failure of the courts, the press, and the public to pay significant attention to the behaviour of these political radicals and to hold them sufficiently accountable for their criminal actions. He warned of an 'unjustified complacency in public attitudes to political demonstrations', which he credited with creating a climate in which the police were regularly smeared with fabricated claims of brutality and charges of political bias.[84] What was needed was not new crowd control equipment or legislation to prohibit demonstrations, but rather robust criminal prosecution and sentencing, responsible reportage in the press, and a repudiation of political violence in the court of public opinion.

The lecture was indicative of Mark's approach as Commissioner, offering a defence of a righteous tradition of British policing, an indictment of political violence as mindless

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[83] Sir Robert Mark, "The Metropolitan Police and Political Demonstrations," *The Police Journal* 48, no. 3 (1975).
[84] Ibid., 199.

criminality, and a critical opprobrium of the criminal justice system as too soft in its pursuit of those breaking the law. Further typical of Mark's style of leadership, it was a deliberate appeal for public support via the media, with copies of his lecture passed by the Metropolitan Police Public Relations Department to the press following the event in a calculated attempt to shape reporting. This was largely successful, leading to sympathetic coverage in a number of national dailies and prompting supportive editorials in *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph.*[85] Mark's lecture and the way in which it was disseminated to the press is an example of how the police sought to control the narrative of events (whether the disorder at Red Lion Square or the inquiry and report the followed), identifying problems and proposing solutions. Mark would later note that his career within police had seen a gradual transition 'from mere law enforcement to participating in the role of social welfare and even more importantly to that of contributors in the moulding of public opinion and legislation.'[86] This attempt to explain and narrate policing and criminal justice issues was an important part of the politics of public order, with the Battle of Red Lion Square and the Scarman inquiry events in a broader contestation over issues of policing, protest, and their control. Attempts to mobilise narratives of public disorder would later be used by the Police Federation in their battle with the Home Office over police wages during the mid-to-late 1970s (a subject discussed in Chapter Six).

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the intersection between public order and police accountability, which represented a significant challenge for police legitimacy during the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the 1964 Police Act had gone a long way to modernising police governance – encouraging the amalgamation of smaller police forces and changing the composition of Police Authorities – its failure to introduce an independent element to the police complaints process undermined public confidence in the police during the coming decade. In its absence, activists, civil liberties campaigners and their supporters in Parliament played an important

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[85] Editorial, 'More Severity', *The Times* (18 March 1975); Editorial, 'Demos v Democracy', *Daily Telegraph* (18 March 1975); 'Sir Robert Marl's warning against complacency over extremists', *The Times* (18 March 1975); 'Now Sir Robert warns on demos', *Daily Mail* (18 March 1975); 'Libels on police hide demo peril, says Yard chief', *Daily Telegraph* (18 March 1975); 'New extremists', *Financial Times* (18 March 1975).
[86] Mark's forward to Thomas Alan Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, 2nd ed. (London: Constable, 1978), 22.

watchdog and advocacy role in defending the right to protest and highlighting heavy-handed policing, whilst calling on successive Home Secretaries to introduce much-needed reform to police accountability. While the police remained hostile to external criticism, subsequent chapters will show that this form of active citizenship and pressure group politics played an important role in highlighting scandals of police corruption, racism, and abuses of power.

During the mid 1970s, these issues converged at the 'Battle of Red Lion Square', an event that triggered a broad public debate around the limits of police powers and civil liberties, shining a spotlight on the long-standing weaknesses of existing mechanisms for police accountability. This chapter has argued that Scarman's inquiry offered a way of institutionalising the broader politics of public order during the period, as in the controlled setting of the inquiry, the views of activists, civil liberties campaigners and police officers could be ordered and organised. The resulting report made a series of proposals and recommendations designed to preserve 'traditional methods' of policing alongside greater accountability, striking a balance between police powers and civil liberties. The report established Scarman's reputation as symbolic of a liberal politics of public order, one that can be juxtaposed against Commissioner Mark, who adopted a strong public profile in calling for a tougher approach to law and order. However, as subsequent chapters in Part Two will show, the limitations of Scarman's report and the unsatisfactory implementation of its recommendations meant the public order and police accountability continued to be points of contention into the second half of the 1970s.

Chapter Five

Deteriorating Race Relations

Policing Notting Hill Carnival, 1975-1977

This chapter focuses on the policing of Notting Hill Carnival, which between 1975 and 1977 became a litmus test for the police approach to the community relations aspects of public order. It begins with an account of the early years of the carnival, which gradually grew in size and status during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It shows that while police relations with Black people in the area deteriorated more broadly during this period, the carnival was largely seen as a success for community relations. The local police developed a low-profile approach to facilitating the event, encouraging favourable coverage in the press. However, this strategy changed significantly after 1975, when the event drew large numbers of Black youths from across London, fuelling racialised concerns of crime and disorder. This chapter shows how police operational planning for the 1976 carnival involved a shift in the police approach to community relations, with the local Commander adopting a strategy intended to relocate the event to an alternative venue by leveraging one section of Notting Hill's 'community' against another, a distinction sharply divided by race. This chapter highlights some of the tensions between policing decisions made at a Divisional level and those made by Scotland Yard, a point that shows that policing institutions are not simply monolithic, though they often act according to prevailing institutional cultures and identities; in this case, a racism located in a discourse of 'Black criminality'.[1] While the policing of Notting Hill Carnival during these years has been discussed elsewhere, this has primarily been by those close to the events.[2] This chapter uses new archival material to develop the themes discussed in Chapter Two, which highlighted the failure of the Metropolitan Police to successfully integrate community relations with operational policing. While this was shown to be in part a result of an

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[1] Gilroy, "Police and Thieves."

[2] For the police side, see Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*. For differing accounts on the significant of the carnival to Black politics in Britain, see Race Today Collective, *The Road Make to Walk on Carnival Day: The Battle for the West Indian Carnival in Britain* (London1977); Cecil Gutzmore, "The Notting Hill Carnival," *Marxism Today* (1982); "Carnival, the State and the Black Masses in the United Kingdom," in *Inside Babylon:The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*, ed. James Winston and Clive Harris (London: Verso, 1993); Kwesi Owusu, "Notting Hill Carnival: 'De Road Is De Stage De Stage Is De Road'," in *Writing Black Britain, 1948-1998*, ed. James Proctor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

institutional conservativism that was resistant to change and an occupational police culture that prioritised law enforcement, the policing of Notting Hill shows the racial dimensions of public order policing, as majority Black crowds were often seen to be 'excitable', volatile, and prone to violence.

Notting Hill Carnival and community relations

The first Notting Hill Carnival was held in 1965, organised as a celebration of cultural diversity in an area still widely associated with the 'race riots' of 1958.[3] In the years since the rioting, the area had become a flourishing scene of community-based progressive activism and Black politics, drawing in 'new left' activists, Black Power leaders, and members of the counterculture.[4] Notting Hill's association with racial disorder, 'radical' politics, and an illicit economy in sex work and drugs meant the area drew significant attention from both the local police and Scotland Yard. As Assistant Commissioner 'A' James Starritt would later inform members of the Select Committee on Race Immigration in 1972:

> Notting Hill has the most important location to discuss race relations because of its association with the riots … One never hears, for example, of the Borough of Brent, which has by far the largest coloured population in London … one hardly ever hears about Southall where relations are very good. One does not hear about Brixton. There is a very large coloured population in Brixton. Notting Hill is the badge that is usually mentioned.[5]

Despite this association with racial tensions and disorder, the Notting Hill Carnival during the late 1960s was seen by police as a success for community relations, a celebration of cultural diversity where the familiar folk dancers and drama groups of a traditionally English fair were

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[3] Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 11. For a history of the carnivals in London prior to Notting Hill, see Bill Schwarz, "Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*: Reflectons on the Emergence of Post-Colonial Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3 (2003).

[4] McGraw, "Sonic Settlements: Jamaican Music, Dancing, and Black Migrant Communities in Postwar Britain."; Schofield and Jones, ""Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It": Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of "Race" in Britain after 1958."

[5] Session 1971-72 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, *Police/Immigrant Relations*, vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1972).

joined by Caribbean steel bands, Irish pipers, and Trinidadian singers. During its first few years the event was small-scale but popular within the local community and the police adopted a fairly standard 'traditional' approach for policing local processions: a small number of police were assigned each year to help supervise the assembly, to accompany the bands as they made their way through the streets, and to regulate traffic at junctions, otherwise adopting a low-profile during the festivities.[6]

During the late 1960s, tension between the police and sections of the Black community centred around the local Mangrove restaurant, an important social space for Black Londoners and a meeting place for Black political activists. The Mangrove had been opened in 1968 by the Trinidadian community leader and activist Frank Crichlow, and in its first year of business, the restaurant was repeatedly targeted in a series of raids by the local police and CID.[7] While Crichlow lodged a number of complaints with the Home Office and the Race Relations Board, the police continued their targeting of the Mangrove and Chichlow soon found himself charged with assaulting an officer during a May 1970 raid.[8] As anger and frustration built among members of the Black community, the Mangrove Defence Committee was set up and a demonstration was organised on Sunday, 9 August 1970. This move was seen by the police within the wider context of deteriorating relations with Black people during the late 1960s, a subject discussed in Chapter Two. Indeed, two weeks prior to the Mangrove demonstration, 100 people had marched on Caledonian Road police station in North London to protest the arrest of five Black youths following an incident at a local amusement park in Islington. As protesters demanded entry to the police station where the young people were being held, a scuffle broke out, leading to eight arrests and five officers injured.[9]

The Operational Order issued by A8 Branch prior to the Mangrove demonstration shows that the police were prepared for significant disorder, with almost 600 officers prepared for the Sunday demonstration, the majority held in reserve at local police stations

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[6] 'Report on Notting Hill Festival – Procession and Pageant' (4 September 1968); 'Report on Notting Hill Festival' (4 September 1968); 'Report on Notting Hill Festival' (21 August 1969); 'Report on Notting Hill Festival' (3 September 1969), NA, MEPO 2/10891.

[7] Robin Bunce suggests that part of the motivation for the police raiding the Mangrove restaurant was to seize drugs, which would then be sold back on the street in order to raise money for police informants, see R.E.R. Bunce and Paul Field, *Renegade: The Life and Times of Darcus Howe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), [digital copy]. For a contemporary account of corruption within Scotland Yard's drug squad, see Cox, Shirley, and Short, *The Fall of Scotland Yard*.

[8] Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985*, 97.

[9] 'Crowd Besieges Police Station', *The Times* (28 July 1970).

ready for rapid deployment.[10] With only 150 demonstrators in attendance, the event was perhaps smaller than the police expected, but disorder broke out as police attempted to stop the march from continuing on to Ladbroke Grove police station, leaving 24 police officers injured and nineteen protesters arrested.[11] Of this number, nine leaders of the march were singled out by the police and later tried on escalated charges of incitement to riot, leading to the controversial trial of the 'Mangrove Nine' at the Old Bailey.[12] The disorder was widely reported in the press as evidence of the growing militancy of the Black Power activists in Britain, with much attention given to the news that Home Secretary Reginald Maudling had received reports from Special Branch and A8 Branch on the political activity of Black Power groups.[13]

Following the disorder of the Mangrove demonstration, the organisers of Notting Hill Carnival had contacted the police to inform them that the event had been called off for fear of a repeat of the disorder.[14] Police relief was short-lived, however, as they soon found out that a new group had stepped in at the last minute, organising under the banner of 'The People's Carnival'. This change in leadership consolidated the West Indian, particularly Trinidadian, influence of the event, and from 1970 onward the carnival attracted a majority Black crowd, with traditional steel drum bands being the main attraction. While the local police informed A8 Branch that the new organisers were not in any way politically motivated, there was clearly concern at Scotland Yard that political activists would latch onto the community event with the intention of causing trouble.[15] In light of the recent disorder of the Mangrove demonstration, local police arranged for the usual deployment of two Serials to be bolstered by an additional three Serials, which would be held in reserve in case of disorder.[16] But despite police anxiety, the local Divisional Commander reported back to A8 Branch that

[10] See 'Operational Order No. 983: Demonstration and March, 9 August 1970' (6 August 1970), NA, MEPO 31/20.
[11] Ibid.
[12] 'Report on 9 August 1971 demonstration' (25 August 1970), NA, MEPO 31/20. The Mangrove Nine, as they later become known, were Barbara Besse, Rupert Boyce, Frank Critchlow, Rohadan Gordon, Darcus Howe, Anthony Innis, Altheia Jones-LeCointe, Rothwell Kentish, and Godfrey Millett.
[13] 'Hustle on "demo" report', *Daily Mirror* (11 August 1971); 'Report on clash for Maudling', *The Times* (11 August 1970). Documents relating to the Mangrove demonstration are available at the National Archives, see MEPO 31/20.
[14] 'Letter from Laslett to Radford' (18 August 1970), NA, MEPO 2/10891. Members of this group included Merle Major, Granville Prince, Selwyn Baptiste and Andrew Sherivington.
[15] 'Memo from Maggs on Notting Hill Procession' (25 August 1970), NA, MEPO 2/10891.
[16] 'Notes for CID Briefing at Public Demonstrations' (6 November 1970), NA, MEPO 2/11229.

'the Carnival passed off without any form of incident and with very little dislocation of traffic.'[17] Given the considerable bad press generated by the disorder of the Mangrove demonstration, the Commander noted that, 'The only regrettable feature is that the proliferation of press and television reporters gave no publicity to an event which was carried out with the utmost cordiality between the coloured participants and police.'[18]

Over the next few years, the Notting Hill Carnival struggled to find sustained leadership, developing in a rather haphazard way until the young Trinidadian-born teacher, Leslie Palmer took over the organisation in 1973. While primarily seen as a cultural celebration during this period, politics was written into the history of the Caribbean carnival, which emerged as a symbol of the emancipation of Black people from slavery during the late nineteenth century.[19] Costumes and music provided the link with this anti-colonial history, with the carnival also coming to reflect the Black working-class experience in London, an important part of which was a critique of policing. In 1971, the carnival procession involved a large effigy of Police Constable Pulley, an officer who had become notorious in Notting Hill for leading the case against the Mangrove restaurant.[20] The same year, a local amateur theatre group staged a performance in which actors dressed up as police officers with pig snouts to recreate a recent raid on Notting Hill's Metro Youth Club, with the crowd passing sentences on the police officers.[21] In 1973, the carnival was organised under the banner 'Mas In The Ghetto', drawing attention to the poor living conditions of many Black people in Notting Hill.[22] The year included a group organised under the theme 'Rebels on Remand', its members dressed in prison outfits to highlight the criminalisation of Black youths and the harassment to which they were regularly subjected by the police.[23]

While the politics of the period became an important part of the event, the police were keen to keep the low-profile approach developed in recent years. In his communications

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[17] 'CID Serial' (27 August 1970), NA, MEPO 2/10891.

[18] 'Maggs, Note 29' (4 September 1970), Ibid.

[19] Owusu, "Notting Hill Carnival: 'De Road Is De Stage De Stage Is De Road'," 157-59.

[20] Ishmahil Blagrove, *Carnival: A Photographic and Testimonial History of the Notting Hill Carnival* (London: RiceNPeas, 2014), 80.

[21] 'Police stay mum as show takes the micky', *Kensington Post* (10 September 1971). The Metro Youth Club was raided in May 1971, resulting in a fight in which ten police were arrested, four – the Metro Four – later tried for assaulting police officers. See A.X. Cambridge, "On the Metro Saga," *Black Liberator* 1, no. 4 (1972).

[22] Blagrove, *Carnival: A Photographic and Testimonial History of the Notting Hill Carnival*, 18, 98.

[23] Ishmahil Balgrove, *Carnival: A Photographic and Testimonial History of the Notting Hill Carnival* (London: RiceNPeas, 2014), 95; Owusu, "Notting Hill Carnival: 'De Road Is De Stage De Stage Is De Road'," 159.

with A8 Branch, the local Commander insisted that attempts to contain the carnival in the same way as a political march were 'unrealistic and likely to create the problems we seek to avoid'.[24] Experience had also shown the benefits of reserve Serials being kept out of sight in order to avoid confrontation, and the value of deploying women police officers, with one Commander noting that they 'provide the level of demeanour which is a deterrent to any who may have mischief in mind'.[25] Other methods of keeping tensions down had also been developed by A7 Branch. Following the disorder at the Mangrove demonstration, officers had put together a note to be issued at CID briefings prior to public demonstrations, which warned officers that 'in a demonstration consisting mainly of coloured demonstrators, officers should treat the situation with a lot of discretion.' It noted that officers in plain clothes should avoid 'barging in and stirring up trouble', and reminded them that, 'in this particular kind of demonstration, there may be a lot of singing, dancing and general excitement, but do not worry as this is the normal reaction with coloured people.' The advice continued by noting that, 'the basic thing to remember is that a CID officer should not become involved in any general melee unless it is a case of extreme emergency,' as the priority was 'gleaning information by mixing with demonstrators, keeping a watch on buildings that might be attacked, and keeping an eye open for small groups breaking away from the main body of demonstrators.'[26]

While police relations with the Black communities were deteriorating more broadly during this period (as discussed in Chapter Two), senior officers in Notting Hill saw the carnival as an opportunity to promote good relations with the community and the event was raised as a counterpoint to the unfavourable coverage the police regularly received from sections of the press.[27] The Public Relations Department sent photographers to the event to capture images of the police joining in the event with carnival goers, which were then passed on to local and national newspapers.[28] Encouraging a favourable image of the police on duty at demonstrations and public events was part of the broader strategy of keeping tensions down and maintaining good community relations, which since the late 1960s had been recognised

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[24] 'Maggs Note 32' (20 August 1971), NA, MEPO 2/10891.
[25] 'Report on Notting Hill Carnival 1971' (19 August 1971), ibid.
[26] 'Notes for CID Briefing at Public Demonstrations' (6 November 1970), NA, MEPO 2/11229.
[27] 'Report on Notting Hill Carnival Procession' (21 August 1972); 'Instruction for Notting Hill Carnival Procession' (23 August 1972); 'Note 47' (30 August 1972), NA, MEPO 2/10891.
[28] 'Public Information Department: Notting Hill Carnival' (undated), NA, MEPO 13/274.

as an important part of public order policing. This continued as the event grew significantly larger, and in 1974, when an estimated 100,000 people attended the two-day carnival on the Bank Holiday weekend, records show that local police maintained their low-profile approach, with only three Serials deployed and an additional Serial remaining in reserve at Notting Hill Police Station.[29]

Concerns of criminality: a change in approach

During the summer of 1975, police in Notting Hill prepared for a repeat of the large numbers of revellers the previous year by arranging for parking to be banned in the designated carnival area over the Bank Holiday Weekend in an effort to alleviate congestion among the large crowd. The event was being advertised on Capital Radio and London Radio, stations popular with young Black people in London, and crowds were expected to come to the area from across the city. Despite the anticipated scale of the event, the police continued with the strategy developed in previous years and only three Serials were deployed to police a crowd expected to reach 150,000 people. While records of the communication between the Divisional Commander in Notting Hill, A.J. Tenten, and A8 Branch do not quite tell the whole story, it seems that there was tension between local police commanders and Scotland Yard, the former concerned with maintaining good relations with a low-profile presence and the latter concerned with ensuring a sufficient deployment of officers in case of disorder. According to Commander Tenten, 'local officers have earned a considerable reputation in the Community and with the organisers arising from their tact, good humour and forbearance in the past'. He insisted that 'the occasion is one of friendly high spirits and I am sure that the low profile adopted by police is correct.' Indeed, based on experience, the Commander argued that, 'Any show of force or strict control would undoubtedly result in undesirable confrontation and the necessity of employing about 20 times the number of officers,' a move that would significantly damage local police relations.[30] While Chapter Two has shown that senior officers at A7 often found that community relations was seen to be in conflict with

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[29] 'Report on Notting Hill Carnival' (19 August 1974); 'Report on Notting Hill Carnival' (28 August 1974), NA, MEPO 2/10891.
[30] 'Report on Notting Hill Carnival' (11 August 1975), ibid.

operational policing, local police Commanders in Notting Hill had integrated it into the response to the annual carnival with relative success.[31]

Despite the optimism of local police, their report following the 1975 event gave a very different assessment, concluding that, 'The whole weekend was noisy, disorganised and potentially explosive.' 'Confusion was the order of the day', as police found it impossible to assist the progress of the bands, who moved through the area at their own discretion. The police claimed that local residents found themselves 'virtual prisoners for the weekend' and 'the amplified music on street corners was deafening and to have stopped it once begun would have started a riot.'[32] While low-profile policing had been a deliberate strategy in previous years, the local Commander now suggested it was 'the only answer in these circumstances, but had any incident occurred requiring firm police action, it would have been physically impossible to have moved policemen in any numbers quickly through the crowds.' With arrests seen as likely to provoke resistance from the crowd, by-laws and licencing laws were ignored and senior officers had to issue 'constant reminders to young officers to keep cool and not overtly interfere.'[33] In the local Commander's assessment, 'the event has completely outgrown its venue, it has no local meaning anymore and moreover resentment among the local residents is growing.' An alternative venue was needed as 'A repetition of this year's events in 1976 might well have repercussions which would give rise to public disorder on one hand or increasing contempt for the law on the other.'[34] While the carnival had previously been presented by the police as a celebration of good community relations, the official narrative shifted to one of lawlessness and criminality. Police reported a total of 53 crimes on Sunday and 89 on Monday, a level of criminality local officers looked to demonstrate by posing for photographs with over 400 wallets and purses that were said to have been confiscated from those arrested, images widely reported in the press.[35] Clearly not everyone got this new message, as the *West London Observer* quoted one police spokesman as saying that, 'Considering the number of people, the carnival went well. Unfortunately there were some thefts but other than that, there were no serious incidents at all.'[36]

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[31] This may have been part of Newman's influence, as prior to his appointment as head of A7 Branch he had been a Commander in Notting Hill.

