

# STATE RESEARCH

**BULLETIN  
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### PASSPORT RAIDS

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Reassurances given by government ministers that the police and immigration service are not indulging in 'fishing expeditions' in carrying out raids for suspected illegal immigrants under the Immigration Act 1971 are not supported by facts of the wave of such raids in London.

The first of the recent raids took place on May 13 when the cash-and-carry warehouse of the Asian-owned Bestways chain in north London and eight Bestways shops were raided by police and

immigration officials. Eight police officers and ten immigration officers (backed up by two police dogs) took part in the raid on the warehouse where the gates were locked and all black people, including a customer and a delivery driver, questioned. Seventeen people were arrested at the cash-and-carry of whom five were patrials (that is not subject to immigration control) and six were non-patrials whose immigration status was in order. During the operation, about 35 people appear to have been arrested of whom 28 were lawfully settled in Britain, including 12 UK citizens.

Periods of detention for those wrongfully arrested ranged from one to eight hours. One man who has been settled in Britain for 22 years was held for seven hours. Access to solicitors was refused, as well as the provision of food and water, and, in one case, the home of a young Asian was

searched without a warrant or his permission and left in a ransacked condition. Those arrested were only given an opportunity to collect and produce documents proving the legality of their presence *after* they had been taken to the police station. No attempt was made to verify the details of one man who quoted the number of his certificate of registration as a UK citizen. After the raid, one man, a UK citizen who has lived in Britain for 22 years, told the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI): 'I have lived for 22 years in this country and most of the time I have lived in the Borough of Brent. Never has such a thing happened to me in my whole life. I am shocked. I feel we have no future in this country.'

The second raid took place at the Hilton Hotel in Park Lane on May 22 although details only became publicly known in June. Sixteen immigration officials and an unspecified number of police officers were involved and questioned around 100 black workers and arrested 35 for alleged offences under the Immigration Act (**Hansard, 2.7.80**). The number of people involved makes this the largest raid ever under the 1971 Act, even more extensive than that which took place in Newcastle Upon Tyne in December 1977 (see Bulletin No 10).

The third raid happened on June 20 at the Main gas appliance factory, again in north London, and involved 40 police officers and 15 immigration officials. Although the information leading to the raid related to alleged offences by West African, all black workers, including Asians, were questioned. According to the Home Office more than 20 of these were charged with (unspecified) breaches of the law.

In each of the three cases, the police have clearly carried out a fishnet operation, described by Roy Jenkins when Home Secretary as 'a technique involving pulling in a number of people and throwing most of them out again without any apology and causing grave inconvenience' (**Hansard, 6.12.73**). Such operations are not permitted by search

warrants granted under the Immigration Act, which are supposed to refer to a specific named person. According to the JCWI, neither the warrant used at Bestways or at Main gas named specific persons. The raids not only involved the unlawful arrest of innocent persons but contravened assurances given by successive governments.

Although its role has not been acknowledged in parliament or elsewhere, it is almost certain that the raids were initiated by Scotland Yard's Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit which was formed secretly in 1972 (See Bulletin No 10) and is part of the C11, Criminal Intelligence, section. As with the Special Branch, Fraud Squad and Drugs Branch, the records of the Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit are stored on Scotland Yard's C Department Computer. Writer Duncan Campbell has estimated from computer specifications that the Unit's records amounted to 13,000 in 1974 and would be expected to increase to 60,500 by 1985, with 80 enquiries being made monthly in 1974 increasing to 370 enquiries by 1985. ('Society Under Surveillance' in **Policing the Police, vol 2**)

The occurrence of three such extensive passport raids within a space of three weeks marks a qualitative shift in the development of a rigorous system of internal immigration control. While the introduction of compulsory identification cards may be unlikely in the foreseeable future, the practical obligation on black people to carry passports all the time is becoming a reality.

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## BRITISH ARMS SALES

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British overseas arms sales this year are unlikely to exceed 1979's total of £1,200m, according to Sir Ronald Ellis, Head of the Defence Sales Organisation (**Daily Telegraph, 7/7/80**). This follows a report (**Time Out, 4/7/80**) that the number of potential customers attending the British

Army Equipment Exhibition in June had declined considerably, with only 52 of the 95 invited countries bothering to send delegations from abroad, a 20 per cent drop on the previous BAEE in 1978.

Ellis claimed, however, that the drop off in exports is not due to a lack of interest in British products, but to the mass cancellation of orders from Iran and to disappointing sales with China. He said that with three-quarters of the world's arms market now sewn up by the USA and the USSR, the remaining quarter was having to be fought over by Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and Israel.

BAEE 80, held at Aldershot from June 23-27, was the third of the biennial arms fairs organised by the Defence Sales Organisation of the Ministry of Defence for the benefit of 200 British arms manufacturing companies (see Bulletin No 6, pp 115-122 on the DSO and BAEE 78). The Exhibitions are aimed at the Third World, thought by military strategists to be the likely setting for many conventional wars over raw materials in the coming years — and therefore a big market for arms. Another growth area catered for by the Exhibitions is internal security, and much of the equipment on display can be used by police or military against civilians.

Ellis claimed on the opening day of BAEE 80 that 96 per cent of the equipment sold through BAEE has never been used in anger, a strange claim considering the nature of many of the countries attending. Seventeen of the countries sending delegations from abroad were on Amnesty International's list of governments that torture their internal political opponents.

Many more were invited, however. Of all the pro-Western repressive governments, the only major absentees from the invitation list were Chile and South Africa (socialist/communist countries were not invited, torturers or otherwise). Brazil's military-technocratic regime was a particular target for the military sales reps. The Exhibition sales catalogue was even printed in Portuguese especially for their benefit, but the MoD

was snubbed when a downgraded delegation turned up.

British arms exports in 1979 included £53m worth of armoured fighting vehicles, warships worth £81.4m, £52m of guns and small arms, and helicopters and planes to a value of £52.4m.

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## TELEPHONE TAPPING

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As promised by the government following the White paper in the interception of communications (see Bulletin No 18) on the 'senior member of the judiciary' who will privately supervise authorised telephone tapping and mail opening, was named in June. He is Lord Diplock, the High Court judge who has been chairman of the Security Commission since 1971 and who conducted the inquiry which led to the establishment in Northern Ireland of the no-jury 'Diplock courts'.

The appointment of Diplock, a judge noted for his anti-libertarian views, has been the subject of criticism and the whole idea of a judicial monitor has been criticised as unsatisfactory and insufficient to meet Britain's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly in the light of the European Court's judgment in the Klass case against West Germany in 1978. Lord Hooson told the House of Lords that the safeguards provided by the West German state were held by the court to be sufficient (if only just) but that none were afforded by English law. The mere appointment of a judicial monitor would do nothing to change this. 'The proposal seems to me contemptible: at least it is in contempt of the European Court.' (**Hansard**, House of Lords, 21.5. 1980)

Safeguards similar to those provided in West Germany against the interception of communications have been demanded by the Post Office Engineering Union (POEU) in a report, *Tapping The Telephone*, published in July. The report is the first full statement on the subject

made by the POEU, some of whose members are involved in telephone tapping. It calls for an inquiry into the interception of communication on the grounds that the White Paper was guilty of a number of omissions, for example, it did not deal with Northern Ireland nor cover the activities of such agencies as Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), and that the appointment of a supervising judge is an inadequate safeguard. In addition, the increase in surveillance, the changes in the technology available and the growing public concern are compelling reasons for such an inquiry which, says the report, should be able to receive evidence from Post Office engineers (and others) who should be free of any threat of prosecution.

**Tapping The Telephone, price £1, from POEU, Greystoke House, 150 Brunswick Road, Ealing, London W5 1AW.**

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## OPERATION CRUSADER

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The biggest mobilisation of Britain's armed services since the 1956 Suez Crisis is to take place between September 1 and October 8. Operation Crusader, an £8.5m exercise to test military contingency plans for reinforcing the British Army on the Rhine (BAOR) and defending the UK in an emergency, will involve the mobilisation of 10,000 regular troops and 20,000 members of the Territorial Army (a third of its total strength).

This will be the first full-scale test of the 'new' British Army since its restructuring between 1975 and 1978 (see Bulletin No 8, pp 8-9), and will involve trying out a large part of the Home Defence system where the military attempts to keep 'subversives' and 'saboteurs' in Britain under control.

The exercise will be in three phases, codenamed Jogtrot, Spearpoint and Square Leg. Jogtrot involves sending the 30,000 mobilised troops to the battlefield in West Germany. Serving soldiers, mainly

from the Sixth Field Force, will travel between September 1 and 11, while the massive force of part-time Territorial Army volunteers will all travel over the weekend of September 13-15. A wide variety of transport methods will be used, including military transport plans and ships, two chartered passenger ships and two chartered freighters, while 1500 TA troops will travel on regular Sealink ferries (this is believed to be mainly as a PR gimmick). Ships will sail from Immingham, Felixtowe, Harwich, Dover, and Southampton, while the aircraft will be operating out of Belfast, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Teeside, Manchester, Luton, Heathrow, Gatwick and the military air-trooping centres at Brize Norton and Lyneham.

The Spearpoint part of the exercise will be a mock battle involving British, German, American and other NATO troops, ending with victory to NATO as the enemy withdraws because of trouble and unrest in their rear. In all, 63,000 NATO troops will be taking part in Crusader, with the majority participating in this Spearpoint battle.

The third phase of the exercise, Square Leg, is probably the most politically contentious, as it involves a major effort against subversion (the most recent official definition of subversion is: 'activities which threaten the safety or well-being of the State, and are intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means.' (Hansard, 6.4.78, Lord Harris of the Home Office). The Ministry of Defence claims that Square Leg will be 'largely a paper exercise' involving very few troops on the ground: 'You won't be seeing vast convoys of Army vehicles or mock battles outside Colchester.' The MoD refuses to say what areas of the country will be involved in Square Leg, but the *Times* (21.3.80) reported that the setting will be the Army's Eastern and North Eastern Districts, taking in all the eastern half of England from Essex to Northumberland (Eastern District is centred on Colchester)

**Peoples News Service (3.5.80) reports**

that there will be some 'live' aspects to Square Leg, with troops guarding at least one or two key installations, and units seeking out 'saboteurs' and 'enemy paratroops'. PNS also states that the Home Office has asked local authorities to participate in Square Leg.

The significance of Operation Crusader lies more in its scale than anything else. Exercises are held every year to test parts of the mobilisation procedure or the readiness of the TA for war, while regular troops are constantly practising for emergencies. Elements of the Home Defence system are tested at least every two years, with the last large exercise being 'Scrum-Half' held from October 10-20, 1978. But the sheer size of Crusader must represent yet another step up the ladder of military escalation by the British and NATO military establishments.

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## TORY PUBLIC ORDER PLANS

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Restrictions on the right to demonstrate and an increase in police powers to deal with crowds and meetings are likely to follow the government's 'green paper' **Review of the Public Order Act 1936 and related legislation**, published on April 24. Although a green paper is a discussion document and does not represent preliminary government commitments, the review hints heavily that several significant changes, including many demanded by the police in recent months, will be made.

The green paper states that the government 'sees merit' in the introduction of a national requirement for advance notice of processions to be given to the police. For some years, police organisations have lobbied for a seven-day notice requirement. A number of English local authorities are currently seeking powers for three-day notice requirements. The green paper splits the difference: 'five days (coupled with suitable provisions for waiver and for exemption) might not be

without merit', it states.

The review comes down in favour of a continued need for a public order statute along the lines of the 1936 Act which was introduced to deal with the Mosleyite movement. But it suggests that broader powers to ban and control marches are needed. At present, there has to be a risk of 'serious public disorder' before these powers are invoked. The green paper argues that this is probably too stringent. It suggests dropping the word 'serious' or possibly adding other criteria such as 'the effect of an event on the policing of an area.' At several points the green paper counterposes demonstrations with such phrases as 'the normal pattern of community and individual life' in a manner reminiscent of the arguments for stricter controls put forward recently by the Association of Chief Police Officers (see **Bulletin 17**). However, it rejects the idea of a banning test based on 'offensiveness' or 'disruption to the community', concluding that 'the risk of public disorder should remain the basis on which a ban on an event is considered.'

The government has stopped short at present of agreeing with ACPO that local authorities should have no say in the decision to ban marches. But the paper suggests that the present powers of district councils under the 1936 Act might be transferred to county councils. The involvement of the courts in decisions to ban marches is rejected.

But perhaps the most important long-term suggestion floated in the green paper is that similar powers to those in the 1936 Act (which applies only to moving processions) might be extended to static demonstrations or meetings, whether public or private. Such powers 'could apply to large scale demonstrations in support of pickets', says the review. In view of the restrictions on the right to picket contained in the government's Employment Bill and of the prospect of restrictions on picket numbers, such powers might well make participation in a mass picket illegal. The police are already committed to this demand.

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## POLICING THE EIGHTIES: THE IRON FIST

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### BACKGROUND PAPER

'1979 heralded the end of a decade of unprecedented economic and social problems and technological change, with accepted standards and values of behaviour being strongly questioned and severely tested by some sections of society.' (Introduction to the Report for 1979 by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, July 1980, HMSO).

This Background Paper looks at developments in British policing over the last past 15 years in order to foresee what kind of police force will emerge in the 1980s. What emerges is that large-scale structural changes have already been implemented and now form part of everyday policing. The present 'debate' between preserving policing by 'consent' (epitomised by the Dixon of Dock Green image) or the adoption of 'fire-brigade' (or reactive) policing has, in practice, **already been resolved.**

The adoption of 'command and control' computer systems by local forces is geared to 'quick response times', and the 'technological cop' can now draw on centralised information systems like the Police National Computer (PNC) and locally-held records. This system leads to a form of policing where confrontation rather than persuasion is becoming the order of the day.

Nor can the British police any longer be viewed as an unarmed force. As this paper shows, more than 12,000 rank and file officers are now trained in the use of firearms, and several forces now have special firearms units. In addition, the spread of technical support units using,

for example, closed circuit television or helicopters for surveillance is becoming more common.

Another 'debate', about whether or not Britain should have a 'third force' to deal with strikes, demonstrations and terrorists, **has also been resolved.** This was already true before the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw announced on 6 August his new 'arrangements for handling spontaneous disorder'. There are already at least 12,000 riot-trained police 'hidden' in the ranks of the uniformed police, mainly organised as Police Support Units. The Special Branch with a brief to keep 'subversives' under surveillance has also grown massively, keeping records, telephone-tapping and watching thousands of people engaged on lawful and democratic activities.

The only official overview of developments in British policing is the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Constabulary to the Home Secretary for presentation to parliament. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (HMI), created under the 1856 Police Act, report to parliament on conditions and developments in 42 police forces in England and Wales. For the eight forces in Scotland, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland reports to the Secretary of State for Scotland, who presents the report to parliament. The report of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner is also given to the Home Secretary for presentation to parliament. An examination of these reports over the past decade and a half shows an almost complete failure to include information on the most contentious developments in British policing.