[32] 'Note 80' (16 October 1975), ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] 'The cash-less legacy of the light-fingered', *Evening Standard* (27 August 1975), NA, MEPO 2/10891.

[36] *West London Observer* (28 August 1975), ibid.

At a meeting in the officers of A8 Branch at Scotland Yard in November 1975, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gerrard insisted that any change to future police arrangements for the carnival, particularly its relocation, would need the support of various organisations such as the local residents associations of Notting Hill, the emergency services, and Kensington and Chelsea Council, as the police did not want to appear to act unilaterally.[37] Notting Hill's Chief Superintendent Patterson took on this task, quietly gathering support for the police plan among these groups. Indeed, following a meeting with the carnival organisers in January 1976, Patterson reported back some success, noting that, 'the Carnival Committee have wholly accepted that the idea of a move was launched and supported by the Council. They were not aware of our earlier negotiations, and I feel this could be very helpful.'[38]

Police operational planning for the 1976 carnival thus became an exercise in both public and community relations, with a strategy to leverage one section of Notting Hill's 'community' against another, a distinction sharply divided by race. The racial politics of community appear stark within the police files covering the preparations for the 1976 carnival, which contain a large number of letters written by, one would assume, white local residents. These letters use racially coded language (and sometimes outright racism) to describe 'local' (sometimes referred to as 'indigenous') opposition to the carnival, which often descended into concerns about the presence of Black people in Britain.[39] One letter sent to the local police in February 1976 was indicative of the many they received:

> I speak as one who was driven to move out of my home of twenty years, to get away from this dreadful night-mare event. (My old home faced Portobello Green in Cambridge Gardens). I will never forget this dreadful night-mare of misery and tension, caused by the intolerable non-stop pop-groups and steel bands, the stench of urine and being called a white b***** by black people drunk with the feeling of power at being allowed to run riot on our Streets with no restrictions whatsoever. There is no doubt at all in my mind, that racial troubles will erupt, if

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[37] 'Branch Note of Meeting' (14 November 1975), ibid.
[38] 'Report on Notting Hill Carnival' (30 January 1976), ibid.
[39] Space restrictions prevent a more in-depth analysis of these letters as evidence of the quotidian racial politics in Notting Hill. But comparison could be draw with the scholars use of the letters of support received by Enoch Powell following his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968. See Amy Whipple, "Revisiting the "Rivers of Blood" Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009).

this event is allowed to continue on the Streets in any shape or form. People will only stand so much and three years is a long time to suffer pent up resentment without exploding sometime.[40]

Alongside these letters, the police carefully monitored discussions of the event in the press, which was seen as both a source of intelligence and a weathervane of local feeling. The police continued the strategy of presenting their opposition to the carnival as a reaction to community feeling, with Chief Superintendent Patterson photographed in the local *Kensington News and Post* holding a petition by residents calling for the carnival to be moved from Notting Hill. Patterson was quoted as saying that, '[the petition] was handed to me by a North Kensington housewife. She said it was a token of support for the police by the people of North Kensington'. Patterson went on to warn that, 'if the Carnival were held in the streets this year, we would have to think in terms of not hundreds of police but thousands.'[41]

Police mobilisation of racialised ideas of community was strongly resisted by Black residents in Notting Hill. When interviewed by the BBC, Darcus Howe, a Trinidadian-born writer, activist, and member of the carnival organising committee, criticised Patterson, who was accused of treating the carnival 'as his Dunkirk'.[42] Howe and others drew attention to Patterson's previous involvement as a member of the SPG units sent to contain social unrest and revolution on the small Caribbean island of Anguilla in 1969.[43] This was seen to provide a link between the imperial dimensions of policing and the policing of London's Black neighbourhoods, with the reserve units of the SPG units deployed to maintain order and social control in both the colonies and the metropole. It appears that there was some dissatisfaction within the police over Patterson's approach, with a member of the Carnival Development Committee noting that a senior officer in Notting Hill had contacted them to express their frustration and advised that they should inform the press that no more robberies took place in Notting Hill over the carnival weekend than on Oxford Street and the surrounding areas in the Christmas shopping season.[44]

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[40] 'Letter from Mrs. Ford to Patterson' (4 February 1976), NA, MEPO 2/10891.
[41] Quoted in Collective, *The Road Make to Walk on Carnival Day: The Battle for the West Indian Carnival in Britain*, 5.
[42] Ibid., 7.
[43] Ibid. For more on the Anguilla operation, see Spencer Mawby, "Overwhelmed in a Very Small Place: The Wilson Government and the Crisis over Anguilla," *Twentieth Century British History* 23, no. 2 (2012).
[44] Collective, *The Road Make to Walk on Carnival Day: The Battle for the West Indian Carnival in Britain*, 5.

Another part of the police strategy for managing public relations involved contacting the Home Office to ensure that they were acquainted with the situation well in advance. As a Commander of A7 Branch noted: 'Undoubtedly claims will be made, not only in West Indian circles, that we are seeking confrontation and are repressing a harmless "folk event". It is important that our concern for public order is *seen* to be justified, particularly at this stage by the Home Office, and later, by the public at large.'[45] Indeed, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (C) Jock Wilson noted that: 'unless some reasonable compromise can be reached, there is no doubt that tremendous efforts will be made by certain extremist parties to accuse police of racial bias in this case and it will be as well for the Home Secretary to know at the outset what the actual facts of the situation are.'[46] However, when Commissioner Mark contacted the Home Secretary to update him on the situation and request the help of the Home Office Police Department in managing the event, he received a rather curt response from Jenkins' Private Secretary, who noted that it was 'not appropriate' for the Home Office to get involved as the issue was not one of public order but of 'amenities'.[47] This frustrated senior officers at A8 Branch, who felt that Jenkins political influence would be useful in adding legitimacy for the police operation. However, the broader context here was that relations between the Metropolitan Police and the Home Secretary had become increasingly fraught over proposed changes to the police complaints process and the handling of police investigations, which were then being prepared in the 1976 Police Bill (a subject discussed in more detail in Chapter Six).

While the police tried to push the relocation of the carnival to an alternative venue that would allow the police more control over the crowd – White City Stadium, Battersea Park or Stamford Bridge Stadium were all considered – the members of the Carnival Development Committee insisted the event remain in Notting Hill. As the Bank Holiday drew nearer it became clear that no agreement for an alternative venue would be found and after a meeting with the carnival organisers on 27 July 1976, Patterson noted, 'I feel the only way to avoid the chaos of 1975 Carnival is to prepare plans for a substantial Police commitment.'[48] Following this recommendation, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gibson prepared an Operational Order

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[45] 'Note 93' (22 April 1976), NA, MEPO 2/10891.
[46] 'Note 97' (10 May 1976), ibid.
[47] 'Branch Note' (27 April 1976); 'Memorandum from Patterson to Mark' (3 June 1976), ibid.
[48] 'Notting Hill Carnival' (28 July 1976), ibid.

that called for some 1,600 officers, almost 100 members of CID, and four units of the SPG; the low-profile approach developed over previous years had been abandoned in favour of a much larger police operation, centrally organised by A8 Branch.[49]

Given that the events of Notting Hill Carnival in 1976 are discussed in great detail elsewhere, they do not need rehearsing at length here. Suffice to say that the flashpoint for the disorder had come when police attempted to arrest a pick-pocketer, but that confrontation quickly escalated as a section of the crowd occupied an abandoned building site and began throwing rocks and debris at the police. Televised footage of the Bank Holiday event showed police coming under a hail of objects, with officers picking up dustbin lids, metal sheeting, and traffic cones to defend themselves.[50] Senior officers struggled to coordinate a strategy to regain control of the area and a series of disorganised baton charges were launched in an effort to disperse the crowd. According to the police narrative, clearly expressed by Moore in his study of the event, groups of Black youths had come to the carnival with the intention of robbing other revellers, confident that the police would be unable to stop them amongst the dense crowds.[51] But for Howe, 'the police had come prepared for confrontation and got it', noting that 'several hundred young blacks inflicted a military defeat on a military organisation'.[52] Members of the crowd had chanted 'last week Soweto, this week Notting Hill', a reference to the recent protests in the Black South African township of Soweto, when police had opened fire on protesters killing 176 people.[53]

The event ended with 413 police officers injured, 35 police vehicles damaged, and several shops looted, and for the senior officers interviewed by Moore, the disorder marked a 'watershed' in public order policing, highlighting the limitations of 'traditional methods'.[54] Moore notes that in a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner after the carnival, Chief Superintendents made it clear that the number of the injuries sustained by the police meant that protective shields and reinforced helmets were now essential equipment (the impact this

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[49] 'Operation Order for Notting Hill Carnival 1976' (19 August 1976), ibid.

[50] ThamesTV, "Notting Hill Carnival Riots - 1976," (2016).

[51] Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 163-203.

[52] Collective, *The Road Make to Walk on Carnival Day: The Battle for the West Indian Carnival in Britain*, 15. See also Gutzmore, "The Notting Hill Carnival."; "Carnival, the State and the Black Masses in the United Kingdom."; Owusu, "Notting Hill Carnival: 'De Road Is De Stage De Stage Is De Road'."

[53] Collective, *The Road Make to Walk on Carnival Day: The Battle for the West Indian Carnival in Britain*, 15.

[54] Sir David McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1976* (London: HMSO, 1977), 10; Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 163-203.

had on public order policing will be discussed in Chapter Seven).[55] Calls came quickly for a public inquiry into the police handling of the event, with references made to the Kerner Commission following racial rioting in the US during 1967.[56] An article in *The Economist* noted that the police plans had been based on the recommendations of the Kerner report, which they evoked to justify their action on the day.[57] The Home Office was indecisive on the matter, perhaps because Jenkins was soon to be replaced as Home Secretary by Merlyn Rees and that he was reluctant to bind his successor with what was bound to be a difficult and fractious process.[58] Commissioner Mark, who had already informed Jenkins that he would sooner resign than agree to the 1976 Police Act, was clearly opposed to an inquiry, later recording his feelings that law enforcement had been grossly inadequate at the carnival. He suggested that the event was 'nothing so much as a return to the sordid celebrations attending the hangings at Tyburn Tree', and complained that 'no one is prepared to tell the simple truth when wrongdoing involves coloured people'.[59]

In the end, there was no inquiry into the disorder at the carnival. There was, however, a new approach taken by the police, which saw the head of A7 Branch, Commander Robert Bryan, take over liaising with the carnival organiser in an effort to develop a more consensual approach to policing the event. Carnival organisers were encouraged to prepare a larger number of stewards, who would work with the police to maintain order.[60] The Community Relations Council and the Arts Council also agreed to provide financial support to the event, though this ran into difficulties as competing organisations clashed over leadership and the meaning of the carnival, whether as a political event or a cultural celebration.[61] This effort at maintaining good community relations was somewhat undermined when the police launched another large raid against the Mangrove in July 1977. While the police agreed to keep a low profile during the carnival that summer, arrangements were also made for the deployment of over 6,000 officers during the Bank Holiday event, some deployed with newly acquired riot

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[55] *Policing Notting Hill*, 186. Somewhat surprisingly, neither the Metropolitan Police nor the Home Office have retained any record of this decision, which would have been made in consultation with Home Secretary Roy Jenkins.

[56] 'Police are blamed for riots at carnival', *The Times* (4 September 1976).

[57] 'London's black carnival', *The Economist* (4 September 1976).

[58] 'Carnival riots: Home Office undecided on judicial inquiry', *The Times* (22 September 1976).

[59] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 211.

[60] 'Carnival plans to avoid clashes', *The Times* (20 January 1977).

[61] 'Clash over who runs Notting Hill Carnival', *The Times* (12 May 1977).

shields.[62] This equipment had seen its first use just two weeks earlier, when police clashed with anti-fascist demonstrators in Lewisham (a subject discussed in Chapter Seven).

Despite the new approach to planning the event, the 1977 carnival ultimately ended in disorder, albeit this time on a smaller scale than the previous year.[63] Low-profile policing gave way as senior officers concluded that the stewards had lost control of the event, with police reserve Serials called in to aid with enforcement.[64] An article in *The Economist* cautiously described the event as an 'improvement', noting that the police had stuck closely to the tactics recommended in the Kerner report, attempting to avoid provoking crowd reactions by arresting people for minor offences.[65] But the event highlighted the continual tension between community relations and operational policing, particularly as it filtered through racialised ideas of 'Black criminality'.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the policing of Notting Hill Carnival, examining the relationship between community relations and public order (a theme first developed in Chapter Two). It has shown that during the early years of the carnival, local police developed a low-profile approach to facilitating the event, which, against a backdrop of deteriorating relations between police and Black people in London, and Notting Hill in particular, was generally seen as a success for community relations. However, it has shown that this approach was abandoned after 1975, as police responded to and amplified racialised concerns of crime. Police operational planning for the 1976 carnival involved a shift in the police approach to community relations, with Commander Patterson adopting a strategy intended to relocate the event to an alternative venue by leveraging one section of Notting Hill's 'community' against another, a distinction sharply divided by race. This chapter has also highlighted some of the tensions between policing decisions made at a Divisional level and those made by A8 Branch at Scotland Yard, with some officers recognising that the continual emphasis on law enforcement during public order operations only served to increase tensions. This was

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[62] 'Police "will be unobtrusive" at Notting Hill carnival', *The Times* (25 August 1977).

[63] While files relating to the policing of Notting Hill carnival between 1965 and 1976 are available at the National Archives (MEPO 2/10891), no records are available for the following years. The is one file (HO 325/439) covering preparations for the 1981 event, but a freedom of information request submitted in April 2019 still await a decision from the Home Office.

[64] McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1977*, 23.

[65] 'Not quite fun for everyone at the carnival', *The Economist* (3 September 1977).

demonstrated at the 1976 event, which saw more than a ten-fold increase in the number of officers deployed the previous year, a decision widely regarded as a provocation.

The descent into disorder that followed has widely been seen as a 'watershed' moment in British policing, leading to the adoption of riot shields for public order operations. However, this chapter has significantly developed these previous accounts, showing how the police prepared for the carnival the following year by proactively engaging with the carnival organisers to facilitate the event. Despite this greater integration of community relations into police planning, this was not widely adopted across the Force, with Black people were subjected to over-policing and criminalisation during this period. The late 1970s saw several major saturation policing operations involving the SPG and members of the CID in the south London area of Brixton, leading the local Lambeth council to establish an independent inquiry into 'police-community relations'. The inquiry concluded that local residents 'described the police as an army of occupation … intimidating and harassing working class people in Lambeth and black people in particular'.[66] By September 1979, relations were at such a point that Commissioner McNee claimed that the challenges of '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'.[67] This deterioration in police relations with Black people in London during the mid to late 1970 provided the context for the urban disorders of 1981, first in Brixton in April and then in neighbourhoods across the capital in July (a subject discussed in Chapter Eight).

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[66] Lambeth Council, "Report of the Working Party on Community/Police Relations in Lambeth," (London: London Borough of Lambeth, 1980), 54.
[67] *Guardian* (25 September 1979). Quoted in Gilroy, "Police and Thieves," 144.

Chapter Six

Policing Unions

The Grunwick dispute, 1976-78

This chapter centres on the policing challenge posed by the Grunwick dispute during the summer of 1977 and explains the significance of picket line policing within a broader politics of public order. Developing the theme discussed in Chapter Three, the first section returns to political discussions over the law on picketing, as Labour Minsters took power in February 1974 with the intention of strengthening trade union powers during labour disputes. However, consistent with their approach taken during the Heath Government, Home Office officials resisted changes to the law that would compromise police powers of discretion. As before, the Home Office found itself mediating between Ministers and the police service, negotiating the balance between individual rights and police powers. The chapter then turns to a discussion of the policing of the Grunwick dispute during the summer of 1977, using newly-released police files to develop contemporary accounts of the police response to the disorder, particularly the role of Special Branch.[1] It shows that, as the dispute escalated into a major *cause célèbre* of public disorder, Commissioner McNee came under significant political pressure from Home Secretary Merlyn Rees and Prime Minister James Callaghan, who called for a tougher line against pickets and demonstrators for fear that the dispute could bring down the Government. While the Grunwick dispute is often seen by historians as an microcosm of the broader politics of 1970s Britain – particularly in terms of the racial and gender politics of labour relations – this chapter centres Grunwick within the broader politics of public order.[2] The final section shows how the Police Federation used the disorder as leverage in its public campaign to pressure the Government to accept demands for a significant increase in police pay, just one part of the increasingly fractious politics of policing during the period, which saw the Labour Government in fierce conflict with all ranks of the police service over issues of police accountability.

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[1] Jack Dromey and Graham Taylor, *Grunwick: The Workers' Story* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978).
[2] Jack McGowan, ""Dispute", "Battle", "Siege", "Farce"? Grunwick 30 Years On," *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 2 (2008); Linda McDowell, Sundari Anitha, and Ruth Pearson, "Striking Narratives: Class, Gender and Ethnicity in the 'Great Grunwick Strike', London, Uk, 1976–1978," *Women's History Review* 23, no. 4 (2014).

Wilson's Labour Government and the law on picketing

Before discussing the policing at Grunwick, it is first necessary to return to the politics of picketing, which in Chapter Three was shown to have manifested itself in the Home Office coming under significant pressure from Ministers within Heath's Government to tighten the law in response to the success of mass, mobile, and secondary action during the 1972 miners' strike. The return of a Labour Government following the February 1974 General Election reignited this debate, as the TUC and its supporters within Parliament now hoped to reverse the trend of recent years in which a number of judges had interpreted existing legislation to restrict picketing activity. Alongside repealing the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, trade unionists also sought to update the statute law for modern work practices, with proposals calling for pickets to have a statutory right to stop vehicles and communicate with the driver and passengers. It was argued that the 1906 Trade Disputes Act had been introduced at a time when workers traditionally walked into work and that new legislation was needed to make peaceful persuasion possible at a time when many workers arrived in vehicles, whether privately or provided by industry management. They argued that mass picketing and the blocking of vehicles had evolved out of necessity, as limited picketing was ineffective in conveying the union message. As for the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, the TUC wanted to abolish charges of criminal conspiracy for trade disputes, a specific response to the case of the 'Shrewsbury 24'.[3] While Ministers close to the TUC supported these proposals – particularly the Secretary of State for Employment Michael Foot and the Minister of State at the Home Office Alex Lyon – Home Office officials once again found themselves in an intensely political debate around the law on picketing, leading to something of a legal morass.

Granting pickets statutory rights to stop drivers and compel them to listen to their case was quickly dismissed as untenable by the Home Office officials asked to work up a proposal, as it represented an unwarranted interference with the liberty of those who did not wish to be stopped.[4] The alternative, however, was either that union officials should be able to ask the police to stop vehicles on their behalf – with officers reserving the power to refuse if to do so might cause a breach of the peace – or to make pickets immune from charges of

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[3] 'Mr Wilson and TUC in talks this week on Shrewsbury pickets', *The Times* (10 December 1974).
[4] 'Memorandum from Jenkins to unknown' (19 March 1974), NA, HO 325/241.

obstructing the highway. None of these options seemed satisfactory to the Home Office, and private consultations with a number of senior police officers showed that the police were very much of the same mind. Both proposals were seen to put the police in an invidious position, where they would either be criticised for working at the behest of the pickets or for denying pickets their right to stop persons and vehicles if a breach of the peace seemed likely.[5] When more formal consultations were made, strong objections were raised by the Police Federation, the Superintendents' Association and ACPO, with Commissioner Mark privately informing one Home Office official that, 'As I have made clear to Jimmy Waddell we shall do everything we properly can publicly to oppose the proposed change in the law on picketing.'[6]

When Home Office officials relayed these comments alongside their own objections to the Ministers involved, they were strongly criticised, with Lyon, noting that, 'I am certainly opposed to having the Home Office view on a sensitive political issue involving the freedom of the citizen dictated by the ACPO.'[7] However, officials felt that Ministers were playing politics with the law and were concerned that in their haste to repeal the 1971 Industrial Relations Act they would produce ill-considered legislation that would be tested and significantly diminished in the courts. Given Labour's position as a minority Government, it was eventually decided that wholesale changes to the law on picketing required more time than the rush to repeal the 1971 Act allowed, with Wilson keen to see the Trade Union and Labour Relations Bill enter the statute books before the Government held another General Election, which it did in October 1974, returning a Labour majority of just three seats. On account of police and Home Office opposition, Section 15 of the 1974 Act represented little more than a difference in drafting style from the much-maligned 1971 Act, rather than legal substance.

While changes to the law on picketing had been delayed for another legislative session, in the new year the Home Office put forward a proposal which they hoped would clarify the law by making it explicit that pickets were entitled to try to persuade other people – whether in vehicles or on foot – to stop and listen, provided they deployed peaceful means

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[5] 'Telex from Gregory to Baker' (20 March 1974); 'Letter from Manuel to Baker' (20 March 1974); 'Note of a meeting held on 20 March 1974 about the law on picketing' (undated); Letter from Baker to Terry' (2 April 1974); 'Letter from Haughton to Peterson' (10 April 1974), NA, HO 325/241.

[6] 'Letter from Mark to Baker' (26 June 1974), NA, HO 325/241. See also 'Letter from Pamplin to Baker' (17 June 1974); 'Letter from Haughton to Baker' (27 June 1974); 'Letter from Rowland to Baker' (3 July 1974), NA, HO 325/241.

[7] 'Letter from Moss to Baker' (24 July 1974), NA, HO 325/241.

and avoided obstruction. The Home Office proposal did not, however, amount to a statutory right, but rather was part of a general 'Code of Practice on Picketing', something akin to the guidelines issued by the NUM during the 1974 miners' strike.[8] This proposal did not go down well with those looking for more robust changes to the law, with Foot informing Home Secretary Roy Jenkins that these proposals were a long way short of what the TUC originally asked for, suggesting there was very little likelihood that the proposals would be considered acceptable. Instead, much to the frustration of Home Office officials, Foot revived the previously discarded proposal of a statutory provision specifically authorising the police at their discretion to stop vehicles at the request of duly authorised pickets for a reasonable period, which would enable the pickets to communicate with the drivers. In support of these proposals he noted that, 'I find it difficult to see why Chief Constables should be strongly opposed to putting into statutory form an idea which the police themselves frequently adopt in practice and which they would apparently be content to see embodied in a Code.'[9] The Home Office, however, knew that ACPO would be strongly against any statutory provision on grounds that this would place officers in great difficulty if they were taken to court for failing to stop a vehicle when requested to do so, a fear that might impel them to act as agents of picketers against their judgement and discretion. Waddell complained that 'the DE [Department for Employment] have failed to see the difference between police using discretion and making it a "right" to be conferred on pickets,' suggesting that officials in the Department were somewhat embarrassed by their Minister's position.[10]

With time running out for an amendment to be added to the 1975 Employment Protection Bill, an unhappy compromise was struck. The agreed text in Clause 99 made explicit that the rights of pickets was not limited to attendance, but extended also to seeking to peacefully persuade anyone on foot or in a vehicle to stop at a picket line, so long as to do so did not cause obstruction.[11] The proposal was far from the reform the TUC and its

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[8] 'Letter from Foot to Murray' (23 January 1975), NA, HO 325/243.

[9] 'Letter from Foot to Jenkins' (12 February 1975), NA, HO 325/243.

[10] 'Handwritten note by Waddell on letter from Foot to Jenkins' (12 February 1975); 'Note from Waddell to Jenkins' (18 February 1975), NA, HO 325/243.

[11] The full text of Clause 99 read: 'It is hereby declared that a person exercising a right conferred on him by Section 15 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 (peaceful picketing) may, at the place where his is attending, seek by peaceful means, falling short of obstruction of the highway, to persuade any other person (whether in a vehicle or not) to stop for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information from or to that other person or peacefully persuading him to work or abstain from working.' Clause 99 (25 March 1975) [draft], 1975 Employment Protection Bill.

supporters in the Labour Party were expecting, and Foot narrowly averted a backbench revolt by giving assurances that the Government would renew its search for an acceptable way of changing the present law.[12] With Labour MPs abstaining, the Opposition were able to secure the deletion of Clause 99 and the Committee stage and by the summer of 1975 the Home Office and Department of Employment were back to searching for a solution.

The issue of reform returned again later in the year as the Employment Protection Bill was making its way through the House of Lords. The Employment Secretary submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet which proposed reasserting Clause 99, but removing the words 'falling short of obstruction', as this would be more palatable to the TUC.[13] This was clearly a fudge, as it remained silent on the overlap between the law on obstruction and immunities for pickets, allowing the police and the courts a degree of discretion about whether and when picketing constitutes obstruction. In Cabinet discussions, this proposal was strongly criticised by both the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor Elwyn-Jones, who argued that the proposal gave pickets the right of obstruction without explicitly saying so, which would inevitably lead to misinterpretation between pickets and police. Jenkins warned that the proposal would place him in a very difficult position with the police and noted that, given there was no possibility that the amendment would be carried by the House of Lords, 'the choice before the Cabinet was whether it would be preferable to antagonise the police by proceeding as the Secretary of State for employment proposed, or the TUC by not attempting to amend the law.'[14] Prior to the Cabinet meeting, Wilson had been briefed by his Private Secretary John Hunt in much the same terms, with Hunt noting that 'The political judgment that remains to be made is whether these legal and police arguments are strong enough to justify resulting deterioration in relations with the TUC.'[15] In the end it was concluded that the proposed amendment should not be tabled for the Lords but that the Employment Secretary should encourage the TUC to devise a non-legally binding Code of Conduct in cooperation with the police.

Wilson's Government had failed to introduce significant legislation to make mass picketing unnecessary by updating the statute for modern work practices. Officials at the

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[12] 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Employment: law on picketing', C(75) 101 (25 September 1975), NA, CAB 129/185/1.
[13] Ibid.
[14] 'Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet', CC(75) 42nd Conclusions (9 October 1975), NA, CAB 128/57/12.
[15] 'Memorandum from Hunt to Wilson' (7 October 1975), NA, PREM 16/480.

Home Office had defended police independence and opposed any action that would likely curtail their freedom to exercise discretion in maintaining public order, which was seen as particularly important for picket line policing. While this was consistent with the objections officials made to changes in the law proposed under the Heath's Conservative Government, it also meant that trade unions increasingly resorted to mass picketing, a tactic that would present a significant problem for public order during the Grunwick dispute.

Policing the Grunwick dispute

During the summer of 1977, debates around union militancy and law and order came to occupy national attention when a small-scale labour dispute at the Grunwick Photo Processing Laboratories in north-west London escalated into a *cause célèbre* of public disorder. The strike had begun in August 1976 as a localised dispute in protest at low wages, unfair dismissal, and mandatory overtime amongst an initially non-unionised and predominantly female South Asian workforce, but over the next nine months, the strike grew in profile into a broader dispute around union recognition, drawing solidarity from the wider trade union movement.[16] In June 1977, as the Grunwick factory prepared for its busy summer period, the Strike Committee decided to escalate their protest by calling for mass picketing outside the factory, a call for solidarity answered by trade unionists and a number of organisations on the far-left. On the first day of a 'Week of Action' beginning Monday, 13 June, an estimated 700 people crowded into the narrow streets surrounding the factory, and police efforts to clear the road and maintain access led to 84 arrests and allegations of 'unnecessary brutality' and provocative police tactics.[17] This was the start of a summer of protest and mass picketing outside Grunwick, which escalated into a significant public order challenge for the Metropolitan Police over the coming months, leading the Labour Government to encourage Commissioner McNee to restrict protest outside the factory and revived unresolved debates around the law on picketing. For those on the right, the Grunwick dispute crystallised everything that was wrong with contemporary trade unionism in Britain: a small employer facing down the threat of 'mob rule' after its refusal to recognise union membership among it employees. For those on the left, the dispute showed how employers

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[16] McGowan, ""Dispute", "Battle", "Siege", "Farce"? Grunwick 30 Years On."
[17] '84 arrests in clash of pickets and police', *The Times* (14 June 1977).

could exploit labour laws to avoid union recognition, making mass actions of solidarity necessary.[18]

From the police perspective, the escalation of the Grunwick dispute into a major public order operation had come as the strikers' call for solidarity had been amplified by a number of organisations on the far-left, who began encouraging supporters to attend the picket. Special Branch reports submitted to A8 Branch during the first 'Week of Action' noted that, 'the violence has been introduced by a Trotskyist group – the Socialist Workers Party – who in anticipation of an eventual victory by the striking workers, pose as their champions.'[19] The problem for the police was that there was no clear authority on the picket line, and local Divisional Commander noted in daily situation reports passed on to A8 Branch that officials from the Association of Professionals and Engineering Experts (APEX), the union representing the striking workers, were 'woefully ineffective in controlling and directing picketing'. The Commander found that the union officials were 'quite overwhelmed by the situation and apparently resigned to being unable to have any influence on hard core militants who were in a majority at all the venues.'[20]

By mid June, police and pickets had begun a daily routine of disorder and confrontation outside the factory, with more than 1,000 supporters amassing to push against police lines with the intention of preventing the morning shift workers from passing through the gates. The factory management had arranged for coaches to convey those workers not on strike, and these were driven dangerously fast through the tightly-held police cordons. The scenes highlighted the trade unionists' claims that, without the right to stop vehicles and communicate to passengers, picketing laws were rendered useless and mass picketing was the only way to make communication effective. The police came under criticism for colluding with Grunwick management to break the strike, with police reports showing communication between coach drivers and police officers to arrange for the quickest and least disruptive passage of strike-breaking workers through the factory gates.[21] Further controversy was sparked when senior officers called in aid from the SPG, whose deployment on the Grunwick

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[18] McGowan, ""Dispute", "Battle", "Siege", "Farce"? Grunwick 30 Years On."

[19] 'Special Branch report on Grunwick Processing Labatories Ltd.' (16 June 1977), FOI.

[20] 'Police report on Trade Dispute – Disorder/Arrests – Grunwick Processing Ltd' (16 June 1977) [released under FOI].

[21] 'Police Report on Trade Dispute – Disorder Arrests – Grunwick Processing Ltd' (22 June 1977) [released under FOI].

picket lines was the first time the units had been used during a labour dispute. While the SPG had become a steady feature of public order policing on political protests during the 1970s, called in from reserve when disorder broke out, they had been withheld from deployment on picket line duties, both out of lack if necessity but also from an awareness of the controversy they might cause. However, even more contentious were allegations that Special Branch officers and plain-clothed members of CID had been placed among the crowd to gather intelligence and establish which groups were coordinating the strike effort, with some trade unionists later claiming that undercover officers were acting as *agent provocateurs* to incite disorder as a means of arresting picketing leaders.[22] While accounts of deliberate provocation are unsurprisingly absent from Special Branch reports, they show ample evidence that undercover officers were operating amongst the crowd, gathering intelligence that was fed to both A8 Branch and the Home Office.[23]

Political involvement in policing operations

As mass picketing entered its second week and crowds outside the factory reached 2,000-3,000 people, the scenes of disorder propelled the dispute into the national spotlight. Following a call by the TUC General Council for affiliated unions to intensify financial and practical aid to the Grunwick strikers, 23 June saw Arthur Scargill and the NUM Vice-President Michael McGahey arrive with 150 miners from Yorkshire, South Wales and Kent, promising to shut down the factory as they had in Saltley five years earlier. While the number of trade unionists and supporters was smaller than during the 1972 miners' strike, in the disorder that followed Scargill was arrested alongside 53 others on charges of obstruction. In newspapers the following day, images of Scargill's arrest were presented alongside that of Police Constable Trevor Wilson, an eight-year veteran of the SPG, who had been struck by a milk bottle and knocked unconscious. The pictures were used to illustrate stories of picket line violence initiated by trade unionists and far-left radicals, a line now being pursued strongly by opposition Conservative members in the House of Commons.[24]

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[22] Dromey and Taylor, *Grunwick: The Workers' Story*, 135.
[23] 'Various Special Branch Reports' (16 June – 8 July 1977) [released under FOI].
[24] 'Ministers and Grunwick chief fail to settle picketing dispute', *The Times* (24 June 1977); HC Deb, 'Grunwick Processing Laboratories Limited' (20 June 1977), vol. 933 cc. 897-99; (23 June 1977), vol. 933 cc. 1766-1770.

These events prompted Callaghan's Labour Government to step up its efforts to resolve the dispute, which was causing significant embarrassment for the Government due to the support and association a number of Labour MPs and Ministers had had with APEX and the Grunwick picketers during the previous year. In the House of Commons, Callaghan maintained that while legitimate pickets must be allowed to operate, those who wished to demonstrate in support should be separated and clearly distinguished from the official pickets, who were now identifiable to the police via official armbands.[25] Privately, the Prime Minister expressed concern that, 'the determining issue now was that of public order', and he ordered the establishment of a Ministerial Group under the chairmanship of the Home Secretary Merlyn Rees to take control of the situation, with the Attorney General Samuel Silkin asked to review the statutory powers available to the Commissioner to close the streets and ban demonstrations in the future.[26] Although the common law had shown that the police had the power to limit the number of pickets outside the factory, this did not apply to demonstrators, a legal distinction that would be hard to make in the heat of the moment. Furthermore, while Section 3 of the 1936 Public Order Act did allow the Commissioner to request a ban on demonstrations in the capital, the statute did not cover picketing. There was insufficient legal distinction between demonstrators and pickets, and though Section 52 of the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act gave the Commissioner the power to direct Constables to close streets and disperse demonstrators in the interests of public order, the Attorney General felt that these powers were rather opaque and would likely be challenged in the courts, especially given the profile of the dispute.[27]

Other arguments against imposing restrictions on the pickets and demonstrators concerned more practical matters. Following a visit to the area by Commissioner NcNee and Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gerrard on 24 June, the police informed Ministers that clearing the streets around the factory would only remove the point of confrontation – possibly to more scattered and less conveniently situated areas – without eradicating the confrontation itself.[28] Despite this advice, when the Ministerial Group managing the dispute met at Chequers on 26 June, both the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary felt that the

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[25] HC Deb, 'Prime Minister (Engagements)' (23 June 1977) vol. 933 c. 1735.
[26] 'Telephone call to Booth from the Royal Yacht' (24 June 1977), NA, LAB 77/83.
[27] 'Note from Attorney General to Callaghan' (25 June 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.
[28] 'Report on Trade Dispute – Disorder/Arrests – Grunwick Processing Ltd.' (24 June 1977) [released under FOI]; 'Note of Meeting held on 24 June 1977: the Grunwick dispute' (24 June 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.

Commissioner needed to be persuaded to adopt a different approach. The notes of the meeting record that the Home Secretary felt that McNee needed to:

> …consider doing much more to close off surrounding areas and thus deny access to people who were not official pickets … The Commissioner, however, had come down strongly against taking such measures. His powers to intervene on that scale were very doubtful and, in any case, such measures would only divert his forces, increase potential points of confrontation, and spread the crowds into the local main roads with consequent serious traffic implications.[29]

The Prime Minister, however, felt that the Commissioner failed to see the seriousness of letting the disorder continue, especially if Scargill's threat to return with more miners and shut down the Grunwick factory was to materialise. The minutes from the Chequers meeting noted that:

> Summarising the discussion, the Prime Minister said that people had to realise there was indeed a crisis. If things continued on the present basis there could well be fatalities and in circumstances which might be in danger of bringing the Government down … the Government was not dealing with respectable unionism but rent a mob. It followed that the Home Secretary should continue to press upon the Commissioner the desirability of reconsidering his tactics.[30]

The following day the Home Secretary made this case to Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gerrard during a visit to Grunwick, but in reporting back to the Ministerial Group it appeared that Jenkins had come round to the police view, accepting that the physical geography of the area – with its small narrow roads – significantly constrained the tactical options available to the police. While there was a case for the use of barriers, the Home Secretary accepted police insistence that 'human cordons' were more flexible and could not be broken down and used as weapons.[31] While Rees had been persuaded to accept the police decision, Callaghan

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[29] Note of Meeting held on 26 June 1977: the Grunwick dispute' (26 June 1977), ibid.

[30] 'Note of a meeting at Chequers' (26 June 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491/46.

[31] 'Note of Meeting held on 27 June 1977: the Grunwick dispute' (27 June 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.

remained unconvinced and continued to suggest that the Commissioner should be encouraged to limit the number of demonstrators outside the factory. Confirming the Prime Minister's concerns of the seriousness of the situation, a note from a Cabinet Office aide warned that, 'One only needs to ask how Mr Ward [the Grunwick factory owner] would react to a suggestion that Grunwick's [sic] should be closed down in the interests of public safety to see the difference from the Saltley situation!'[32] Shutting the gates at Grunwick would be politically disastrous for Callaghan, giving further weight to criticism from the Opposition that the Government was being cowed by militant trade unionism and the radical far-left.[33] As mass picketing entered its third week, Callaghan felt that something needed to be done soon to resolve the situation.

Failing to encourage the Commissioner to take firmer control of the public order situation and ban the demonstration outside the Grunwick factory, the Labour Cabinet attempted to defuse the situation by institutionalising the dispute in the form of a Court of Inquiry, which was established under the 1919 Industrial Courts Act. This move was acknowledged to be the last significant intervention available to the Government and there was concern within the Ministerial Group that they may be playing their final hand too early. However, as the Home Secretary noted in a letter to the Prime Minister, the announcement of an inquiry was essential to forestall the 'National Day of Action', which was then being planned by Arthur Scargill for 11 July.[34] Indeed, the reports the Home Office was receiving from Special Branch at that time noted that, 'At the moment it seems feasible that this [the 'National Day of Action'] could develop into one of the largest and potentially violent demonstrations ever seen in this country.'[35] After short deliberation, the establishment of an inquiry chaired by Lord Scarman was officially announced by the Secretary for Employment on 30 June, a move that was welcomed by APEX officials, whose insistence that a maximum of 500 people at the picket was successful in quieting down scenes outside the factory.[36]

Both the Metropolitan Police and the Government continued to be concerned about the 'National Day of Action', with documents showing that the Home Secretary was still

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[32] 'Note from [unknown] to Callaghan' (27 June 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.
[33] 'Sir Keith Joseph says moderates are playing Trojan horse role', *The Times* (25 June 1977); '"Constitutional crisis" over Grunwick', *The Times* (28 June 1977).
[34] 'Letter from Rees to Callaghan' (28 June 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.
[35] 'Special Branch Report on Grunwick Dispute' (30 June 1977 [released under FOI].
[36] 'APEX decides to keep up mass picket at the Grunwick plant', *The Times* (2 July 1977).

considering an appeal to the Commissioner to request a ban on demonstrations under the 1936 Public Order Act.[37] Special Branch were working with their colleagues across the regions to establish the support Scargill was likely to draw from the NUM and the wider union movement and, in an intriguing handwritten comment on a memorandum sent by officials, the Prime Minister noted: 'Keep me informed about Scargill's movements. He may have to be warned off.'[38] Whether any direct approach was made to Scargill is unclear, but an appeal was certainly made to encourage the TUC to cooperate with the police in organising the demonstration for 11 July. The Circular issued by the TUC in support of the 'National Day of Action' called on unions to give all their support to the demonstration, but noted that any workers attending the Grunwick picket in solidarity should do so only by arrangement with APEX, who maintained that a maximum of 500 pickets should meet outside the factory.[39] On the day of the event, around 4,000 police officers were deployed to control the 15,000-18,000 demonstrators who marched through Willesden in north-west London to show support for the Grunwick strikers. While most demonstrators stayed away from the factory gates, some deviated from the agreed route and took their protest to the entrance, where disorder saw mounted police deployed, 70 people arrested, and 30 others (including 18 policemen) injured.[40]

Following the 'National Day of Action', picketing continued over the summer and into the autumn, as the Strike Committee maintained their call for mass picketing outside the Grunwick factory, leading to further clashes with the police.[41] While Scarman's report found in favour of the strikers in concluding that Grunwick's management had 'acted within the letter but outside the spirit of the law', its findings were not legally binding and were quickly rejected by Grunwick management as a 'political con-trick'.[42] As the campaign for reinstatement of the striking workers looked increasingly hopeless, a split emerged between the Strike Committee and APEX, the former wanting to continue mass picketing and the latter

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[37] 'Note of Meeting held on 4 July 1977: the Grunwick dispute' (4 July 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.