There is no mention in the Inspectors' reports for England, Wales and Scotland of the growth of Special Patrol Groups or Police Support Units, and scant information on 'crowd control' and

firearms training. Nor did the Special Branch officially exist until 1978 when, after public pressure, the Inspectors' reports (along with 23 chief constables) 'spontaneously' included brief details of Special Branches for the first time since its formation in 1883.

The turning point in the direction of policing occurred between 1968 and 1972 when all these developments started to appear, if only in embryonic form. Yet there was virtually no information published at the time, and therefore no basis for scrutiny or public debate by the statutory bodies on the growth of political and industrial intelligence-gathering, the adoption of the 'fire-brigade' policing, or the creation of Britain's version of a paramilitary 'third force'. It is only possible to detect these developments through a scrupulous examination of the individual reports of the 52 chief constables and by the careful monitoring of the reported activities of the police. (This paper does not deal with the developments of record-keeping and computers, like the PNC, by the police for which see: Duncan Campbell's article in *Policing the Police*, Vol.2, and *Bulletins* No 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16).

The political background to police preparations for the 1980s comes at a time when the very nature of liberal democracy as we know it is under attack. The right to strike and to organise for political goals which took more than a hundred years to establish, is under direct attack. So too is the welfare state, part of the historical 'contract' between capital and labour. The very boundaries of what constitutes lawful and legitimate views and actions in a liberal democracy are being eroded by concerted attempts to present all activists as 'subversives', 'extremists' or 'militant strikers'.

### **Policing the community**

There are more police officers in the UK today than every before in its history. This is the result of recent pay awards and the priority placed by this government on

'law and order'. The Metropolitan Police now has 23,210 officers, an all time high (*Guardian*, 5.8.80). The Inspector of Constabulary reported that at the end of 1979 the strength of the police service in England and Wales 'had grown to a new peak of over 113,300' officers (with an additional 43,000 civilian employees, compared with 17,057 in 1972). The Chief Inspector for Scotland reported that in 1979 there were 13,214 officers in the eight forces. David Gray, the Chief Inspector for Scotland, adds in his 1978 Introduction an astute observation:

'Records show that in 1938 there were 6,923 police and 88 civilians in Scottish forces. There are now nearly twice that number of police and the civilian establishment has increased from 88 in 1938 to 4,482 at the end of 1978. In effect our police force has more than than doubled in the last 40 years. Population in Scotland has increased by only about 10 per cent since 1938 and one could well ask where all the policemen have gone.'

One might well indeed ask 'where have all the police officers gone'. Much publicity has been given in the media (and chief constables' reports) to 'community policing' which would put more officers back on the beat and re-introduce foot patrols. According to the HMI's report, three or four forces are trying to redress the trend, and a handful — Devon and Cornwall, West Midlands, Humberside and Gloucestershire — are 'experimenting' in community policing schemes.

Yet these limited attempts pale into insignificance when compared to the 'fire-brigade' policing policies adopted in all major urban areas over the past decade. It is thus not simply a question of the number of police available but **how they are used**. 'Fire-brigade' policing, a term first used by Sir Robert Mark to describe the policing of urban areas, rests on the concept of quickly responding to reported incidents. It relies on the 'technological cop' to whom, in the words of John Alderson, the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, 'The car, radio and the

computer dominate the police scene. The era of preventive policing (by patrolling) is phasing out in favour of a responsive or reactive police' (**Cranfield Papers**, 1978).

It is a system of policing which, because it places efficiency at the forefront, not only leads to people generally meeting the police in conflict, but necessarily negates 'community/preventive' policing in any meaningful way. It also relies on an ideology which designates part of inner cities as 'high crime areas' — those working class areas of high social deprivation and often large black communities like Brixton, Hackney and Lewisham in London, Huyton in Liverpool, and Lozells in Birmingham — where policing is not a question of protecting the community but of keeping it under control. The same ideology also leads to the creation of specialist 'heavy' squads like Special Patrol Groups (see below).

The degree to which 'fire-brigade' policing has been adopted is indicated by the number of forces which have 'command and control' systems to ensure 'quick response times' to incidents. The following survey shows that 27 forces either have, or will soon have, such systems. This indicates that 'fire-brigade' policing is not a passing phase but is now a permanent feature of policing. It is the means by which everyday policing in the community will be conducted in the 1980s.

### **Command and control systems**

At the simplest level 'command and control' systems mean one whereby the operator answering the 999 call knows what resources are available and how to deploy them with the minimum of delay.

Increasingly, therefore, these systems have become computerised, so that the operators can know immediately who and what is available where and can order the appropriate response. The information is available on several specialised indexes (see below) and the despatch of resources

is aided by increasingly specialised radio transmission. Those forces which have computerised command and control are now also gradually interfacing their systems with the Police National Computer (see Duncan Campbell: 'Society under Surveillance' in **Policing the Police Vol.2**, pp. 120-131).

The use of computerised command and control systems in Britain dates from 1972. A Home Office Police Scientific Development Branch experiment was set up in the Birmingham force (extended to West Midlands after reorganisation in 1974). A more sophisticated system was established experimentally in Glasgow in the following year and, at the end of 1973, the Home Office issued a memorandum of guidance to all chief constables explaining the potential of such systems to police forces.

Other forces then began to follow suit. An experiment in Staffordshire provided the basis for extending it to rural forces. By 1977, schemes were in operation in West Midlands, Strathclyde (an extension of the Glasgow project), Staffordshire and Suffolk. Next in line came Bedfordshire, Dorset, Lincolnshire, South Wales, West Mercia and West Yorkshire.

In 1979, following an experiment in four divisional stations in the Y district of London (which covers the boroughs of Enfield and Haringey), the Metropolitan and City forces placed a joint order for the largest computerised command and control system in Britain. Due to become completely operational in 1985, it will provide computer-aided despatch of resources from Scotland Yard and 75 divisional centres in the capital.

In the past two years, a rush of at least 15 other forces have advanced at least to the early stages of completing specifications, obtaining authorisation and inviting tenders for such systems. These forces are: Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Durham, Essex, Greater Manchester, Gwent, Hertfordshire, Lothian and Borders, Merseyside, Northumbria, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Sussex and Thames Valley.



Although small forces like Bedfordshire and Suffolk have gained kudos from being early into the field, the latecomers are picking up the advantages of waiting for systems to be tried and tested.

In Northumbria, whose chief constable, Stanley Bailey, chairs the computer development committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the planned computerisation of police operations owes much to a model developed in South Wales. This model divides the force into three operational communications areas, each under the control of a self-contained area operations room (AOR). Northumbria's will be at Newcastle, Sunderland and Cramlington. The AORs and all sub-divisional police stations will be linked to the force central computer in Newcastle by Visual Display Units (VDUs) and teleprinters. The computerised indexes available to Northumbria's AOR operators will be: incident logging, resource availability, street index, keyholder index, burglar alarm index, duty states, diary of future events, miscellaneous information and message switching. All calls for police assistance will be routed to the appropriate AOR, who will dispatch the necessary officers and technical support.

This restructuring of the force into smaller numbers of areas supercedes the old divisional and sub-divisional structure. While the old structure will remain — and has a part to play within the new computerised areas — it will become far less effective and important as operational control is centralised at area level. In Northumbria, for instance, the eight divisions and 22 sub-divisions will give way, for basic operational purposes, to three areas. A similar process has occurred in South Wales and parts of West Yorkshire. However, other forces (such as West Mercia and Derbyshire) have decided that their computerised command and control systems will remain divisionally based.