[38] 'Memorandum to Callaghan on Grunwick Dispute' (5 July 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491/21: 2

[39] 'Trade Union Congress, Circular no. 189' (4 July 1977), NA, PREM 16/1491.

[40] '4,000 police mobilized for Grunwick protest march', *The Times* (11 July 1977); 'Police arrest 70 as Grunwick battle leaves 30 hurt', *The Times* (12 July 1977); 'Note of Meeting held on 11 July 1977: the Grunwick dispute' (11 July 1977), PREM 16/1491.

[41] See, for example, 'Month's mass picket planned for Grunwick', *The Times* (9 August 1977).

[42] 'Why I believe the Scarman inquiry was a political "con-trick"', *The Times* (1 September 1977).

arguing that the disorder damaged the union's case.[43] The Strike Committee continued organising weekly demonstrations without the approval of APEX, and the last mass picket was held on 7 November, with an estimated crowd of 4,000 people, 113 arrests, and 42 police injuries.

With the end of mass picketing, the Grunwick dispute disappeared from the national headlines, but the demands placed on the Metropolitan Police were less quickly forgotten.[44] Police records showed that between 13 June and 7 November, there were 51 days of large-scale picketing, requiring a total deployment of 37,000 officers over this period at a cost of £1.5 million. A total of 347 police injuries were reported as a result of the picketing and associated demonstrations, and 503 arrests had been made, all of which came under the criminal law.[45] The event had revived debates over the law on picketing, with Leader of the Opposition Margaret Thatcher and her Shadow Cabinet colleagues calling for new statutory laws that would limit the number of pickets at any one location, outlaw secondary picketing, and prohibit picketing by anyone not directly involved in the dispute.[46] The Labour Government, having survived the events at Grunwick, refused to contemplate new legislation to regulate picketing, hoping that trade unions would agree to voluntary limits on the numbers and disavow mass picketing.

The Police Federation and the politics of public order

As has been a theme throughout the chapters of this thesis, public order events – in this case, the Grunwick dispute – fed into broader political debates over policing during the 1970s. The disorder at Grunwick during the summer of 1977 became an important part of the fractious and politicised relations between the Labour Party and the police service, as MPs were accused of supporting the 'rent-a-mob' on the Grunwick picket lines, where daily disturbances were a significant drain on police resources. Indeed, following the disorder at Grunwick, Notting Hill, and Lewisham during the summer of 1977, public order became an important feature of the Police Federation's media campaign to pressure the Labour

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[43] 'Grunwick mass picket opposed', *The Times* (23 July 1977); 'Move to resurrect plans for Grunwick mass picket', *The Times* (1 August 1977).
[44] The dispute ended in July 1978 when all but two of the remaining strikers voted to seek jobs elsewhere.
[45] House of Commons, The Employment Committee, Session 1979-80, The Legal Immunities of Trade Unions and other related matters, Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 27 February 1980, p. 36, Parliamentary Archives.
[46] 'Tories plan to reform law on trade unions', *The Times* (28 June 1977).

Government in their ongoing battle over police pay. Police Federation newspaper advertisements in October 1977 featured a photograph of the Police Constable Trevor Wilson, the SPG officer who had been injured during the picketing at Grunwick. Underneath the vivid photograph of the bleeding officer, the caption read: 'One way to earn £40 a week'.[47]

The Police Federation had begun its a vocal campaign for higher wages in the summer of 1976, which was launched at a public event where demands of better police pay were raised alongside affiliation to the TUC and the right to strike. After Police Federation negotiators rejected the Home Office offer of a small pay increase in April 1977, the union had hired a public relations agency and launched a media campaign criticising the Labour Government on the issue.[48] Highlighting this deterioration in relations, when the new Home Secretary Merlyn Rees attended the annual conference of the Police Federation in Scarborough in May 1977, he faced booing and jeering from the large crowd of police officers outside the conference centre, while his speech inside was met with deliberate silence from the delegates, an altogether embarrassing episode for the new Home Secretary. As the Police Federation became increasingly vocal during this period, its representatives even wrote into the police service magazine *Police Review* to criticise the operational planning and tactics of senior officers during the Grunwick dispute, who were accused of forcing officers 'on the ground' to bear the brunt of provocative policing.[49] As the Home Office and the Police Federation failed to meet a compromise and relations because increasingly acrimonious, Rees eventually established an inquiry in December 1977 under the chairmanship of Lord Edmund-Davies, tasked with considering police pay, working conditions, and the machinery for negotiating such matters in the future. Once again, an inquiry provided a way for the Home Secretary to order a number of increasingly controversial issues in an institutionalised form, though its eventual recommendations were a substantial pay increase for the police.[50]

Happening alongside the wrangling over police pay were long-standing issues of reform to the police complaints process, something that Lord Justice Scarman had lent his support to following the disorder at Red Lion Square in June 1974 (a discussed in Chapter Four). This finally came with the passing of the 1976 Police Act and the establishment of the

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[47] Eugene McLaughlin and Karim Murji, "Resistance through Representation: 'Storylines', Advertising and Police Federation Campaigns," *Policing and Society* 8, no. 4 (1998): 383.

[48] 'Police Pay – The Truth', *Daily Mail* (21 March 1977); 'Police Pay Is a Crime', *Daily Mail* (6 May 1977).

[49] 'Pickets jeer Mr Rees on visit to factory', *The Times* (18 June 1977).

[50] Edmund-Davies, *Committee of Inquiry on the Police: Reports on Negotiating Machinery and Pay*.

Police Complaints Board (PCB), a civilian-run body that would review the report of the investigating officer overseeing a complaint, as well as the disciplinary decision made by the Deputy Chief Constable. Much to the anger of those within the police service, the PCB had the power to recommend that additional disciplinary charges be bought against the officer under investigation, a significant development in bringing about civilian control of the accountability process. The police strongly resented the fact that members of the PCB were 'political nominees' appointed by the Home Secretary, and the Police Federation at one point threatened that it would advise its members not to participate with its inquiries. True to his word, Mark had strongly opposed the 1976 Police Act during his time as Commissioner, and once it became inevitable that the Act would become law, he announced his early retirement, leaving Scotland Yard in March 1977. While the 1976 Police Act greatly angered the police, civil liberties groups also complained that those appointed to the PCB were establishment figures with no independent investigative powers, and they remained furious that the Police Federation had negotiated greater powers to sue complainants for libel.[51] Rather than resolving the increasingly fraught debate about police accountability, the 1976 Act emerged as a political compromise and was almost universally criticised.

Another source of political controversy during the period was the law governing police investigations and prosecutions, which had been exposed in October 1976 when Scarman and two other Appeal Court judges overturned the convictions in the Maxwell Confait murder case. The appeal had exposed a significant miscarriage of justice in the police handling of the investigation, which had seen three teenage boys convicted and imprisoned in November 1972. The Police Federation steadfastly refused to accept the findings of the appeal and a month later launched a brazen 'law and order' campaign, accusing the Labour Government of sitting idle while it presided over what Jim Jardine, the organisation's chairman, described as a 'tide of lawlessness'.[52] Indeed, Mark later suggested that the overturned convictions had been the result of a politically-motivated campaign by those committed to undermining the authority of the police, a response that typified police defensiveness to external criticism.[53] Despite police hostility, the ruling of the Court of Appeal led Jenkins to immediately establish

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[51] Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1985), 190-1.
[52] 'Unprecedented Turmoil for Home Secretary in the Police, Prisons and Probation Services,' *The Times* (23 Mary 1977).
[53] Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, 196-7.

an inquiry under Sir Henry Fisher, which was tasked with investigating the police handling of the case with a view to reforming the investigative and prosecution procedure.[54] Just as trade union solidarity had seen the Grunwick picket line escalate into large-scale public disorder, the politics of trade unionism within the police service meant that these events emerged from and contributed to a broader discussions over policing during the mid-to-late 1970s.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the politics of public order as it relates to policing unions during the mid-to-late 1970s. It began by returning to the subject of political negotiations over the law on picketing (as discussed in Chapter Three), which once again became a live issue following the election of Wilson's Labour Government in February 1974. While Labour Minsters took office with the intention of strengthening trade union powers during labour disputes, Home Office officials once again resisted changes to the law that would compromise police powers of discretion, a line consistent with their approach taken during the Heath Government. In the absence of a change to the law, mass picketing continued to be a tactic deployed by trade unionists, the public order consequences of which were seen at the Grunwick dispute during the summer of 1977. Using newly released police files, this chapter has developed contemporary accounts of the policing of the dispute, which saw Special Branch officers deployed to infiltrate pickets and demonstrations, gathering intelligence that was fed back to A8 Branch at Scotland Yard and the Police Department in the Home Office.

It has also shown that, as the dispute escalated into a major *cause célèbre* of public disorder, Commissioner McNee came under significant political pressure from Home Secretary Merlyn Rees and Prime Minister James Callaghan to take a tougher line against pickets and demonstrators, with Callaghan privately expressing fear that the dispute could bring down the Government. The final section of this chapter has centred the Grunwick dispute within the broader politics of public order, and shown how the Police Federation used the disorder as leverage in its public campaign to pressure the Government to accept demands for a significant increase in police pay. This was just one part of the increasingly

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[54] Sir Henry Fisher, *Report of an Inquiry by the Hon. Sir Henry Fisher into the Circumstances Leading to the Trial of Three Persons on Charges Arising out of the Death of Maxwell Confait and the Fire at 27 Doggett Road, London Se6* (London: HMSO, 1977).

fractious politics of policing during the period, which saw the Home Office in fierce conflict with all ranks of the police service over issues of police accountability.

Chapter Seven

Drifting Towards Paramilitarism?

The 'Battle of Lewisham' and the 'Battle of Southall', 1977-79

This chapter focuses on the policing of two anti-fascist demonstrations, the first in Lewisham in June 1977 and the second in Southall in April 1979. These events took place in the context of a rise in the provocative public organising of the NF and a corresponding surge in racist violence associated with the far-right, which in turn galvanised a broad-based coalition of anti-fascist and anti-racist groups committed to protesting NF events and protecting the communities they targeted. As at Red Lion Square (a subject discussed in Chapter Four), anti-fascist and anti-racist counter-demonstrations raised questions of police powers and civil liberties, leading to renewed debate over the limitations of public order and race relations legislation. Despite campaigns to prohibit NF meetings and demonstrations, events continued to go ahead, often ending in public disorder. This chapter shows that the policing operation at both Lewisham and Southall was widely seen as confirmation that the police were abandoning 'traditional methods' and drifting towards paramilitarism, the result being a significant number of injured demonstrators. This was particularly the case at Southall, where several hundred people were injured during the police operation, including the New Zealand school-teacher Blair Peach, who was knocked down and killed by a member of the SPG. This chapter examines the police response to these events and shows how the Metropolitan Police experience in handling public disorder – particularly the use of riot shields – was gradually exported to other police forces across the country. Picking up the 'paramilitarism debate' between P.A.J. Waddington and Jefferson discussed in the introduction, this chapter highlights the tensions associated with paramilitary-style tactics as either an effective and accountable or ineffective and unaccountable form of public order policing.[1] It argues that the disorder, disorganisation, and loss of police discipline at these events was seen by some police officers as justification for a more specialist and 'professional' approach to public order

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[1] Waddington, "Towards Paramilitarism? Dilemmas in Policing Civil Disorder."; *The Strong Arm of the Law: Armed and Public Order Policing*; ""The Case against Paramilitary Policing" Considered." Cf. Tony Jefferson, "Beyond Paramilitarism," ibid.27, no. 1 (1987); *The Case against Paramilitary Policing*; "Pondering Paramilitarism: A Question of Standpoints?."

policing, a desire for *internal* accountability (in other words, within the police command structure itself) that encouraged the adoption of paramilitarism. However, it also shows that the absence of *external* accountability – in this case, the inadequacies of the existing complaints process and the failure to establish a public inquiry into the disorder at either Lewisham or Southall – meant that changes in police tactics, equipment, and operational planning largely went without public scrutiny, the result being a continual deterioration in police legitimacy which was to play out even more starkly throughout the following decade.

The 'Battle of Lewisham'

Following the events of Red Lion Square in June 1974 and the publication of the Scarman report, the next few years saw the NF undergo significant internal divisions and a period of chaotic infighting, with membership numbers remaining inconsistent. Nevertheless, NF activity continued to receive considerable attention in the media, with coverage of its public demonstrations, provocative confrontations, and electoral campaigning a regular feature in the British press during the second half of the 1970s. While NF events were held in cities across the country, London saw a surge in far-right organising in the run up to local council elections in May 1976 and elections to the Greater London Council in May 1977. The NF and its splinter group, the National Party, continued their attempts to mobilise anti-immigration racism by exploiting concerns over the economic and urban 'crises' facing Britain during the period, with non-white residents blamed for unemployment, poor living conditions, and rising crime.[2] The activities of the far-right during this period galvanised a broad-based opposition movement committed to protesting NF events as a form of protection for the communities they targeted, a period of evolution for British anti-fascism which now identified the NF as a vulgar manifestation of wider issues of institutionalised racism.[3]

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[2] For recent literature on the NF and the far-right in Britain during the 1970s, see Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism*, 5-27; Thomas Linehan, "Cultures of Space: Spatialising the National Front," in *Cultures of Power-War British Fascism*, ed. Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Shaffer, *Music, Youth and International Links in Post-War British Fascism*, 17-106.

[3] For recent literature on the anti-fascist and anti-racism movement during this period, see Dave Renton, *When We Touched the Sky: The Anti-Nazi League, 1977-1981* (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2006); Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements*, 20-64; Satnam Virdee, "Anti-Racism and the Socialist Left," in *Against the Grain: The British Far Left from 1956*, ed. Evan Smith and Matthew Worley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 111-50; Michael Higgs, "From the Street to the State: Making Anti-Fascism Anti-Racist in 1970s Britain," *Race & Class* 58, no. 1 (2016).

Taking over as Commissioner in March 1977, Sir David McNee almost immediately faced significant public order challenges in his new role, as the NF held a large St George's Day march through north London's Wood Green on 23 April 1977. The march was met by a 3,000 person strong counter-demonstration made up of a diverse alliance of Labour and trade union branches, anti-racist groups, local members of the West Indian and Cypriot communities, and even Conservative councillors, who together held a peaceful rally at one end of Duckett's Common while the NF occupied the other. However, revealing long-standing tactical splits within the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement, members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the IMG attacked the NF demonstration, leading to some of the most serious clashes between police and demonstrators since the disorder at Red Lion Square. Among the 1,500 police officers deployed during the event, 40 sustained injuries and 93 people were arrested, the vast majority of them anti-fascist demonstrators.[4]

Only a few months later, it appeared likely that the disorders in Wood Green would be repeated, this time in the south east London area of Lewisham, where the NF planned to hold a provocative 'anti-muggers' march on 13 August 1977. Lewisham had been a target area for far-right groups in recent years, and they had intensified their activities in the summer of 1977 in an effort to capitalise on racialised media reports of a 'mugging' crime-wave in the area. In July 1977, a group of nearly 200 people had attacked a street stall set up by the Lewisham 21 Defence Campaign, a support group that had come together after 21 young Black men were arrested on controversial charges of 'conspiracy to rob' following a coordinated police raid on a number of homes across south-east London in late May 1977.[5] The willingness of local police to facilitate the NF march exacerbated their historically poor relations with Black residents, which had previously led council representatives to appeal for a public inquiry in November 1972.[6]

The announcement of the NF's march was predictably met by plans for a counter-demonstration, this time organised by the broad-based All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (ALCARAF), which had been established in 1976. This was an umbrella organisation made up of local political parties, trade union branches, and religious and anti-racist groups, and its diversity reflected the transition of the anti-fascist movement from a

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[4] McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1977*, 23.

[5] '31 remanded on bail after London street crash', *The Times* (5 July 1977).

[6] 'Lewisham is refused inquiry on police', *The Times* (17 November 1972).

far-left campaign into a broader coalition of groups representing multi-racial working-class solidarity.[7] ALCARAF was committed to holding a peaceful demonstration against the NF and representatives from the group, led by the Mayor of Lewisham Roger Godsiff, met with the local District Commander, to plan the route of their march. Local police agreed to the proposed route of the march, which planned to finish before the NF demonstration was set to meet. Unsurprisingly, more militant elements within the anti-fascist movement – particularly the SWP, the IMG, and a number of groups affiliated with the London Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (LARAFC) – considered this plan to be a political compromise and began making their own arrangements to confront the NF directly.[8]

With a clash between the NF and the counter-demonstrators considered likely, local politicians and community leaders began calling on Commissioner McNee to ban the NF march, claiming that the event was being organised as a deliberate attempt by those outside the community to incite racial hatred, which would almost certainly lead to disorder.[9] This was seen as an early test for new 'race relations' legislation, as Section 70 of the 1976 Race Relations Act had followed Scarman's recommendations and amended Section 6 of the 1965 Act so as to remove the subjective test of 'intent to stir up racial hatred' and replace it with the simple test of whether, 'having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up against any racial group'. In fact, Section 70 actually removed racial incitement from 'race relations' legislation, putting it under an amended Section 5 in the 1936 Public Order Act. Despite this change to the statue, Commissioner McNee refused to be swayed by appeals for a ban, claiming that Scarman's report had made it clear that political character was irrelevant when determining the police response to a demonstration.[10] Furthermore, he argued that police experience had shown that against people determined to ignore it, a ban only created additional problems of enforcement.[11] Organisers from the NF had informed senior officers that if a ban was imposed, they would simply march outside the restricted area in nearby Peckham or Camberwell, and if the area of the ban was extended to the whole of the Metropolitan Police District, they would simply hold a meeting rather than a procession,

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[7] Higgs, "From the Street to the State: Making Anti-Fascism Anti-Racist in 1970s Britain."; Virdee, "Anti-Racism and the Socialist Left."

[8] Higgs, "From the Street to the State: Making Anti-Fascism Anti-Racist in 1970s Britain," 73.

[9] 'Liberals ask police chief to ban Front march', *The Times* (4 August 1977).

[10] HoC Deb, 'Adjournment (Summer)' (28 July 1977), vol. 936 cc. 1021-1023.

[11] Sir David McNee, *Mcnee's Law* (London: Collins, 1983), 96.

as the former was not covered by Section 3 of the 1936 Public Order Act.[12] McNee thus maintained that the Metropolitan Police would continue its strategy of allowing both events to go ahead, while ensuring that any outbreaks of disorder would be contained within a single area by a large deployment of police.[13]

One lesson that had been learned from events at Red Lion Square was that police should direct the route of opposing marches so as to limit the chance of their meeting. As a result, just days before the demonstration, Commissioner McNee intervened and directed that the ALCARAF march should now follow a much shorter route than the one agreed with the local District Commander. As with the policing of Notting Hill Carnival in 1976, the intervention of Scotland Yard significantly shifted the previous local dimension of policing. Given that the NF were still allowed to march through the multi-racial area of Deptford, the Commissioner's decision was seen as evidence of the police taking a political side. McNee's intervention was strongly criticised by ALCARAF's leadership, who suggested that their peaceful march was being undermined by the police while the NF event was being supported.[14] Final attempts to avoid disorder were made during the week of the march, as a deputation of Labour MPs handed in a resolution at the Home Office calling on the new Home Secretary Merlyn Rees to meet with the Commissioner and encourage him to request a ban on the NF demonstration. At the same time, Lewisham's Labour-run council took the unusual step of appealing to the High Court to issue a 'writ of mandamus', which would compel McNee to request a ban on all marches in the borough for three months.[15] Despite these last-ditch efforts, neither proved successful, and police, demonstrators, and local residents began preparing for what was predicted to be a disorderly weekend.[16]

While the beginning of the LARAFC demonstration passed off without serious incident, when the 5,000 strong crowd reached the point at which the new route of the march directed them away from Deptford, they were met by the local District Commander and a number of police Serials who informed the march leadership that any demonstrators who continued

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[12] Ibid. 'Yard looks at police tactics on demonstrations', *The Times* (17 August 1977).

[13] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1977*, 24.

[14] 'Mayor denounces police arrangements for Front and opposition marches', *The Times* (11 August 1977); Albany Video, *13th August* (Online: London Community Video Archive, 2017 (fp. 1977)), Video.

[15] 'Council to take court action on Front march', *The Times* (10 August 1977). Interestingly, this tactic was first employed in the mid-1960s by the 'anti-permissive' campaigner Raymond Blackburn, who had called for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to be compelled to reverse his decision not to enforce the law prohibiting bettering and gaming clubs.

[16] 'Court refuses order banning rival marches', *The Times* (12 August 1977).

with the original route of the march would be arrested. Rather than accept this compromise, the march was peacefully abandoned, with the Mayor of Lewisham, Roger Godsiff, lodging a formal complaint with the police.[17] Those committed to confronting the NF had meanwhile gathered in Lewisham Town Centre, where some 4,000 people were joined by those who had left the LARAFC march frustrated following its dispersion. As around 1,000 NF supporters gathered in nearby Clifton Rise, large-scale clashes broke out between police and anti-fascist demonstrators. Despite the numerous police cordons set up to protect the NF march, the scale of the disorder was such that the police directed that the NF abandon their planned route through Deptford. Protected by a large police escort, the NF were forced to end their demonstration early with hurried speeches in a nearby car park, before they were hastily stewarded onto waiting trains at Lewisham Station.[18] Despite the departure of the NF, disorder continued into the afternoon as police and anti-fascists engaged in drawn-out clashes over control of the town centre, with mounted officers deployed to disperse the crowd. Such was the scale of the disorder that police Serials equipped with newly acquired plastic riot shields were called in to defend officers against a hail of objects, the first time such equipment had been used in a public order operation in Britain. While police reports on the event have not been deposited at the National Archives and freedom of information requests to the Metropolitan Police failed to locate any remaining records, a considerable amount of planning clearly went into the operation, which required the deployment of some 3,500 officers and the establishment of a large police encampment at nearby Hilly Fields to support logistical arrangements. Despite this, the demonstration ended with 210 people arrested and 270 police officers injured (56 requiring hospital treatment), the scale of the disorder surpassing that of the Notting Hill Carnival the previous summer.[19]

Changing police tactics

Members of Lewisham Council and the Bishop of Southwark strongly criticised Commissioner McNee for his refusal to ban the NF march, suggesting that the police had 'deservedly lost the

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[17] Footage of the exchange between Commander Randall and Mayor of Lewisham Roger Godsiff can be viewed at Video, *13th August*.

[18] Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* 124.

[19] McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1977*, 5.

confidence of the citizens of south London.'[20] McNee, however, remained resolute in defending his decision, suggesting that banning the march would only have created further problems of enforcement and would have been an abdication of police responsibility.[21] Despite the Commissioner's position, a deputation of Labour politicians met with Rees to make the case for a public inquiry, alongside suggestions that the 1936 Public Order Act should be revised so as to give the Home Secretary (or the relevant Police Authority) the power to enforce a ban, rather than rely on the judgement of the Commissioner (or other senior officers in cases outside London).[22] This proposal would have meant a significant shift in the official relationship between the Home Secretary and the Commissioner, putting police operational decisions in the hands of a political representative.

Rees was reluctant to establish a large-scale inquiry into the police handling of the events, though his reasoning is little illuminated by documents retained in his private papers or by any records held at the National Archives.[23] The most likely explanation is that Rees had in his mind the advice of Lord Scarman, whose report into the disorders at Red Lion Square had noted that, 'Public inquiries cannot, and should not, be held after every disorderly demonstration.'[24] A possible contributing factor to Rees' reluctance, however, was the significant strain in relations between the police service and the Home Office during the summer of 1977, which saw Grunwick escalate in to a major *cause célèbre* of public disorder. As Chapter Six has already shown, the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister had already been exerting political pressure on the new Commissioner to adopt a tougher line against the pickets and demonstrators there. Furthermore, Scarman, the most obvious choice to lead such an inquiry, was already busy with his inquiry into the Grunwick dispute (which covered the terms of the dispute, not the policing and disorder it provoked). Among all these various

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[20] 'Bishop accuses the police over Lewisham clashes', *The Times* (15 August 1977); 'Young Liberals demand an inquiry into police conduct', *The Times* (15 August 1977); 'Government to study public order legislation', *The Times* (17 August 1977).

[21] 'London police chief "will not bow to violence"', *The Times* (16 August 1977).

[22] 'Mr Rees cool on march riot inquiry', *The Times* (26 August 1977).

[23] Rees' private papers are held at Leeds University (MS 1743) and hold little on issues of public order during his term as Home Secretary. This is particularly surprising since, having previously served as Home Secretary for Northern Ireland (1974-1976), Rees would have had important experience in the issues associated with policing politically contentious marches and demonstrations. It could be the case that what relevant documents were originally contained within his private papers were defined as public records and removed from the collection at some point, though there is no corresponding records available in the National Archives.

[24] Scarman, *The Red Lion Square Disorders of 15 June, 1974: Report of Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Scarman*, 42.

influences, Rees and his advisors at the Home Office would have been keenly aware that the announcement of a public inquiry into the events of Lewisham would be seen as a further criticism of the police.

The absence of a public inquiry meant that changes then underway within the Metropolitan Police went without public scrutiny. The deployment of riot shields at Lewisham has been seen by police scholars as an important watershed in public order policing, with Brain noting that 'a new Rubicon had been crossed'.[25] For Moore, the decision to equip the police with riot shields marked 'the beginning of the end for the traditional police image in dealing with hostile crowds, which had been in existence for nearly 150 years,' a statement that passes over the fact that officers of the Metropolian Police were still being issued with cutlasses for public order operations during the early twentieth century, such as during the 'Tottenham Outrage' during 1909.[26] Nevertheless, the mythology of 'traditional methods' for post-war public order policing remained strong during the 1970s, impacting how police officers understood their response to events at Notting Hill. Indeed, when Moore interviewed Deputy Assistant Commissioner Gibson about the disorder at Notting Hill Carnival in 1976, he recalled that the previous police strategy of 'containing and dispersing [disorderly crowds] as gradually and smoothly as you could, picking out the ringleaders … suddenly no longer worked'. Gibson noted that officers had 'had to improvise a solution to the problem literally on the day when it happened. We had all sorts of contingency plans for dealing with any ordinary disorder that we could have anticipated but we suddenly found ourselves batting in a totally different league'.[27] The solution at Notting Hill in 1976 had been for officers to pick up dustbin lids, milk crates, and other objects to defend themselves, while throwing rocks and debris back at the crowd. Widely seen on television after the event, police behaviour and the overall loss of discipline that day exposed the limitations of basic and in-service training, as well as the Metropolitan Police's overall approve to dealing with the delicate issues of 'community relations' and public order.

Given the significance of the adoption of riot shields after the disorder at Notting Hill, it is surprising that no records remain of the Home Office views on the matter, particularly as

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[25] Brain, *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A Turbulent Journey*, 38.
[26] Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 163. See Geoffrey Barton, *The Tottenham Outrage and Walthamstow Tram Chase* (London: Waterside Press, 2016).
[27] Moore, *Policing Notting Hill*, 185-6.

the Home Office Police Research and Planning Branch would likely have been involved in acquiring the equipment. Rees informed Parliament in January 1977 that he had approved of Mark's proposal, noting that, 'The Commissioner and his successor [McNee] have assured me that they intend to continue with traditional methods of maintaining order whenever possible'.[28] Shield training soon begun at the Metropolitan Police facility in Hendon, with manuals showing the incorporation of new equipment into existing tactics. While shield units were trained to protect police cordons by forming a line in front of uniformed officers, they were also drilled to operate in modular 'five-man scrum formations', which saw three shields at the front and two officers standing at the back. These units could be added together to strengthen the formation and would be used to 'advance towards missile throwers to get within 10 feet'.[29] This was seen by senior officers as incorporating the existing strategy of 'mutual vulnerability', where Serials kept in close contact with demonstrators believing that this generally deterred violence.[30] However, the manual stressed that units should 'avoid contact with the crowd as shields would cause injury' and that officers should 'maintain strict discipline under the control of a commanding officer'.[31]

These shield formations can be seen in archival footage of the Lewisham demonstration, which presents police tactics in a significantly different light to the crowd control training manuals. In the melee and disorder, some police are seen to display a significant loss of control and discipline, fighting with demonstrators and breaking rank to pursue individuals into the crowd. This highlights one of the tensions within paramilitary-style tactics, which some police saw as effective in maintaining order amongst crowds *and* police officers. This was the argument later taken up by P.A.J. Waddington, who made the case that the disorder, disorganisation, and loss of police discipline at public order events provided justification for a more specialist and 'professional' approach to crowd control.[32] This desire for *internal* accountability (in other words, within the police command structure itself) had been something identified by senior officers after the disorder of Grosvenor Square in March

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[28] HC Deb 'Crime Prevention' (27 January 1977), vol. 924 cc. 1746-48.
[29] 'Metropolitan Police Shield Training Manual' (1978), HHC, ACPO U DPO/11/1/23.
[30] Sir David McNee, "Law and Order," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 129, no. 5303 (1981): 717.
[31] 'Metropolitan Police Shield Training Manual' (1978), HHC, ACPO U DPO/11/1/23.
[32] Waddington, "Towards Paramilitarism? Dilemmas in Policing Civil Disorder."; *The Strong Arm of the Law: Armed and Public Order Policing*; ""The Case against Paramilitary Policing" Considered." Cf. Tony Jefferson, "Beyond Paramilitarism," ibid.27, no. 1 (1987); *The Case against Paramilitary Policing*; "Pondering Paramilitarism: A Question of Standpoints?."

1968 (a subject discussed in Chapter One), when the introduction of crowd control training for officers across the Force had been introduced to strengthen police capacity and to improve police discipline. For both senior police officers and activists, the widespread disorder at Lewisham highlighted how this continued to remain a tension within the police approach to public order.

The acquisition of riot shields by the Metropolitan Police also raised issues of national policing importance. MPs had raised concern that if the Metropolitan Police was to be the only force in Britain trained in such equipment, it could further its reputation as a tough law and order based force at odds with national policing standards.[33] The challenges associated with NF demonstrations and anti-fascist counter-demonstrations elsewhere in Britain encouraged other forces to learn lessons from the Metropolitan Police. In November 1977, a special seminar on public order was held at the Force training facility in Hendon, attended by police chiefs from across the country. From this meeting, the ACPO General Purposes Committee decided to set up a Public Order Sub-Committee on Tactics, Equipment, and Instructor Training, which looked to build on the experience of the Metropolitan Police and standardise public order training and tactics across the country.[34] The Sub-Committee approved the adoption nationally of the Metropolitan Police riot shield, but noted that there was currently no national uniformity in standard police tactics for public order operations. It recommended that members should 'look carefully at the possibility of producing a manual', but noted that this should be pursued 'discreetly' (this matter will be discussed in Chapter Eight).[35] Following these recommendations, the Metropolitan Police organised a series of one-week courses for provincial police instructors (including those from Scotland), continuing a practice that had gradually seen Metropolitan Police experience in public disorder funnelled into forces across the country, encouraging a process of national capacity building and standardisation. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police continued to train its own officers in the use of riot shields and, by May 1978, McNee reported that more than 7,000 officers had received training in this equipment.[36]

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[33] HC Deb 'Crime Prevention' (27 January 1977), vol. 924 col. 1746-48.

[34] 'Minutes of the Public Order Sub-Committee on Tactics, Equipment and Instructor Training' (18 January 1978), HHC, ACPO DPO 2/5/6/1.

[35] Ibid.

[36] McNee, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1978*, 19.

Public order legislation

While calls for a public inquiry into police tactics and operational planning had been rejected after the disorder at Lewisham, Rees had announced that the Home Office would undertake a review of the 1936 Public Order Act and related legislation.[37] Following this announcement, the retiring ACPO President Peter Matthews had put pressure on the Home Office by announcing publicly that in his view the Act was no longer adequate for modern policing purposes and that new legislation was required given the rise in 'extremist demonstrations'.[38] In the autumn of 1977, government advisors were asked to consider what lessons could be learned from developments in Northern Ireland in recent years, where demonstrations were regulated by the province's 1951 Public Order Act, which had been strengthened via amendments in 1970 and 1971. The revised legislation required organisers to give police five-days' notice before a demonstration was held, and upon the advice of the Chief Constable of the RUC, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland could impose a ban on any specific march or demonstration for up to twelve months, with counter-demonstrations banned for up to a month. Those defying the ban were also liable for prosecuted alongside the organisers and it was illegal to try to break up a march or trespass on property with the intention to disrupt.[39] Despite this review, Rees eventually announced that the law on public order would be left alone.[40]

While there had been no changes to the law following the disorder in Lewisham, March 1978 did see a significant shift in the Commissioner's application of it. With the NF planning a march in support of their candidate in the Ilford by-election, McNee applied for and was granted a two-month ban on all public demonstrations (other than those of a religious, festive or ceremonial character) across the Metropolitan Police District. The decision to apply for such a wide ban followed an unsuccessful localised ban on demonstrations in Manchester during October 1977, where Chief Constable for Greater Manchester James Anderton had applied for a ban covering the area of Tameside, only for the NF to rearrange their march for nearby Longsight. It was later revealed that the police had had prior knowledge of the NF's plans, leading to loud calls of political bias and demands for

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[37] 'Government to study public order legislation', *The Times* (17 August 1977).
[38] 'Police chiefs to discuss state of law on marches', *The Times* (16 September 1977).
[39] 'Lessons of Ulster violence are studied', *The Times* (18 August 1977).
[40] 'Deficiencies in law on public order not a major problem', *The Times* (3 March 1978).

a public inquiry.[41] The period of the ban in London also covered the Lambeth Central by-election in April 1978, where relations between the police and Black communities had significantly deteriorated in recent years.[42] While the NF agreed to respect the ban, the legislation did not apply to public meetings organised under the 1949 Representation of the People Act and large numbers of police were nevertheless required to maintain order at events in both Ilford and Lambeth Central, though large-scale disorder was avoided.

While many had called for a ban in the run-up to the Lewisham demonstration, its subsequent application highlighted long-standing problems of enforcement, as the NF increasingly circumvented public order legislation by invoking their right to hold public meetings in council properties as part of their election campaigning. It also exposed the limits of understanding the impact of NF racism as solely an issue of public order, which failed to recognise the more quotidian impacts of far-right activity, such as a rise in racial prejudice, racial harassment, and racial violence. Indeed, the latter half of the 1970s saw a significant rise in racial violence within the capital, with the murders of Gurdip Singh Chaggar (Southall, June 1976), Altab Ali (Whitechapel, May 1978), Kennith Singh (Newham, April 1978), and Ishaque Ali (Hackney, June 1978) just some of the more high-profile racist attacks that occurred during the period.[43] The case of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, an eighteen-year-old Sikh student stabbed to death by a group of white youths in Southall on 4 June 1976, highlighted many of the problems of policing far-right racism during this period and the response these failures provoked among Black and South Asian communities. Chaggar's murder led to a weekend of protest and collective organising in the area, but anger only increased when investigating officers refused to acknowledge Chaggar's murder as racially motivated, a obfuscation that rendered everyday experiences of racism invisible and delegitimised concerns around far-right violence.[44] Despite appeals from community representatives, Commissioner Mark later doubled-down on this conclusion, claiming that the 'unrest' that followed in the summer of 1976 was 'stimulated and manipulated' by left-wing political

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[41] 'Tameside bans all marches to stop NF', *The Times* (21 September 1977); 'Front shows weakness of order Act', *The Times* (7 October 1977); 'Secret talks by NF and police before march', *The Times* (10 October 1977); 'Police chief tells why march was secret', *The Times* (11 October 1977).

[42] Council, "Report of the Working Party on Community/Police Relations in Lambeth."

[43] Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, *Blood on the Streets: A Report by Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council on Racial Attacks in East London* (London: Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, 1978).

[44] Campaign Against Racism and Facism and Southall Rights, *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1981), 54.

organisations, a statement that removed political agency from the community organising.[45] Further highlighting the failure of the police and the courts to deal effectively with far-right racism, January 1978 saw the former NF leader and then National Party councillor, John Kingsley Read, found not guilty for inciting racial hatred after charges were brought against him for greeting news of Chaggar's murder by telling his audience at a meeting in Newham, 'one down, a million to go'.[46]

The 'Battle of Southall'

Given this recent history in Southall, it was unsurprising that, when news got out that Ealing Council had granted the NF permission to hold a public meeting in the local Town Hall in the run up to the May 1979 General Election, the event generated strong local opposition. The Conservative-led council were immediately called upon to cancel the meeting, which ran contrary to the previously Labour-led council's long-standing ban on letting property to the NF. It was also noted that Brent Council and the London Educational Authority had recently denied the NF access to their property on the grounds that their statutory obligation under the 1949 Representation of the People Act was negated by the fact that the meetings were in no meaningful sense public. Despite these appeals, the council refused to renege on its decision to allow the NF meeting, which was provocatively planned to take place on the evening of St George's Day on Monday 23 April 1979, acting as the culmination of a number of other electoral events held by the NF across the capital.[47]

A broad coalition of groups came together to establish a planning committee to organise a counter-demonstration against the NF, which included representatives from the Indian Workers Association, Ealing Community Relations Council, religious organisations of various faiths, and local trade union branches.[48] A March for Peace and Unity was planned for Sunday 22 April, which would begin in Southall and move east through Hanwell and onto Ealing Town Hall. While it was initially felt that the NF's provocative arrival on Monday evening should be ignored – with local shops closing in the early afternoon as a form of silent

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[45] Mark, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1976*, 35.
[46] 'Race board demands action over speech', *The Times* (15 June 1976); 'Judge says use of the word "nigger" not unlawful', *The Times* (7 January 1978).
[47] Southall Rights, *23rd April 1979: A Report by Southall Rights*, 1.
[48] Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 22-28; Southall Rights, *23rd April 1979: A Report by Southall Rights*, 2-3.

protest – it was later decided that a mass, peaceful sit-down demonstration should take place prior to the meeting, with demonstrators occupying all the roads approaching the Town Hall. It was accepted that such a demonstration would likely lead to a large number of arrests on charges of obstruction, and these plans, well-advertised within the community, were communicated to the local Divisional Commander and Community Liaison Officer. During their meetings with organisers, the police made no objection to the plans, though they refused to confirm what their response would be.[49] More peripheral to the organising committee were a number of other groups committed to physically confronting the NF, which included the Southall Youth Movement (SYM), the SWP, Socialist Unity, and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL).