With 52 police forces and police authorities all now looking at ways in

which greater use of computers can be made for a variety of policing purposes (not merely command and control), the co-ordinating role of the Home Office has assumed great importance. This role is carried out by the Police Research Services Unit and the Police Scientific Development Branch. Along with ACPO and the HMI, their job is to control the direction of police computer development and prevent too many independent developments. The latest HMI report notes: 'I am glad to see that the Home Office and ACPO are jointly working towards the establishment of standards which forces will be able to use in procuring computer systems.'

The relatively unco-ordinated development of the past has meant that several forces — including some big ones like Hampshire, Lancashire and South Yorkshire — have computerised in alliance with local government. Systems such as personnel, crime and accident records may be held on local authority computers. However, there are now clear police moves to disengage from such projects and to set up instead 'dedicated' police computers which are quite separate from the local authorities. The demands of command and control systems provide powerful leverage for this process.

Dedicated systems are important and attractive to the police for two reasons. First, there is the economic climate. Police authorities and the Home Office can get the necessary financial authorisation more easily than local government. Both Sussex and Northumbria have found it difficult to press ahead with their computer plans because the local authorities could not increase their establishments to obtain the necessary operators. West Midlands Chief Constable, Sir Philip Knights, has drawn attention to the difficulties facing the police in retaining highly qualified computer staff attracted by higher pay rates in private industry. Independence might allow police authorities to bump up their pay rates faster than the harassed local authorities. Especially under the present government — which is prepared

to invest in law and order — there is every incentive for police to go it alone in capital intensive areas like computerisation.

However, secondly, disengagement from local authorities would give the police much greater operational autonomy over their computers. The outside possibility of the introduction of data protection legislation affecting local authorities would leave their joint systems with the police in a problematic position. Joint systems might also become vulnerable to local moves to impose greater control and accountability on the police. Dedicated systems allow the police to operate unhindered and dedicated command and control systems allow them to maintain the principles of fire-brigade policing without danger of challenge.

### Special Patrol Groups

The first Special Patrol Group was set up in London in 1965 as an anti-crime unit to go to the aid of local divisions and provide 'saturation policing' in areas of 'high crime' (see Bulletin No 13). The SPGs that were formed in the 1970s outside London provided a highly mobile back-up force alongside the 'quick response' system provided by computerised 'command and control' networks. However, the State Research survey in 1979 showed that, from 1973/4 onwards, 24 out of 52 forces in the UK had SPG-type groups and that they had also adopted a para-military role in relation to their use in public order and anti-terrorism. (See Bulletin No 13).

In a recent letter to the TUC, the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, persisted in saying that the London SPG — which was responsible for the death of Blair Peach at Southall — is not a para-military force (*Times*, 21.7.80). Following Commissioner Sir David McNee's repeated and well-reported line, the Home Secretary stated that its primary purpose is 'to assist hard-pressed local officers in the fight against crime'. It is precisely the combination of roles that hides the para-

military capacity of the SPG — helping local police by 'saturation policing' in 'high crime areas' with the use of random stops and searches and roadblocks, combined with training and use for public order, and the training and use in anti-terrorist emergencies. The public order function of the SPG is certain to grow. The recent review of police public order 'response times' (announced by Whitelaw himself) stresses that they can have a vital role in providing an 'immediate response' to 'sudden disorder'.

Whitelaw and McNee deny that special training and deployment in public order and anti-terrorist situations (their para-military role) makes the SPG unsuitable for policing in the local community. But their para-military role inevitably inculcates an aggressive and violent ethos which is totally inappropriate to normal policing.

Despite such protestations, the evidence presented in the annual reports on the provincial SPGs, all modelled on the London one, shows that the combination of an anti-crime and a para-military role is an almost universal feature of SPGs. The 1979 report on the Nottinghamshire SPG, the Special Operations Unit, states that 'a third of the Unit's time during the year has been spent on control of public disorders', and that 'all members of the Unit are trained in the use of firearms and form the main Firearms Tactical Team which is available on a call-out system around the clock'.

The 1979 reports provide evidence of the SPGs' para-military role:

— **Staffordshire** (Force Support Unit) trains and exercises in 'the handling of firearms, shield training and crowd control';

— **West Midlands** (Special Patrol Group) has been used on 'drugs raids', 'marches and demonstrations'; its role in 'maintaining order' is an 'equally important role' to help given to local divisions;

— **Derbyshire** (Special Operations Unit) has been used 'increasingly in public order situations';

— **Greater Manchester** (Tactical Aid Group) was used on 43 demonstrations and marches during the year, 3 times outside the force area. Of the 497 arrests made by the Group, 105 were for 'public order offences';

— **Gloucestershire** (Task Force) was involved in many 'incidents of public disorder and industrial disputes involving striking pickets';

— **Thames Valley** (Support Group) 'Monthly training in the use of firearms continued';

— **Avon and Somerset** (Task Force) is responsible for 'the Force Armoury, all firearms training and associated lectures

... (on) public order and protective shield training' (our emphasis);

— **Northumbria** (Special Patrol Group) was involved in 'public order situations .. and incidents where firearms are likely to be used'; 'The majority of SPG personnel are regularly trained in the use of firearms';

— **Merseyside** (Operational Support Division) has been used in a 'large number of demonstrations'; provides 'firearms officers for various security purposes and emergencies';

— **Lancashire** (Task Forces) are 'largely concerned with the prevention and detection of crime and the control of crowds';

### SPECIAL PATROL GROUPS IN THE UK

Force	Name of Group	Date established	Size*
<b>England</b>			
Avon and Somerset	Task/Force	1973	55
City of London	Special Operations Group	1977	16
Derbyshire	Special Operations Unit	1970	22
Essex	Force Support Unit	1973	32
Gloucestershire	Task Force	—	—
Greater Manchester	Tactical Aid Group	1976	74
Hampshire	Rural Support Group	—	32+
Hertfordshire	Tactical Patrol Group	1965	28
Humberside	Support Group	1978	47
Kent	Support Groups	—	39
Lancashire	Task Forces	1978	—
Merseyside	Task Force	1974-6	68
	Operational Support Division	1976	114
Metropolitan Police	Special Patrol Group	1965	204
Norfolk	Police Support Unit	—	—
Northumbria	Special Patrol Group	1974	46 (1977)
North Yorkshire	Task Force	1974	—
Nottinghamshire	Special Operations Unit	—	35
Staffordshire	Force Support Unit	1976	23
Thames Valley	Support Group	1969	41
West Mercia	Task Force	1978	11
West Midlands	Special Patrol Group	1970	90
West Yorkshire	Task Forces	1974	—
<b>Wales</b>			
Gwent	Support Group	1972	20
South Wales	Special Patrol Group	1975	54
<b>Scotland</b>			
Central Scotland	Support Group	—	—
Strathclyde	Support Units	1973	145 (1975)
<b>Northern Ireland</b>			
Royal Ulster Constabulary	Special Patrol Group	1970	368

\*1978/79 figures except where stated.

— **West Yorkshire** (Task Forces) were used at 'public marches and demonstrations'; and received training 'in relation to their role as a Police Support Unit, (and) in the use of firearms';

— **Humber** (Support Group) was used for 'preventive public order duty in city and town centres (and) industrial picketing';

— **Essex** (Force Support Unit) was used at 'demonstrations and strikes';

— **Kent** (Support Groups) 'All members of the Group are trained in the use of firearms and CS gas';

— **West Mercia** (Task Force) 'proved of invaluable assistance with major crimes and operations of a public order nature';

— **Hampshire** (Rural Support Group) 'All larger marches are now attended by sections of the Rural Support Group; a **team of rural beat officers who have received an extended form of public order training**' (our emphasis).

Each report seeks to emphasise the role of SPGs in 'assisting hard-pressed local officers', to use Whitelaw's description. There may be a valid need for a central reserve unit to help in local divisions in an anti-crime role, but there is no reason why these groups should also undertake para-military activities.

The annual reports for 1979 make it possible to pinpoint three more SPGs — in West Mercia (1978), Hampshire and Kent, bringing the total to 27 (see table for details). The reports also reveal that three forces have increased the size of their SPGs. The Special Operations Unit in Derbyshire has been doubled from 11 to 22; the Tactical Aid Group in Manchester has risen from 70 to 74; and the Special Patrol Group in the West Midlands from 85 to 90. In the latter case, the annual report states that the authorised establishment for the SPG (the numbers which may be recruited) is 127.

The evidence is irrefutable. In Britain there are now at least 27 elite SPG groups with a para-military capacity which are also being used in everyday policing in the community. Whitelaw's 6 August statement suggests that more may be

formed. This development has taken place over the past decade and, like the Police Support Units (PSUs) described below, now form a permanent feature of British policing.

### **The creation of a 'third force'**

The potentially most unpopular development in the 1970s, which was hotly debated and resolved between 1972-74, was the creation of a 'third force' to stand between the army and the police to deal with demonstrations, strikes and terrorists. The police opposed the idea and, with Home Office backing, won the day. But, in doing so, they effectively committed themselves to fulfilling this role (see Bulletin No 13, for the background to this debate).

As we have seen, during the 1970s more than half of the 52 police forces in the UK created Special Patrol Groups. During the 1970s other specialist units were created — the Police Support Units. This meant there was a massive extension in crowd control, riot and shield training for rank and file police officers, quite outside the SPGs. 'Mutual aid' to other forces has been extended to providing **riot-trained** police units.

Thus the police's answer to providing a 'third force' in the UK has been double-edged. The anti-terrorist role is carried out by SPGs, newly-formed Tactical Firearms Units (see later) and, as a last resort, by the army's Special Air Service (SAS). The public order role of a 'third force' is undertaken by the Police Support Units and SPGs. Taken together, this development means that a qualitative change in the role of the police has already occurred.

### **Mutual Aid**

The concept of 'mutual aid', as it is termed in police circles, whereby officers of one force go to the aid of another, is an old one. In the latter part of the 19th century the Metropolitan Police were often ordered to different parts of the

country by the Home Secretary. In 1910, the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, sent 800 London officers to Tonypandy in Wales to suppress striking miners. The Police Act of 1890 just authorised standing arrangements to be made between forces providing for mutual aid, as a means of avoiding the use of troops; a Select Committee in 1908 found that military assistance had been requested by the police 24 times in the previous thirty-nine years. It further found that only a quarter of the 200 forces then in existence had made agreements. Mutual aid agreements did not become general until 1925 — the year before the General Strike (**A History of the Police in England and Wales**, T.A.Critchley, pp 179-181). The provision was incorporated in the 1964 Police Act, S.14.

In a recent article in **Police Journal**, entitled 'Third Force', a senior officer of the Thames Valley Police confirmed the 'British way' of creating a mobile third force (April 1980). Compared to the French and German systems, he wrote: 'In England and Wales Special Patrol Groups and Support Units have been formed as reserves within individual forces ... Mutual aid is provided by Police Support Units'. What distinguishes, and disguises, Britain's 'third force' is that SPGs also carry out duties other than crowd control and anti-terrorist work, and members of PSUs are drawn from uniformed police officers who spend most of their time doing ordinary police work.

### **Police Support Units**

After the Second World War the duties of the police in relation to Civil Defence were drawn up following the Civil Defence Act 1948, and the creation of the Civil Defence Corps in 1949 (the latter was disbanded in 1968). One of the standard police textbooks, J.D. Devlin's **Police Procedure, Administration and Organisations** (Butterworths), published in 1966, defined these duties in a section on 'The Police and Civil Defence'. This stated that in time of war the police

would have additional duties of the maintenance of internal security, guarding key points, and assisting in the evacuation of the public. For this purpose 'about a third of the Police Service would be withdrawn from normal duty and held in reserve'. Those held in reserve would be 'formed into self-supporting mobile columns each consisting of 133 men commanded by a superintendent. Each column would be divided into three divisions, under the command of an inspector' (op.cit. p 145). There would therefore be three divisions of about 40 officers under the command of an inspector making up a column.

Police Support Units were first mentioned in the Police Manual of Home Defence issued by the Home Office in 1974; here the formation of PSUs is discussed solely in terms of civil defence in a nuclear war. Their role is to deal with 'the additional duties arising from the onset of war', such as guarding key points, and maintaining internal security (eg the detention of 'subversive or potentially subversive people'). Each PSU would consist of an inspector (Unit Commander), and three sections each with a sergeant and ten constables, 34 men in all. PSUs, the Manual states, 'would be established on a divisional basis, the actual number of units being proportional to manpower strengths. Each division would provide at a minimum, one PSU'. As is evident, with some minor modifications, this plan is very similar to that laid down in the late 1940s.

According to the 1974 Manual, PSUs would be used to 'meet situations before and after attack', and their 'mobilisations' would be enacted on the 'receipt' by the chief constable of 'a message from the Home Office'. The chief constable would 'then take steps to form Police Support Units in accordance with pre-arranged plans' (our emphasis). Not only is the formation of PSUs represented as a wartime measure, but the Manual also states that 'no specialist training will be given to personnel designated for Police Support Units, but Chief Constables will

have opportunities to practise the units in peacetime when suitable policing tasks arise'. PSU members spend most of their time on other police duties and are thus different from officers in an SPG.

In practice, since 1974, PSUs have been formed and trained not only for civil defence but also primarily for public order situations like strikes and demonstrations. As this study will show their training has been in 'crowd control' and 'riot shield training', and they have been used in public order situations either within their

force boundaries or by providing mutual aid to other forces.

An examination of 50 chief constables' reports for 1979 (the RUC and Northamptonshire reports have yet to be published) shows that 28 have formed PSUs over the past six years. And a further 14 reports contain mentions under 'Training' of courses on 'crowd control', 'public order' or 'shield training' (see chart). As chief constables include information in their annual reports entirely at their own discretion it is not an

## POLICE SUPPORT UNITS IN ENGLAND, WALES AND SCOTLAND

This survey covers the Metropolitan Police, the City of London Police, the 41 provincial forces in England and Wales, and the 8 forces in Scotland. It does not cover the Royal Ulster Constabulary whose report for 1979 has not yet been published. A total of 52 out of 53 annual reports form the basis of the survey.

**Col. A:** gives the number of police officers in each force. **Col. B:** the number of local divisions within each force. **Col C:** indicates whether or not an annual report contains a report on PSUs, or the existence of PSUs included under 'training' (this is shown as tr). Where figures of the numbers in PSUs are given they are put in brackets. The fact that many forces contain no mention of PSUs does not mean they do not have them, it simply means that the Chief Constable has chosen not to include mention of them in his annual report. **Col D:** shows where PSUs are included under the heading 'Home Defence/War Duties'. **Col E:** gives the figures for training in 'crowd control', 'riot control', or 'riot shield training' in the reports.