After two weeks of organising, the March for Peace and Unity on Sunday 22 April saw some 4,000 people in attendance, with banners and placards representing a diverse number of groups and organisations. While the turnout was smaller than organisers had expected, A8 Branch had arranged for some 1,200 officers to police the event, with a police helicopter following the demonstrators along the route of the march. For many, this deployment appeared as a provocative show of force and ran contrary to appeals for low-profile policing from the demonstration's organisers. While only 24 arrests were made in total, the local legal advice group Southall Rights later noted that, 'In our view the heavy-handed policing of the Sunday march contributed to a raising of tensions amongst the marchers, most if not all of whom would be present on Monday.'[50] While the police later claimed that they had planned to allow demonstrators access to three areas near to the Town Hall prior to the NF's arrival at 7pm, these arrangements had not been communicated to the organisers, who had still heard no objection from the police as to their widely-known plans for a sit-down protest.[51] As demonstrators began to arrive, a number of incidents of disorder broke out and the police decided to tighten their cordons to regulate the flow of the crowd. More people soon began to congregate for the start of the sit-down demonstration, but as demonstrators found themselves unable to establish an effective protest, frustration and disorder increased. At

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[49] Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 26-7; Southall Rights, *23rd April 1979: A Report by Southall Rights*, 2.

[50] *23rd April 1979: A Report by Southall Rights*, 3.

[51] 'Assistant Commissioner 'A', Report on demonstration with disorder and death – Southall – Monday 23 April 1979' (24 April 1979). Available at: https://www.met.police.uk/foi-ai/af/accessing-information/met/investigation-into-the-death-of-blair-peach/; cf. Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 26.

around 4pm, the police decided to seal off the area to ensure that the NF had access to the Town Hall, but this only increased anger amongst the crowd, with bricks and other objects thrown at police lines. In response, mounted officers, shield Serials, and units of the SPG were ordered to conduct a series of dispersal operations to push the crowd away from the Town Hall, with the next few hours descending into significant disorder in the surrounding streets. Since police reports on the planning of operation are absent from the National Archives, it is difficult to establish how A8 Branch had prepared for the event and what their overall strategy had been. It seems likely that the police decided that allowing the mass sit-down demonstration to go ahead would require too many officers and that the arrest of respected community and religious leaders would be politically embarrassing for the Force. There had clearly been a lack of communication between A8 Branch and the local police in Southall, as the Community Liaison Officer knew nothing of the overall operation.[52] Regardless of police intentions, the escalation of disorder saw a considerable loss of police discipline, as police vehicles were driven at speed into the crowd, demonstrators were hit with riot shields and police batons, and a large number of officers launched a violent raid on a nearby music cooperative known as Peoples Unite. In total, the operation involved some 2,875 officers – including 94 mounted police, all six units of the SPG, and the use of the police helicopter – and by 10pm that evening over 700 arrests had been made, with 345 people subsequently charged. While some 40 members of the NF had been bussed in from east London to attend the meeting, the disorder that followed saw 97 police officers injured, 21 of whom required hospital treatment. While injuries amongst the public were typically less well recorded, Southall Rights estimated it to be in the hundreds, including a number that sustained very serious blows to the head from police truncheons.[53] Among this number was Blair Peach, a 33-year-old school teacher and anti-racist campaigner, who had been chased with a group of friends up a residential street by six members of the SPG, one of whom had hit him with a fatal blow to the head.

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[52] Ibid., 44-5.
[53] Southall Rights, *23rd April 1979: A Report by Southall Rights*, 20.

Accountability denied

The scale of the disorder, the numerous allegations of police brutality, and the death of Peach quickly led to widespread calls for a public inquiry, with community organisations immediately withdrawing their cooperation from the local Police Liaison Committee. The Chief Executive of the Commission for Racial Equality, Peter Tucker, wrote to the Home Office soon after the event noting that, 'Everyone we have spoken to has taken the view that one of the main causes of the disturbances was the over-representation of the police and the activities of the Special Patrol Group.'[54] Linking the treatment of South Asian Londoners to Britain's violent colonial history, the local Southall newspaper, *Punjab Times,* proclaimed that 'Monday's police terrorism has convinced people that Southall has been reduced to the status of a British Imperial Colony.'[55] Despite this pressure, Home Secretary Rees soon announced that there would not be a public inquiry into the event, but that the Home Office would once again review the 1936 Public Order Act and the police would conduct their own internal investigations. Specific allegations of excessive force were to be investigated by Chief Superintendent Linnett of the Complaints Investigation Bureau (a unit that had replaced A10 Branch following the passing of the 1976 Police Act), while Commander John Cass would lead a separate investigation into the death of Blair Peach.[56]

With Parliament dissolved in the run-up to the General Election, MPs were not immediately given an opportunity to press the Home Secretary to change his mind on the issue of a public inquiry. Though Parliament resumed once Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party had swept to victory following the May election, it soon went into recess again in advance of the European Assembly elections. This led to a significant delay in Parliamentary accountability, with the new Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, only addressing the issue in the Commons in late June.[57] By this time Whitelaw had been presented with the Commissioner's report on the event, which concluded that disorder had not been the result of police mistakes, but rather that generational divisions within the local South Asian community had been exploited by 'extremist elements' from outside Southall.[58] McNee

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[54] Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 68.

[55] Paula Richman, "The Ramlila Migrates to Southall," in *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition*, ed. Paula Richman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 313.

[56] Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 68.

[57] The response of the media is analysed in ibid., 87-107.

[58] HC Deb 'Special Patrol Group' (28 June 1979) vol. 969 cc. 638-41.

rejected claims of a widespread loss of police discipline and Whitelaw reassured his colleagues in the Commons that there had been no change in police methods:

> It has been and will remain the Commissioner's policy … that defensive containment by numbers of police on foot is more likely to be successful, and is certainly more within our traditions, than deliberate, offensive tactics by smaller groups equipped in the style of some foreign police forces.[59]

Whitelaw also noted that the complaints procedure had been strengthened by the 1976 Police Act, which under Section 8 empowered the PCB to make a special report on any matter it felt should be brought to the attention of the Home Secretary, a measure specifically introduced in response to Scarman's recommendation that public inquiries should not take place after every episode of disorder.[60] Despite these reassurances, a number of Labour MPs argued that internal accountability was insufficient to restore public confidence in the police, particularly among Black and South Asian communities, who held little faith in the existing complaints process, despite the introduction of the PCB. However, much to the disappointment of some within his party, Shadow Home Secretary Merlyn Rees agreed with Whitelaw's decision, quoting in the Commons a letter Scarman had sent to Jenkins in which it was noted that, 'It would be a pity if after every headline-making demonstration the public should get into the way of expecting a public inquiry. Such inquiries are no substitute for effective complaints procedure legislation'.[61]

As many still felt that the 1976 Police Act had not brought sufficient accountability, community leaders in Southall approached the NCCL in June 1979 to suggest that the group establish an unofficial inquiry into the events of 23 April. A distinguished committee of academics, trade unionists, religious leaders, and local politicians was drawn together in an effort to secure both the confidence of the local community and a measure of legitimacy in the eyes of the political establishment, with it agreed that the inquiry would be chaired by Michael Dummett, a professor of philosophy at Oxford University and a long time campaigner for racial tolerance and diversity. In the months that followed, the inquiry received evidence from over 120 individuals and organisations involved in the counter-demonstration, the

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[59] HC Deb 'Southall (Demonstrations)' (27 June 1979) vol. 969 c. 440.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid. c. 442.

Metropolitan Police being the only party to decline the invitation to participate.[62] Responding to a letter from Labour MP Patricia Hewitt, who acted as secretary to the inquiry, Assistant Commissioner Gibson noted that, 'It is considered that your enquiry will delay the improvement in race relations in Southall and elsewhere in London', a response altogether indicative of the police's long-standing hostility towards external criticism and accountability.[63]

While the police refused to cooperate with the unofficial inquiry, the internal investigation by Commander Cass into the death of Peach proved to be a significant undertaking. Over the summer of 1979, some thirty police officers were involved in collecting over 400 witness statements and conducting almost 100 interviews. A search of the lockers of the SPG unit involved in the dispersal operation that led to Peach's death was also carried out, uncovering a disturbing number of offensive weapons, including a metal cosh, a large truncheon, a leather covered stick, two knives, and a crowbar.[64] This evidence was significant since two post-mortem examinations – one official and one at the request of Peach's family – suggested a large heavy instrument had likely caused the fatal blow. Commander Cass remained less convinced by this medical evidence, however, believing it unlikely that an officer would risk bringing an unauthorised weapon on a large public demonstration. Nevertheless, his report concluded that the only plausible explanation for Peach's death was that one of the six SPG officers had indeed struck the fatal blow, with one officer, emerging as the most likely suspect.[65] While Cass felt there was insufficient evidence to recommend prosecution for murder, he noted that there was 'little evidence from any source that criminal acts were being committed by the demonstrators at the time of death,' and he felt that

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[62] Membership of the committee included Roger Butler (South District Secretary for the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers), Stuart Hall (Professor of Sociology at the Open University), Patricia Hewitt (General Secretary of the NCCL), Bill Keys (General Secretary of the Society of Graphic and Allied Trades), Joan Lestor (MP for Eton and Slough), Dick North (Member of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Teachers), Paul O'Higgins (Reader in law and the University of Cambridge), Ranjit Sondhi (Director of the Asian Resources Centre in Birmingham), Rt Reverend Hewlett Thompson (Bishop of Willesden), and Pauline Webb (Methodist Church).

[63] Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 17.

[64] 'Copy of Report of Commander Cass dated 12 July 1979' [online]. Available at: https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/foi-media/metropolitan-police/other_information/corporate/blair-peach --12-july-1979-report-pseudonyms [accessed 1 March 2020].

[65] Ibid.

'strong inference' could be drawn that three of the officers in the unit had 'conspired together to obstruct the police investigation'.[66]

While Commander Cass clearly felt that at least some of the officers should be prosecuted for their behaviour, the Director of Public Prosecutions Sir Thomas Hetherington QC concluded that there was insufficient evidence with which to pursue a criminal conviction and no further action would be taken. Angry and frustrated at the police investigation, those seeking justice for Peach turned to the inquest as a means of ensuring accountability, but this was soon thrown into controversy as the coroner, Dr John Burton, rejected an appeal that the evidence be heard before a jury and refused to allow lawyers acting on behalf of Peach's family to see the Cass report and the statements and interview transcripts on which it was based. While the Court of Appeal eventually overturned the coroner's decision to refuse a jury, the application for access to police evidence failed in the High Court.[67] Given the loud public criticism of the inquest, calls for a public inquiry continued, with the Home Office receiving representations from more than 140 organisations, including the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, the latter of which called for the disbandment of the SPG. Despite this pressure, Whitelaw maintained his refusal by insisting that there remained no significant gaps in the police investigations and that a rehearsal of events would only delay the resettling of 'race relations'.[68]

With the inquest set to resume at the end of April, the anniversary of Blair Peach's death offered an opportunity to renew pressure for greater accountability. Demonstrations were held at over 50 police stations across London and the ANL printed 5,000 'wanted posters' naming the six members of the SPG held to be responsible for Peach's death.[69] On the same day, the unofficial inquiry set up by the NCCL published its 200-page report, giving an account of the sequence of events and the response of the media and the courts to the disorder.[70] While the report criticised a small minority of demonstrators who had attacked the police, it strongly condemned the police operation, suggesting that the decision to cordon off the centre of Southall was 'unreasonable and unjustified' since it prevented effective

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[66] Ibid.

[67] 'Peach plea over inquest fails', *The Times* (16 November 1979)*;* 'Blair Peach inquest to be held before jury after ruling by Court of Appeal', *The Times* (15 December 1979)*.*

[68] HC Deb 'Southall (Disturbances)' (13 December 1979) vol. 975 cc. 1523-5.

[69] 'Peach group name police on "wanted" poster', *The Times* (22 April 1980).

[70] 'Unofficial report condemns "police violence" at Southall and demands a public inquiry', *The Times* (23 April 1980).

protest and significantly increased the likelihood of violent confrontation. Debunking claims that the disorder had been caused by 'outsiders', the report found that, 'Whereas the National Front's right to freedom of speech was upheld by the local council and the police, the community's right to freedom of speech was destroyed by the police.'[71] The police were also criticised for 'excessive and unnecessary violence' in dispersing demonstrators, with the report noting that 'The evidence we have received leads to the inescapable conclusion that, on 23 April, police officers used their truncheons, not for self-protection but as offensive weapons against people in the crowd.'[72] In terms of police tactics, the report noted that riot shields had the effect of depersonalising police officers by removing face-to-face contact, while it was stressed that the SPG should have no place in the policing of demonstrations.[73] Among its 53 findings and recommendations, the report once again called on the Home Secretary to establish a public inquiry and called on the Director of Public Prosecutions to reconsider his decision not to pursue a case against any of the officers involved in Peach's death.

These interventions provided the context for the inquest, which was eventually established in late April 1980 and unsurprisingly proved to be a deeply adversarial and contentious process. The refusal of the police to submit the Cass report as evidence meant that the counsel representing Peach's family were unable to cross-examine police witnesses on their previous statements, meaning the contradictory and uncooperative oral evidence of the six SPG officers went unchallenged. A further problem was that the coroner was solely responsible for selecting the witnesses, rejecting appeals that Commander Cass and A8 Branch Commander David Held be called before the inquest to give evidence. While these procedural issues undermined faith in the inquest process, the conduct of coroner Burton also led to sharp criticism. At one point during the proceedings, he suggested to the jury that there were two 'extreme theories' about Peach's death: the first being that he had been killed by a police officer using an unauthorised weapon and the second that he had been killed by the ANL, who hoped to make Peach a martyr for their cause. Grouping these two theories together was clearly improper, particularly since the Cass report, which had been seen by the coroner, had wholly discredited the possibility that Peach had been killed by someone other

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[71] Dummett, *Southall 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, 135.
[72] Ibid., 164.
[73] Ibid., 158, 71.

than the police. Nevertheless, with the jury required to be convinced beyond reasonable doubt for a verdict of unlawful killing, May 1980 saw the return of a majority verdict of 'death by misadventure', a decision that made renewed criminal prosecution impossible.[74]

While Whitelaw publicly dismissed criticisms that the coroner had shown political bias in his handling of the inquest, documents later released showed that in June 1980, Burton contacted the Home Office with a draft paper titled 'The Blair Peach Inquest – the Unpublished Story', in which he set out a narrative that anti-fascist demonstrators were responsible for Peach's killing by provoking disorder. While Burton planned to circulate the document within the Coroners' Society, a senior civil servant warned in an internal note that, 'I'm a little disturbed at the proposal as I feel that if it fell into the wrong hands it would be used to discredit the impartiality of coroners in general and Dr Burton in particular.' Another official responded: 'It only needs one leak for a great deal of harm to be done – not only to the standing of coroners but also in respect of the Home Secretary's decision that a public inquiry should be resisted.'[75] These files show that Whitelaw was clearly aware of the problem of political bias within the inquest process but continued to refuse calls for a public inquiry in the hope that events would take their course and tensions would subside. However, this deferral of accountability only led to a future deterioration of relations between the police and sections of London's Black and South Asian communities, the consequence of which only created greater problems of public disorder.

Conclusion

This chapter has situated the policing of anti-fascist demonstrations in Lewisham and Southall within a broader politics of public order during the late 1970s, focusing on particular issues of police tactics, public order legislation, and police accountability. This chapter has highlighted some of the tensions within the so-called 'drift' towards paramilitarism during this period, which were most obvious in the adoption of shields for public order operations. Developing the argument articulated by P.A.J. Waddington during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has argued that the disorder, disorganisation, and loss of police discipline at Lewisham and Southall was seen by some police officers as justification for a more specialist and

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[74] 'Inquest into the death of Blair Peach' (1979-1980), NA, HO 299/114.

[75] Quoted in Solomon Hughes, 'Bias revelations in Blair Peach case', *Socialist Worker* (9 September 2006). Available at: https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/9430/Bias+revelations+in+Blair+Peach+case

'professional' approach to public order policing, a desire for *internal* accountability (i.e. within the police command structure itself) that encouraged the adoption of paramilitarism. These methods were seen as important as the 1936 Public Order Act was largely seen as ineffective in preventing disorder associated with NF demonstrations and anti-fascist counter-demonstrations, since it still raised issues of enforcement and did not apply to public meetings. The Metropolitan Police continued to provide national expertise in the field of public order, which some regional forces looked to learn from. However, as will be shown in the following chapter, national capacity was still undeveloped and standardisation between forces was a long way off. While police attention continued to focus on developing an effective response to public disorder, the absence of *external* accountability meant that changes in police tactics, equipment, and operational planning largely went without public scrutiny, the result being a continual deterioration in police legitimacy. These themes and the tensions between them will now be developed in Part Three of the thesis, with Chapter Eight focusing on the politics of public order following the urban disorder of 1980-81 and the Scarman report.

Chapter Eight

Abandoning 'Traditional Methods' and Building National Capacity

The urban disorders and the road to Orgreave, 1979-85

This final chapter focuses on the building of national police capacity between the years 1979 and 1985, bringing together various themes discussed throughout the course of this thesis and situating policing developments during this period within a broader politics of public order. The election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government in May 1979 represented a significant shift within this politics, as calls for a tough approach to law and order now appeared writ large. In Stuart Hall's famous diagnosis, Thatcherism was grounded in a politics of 'authoritarian populism', and the early years of the Conservative Government saw a sustained and radical critique of the supposed failures of liberal rule during the 1970s, which was seen to have left Britain 'ungovernable'.[1] The rhetoric of the right during this period argued that for too long the 'enemies within' (whether muggers, rioters, or strikers) had been allowed to disrupt public order and the Thatcher Government promised a tough, crime-fighting agenda, led by a greatly strengthened and strongly supported police force.[2] In Andrew Gamble's influential analysis, the defining features of Thatcherism were the 'free economy and the strong state'.[3] It is within this context that some historians have described the urban unrest of 1980-81 and the police response to it as a symbol and symptom of 'Thatcher's Britain', with a line drawn from events in Brixton in April 1981 to the 'Battle of Orgreave' during the 1984-85 miners' strike.[4]

While there is much of value in this account of the law and order politics of Thatcherism, this thesis has emphasised continuities and complexities in policing and public order, going significantly beyond the one-dimensional accounts of a 'drift' towards

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[1] Stuart Hall, *Drifting into a Law and Order Society* (London: Cobden Trust, 1980); Anthony D. King, "Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s," *Politics Studies* 23 (1975); Anthony H. Birch, "Overload, Ungovernability and Delegitimation: The Theories and the British Case," *British Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 2 (1984).

[2] Brake and Hale, *Public Order and Private Lives: The Politics of Law and Order*.

[3] Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988).

[4] Peter Hayes, "Riots in Thatcher's Britain," in *Crowd Actions in Britain and France from the Middle Ages to the Modern World*, ed. Michael T. Davis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Peplow, *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain*.

paramilitarism. Continuing this approach, this chapter focuses on the relationship between the Home Office and ACPO in developing national public order capacity during the early 1980s. Using newly-released archival material, it shows that the Home Office played a key role in encouraging these developments, which emphasised the need for the standardisation and centralisation of police resources. As had been the case throughout the 1970s, the Metropolitan Police was at the centre of this process, leading the way in building of national public order capacity. This chapter significantly develops existing accounts of the relationship between the Home Office and ACPO in shaping police policy during this period, something previous scholars have described as 'exist[ing] in a twilight world of speculation, charge, counter-charge and denial'.[5]

National policing capacity and the ongoing picketing debate

In February 1979, following the prolonged strike action of the 'Winter of Discontent', Home Office officials called for a meeting with HMIC to review national policing capacity, particularly the ability of the police to respond to several simultaneous large-scale disorders across the country. The group reportedly 'came to some fairly gloomy conclusions,' as it was felt that 'few if any forces outside London could by themselves provide the police numbers required to contain a prolonged Grunwick-type incident, let alone more than one such incident at a time.'[6] Concerned by this, Home Office officials wrote to ACPO President Philip Knight and informed him that significant improvements were needed, as traditional methods of policing were being stretched to their limits and it was felt that police may have to develop more offensive tactics and equipment so that disorder could be dispelled more quickly and with fewer officers. While recognising that 'any move to a riot squad approach on Continental or American lines would be unwelcome to the police as well as to Ministers and public opinion in this country', officials requested that the ACPO General Council consider what new training could be developed and introduced in this area, particularly for PSUs in forces that had not gained much experience of public order operations.[7]

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[5] Brewer et al., *The Police, Public Order and the State*, 19.
[6] 'Note from Heaton to Phillips' (22 February 1979); 'Note from Andrew to Knights' (26 February 1979), NA, HO 325/294.
[7] Ibid.