	A	B	C	D	E
Force	Size	Divs	PSU	Home Defence	Tr:crowd/riot control
1 Metropolitan Police	22,786	24	—	—	2,500 (79)
2 City of London	847	3	—	—	132 (78)
3 Avon and Somerset	2,865	11	Yes (a)	—	—
4 Bedfordshire	917	5	Yes (tr.)	—	—
5 Cambridgeshire	1,085	2	Yes..under 'Home Defence'	—	172 (79)
6 Cheshire	1,803	5	Yes(1,220)	—	—
7 Cleveland	1,411	7	—	—	—
8 Cumbria	1,071	4	—	—	6 (c)
9 Derbyshire	1,757	4	—	—	840 (79)
10 Devon & Cornwall	2,705	7	Yes (100+)	—	—
11 Dorset	1,159	2	Yes (tr)	—	—
12 Durham	1,313	4	Yes (tr)	'Public order' training under 'War Duties'	Yes (no figs)
13 Essex	2,503	8	—	—	500 (79)
14 Gloucestershire	1,099	3	—	—	180 (79)
15 Greater Manchester	6,653	14	Yes (78 Rep)	—	—
16 Hampshire	2,945	10	Yes (tr:657) (78)	—	Yes(no figs,79)
17 Hertfordshire	1,466	6	Yes	—	—
18 Humberside	1,879	6	—	—	—
19 Kent	2,808	7	Yes(tr:13 courses)	—	—

unreasonable assumption that all 52 forces either have or are in the process of forming their full complements of PSUs — one per division in the force area. The Home Office now envisages the final completion of a national mutual aid system based on PSUs. On 6 August Whitelaw announced that each force in the country will review its 'command structure and operational plan' for dealing with 'spontaneous disorder' and that Chief officers will consider invoking mutual aid at 'an early stage in an incident'.

There are 325 divisions of the 51 forces in England, Wales and Scotland and if each has one PSU (some may have more) then there are at least **11,000 specially-trained riot police** in Great Britain. This figure excludes the 27 known Special Patrol Groups, who are highly trained in riot control; Shield Trained Units, each of 30 officers, which are known to exist at divisional level in London and West Yorkshire; and officers who are not attached to any of these named units but who nevertheless receive

	A	B	C	D	E
20 Lancashire	3,089	10	—	—	736 (79)
21 Leicestershire	1,701	4	Yes	—	—
22 Lincolnshire	1,097	4	Yes(tr:415)	—	—
23 Merseyside	4,469	11	Yes (490)	—	490 (79)
24 Norfolk	1,265	4	Yes ( 76 men)	—	—
25 Northamptonshire	942	5	Yes(tr:312) (78)	—	—
26 Northumbria	3,400	8	Yes	—	—
27 North Yorkshire	1,338	4	Yes...under War Duties	—	—
28 Nottinghamshire	2,125	6	—	—	—
29 South Yorkshire	2,644	6	Yes (68+)	—	500 (76)
30 Staffordshire	2,015	7	—	—	Yes (no figs)
31 Suffolk	1,105	3	Yes (tr)	—	—
32 Surrey	1,459	5	Yes (255)	—	—
33 Sussex	2,777	5	Yes (1,306)	—	—
34 Thames Valley	2,764	8	Yes(tr, in 75&76)	—	—
35 Warwickshire	883	3	—	—	—
36 West Mercia	1,837	7	—	—	495 (79)
37 West Midlands	6,160	11	—	—	Yes (no figs)
38 West Yorkshire	4,799	14	Yes...under War Duties	—	—
39 Wiltshire	1,007	3	—	—	146 (79)
<b>WALES</b>					
40 Dyfed-Powys	918	4	—	—	—
41 Gwent	946	3	—	—	—
42 North Wales	1,271	4	Yes (tr)	—	—
43 South Wales	3,069	9	—	—	—
<b>SCOTLAND</b>					
44 Central	509	2	—	—	—
45 Dumfries & Galloway	311	7	Yes (tr:74)	—	—
46 Fife	671	3	—	—	238 (79)
47 Grampian	918	4	Yes (tr:180)	—	—
48 Lothian & Borders	2,342	7	—	—	—
49 Northern	603	3	—	—	96 (79)
50 Strathclyde	6,858	15	Yes (b)	—	—
51 Tayside	941	3	—	—	Yes (78)
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>					
52 Royal Ulster Constabulary	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	—

**Notes:**

- a) Avon and Somerset are known to have PSUs (Police Federation magazine, April, 1980)
- b) Strathclyde supplied PSUs to Dumfries and Galloway for port duty (1976 Report).

riot control training. In London, for example, where there are 24 divisions, there would be 816 PSU-trained officers and 720 Shield Trained Unit officers, yet in 1978 the Commissioner reported that 7,000 out of 22,000 officers had received riot control training.

Britain now has, in everything but name, a large 'third force' trained for and used against workers on strike and political demonstrations.

In the 1972 'Civil Defence' (geared in the 1950s and 1960s to nuclear warfare) was redefined as 'Home Defence' (as it is termed in police and military circles) or as 'Emergency Services' (as it was presented by the Home Office to local authorities). The redefinition meant that planning and training for wartime **and** peacetime emergencies were in future to be treated as a united strategy. The Home Office circular to local authorities said: 'It is considered that there is much common ground between war planning and the preparations required for, and the organisation appropriate to, a major peacetime emergency (strikes and terrorism, etc) or natural disaster' (Circular ES/1, 22.3.72). The briefs given for 'Home Defence' and the Civil Contingencies Units therefore have much in common (see Bulletin No 8, Civil Defence of Internal Defence?).

The collapsing of the old-style 'Civil Defence' (against an external enemy) to the new-style 'Home Defence' or 'Emergency Services' further thwarts any attempt to reveal the exact degree of training and planning of the police which is directed at public order situations. Three reports — West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire — give accounts of their PSUs under the headings of 'Home Defence' or 'War Duties'. At the same time it is difficult to establish how many 'Home Defence' training courses include components which could be used for strikes and demonstrations. 'Home Defence' training encourages police-military liaison (which was seen in practice in the firemen's strike) (see Bulletin No 10) and police liaison with the

local council Emergency Services Planning Department officials, the fire service, hospitals and voluntary organisations (the latter often being reported under 'Major Incidents Training').

### Features of PSUs

The development of PSUs has not just affected the urban police forces, but also rural ones because the concept of mutual aid has placed the same demands on all forces.

The chief constable of Norfolk writes in his reports that it is a 'sad reflection' that:

**'Violence as demonstrated by disorder of both industrial and political origin has increased to such a degree that police officers are being subjected to forms of training for situations beyond what is regarded as their traditional role ... Today it is necessary to train Police Support Units to act as a team, quickly and with knowledge of each other's role, under their unit commanders. They are equipped with shields and other clothing and members of these Units receive regular and realistic training. It is a matter of some concern that officers who not only are trained for, but also experience, violent confrontations are expected to revert immediately to the role of a community officer'** (1979 Report) (our emphasis).

Similarly, the Suffolk report says: 'Against a background of social unrest, the enforcement of the law of picketing and the control of demonstrations designed to promote political demands have become an increasingly invidious task for the police' (1979 Report). Suffolk sent PSUs to Leicester in April 1979 where there were violent clashes with anti-National Front demonstrators. Even some chief constables fear that if police are trained and used in more aggressive roles then, over time, it is bound to effect the way in which they carry out everyday policing in the community.

Several of the reports spell out the rationale for forming PSUs. John



Alderson of Devon and Cornwall, writing about PSUs, says: 'All forces in England and Wales are committed to having teams of officers trained in crowd control techniques and available for short notice transference to other parts of the country in times of emergency. These units of 34 men act very much as a team and have to be taught certain drills for use in disorderly crowds' (1978 Report). While the West Yorkshire report under the heading of 'Home Defence' demonstrates the complementary roles of the various units:

'Each of the three Task Forces (SPGs) attended a one-day Course at the Peel Centre, Hendon, to receive instruction in the Metropolitan Police system of shield training which was adopted by this Force. All Police Support Units within the Force underwent two one-day combined training sessions at headquarters and, additionally were involved in combined training with Shield Trained Units' (1979 Report). The same section refers to courses organised by the force which 'spanned home defence, public order and major incident training'.

West Yorkshire is not the only force to send SPG and PSU officers to be trained by the Metropolitan police; others include North Wales, Suffolk, Surrey, and Cheshire. The Cheshire report states that their PSUs have been trained 'in the latest methods of crowd control to a system formulated by the Metropolitan Police. The system involves the tactical use and deployment of the Police Protective Shield. The training has been undertaken on a regional basis, with the Greater Manchester Police, and all forces in the region have been trained to the same method' (1979 Report).

Two reports state that riot control training is now a standard part of their training programmes for all officers. In Northumbria, all probationer constables with about 18 months' service received a three-day course in crowd control and police support unit techniques, including the 'use of protective shields, as an integral

part of their training' (1979 Report); the Merseyside report says, 'All newly trained officers to this Force are given this instruction (riot shield training)' (1979).

Few of the sections on PSUs (most of which appear under the heading 'Training') give information on their actual use, and those that do indicate that in addition to their primary functions, crowd control and mutual aid, they are used in a variety of ways. The five Surrey PSUs were 'mobilised' on eight occasions in 1979, twice for mutual aid, and six other times including 'assistance at a gipsy eviction'; 'public order standby for the Pop Festival'; 'the general election'; and 'hunting saboteurs'. The Greater Manchester PSUs were mobilised 25 times in 1977 and 11 times in 1978, for mutual aid, 'political demonstrations and marches (and) football matches'.

Police force structures reflect their new para-military activities; several forces have created 'Operations Divisions', yet another sign of the growing specialisation in police forces. South Yorkshire, for example, set up one in October last year. This has an Operations Room, which handles 'Major Incident Contingency Planning' and 'Home Defence', and an 'Operations Section'. The Operations Section handles 'Operational Incidents', 'Public Order — Industrial Disputes', 'Police Support Units' and 'Vandal and Litter Squads'. Under the first category the report states that the Section is responsible for all public order situations and Royal visits and co-ordinates planning 'for such visits/incidents' with Divisional Commanders, Special Branch ...'. For 'Public Order-Industrial Disputes' the Section is responsible for the 'collation of information, contingency planning and the operational execution of orders concerning large-scale industrial disputes and public order situations ...'. For 'Police Support Units': 'The Operations Division have assumed total responsibility for Police Support Units in the Force and are now responsible for the training, provision of equipment, deployment, reception and all other matters touching

upon the utilisation of Police Support Units, either within the Force or in support of other forces' (1979 Report). Cleveland has an 'Operations Branch' which unites similar functions.

All forces are now to set up 'logistics planning teams' to coordinate their internal arrangements for responding to public order problems. And the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Home Office will study 'urgently' whether new 'suitable vehicles and communications' will be needed, particularly in the case of mutual aid.

### **PSUs and mutual aid**

The main reported occasions over the past 15 months when PSUs have been used in mutual aid to other forces were at Leicester (anti-NF demonstration) April 21, 1979; Great Yarmouth for the NF annual conference; Corby to contain anger at steel closures; Bristol in April this year; and during the steel strike.

In Leicester on April 21, 1979, 1,000 National Front marchers were confronted by 400 'militant' anti-NF demonstrators (police figures). On that day, according to Leicestershire's annual report, there was 'a total of 5,065 police officers, including 4,035 from 20 other forces' (our emphasis). The reason why police had to be drawn from 20 forces rather than 5 or 6 was that each sent only riot-trained PSUs. Gloucestershire sent their SPG and PSUs; Hertfordshire sent five PSUs, one being deployed as a shield carrying unit (1979 Report); Greater Manchester sent 600 officers 'in a police convoy of 42 assorted vehicles'; and, just two days before Southall, the Metropolitan police sent 500 officers; other forces known to have sent PSUs to Leicester are Suffolk and Bedfordshire.

For the National Front annual conference at Great Yarmouth, the Norfolk force got officers from eight other forces, including the PSUs from Suffolk and Bedfordshire. As the report for Northamptonshire has not yet been published it is not known how many

police were deployed at Corby. Other reports show that PSUs were sent from West Midlands, Leicestershire and Bedfordshire.

During the steel workers strike the South Yorkshire police were supplemented by PSUs from Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Humberside, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (speech by James Brownlow to the Association of Chief Police Officers Conference, 1980). On April 2 this year when police withdrew from the St Paul's area of Bristol after disturbances, it took six hours for them to go back in again — because they were waiting for the PSUs to arrive from Devon and Cornwall, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. When they went back into St Paul's the police wanted to do so only with units who were riot-trained (see Bulletin No 18).

In the above instances, and in many others not recorded in chief constables' reports, what the crowds did not realise was that they were not being confronted by ordinary uniformed police but by specially-trained PSU and SPG units. At Leicester, the police used dogs and riot shields as offensive weapons. More than 80 of the 400 anti-NF demonstrators were arrested. The chief constable Alan Goodson, comments in his annual report:

'We hold back from the para-military style of organisation that is the ready solution to intolerable levels of violence, because of its effect upon the fundamental relationship between the police and the brutalising of the traditional image of the British bobby'. The evidence suggests that the British police have not held back from para-military activity; they have simply adopted a style of organisation which is intended to conceal it.

### **Crowd control courses**

The HMI report for 1972 was by far the most explicit of the last decade. It could not ignore the first miners' strike and what the police and government saw as the humiliating defeat of 'law and order'

at Saltley in Birmingham. The 1972 report speaks of picketing posing 'considerable problems for the police', and of 'some incidents in which the police were overwhelmed by numbers'. Yet the following year, 1973, makes no mention of strikes (this was the year Heath declared his fifth state of emergency and the state's regional emergency structure was put on standby). No national figures for crowd control were given, though this is standard practice for most other training courses. All that appeared was the statement that 'Other courses arranged locally included ... crowd control'.

For 1974, the year of the continuing miners' strike and three-day week, the one-page section on 'Public Order' was devoted almost exclusively to Provisional IRA bombings in Britain. The final, 33-word, paragraph stated that it was a 'comparatively quiet year' in the public order field. In this 'quiet' year, the section on training as usual contained no figures, yet a single sentence baldly stated: **'There was a sharp increase in the number of courses on crowd control'**, (our emphasis). Between 1974 and 1979, 'crowd control' simply appeared under 'other courses'.

As has been indicated, training in riot control extends beyond the specialist units. It is becoming a standard part of police training. In the chief constables' reports over the last few years the numbers trained in 'crowd control', where they are given, are very large in many cases — London 2,500 (1979); Derbyshire 840 (1979); Devon and Cornwall 830 (1978); Essex 500 (1979); Lancashire 736 (1979); South Yorkshire 600 (1976); West Mercia 495 (1979); Fife 238 (1979); Northern Constabulary (Scotland) 96 (1979). In Cambridgeshire, 172 officers were trained in crowd control under the training heading 'Home Defence', and Durham similarly lists public order training under 'War Duties'.

In West Yorkshire it is their Task Forces (SPG) which are in charge of riot training, as is the Operational Support Division (SPG) in Merseyside.