Concerned that ACPO were responding too slowly to their concern, Home Office officials took it upon themselves to encourage senior officers in regional police forces to learn more from the Metropolitan Police experience. In November 1979, officials held a two-day trial exercise for senior officers from Merseyside police at the NRC at Scotland Yard, where A8 Branch officers prepared a complex scenario in which a miners' strike involving energetic picketing and sympathetic action from trade unions, coincided with a NF demonstration, a Right to Work march, and industrial problems in the prison service. This gaming exercise – in which senior officers prepared an operation and then reacted to 'live' intelligence and situation reports – revealed considerable weaknesses in communication and coordination between forces, and the Home Office resolved to return to ACPO to encouraged greater standardisation and training for non-metropolitan forces.[8]

The election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government in May 1979 had brought new impetus to this process, as Ministers had strongly criticised the previous Labour Government over failures to maintain order during the Grunwick dispute. In July 1977, an internal report prepared by the Conservative Nationalised Industries Policy Group, chaired by Nicholas Ridley MP, had recommended that a future Conservative Government would need to transform national police capacity if they were to take on the unions, stressing the need for 'a large, mobile squad of police who are equipped and prepared to uphold the law against the likes of the Saltley Coke-work mob.'[9] The confidential annex of the report containing these details – titled 'Countering the Political Threat' – had been leaked to the *Economist* in May 1978, provoking criticism that the report advocated mobilising the police to break a strike.[10] While historians have debated the extent to which the Ridley Report represented a blueprint for taking on the NUM in 1984, Thatcher's Conservative Party had taken power in May 1979 bent on a radical restructuring of industrial relations, including new legislation to regulate picketing.[11]

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[8] 'National Reporting Centre: Report on Exercise "DRAFTSMAN"'(14 November 1979), NA, HO 325/294.

[9] 'Final Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group' (8 July 1977), 25, Margert Thatcher Foundation, Thatcher MSS (2/6/1/37).

[10] 'Appomattox or civil war', *Economist* (27 May 1978); 'Mr Rees sets out role of the police during strikes', *The Times* (2 June 1978).

[11] John Saville, "An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike, 1984-5," *Socialist Register* xxii (1985/6). For a more recent account of this argument, see Peter Dorey, "'It Was Just Like Arming to Face the Threat of Hitler in the Late 1930s.' the Ridley Report and the Conservative Party's Preparations for the 1984-85 Miners' Strike," *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 34 (2013). Cf. Richard Vinen, "A War of

As argued in Chapters Three and Six, Home Office officials with the Police Department had resisted changes to the law on picketing by successive Governments throughout the 1970s, acting as 'platonic guardians' in assuaging political passions. However, as Loader's interviews with former members of the Home Office show, the change in Government in 1979 marked a significant shift in political pressure and a tougher politics of law and order.[12] Buoyed by public concern with mass and secondary action during the 'Winter of Discontent', Thatcher's Government quickly proposed a new Employment Bill that significantly narrowed the scope of picketing immunities to cover only primary picketing at a worker's own place of work. Alongside the Bill, the Government introduced a 'Code of Practice on Picketing', similar to the one proposed by the Home Office in 1975, which served to reinforce judicial theory and police convention that the number of pickets at any entrance to a workplace should not exceed six, recommending that frequently much smaller numbers would be sufficient.

While police chiefs welcomed the idea of a 'Code of Practice', they maintained their long-held position that the current law was sufficiently firm and clear to enable the police to maintain order, remaining cautious to protect what they saw as the police tradition of independence and discretion.[13] In submitting their evidence to the Employment Committee, police chiefs insisted that strict statutory restrictions on the number of pickets at any one location could be 'self-defeating', since each scenario should be judged by the commanding officer based on an assessment of the situation.[14] As Home Office officials had informed Minsters following the 1974 miners' strike, strict limitations on picketing numbers would bind the hands of the police, who might then come under pressure to disperse crowds even when they were peaceful. Police chiefs were also keen to explain that the Government's changes to the civil law to prevent secondary picketing would not be enforced by the police, as to do so would compromise their impartiality and possibly escalate tensions among peaceful crowds. Consistent with the police response during the previous decade, police chiefs maintained that the primary issue was the police capacity to enforce the law, not the law itself. As Commissioner NcNee rather bluntly put it when asked by journalists about the new

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Position? The Thatcher Government's Preperation for the 1984 Miners' Strike," *English Historical Review* (2019).

[12] Loader, "Fall of the 'Platonic Guardians': Liberalism, Criminology and Political Responses to Crime in England and Wales," 574-5.

[13] See Employment Committee, Session 1979-80, *The Legal Immunities of Trade Unions and other related matters*, Minutes of Evidence (Wednesday 27 February 1980).

[14] Ibid.

Conservative Government's proposals, there could be 'all the fancy arrangements with the trade union movement' on the statute book, but this did not stop the real issue of mass pickets, which was a policing matter.[15]

Some Chief Constables were bold enough to say that they felt that the task of strictly preventing mass picketing under the current model of policing by consent was becoming practically impossible, suggesting that if police were forced to clear large crowds from picketed sites, they would regrettably be required to jettison 'traditional methods' or accept their limitations. Recalling his experience as a Deputy Chief Constable at Saltley in 1972, Philip Knights, now President of ACPO, informed the Employment Committee that, 'Short of throwing a cordon of police round the area and physically preventing people from getting through, and at the same time probably obstructing the whole of Birmingham city centre, there was nothing we could do to prevent these people coming to Saltley.'[16] In similar terms, Chief Constable for West Yorkshire James Brownlow, noted that, if the police had acted to prevent mass picketing at Hadfield during the recent steel strike, 'We would have needed an entirely different police force and we would be going down the slippery slope of having a national police force and national control.' In defence of the British policing tradition, Brownlow told the members of the Committee that, 'I would hope that despite all the problems we have you will still allow us to have our discretion and you will not move towards the Army, CRS-type police or anything like that [CRS is the French national police reserve, the *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*]. I think that would be detrimental to this country.'[17] Consistent with their position throughout the 1970s, the police maintained that 'traditional methods' required prioritising public order over strict law enforcement and strengthening mutual aid arrangement to ensure sufficient police resources.

The urban disorders of 1980-81

While the weekend of rioting in Brixton in April 1981 is often seen as the beginning of the urban disorders, they were portended by events in Bristol a year earlier, when a police raid on a members' club in the multi-racial area of St Pauls escalated into a disturbance that

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[15] 'Police chief criticises planned law on pickets', *The Times* (9 January 1980).

[16] Employment Committee, Session 1979-80, *The Legal Immunities of Trade Unions and other related matters*, Minutes of Evidence (Wednesday 27 February 1980), 41.

[17] Ibid. 45.

showed the local police to be wholly unprepared. St Pauls was in some ways similar to west London's Notting Hill and other multi-racial neighbourhoods in London: a traditionally white working-class area that had seen significant migration from the Commonwealth Caribbean during the 1950s and 1960s. Given the state of racial politics during this period, the area had developed as both a locus for concerns of crime and vice as well as a centre of Black cultural life and political activism. Reflecting the widespread racism identified by A7 Branch officers during the 1970s, Robert Reiner's 1974 study of the police in Bristol found that hostility towards Black people was commonplace, with one constable claiming: '90 per cent of the force are against coloured immigrants'.[18]

The trigger event for the disorder in St Pauls had been a raid on the local Black and White Café, one of a number of social spaces and meeting places frequented by Black residents that had been targeted in recent months. As several witnesses accused police of misconduct and harassment, a crowd had gathered and disorder had escalated, rising into a series of violent protests that led to 49 officers injured, with the Chief Constable making the decision to withdraw from the area and await reinforcements from neighbouring forces.[19] The event was later used by Stephen Reicher to develop his influential 'social identity theory', which suggested that the crowd behaviour could be explained by a shared sense of community, in which the police were positioned as outsider.[20] As had been the case following the disorders in Southall, community leaders rallied together to call on the Home Secretary to establish a public inquiry into the event, suggesting it was indicative of a broader deterioration of police relations with sections of the Black community.[21] Perhaps unsurprisingly, Whitelaw refused, privately telling Cabinet that 'an inquiry would be undesirable' as 'the police would be pilloried to no good purpose'.[22] The response highlighted the long-standing failure of successive Governments to meet community demands for greater police accountability, a problem that had risen throughout the 1970s.

Rather than see the events in Bristol as a broader failure of police engagement with community relations, the events were primarily seen as a problem of public order. Whitelaw

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[18] Robert Reiner, "Black and Blue: Race and the Police," *New Society* 57 (1981): 468.

[19] 'Bristol: the Chief Constable's report' (28 April 1980), NA, HO 266/33.

[20] S.D. Reicher, "The St. Pauls' Riot: An Explanation of the Limits of Crowd Action in Terms of a Social Identity Model," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 14, no. 1 (1984).

[21] Simon Peplow, "'A Tactical Manoeuvre to Apply Pressure': Race and the Role of Public Inquiries in the 1980 Bristol 'Riot'," *Twentieth Century British History* (2017).

[22] 'Cabinet Conclusions' 17(80) 3 (24 April 1980), NA, CAB, 128/67/17.

established a working group at the Home Office to consider what lessons could be learned, with consideration given to the establishment of a national mobile reserve that could be deployed in response to public disorder in areas across the country. However, officials and senior officers ultimately concluded that holding such a force in constant standby would be a costly arrangement and it would be difficult to find a routine occupation for its many units.[23] Instead, recommendations fed into broader plans to improve mutual aid, contingency planning, and public order training across the country.[24] Work in this area was taken on by Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner Geoffrey J. Dear, recognition of the fact that police in London had the most experience in this area. Dear's research confirmed what had long been a concern among Home Office officials, noting that, 'there is at present no cohesive pattern of training' for police forces across England and Wales, and that 'the depth of instruction varies between a superficial outline in initial training to detailed and innovative instruction at shield training centres and for police support units.'[25] While the Metropolitan Police were leading the way in this area, Dear's working group noted that 'in the great majority of cases recruits receive no training in the use of protective shields, and at best only limited practical experience of tactical deployments such as forming cordons and de-bussing.'[26] The working group called for all officers to be brought up to a basic standard as a matter of urgency, but noted that priority should be given to recruits, since young officers on routine operational duties were most likely to be first to deal with spontaneous disorder.

While work was ongoing it was overtaken by the events of 10-12 April 1981, which saw the south London area of Brixton erupt in scenes of considerable rioting and collective violence against the police.[27] Relations between the police and Brixton's Black communities had deteriorated significantly in the years prior to the disorder, as the area had been a target for stop and search and saturation policing operations, particularly by the SPG.[28] The flashpoint for the disorders in April had come four days into one such operation (codenamed 'Operational Swamp'), and with tensions in the area raised, a routine interaction between

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[23] 'Home Office Memorandum, Review of arrangement's for handling spontaneous disorder' (6 August 1980), NA, HO 266/72.
[24] 'The Report and Recommendations of the APCO Working Group examining policing of incidents of spontaneous public disorder' [reproduction] (April 1981), HHC, ACPO U DPO/11/1/23.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Peplow, *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain*.
[28] Council, "Report of the Working Party on Community/Police Relations in Lambeth."

police and Black people escalated into some of the worst scenes of violence in post-war Britain. The spontaneous nature of the disorder that caught the police unprepared, with some officers later judged to have been under-equipped and inadequately trained, demonstrating inexperience and inflexibility in the use of riot shields.[29] Police also suffered difficulties in communications, since the multi-channel radio systems that had been phased in across the Metropolitan Police during the late 1970s had not yet reached Brixton, meaning reinforcements called in from other Districts found themselves unable to communicate with senior officers on the ground until reserve radio sets arrived from A8 Branch at New Scotland Yard.[30] While previous calls for public inquiries following episodes of disorder had fallen on deaf ears, the scale of the rioting in Brixton – which left 415 officers injured – saw Home Secretary Whitelaw announce that Lord Scarman would be appointed to lead a public inquiry into the event.[31]

While Scarman was still collecting evidence for his inquiry, the first half of July 1981 saw serious disorder break out in urban areas across England. On Friday 3 July, the west London area of Southall saw clashes between South Asian youths and white skinheads escalate into a large-scale disorder, leaving 61 police officers injured.[32] The following evening, disorder broke out in the Toxteth area of Liverpool, escalating to such a scale that Kenneth Oxford, Chief Constable for Merseyside, called for mutual aid from forces in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cumbria, Birmingham, and Devon. Such was the scale of the disorder in Toxteth that in the early hours of Monday 6 July, Oxford woke Whitelaw with a phone call to request authorisation for the use of CS gas, the Home Secretary replying that this was an operational decision and should be made by a senior officer.[33] Oxford's decision to use CS gas made it the first time the equipment had been used during a public order operation in Britain, and the decision was strongly criticised by the local Police Authority.[34]

Disorder soon erupted in the Moss Side area of Manchester, where over a period of some five days, eighteen officers were injured, 241 people were arrested, 22 police cars were

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[29] Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Enquiry*, 112.

[30] 'Written Submission by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to Scarman Inquiry, Part II' (undated), NA, HO 266/44.

[31] 'The Report of the Working Group on Protective Clothing and Equipment for the Police' (October 1981), 1, House of Commons Library, DEP 9654.

[32] Kettle and Hodges, *Uprising: The Police, the People and the Riots in Britain's Cities*, 156.

[33] William Whitelaw, *The Whitelaw Memoirs* (London: Aurum Press, 1989), 246-7.

[34] Simon Peplow, "Race, Policing, and Public Inquiries During the 1980-81 Collective Violence in England" (University of Exeter, 2015), 233-70.

damaged, and £5,000 of damage was done to a local police station.[35] The comparatively small number of officers injured was credited to the proactive policing response adopted by the controversial and outspoken Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, John Anderton, who did away with static cordons of officers holding protective shields in favour of vans of mobile 'snatch squads' driving at speed into crowds, tactics considered 'heavy handed' by Anderton's critics but later praised as a 'conspicuous success' by the Home Secretary.[36] Anderton later publicly denounced this criticism as a Marxist-inspired plot on the part of the Greater Manchester Police Authority to curb his operational independence.[37] As Channing has shown, the approach taken by Oxford and Anderton highlighted the impact different styles of leadership could have on police responses to public disorder.[38] The violence that month continued to spread, as the first half of July saw large disturbances in urban areas across England – including Reading, Ellesmere Port, Nottingham, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Hull, Preston, Slough, and the Handsworth area of Birmingham – before returning again to Brixton and a number of other areas across London.[39]

Due to the scale of the disorder and the number of police officers sustaining injuries, Whitelaw contacted the Minster for Defence, John Nott, to procure a loan of equipment. On 9 July, the Army depot at Bicester provided police forces with almost 1,800 NATO-style helmets, and an order for 2,000 more was quickly placed by the Home Office.[40] Whitelaw would later claim that, 'Better protection had assisted chief officers in adopting positive tactics to break up violent groups', a clear nod to proactive policing response adopted by Anderton and Oxford.[41] This marked a significant departure from traditional policing methods, as Oxford later explained:

> Previously it had been the conventional practice to contain rioters by lines of police
>
> officers behind riot shields and then try to divide them into smaller groups and

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[35] Kettle and Hodges, *Uprising: The Police, the People and the Riots in Britain's Cities*, 165.

[36] Peplow, "Race, Policing, and Public Inquiries During the 1980-81 Collective Violence in England," 233-70, 66.

[37] Eugene McLaughlin, *Community, Policing and Accountability: The Politics of Policing in Manchester in the 1980s* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994).

[38] Iain Channing, "Chief Constables and Public Order: Tensions between Discretion and Consistency," in *Leading the Police: A History of Chief Constables 1835-2017*, ed. Kim Stevenson, David J. Cox, and Iain Channing (London: Routledge, 2017).

[39] Kettle and Hodges, *Uprising: The Police, the People and the Riots in Britain's Cities*, 154-81.

[40] 'Home Affairs Select Committee brief for a debate on recent outbreaks of civil disorder in Great Britain' (undated); 'Nott to Whitelaw' (16 July 1981), NA PREM 19/484.

[41] HoC Deb, 'Police (Equipment)' (15 July 1981), vol. 8 col. 1177.

eventually disperse them. This approach together with the only offensive tactic open

to us – the use of the baton charge – proved to be completely and utterly ineffective in

the face of the tactics adopted by the protagonists in 1981.[42]

In the wake of the disorders, Whitelaw was 'anxious to move very quickly' in getting access to 'more offensive types of equipment' and, in a remarkable move, the Home Office requested a loan of 50 riot guns and 5,000 baton rounds from the Army.[43] Despite Nott's 'considerable reservations' about arming the police with military weapons, stocks of baton rounds were drawn from the packs of equipment held by the Army for internal security duties, while two water cannon were transferred to the Metropolitan Police training facility in Hendon.[44] During the course of the two weeks of disorders, the NRC at New Scotland Yard had arranged mutual aid to eight police forces across the country, amounting to 908 PSU. While this mobilisation had been important in getting officers from unaffected areas to the urban centres of disorder, inexperience and poor communication practices had hampered the arrangements.[45] A lack of standardisation in PSUs had also created difficulties in determining reinforcements, while disorganisation in transportation, such as a reliance on private coaches, had affected availability.[46]

Chief Constables would later insist that they were forced into accepting paramilitary equipment due to increasing levels of violence, a 'reluctant, incremental reaction to a developing situation.'[47] A Chief Constable interviewed by Reiner later recalled police opposition to new equipment:

I was on the General Purposes Committee of ACPO during the time of the riots, and we strenuously resisted bringing in these NATO-type helmets. Our first step was to have a reinforced helmet, to keep the image of the constable. That didn't last long, and we were forced down the road of being more sophisticated.[48]

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[42] Kenneth Oxford, "Policing by Consent," in *Scarman and After*, ed. John Benyon (Oxford: Pergamon, 1984), 123.

[43] 'Whitelaw to Nott' (6 August 1981), NA, PREM 19/484.

[44] 'Nott to Whitelaw' (16 July 1981), NA, PREM 19/484; 'The Report of the Working Group on Protective Clothing and Equipment for the Police' (October 1981), House of Commons Library, DEP 9654.

[45] 'NRC, intelligence function' (28 September 1981), HHC, ACPO U DPO/8/1/1.

[46] 'PSUs – lack of standardisation and its effects on the NRC' (14 September 1981), HHC, ACPO U DPO/8/1/1.

[47] Reiner, *Chief Constables: Bobbies, Bosses, or Bureaucrats?*, 170-4, 71.

[48] Ibid., 172-3.

Not all officers accepted the new equipment as inevitable, however, with the liberal-minded Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall John Alderson becoming a vocal public critic of such paramilitarism. During the late 1960s, Alderson had served as a Deputy Assistant Commissioner within the Metropolitan Police, responsible for heading up the police training school in Hendon, before being appointed by the Home Office to the role of Commandant at Bramshill. As Robert Reiner noted, in this latter role Alderson was 'responsible for the education of all future members of the police élite', a position he used as a 'springboard for his emergence on to the national stage of policing policy and politics, where he became a hugely influential, albeit increasingly controversial, figure.'[49] Indeed, following the urban disorder in 1981, the liberal-minded pioneer of community policing criticised the turn towards new riot control equipment, writing publicly that, 'we must not advance the police response too far ahead of the situation', arguing that 'it is even worth a few million pounds of destruction rather than get pushed too far down that road.'[50] Indeed, Alderson later refused to have his officers trained in the use of CS gas and baton rounds and unusually insisted on giving his own evidence to Scarman's Inquiry to ensure that the 'community policing' perspective would be heard.[51]

Building national public order capacity

When Scarman's report was published in November 1981, it came out in support of ongoing efforts by ACPO and the Home Office to increase national capacity for public order operations. The report recommended the strengthening of mutual aid arrangements between forces, an improvement in training at junior and command level across the country, and increased investment in communications facilities, protective equipment, and police vehicles. It also recommended a review of police tactics, concluding that the disorders of 1981 had exposed the need for 'a more positive, interventionist role in quelling disorder'.[52] While the Report recognised 'the importance and necessity' of Whitelaw's decision to furnish the police with

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[49] "Alderson, John Cottingham," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2015).

[50] *The Sunday Telegraph* 12 July 1981, as cited in *The Politics of the Police*, 86.

[51] Alderson, *Law and Disorder*; *Principled Policing: Protecting the Public with Integrity* (Winchester: Waterside Press, 1998).

[52] Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Enquiry*, 155.

water cannon, tear gas, and plastic bullets, it warned that such equipment should only be used in a 'grave emergency' and on the authority of a Chief Constable.[53]

In order to implement the recommendations of the Scarman report, the Home Office set up a Public Order Steering Group in January 1982, a body that brought together representatives from ACPO, the Metropolitan Police, and the Police Staff College at Bramshill. Chaired by Gerald Phillips, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, the role of the Steering Group was privately expressed by Phillips as 'keep[ing] a firm grip on all public order developments, to bring all the interests together and to maintain impetus wherever it seems to be flagging'.[54] Although it was recognised that Home Office involvement in this area was 'not wholly appropriate' – since public order was seen as 'essentially an operational matter with political overtones' – officials had long been concerned that ACPO had a tendency to slow down necessary policing reform.[55] Recent years had been testament to this fact, as mutual aid arrangement had been exposed as rather haphazardly organised in some areas during the urban disorders. The Home Office were aware they would have to operate with discretion in this area, however, as Phillips noted that he had already found that some Chief Constables were 'a little circumspect about Home Office and Inspectorate involvement in ACPO's work'. But the establishment of the Steering Group was seen as a necessary step since it felt that ACPO 'were proceeding at a rather leisurely pace'.[56]

In March 1982, the Home Office organised a three-day seminar for Chief Constables at the Police Staff College Bramshill, emphasising the need for a national consensus on approaches to public order.[57] As Philips later noted, the seminar highlighted an 'ignorance of the range of public order tactics' among many Chief Constables, and a survey of the 43 police forces across England and Wales had left the Home Office and HMIC 'very concerned about the capacity of some forces outside the Metropolis to provide, in terms of PSUs, both senior and junior officers who knew what they were doing'.[58] While the Home Office had been encouraging police forces to develop public order capacity to strengthen mutual aid throughout the 1970s, county forces appeared to have been reluctant to invest time and

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[53] Ibid., 154.
[54] 'Phillips to Renton' (29 April 1982), ibid.
[55] 'Note of Police Training Council Meeting on 7 January 1982' (11 January 1982), ibid.
[56] 'Letter from Phillips to Andrew' (29 January 1982), ibid.
[57] 'Outline of seminar on public order for Chief Officers of police to be held by the Police Staff College in March 1982' (undated), ibid.
[58] 'Memorandum from Philips to Walters' (29 April 1982), ibid.

money in training and equipment which would only see used in support of other forces. Forces outside of metropolitan and industrial areas saw this as a form of cross-subsidisation, for which they received little in return.

While the Home Office advised HMIC to promote greater regularity in training and mutual aid exercises between forces, Phillips noted that ACPO 'appear to be doing nothing to fill the gap' brought out in the Bramshill seminar.[59] The concern for the Home Office was that forces with large urban centres who had experienced disorder in 1981 – such as London, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and the West Midlands – were beginning to make their own arrangements, duplicating efforts and hampering national standardisation.[60] These concerns were particularly true for the Metropolitan Police, with one member of the Home Office Police Department noting in a letter to Phillips in April 1982:

> We are worried about the interfaces with ACPO and the Metropolitan Police. We shall try, at the working level, to improve our liaison with them. However, my people are not over-optimistic – especially over our relationship with the Metropolitan Police. New Scotland Yard tend to make up their own minds, work out their own tactics and assume that those tactics do for the police service as a whole – that is, when they tell people outside the Metropolitan Police what is going on.[61]

One example of this problem was the Metropolitan Police approach to riot shields. While all PSUs across the country were training in tactical formations using long shields, the Metropolitan Police had developed its own tactics using more mobile short and round shields, equipment not all forces had access to. The lack of standardisation in equipment and training was seen to present problems for mutual aid, with different forces adopting widely different terminology for tactical manoeuvres in crowd control operations.[62] While the Home Office were keen to ensure that police forces could work effectively in situations of national emergency, some forces were reluctant to change existing practices, particularly when they felt they were being determined by the priorities of metropolitan forces. As one civil servant

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[59] ibid.
[60] 'Memorandum from Phillips to McNee' (30 April 1982); 'Memorandum from Philips to Walters' (29 April 1982), ibid.
[61] 'Letter from Renton to Philips' (19 April 1982), ibid.
[62] 'Noted of a Public Order Liaison Group meeting on 23 June 1982' (July 1982), ibid.

noted: 'As to ACPO, so far as I can see, they are in some disarray and in danger of allowing the defence of chief officers' operational independence to prejudice efficient use of support units across borders. This disarray seems to manifest itself in the confusion about tactics.'[63]

Attempting to overcome this problem of disorganisation among different forces, the summer of 1982 saw ACPO's General Purpose Committee set up a Standing Sub-Committee on Public Order, re-establishing now on a permanent basis the committee that had overseen the incorporation of riot shields into regional forces. While the committee would be based at A8 Branch in Scotland Yard, the Metropolitan bias would be overcome by the appointment of Christopher Payne as its chairman, then serving as Chief Constable for the Cleveland Constabulary.[64] The fact a Standing Sub-Committee had not be established earlier speaks both to the lack of unity within ACPO during this period, but also to the fact that for many police forces in rural areas across the country, large-sale public disorder was not a major concern. Preparing crowd control training for officers in non-metropolitan Districts could hardly be seen as a priority for some Chief Constables, particularly given the cost and finite resources. While the establishment of the ACPO Sub Committee was seen as an important new development, it also raised questions for what role the Home Office would take going forward, with officials at the Home Office expressing concern that they might lose their ability to control the rationalisation and standardisation of national policing capacity. As one member of the Police Department noted:

> We are anxious about the permanent organisation proposed for carrying forward the work that the [Public Order Steering] Group cannot complete or cannot be expected to cope with. As I said at the meeting, we here would be unhappy if the permanent arrangements left Horseferry House [the Home Office Police Department] and Sandridge [the Police Scientific Development Branch] with no representation at the 'working level'… if the permanent working level is to be A8 of the Met plus a provincial police representative or two, will we find ourselves in the position that concerned us in the Spring, when the Met were 'doing their own thing' and, for all we know, duplicating research being done at Sandridge? ... In short, we need some safeguard against the

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[63] 'Letter from Renton to Philips' (19 April 1982), ibid.

[64] 'Home Office note in preparation for Public Order Liaison Group meeting on 5 August 1982' (undated), ibid.

>A8/provincial unit going it alone and some better assurance that Mr Payne's sub-
>committee will be able to keep a close, effective liaison with us.[65]

While Philips shared concern that the 'organisational chaos' of ACPO would stymie effort at rationalisation, he felt that the Home Office had little grounds to interfere in operational matters. As he eventually concluded: 'In the end, we may have to accept that the arrangements are a by-product of the ACPO way of doing things but it is worth at least trying to improve it.[66]

Conclusion

With significant encouragement from the Home Office, the ACPO working group on police tactics eventually published its *Public Order Tactical Options Manual* in July 1983. The document was passed to all Chief Constables and Assistant Chief Constables across the country and provided the basis for new methods of crowd control for public order operations. The manual provided a long list tactics, escalating gradually from increased foot-patrols to the use of baton rounds and live ammunition, and these tactics appeared alongside existing expertise, the type of equipment involved, and an account of the scenario in which each tactic might be deployed. The manual had been a significant undertaking, the culmination of six months research by officers at A8 Branch, which, since its establishment in April 1968, had become the central authority for public order expertise in Britain.[67] While the Metropolitan Police experience had gradually been exported to forces across the country through various training arrangements and leadership seminars throughout the 1970s, the *Tactical Options Manual* looked to disseminate this expertise in a more formal manner, encouraging the standardisation, rationalisation, and building of national public order capacity. The manual was just one feature of the developing of national police resources during the early 1980s, as mutual aid arrangements had been strengthened across the forces following the urban disorder, with PSUs and intelligence coordinated by the NRC at Scotland Yard.

As was highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, these developments in national public order capacity would soon see use during the 1984-85 miners' strike. Indeed, the

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[65] 'Letter from Dawson to Phillips' (10 August 1982), ibid.
[66] 'Letter from Phillips to Dawson' (12 August), ibid.
[67] In April 1983, A8 Branch was remanded as the Police Public Order Forward Planning Unit.

existence of the *Tactical Options Manual* was later revealed at the subsequent Orgreave 'riot trial', where the counsel for the prosecution justified police tactics with reference to the manual. This revelation provoked much criticism of the Government and the police, who were accused of secretly initiating a shift in British policing traditions without any democratic accountability. Indeed, leaked extracts of the manual were later published by the investigative journalist Gerry Northam, who gave a sensationalist account of the arrival of paramilitary policing.[68] While Chief Constables and politicians had, throughout the 1970s, rejected a *de jure* national police force, they had ended up with the substance of one. However, rather than this being a straight-forward process, this chapter – and this thesis more broadly – have emphasised the continuities and complexities in policing and public order. It has shown that, while the Home Office played a key role in encouraging the development of national police capacity through the standardisation and centralisation of police resources, the operational independence of Chief Constables (reflected in the disorganisation of ACPO) was a significant challenge to overcome. Nevertheless, as had been the case throughout the 1970s, the Metropolitan Police was at the centre of this process, leading the way in building of national public order capacity.

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[68] Northam, *Shooting in the Dark: Riot Police in Britain*.

Conclusion

While most existing accounts of the development of public order policing in Britain, and in the Metropolitan Police in particular, begin with the urban disorders of 1981 and the Scarman report that followed, this thesis has used newly released archival material – including significant tranches of documents secured through FOI – to show that the origins of the transition from 'traditional methods' to 'paramilitarism' in fact began more than a decade earlier, with the public order challenge posed by large anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in London during 1968. With this as its starting point, this thesis had shown how, in the decade that followed, new equipment, crowd control tactics, intelligence gathering practices, and public and community relations initiatives were integrated into police strategy and command and control for public order operations. As such, this thesis shows that the changes that occurred during 1980s were not altogether new, even if they were adopted and implemented during this period with a new level of urgency. Rather, developments post-Scarman built upon and extended pre-existing practices that had developed over the previous decade, with the 1970s shown to be a significant period in the modernisation of British policing.

In studying the development of policing through a series of episodes of public disorder, this thesis has contributed to the broader literature on police reform and innovation. It has offered important new empirical evidence to substantiate what Stephen Savage has described as the 'systems failure' approach to police reform, where the experience of 'things going wrong' creates a window for new methods to emerge. Like other scholars, Savage has looked at this in the context of the urban disorders in 1981, showing how the experience led to significant changes within the police service, particularly in terms of the turn towards 'community policing'.[1] However, as this thesis has shown, 'systems failure' did not necessarily mean jettisoning old methods and inventing new ones. Rather, it was more often the case that these events provided a space for pre-existing ideas to develop and take purchase.

As Chapter One has shown, while the disorder outside the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square in March 1968 raised concerns that the police were unprepared for the scale of mass demonstration, senior officers within the Metropolitan Police were unwilling to adopt new

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[1] Savage, *Police Reform: Forces for Change*, 26-32.

specialist crowd control equipment such as that used by US and Continental police forces. Instead, they looked to codify and develop a more coherent idea of what 'traditional methods' actually meant in the context of public order policing. The deployment of unarmed, non-specialist officers working to contain crowds through minimum force was thus continued, but was underpinned by an extensive programme of in-force training designed to introduce common minimum standards in crowd control tactics. Furthermore, 'traditional methods' now included a greater emphasise on mobility, communication, and advance intelligence, which allowed senior officers to exercise command and control over police resources. In similar terms, Chapter Five showed that the experience of disorder at Notting Hill Carnival during the late summer of 1976 led officers at A8 Branch to engage more seriously with a 'community relations' approach to the event, and their colleagues in A7 Branch encouraged carnival organisers to arrange their own stewards and agreed to adopt a low-profile approach at the event the following year. And while these ideas had been around since the establishment of A7 Branch in 1968 and had been encouraged during the early 1970s as police relations with sections of London's Black communities deteriorated, it was only after 'things went wrong' in 1976 that this approach was integrated into public order operations.

However, this thesis has also shown that it was not always the case that 'systems failure' led to significant change in policing practice. As was highlighted in Chapter Two, senior police officers and civil servants were reluctant to implement a tougher approach to the policing of pickets during and after the miners' strike of 1972, despite the fact that Minsters had claimed that the so-called 'Battle of Saltley Gates' had been a 'victory for violence'. Instead, they looked to maintain 'traditional methods' of accommodation, even raising concern that the crowd control tactics of the Metropolitan Police were not appropriate for managing local industrial disputes. As such, this thesis has contributed to the recent literature on the politicised bureaucracy of policing in Britain during this period, adding further evidence to support Loader's argument that civil servants during this period acted as 'platonic guardians'.[2] In another setting, the focus on police accountability during Chapter Four also showed 'systems failure' did not always lead to change, as despite ongoing calls for the

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[2] Ian Loader, "Fall of the 'Platonic Guardians'liberalism, Criminology and Political Responses to Crime in England and Wales," *The British Journal of Criminology* 46, no. 4 (2006). See also Rock, *The Official History of Criminal Justice in England and Wales: Volume Ii: Institution-Building*.

introduction of an independent element into the police complaints system and numerous incidents that highlighted police malpractice (from the Challenor Affair in 1963 to Scarman's inquiry into the disorder at Red Lion Square in 1974), reform met significant opposition from within the police.

As such, this thesis has shown that any account of changes in policing and criminal justice history must also contextualise these changes within the institutional cultures, trends, and pressures that shape reform and opposition to it, all of which form part of the politicised bureaucracy of policing. For example, this thesis has offered an account of both the institutional conservativism and institutional racism that existed within the Metropolitan Police during this period, which led to strong opposition to 'community relations' and police accountability during the early 1970s. Chapter Two showed that while reform-minded officers within A7 Branch saw 'community relations' as an important part of modern urban policing, its work was undermined by officers across the Divisions who viewed its initiatives with suspicion and hostility. Critics complained that police work was being denigrated into a lesser form of social work, with the priorities of A7 Branch seen to run contrary to an occupational police culture that emphasised law enforcement and crime fighting, both of which were embedded in racialised ideas of 'Black criminality'. Furthermore, as Chapter Six noted, the police during this period carried something of a siege mentality, believing that they were constantly under fire from critics who sought to undermine their authority and morale. As law and order became increasingly politicised during the 1970s, senior officers like Commissioner Mark and police representative groups like the Police Federation showed themselves all too willing to use their profile to influence political decisions, criticising the Labour government's attempts to increase police accountability with the 1976 Police Act and launching a public campaign to increase police pay.

Alongside the Metropolitan Police, this thesis has also offered new evidence to show the extent to which political influence was brought to bear on policing, particularly during moments of perceived 'crisis'. For example, Chapter One showed how, as Home Secretary, Callaghan gently exerted political influence on both the police and the media prior to and after the anti-war demonstrations in 1968, encouraging regional police forces to learn from the Metropolitan Police experience. Indeed, this was a theme developed throughout the course of the thesis, which showed that the experience and expertise of the Metropolitan Police were often used as a blueprint for national policing developments, with the Home Office

encouraging common minimum standards and the building of national capacity in the aftermath of the urban disorders in 1981, a subject discussed in Chapter Eight. Political intervention was not always successful, however, and in Chapter Six it was shown that Commissioner McNee resisted pressure from the Labour Home Secretary and Prime Minister to take a tougher approach in policing the 'Grunwick dispute' during the summer of 1977. This speaks to a final theme developed throughout the course of this thesis, which concerns the negotiation that occurred during this period between effective crowd control in the short-term and police legitimacy in the long-term. While new technology and equipment may have been effective in dispersing crowds, police remained conscious of their image and the public reception of that image, with public order policing remaining an important exercise in public relations. Indeed, this thesis has shown that the evocation of 'traditional methods' was important in this respect, as it sometimes acted as a restraining factor on changes to public order policing, but also helped to disguise clear shifts in policing aims and methods, since embedding them in the discourse of 'traditional methods' suggested continuity rather than change in policing.

As well as developing a more complete account of the politics of public order from the late 1960s onwards, this thesis has made a methodological contribution to the study of policing and criminal justice history, primarily through its use of FOI. As discussed in greater detail during the Introduction, accessing relevant archival records was a significant challenge during the research for this thesis as many of the Metropolitan Police and Home Office files listed on the catalogue of the National Archives were initially withheld under Section 3(4) of the 1958 Public Records Act. As part of the research process, FOI requests were routinely submitted for withheld records contained within the Queen's Peace Series (HO 325), the result being that a significant number of previously embargoed files are now in the public domain. Furthermore, since both the Home Office and, more importantly, the Metropolitan Police continue to hold records that are not listed on the National Archives catalogue, a practice of meta-data requesting was developed, whereby both were asked to provide a list of all items held on their record management system that contained key search terms. Alongside this, they were also asked to provide lists of all previous requests that used these terms, redacting the personal information of the requester but including the date, description, and outcome of previous requests. This information was then used to make targeted requests for records known to be held and/or previously released, and a stronger

public interest argument could be made for records previously withheld. While this methodology was not without problems – with some requests being rejected and others being delayed for more than two years – it is hoped that the material released as a result of this thesis will be useful for scholars in the future, while the method of FOI requesting might also prove fruitful to those researching police history and the institutions that police this history.

While this thesis has developed an account of the politics of public order which goes significantly beyond and substantially predates the changes identified in the existing literature, it also raises a number of questions which will hopefully form the basis of future research. The first has to do with the notion of 'traditional methods' and the degree to which they represented an invented tradition that emerged during the late 1960s at a moment of perceived 'crisis'. While this line of argument is sketched out in the Introduction and in Chapter One of this thesis, more research is required into the policing of public order during the 1950s to fully substantiate the claim that 'traditional methods' were part of the self-conscious mythologising of British policing that emerged during the mid 1960s, a time in which police legitimacy was increasingly called into question. There is perhaps a second question that emerges from this, which is to explain the curious absence of any reference to the policing of public disorder during the 1930s among senior police officers during the 1960s. During the research for this thesis, it was surprising to find that, while grand claims were made about policing tradition, the historical memory of the Metropolitan Police in any practical sense was particularly short-sighted. Where reference was made to the policing experience of the past, it was always to the anti-nuclear and peace movements of the early 1960s, whose tactics of 'sit down' demonstrations and non-violent opposition presented a challenge in terms of police manpower and organisation. The most obvious answer to this question concerns the length of police career, as most officers of an experienced rank during the 1930s were unlikely to still be in their job by the 1960s. However, a perhaps more compelling answer lies in the outlook of reform-minded officers during this period. While the past may have appeared as a foreign country when compared to the pace of change during the 1960s, other countries – particularly the US – were seen to offer a vision of the future.

While touched upon at various points throughout this thesis, the international dimensions of public order policing require further investigation. Chapter One showed that, following the outbreak of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland, Commissioner Mark was

appointed to provide recommendations for the RUC based on the recent experience of the Metropolitan Police, whilst also joining senior army officials in carrying out an international tour to research various procedures for military aid to the civilian authorities. Furthermore, Chapter Two showed that senior officers within A7 Branch were influenced by urban police reform following racial rioting in US cities during 1967, and their vision for the integration of 'community relations' into the policing of multi-racial areas of London was similar to the recommendations outlined in the report of the 1968 Kerner Commission. While this thesis has gone some way to correcting the arguments of Hillyard and Northam, who suggested the 1980s saw the arrival of 'colonial' policing methods following the urban disorders in 1981, there remains more work to be done if the international dimensions of public order policing during the 1970s are to be fully developed.[3] While this history remains necessarily unfinished, and new archival material will further deepen the contours of the politics of public order, this thesis will provide a substantial and developed framework in which this new material will fit, providing a source for scholars of the future.

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[3] Hillyard, "The Normalisation of Special Powers: From Northern Ireland to Britain," 38-43; Northam, *Shooting in the Dark: Riot Police in Britain*.

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