On 6 August the Home Secretary's statement carried this development to the national level. While the main brunt, in operational response terms, will still fall on PSUs and SPGs *all* officers will now receive 'basic public order training'. This training will include the use of riot shields. And regular inter-force exercises will be held.

### **Firearms training**

The traditional image of the police as an unarmed force also no longer holds true; more and more, they are going about their work with firearms to hand. This development during the 1970s affects the police in two ways. There has been a massive increase in firearms training for rank and file officers and all newly recruited police officers now receive firearms 'familiarisation' training. At the same time specialist firearms squads have been formed in many forces — Firearms Support Units and/or the local SPG.

### **Police and firearms**

Modern police firearms policy dates from 1971, when the then Home Secretary Robert Carr, set up a working party to decide what arms the force should have. Since then, police firearms policy has developed rapidly on a nationwide scale.

In accordance with Home Office instruction, all police forces train a proportion of officers to handle firearms. The proportion varies and not all forces provide comparable figures. Of those that do so, Avon and Somerset has trained 4.8 per cent of the force (140 officers) as authorised users; West Mercia has 5.8 per cent (107), Greater Manchester 6.3 per cent (420) and Warwickshire 7 per cent (62). At the upper end of the scale come South Yorkshire with 12.1 per cent (320), Essex with 12.2 per cent (305), Humberside with 15 per cent (281) and the Metropolitan 16.8 per cent (3,820). But the force with the highest proportion appears to be Northern (which covers the Scottish highlands and islands) with 313

trained officers (almost 52 per cent of the force).

In fact if the national average is estimated at around 10 per cent, over 12,000 police officers now receive regular handgun revolver training in Great Britain. It is unknown if there are enough guns in stock for them to be issued with them all at the one time.

Initial and refresher training for these officers is carried out by the local force itself. Forces increasingly possess their own indoor ranges (often they are part of the force training centre or force headquarters). For example, Northumbria opened its own range at Gateshead last year, which has already been visited by other forces planning to instal their own ranges. Other forces still use military ranges: for example, North Yorkshire trains at the army's ranges at Catterick, while the Met uses RAF facilities at Uxbridge. Dorset shares a range with the UK Atomic Energy Authority.

Initial revolver training normally lasts five days, though the Met's course lasts only four. Lancashire describes the training as covering 'how to shoot, basic weapon recognition, handling and maintenance techniques'. In most forces, trained officers receive one day's refresher training every three months.

The training is supervised by officers who have received firearms instructor training at one of four major police arms training centres: Wakefield, Preston, Exeter and London. The training course now lasts for six weeks. The training officers (who normally seem to be of sergeant rank and above) are sometimes themselves members of existing specialist units or squads of various kinds within their own forces. For example, firearms training officers in Avon and Somerset are members of the Task Force (SPG), while in Leicestershire they are members of the specialist Tactical Firearms Unit (see below). Elsewhere — and this may be the traditional model — the training officers are members of the Firearms and Explosives Section (as in Greater Manchester and West Midlands) which

administers civilian possession and licensing of weapons under the Firearms Act. A further model is the City of London's wholly specialised six-strong Firearms Training Unit.

The training — sometimes known as 'defensive weapons training' — covers handguns. But all forces also have specialist shotgun and rifle training. Of these, shotgun training is more common (and relates both to the firing of cartridges and gas).

Information on the numbers and types of weapon in police force armouries remains hard to come by and attempts to discover more are met with silence on security grounds. Only one force traditionally gives such details. The City of London reports that it possesses five types. A Smith and Wesson .38 revolver with a four inch barrel and a large butt is available for use by any firearms-trained officer. A similar calibre weapon of the same make, but with only a two inch barrel and a shorter butt, is used by CID and plain-clothes officers. This force also possesses Parker-Hale 7.62 mm and .222 rifles as well as Remington 12-bore shotguns. The only other force to specify its weaponry in the 1979 annual reports is Hertfordshire, which has acquired a Remington pump action shotgun to supplement the Police Viking shotgun. Other information suggests that these are all standard police weapons.

### **Specialist arms training**

South Yorkshire illustrates the indubitably specialist character of rifle training. It has 12 rifle-trained police, the same number as South Wales and Avon and Somerset, while Lancashire has 14. Other forces may have larger numbers, but they still remain a select group and are normally members of specialist units. This contrasts with the revolver trained (and some of the shotgun-trained) officers, who are normally ordinary divisional uniformed police.

Specialist firearms training is normally provided for most members of Special

Patrol Groups (or their equivalents) and for Special Branch operational officers — as well as for more specialised units such as the Met's Diplomatic Protection Group.

The arming of SPGs is in line with their primary policing function as a major incident reserve force. In Thames Valley, for instance, the armed work of the Support Group (SPG) 'included the arrests of armed persons and observations for suspected armed robberies'. However, in Essex the commitment was significantly wider. Here, the majority of arming of the Force Support Unit was 'in connection with ongoing commitments for surveillance and protection of property concerning suspected terrorist activities', while other armed policing included VIP protection, prisoner escorts, high-value convoy escorts and the destruction of dangerous animals — as well as crime-related operations. The Essex picture is much nearer the typical mark.

However, SPGs are normally only armed for particular duties (though the duties may be frequent). Nevertheless, they form the core of operational armed policing in most of the police forces in this country — receiving what is known as 'tactical firearms' training. For example, in Nottinghamshire, the Special Operations Unit (SPG) are all firearms trained and are all available on a 24-hour stand-by as 'the main firearms tactical team'. However, not every member of every SPG receives tactical firearms training. In Merseyside 72 of the 114 members of the Operational Support Division (SPG) were regularly trained, as were 'a majority' of the Northumbria Special Patrol Group.

The police are increasingly armed for various types of protection duty. This can cover four main activities: armed guarding of buildings, convoys, prisoners and VIPs. Apart from specific continuous duties, buildings will normally only receive armed protection at times of tension. Essex police, for example, guarded oil installations at Canvey Island during 1979 (after an IRA bomb) — the guarding was

done by the Force Support Unit (SPG).

The same goes for guarding convoys and escorting prisoners. Gloucestershire Task Force (SPG) provides guards 'in connection with the loading of atomic waste'. South Wales, Essex and Hampshire all refer to related duties. But, on the railways, local forces only play a supporting role to the British Transport and, especially, the UKAEA police in guarding convoys of dangerous loads which are believed to be 'at risk'.

While these duties are likely to involve the SPGs, armed protection of VIPs invariably involves the Special Branch. In some forces, these duties have begun to devolve onto more specialised offshoots (like the Met's Diplomatic Protection Group, Anti-terrorist Squad and Royalty Protection Group, and West Midlands's Anti-terrorist Squad) the operational side of all provincial Special Branches still involves extensive armed protection work. VIP protection firearms training lasts for a week and is a speciality of the Devon and Cornwall police training centre and of the Met.

### **Firearms Support Units**

At least nine forces in Britain have now developed crack units of armed police, separate from SPGs and from the other units mentioned above, training together on a regular basis and deployed for major incidents. In order best to understand their role, they might best be described as Firearms Support Units, as indeed some of them are. As Home Office minister, Leon Brittan, said on 28 July: 'The trend is towards the setting up of specialist units'.

The earliest was possibly Essex's Central Firearms Unit, dating from 1975. Cheshire's Firearms Support Unit dates from 1978. It provides 'immediate support' where 'their higher level of team training and firearms expertise' may be required. It consists of two teams of seven constables, each team commanded by an inspector. They train together once a month but are only deployed as a team or

unit as occasion requires. They are equipped with special single frequency radios. Originally, their training was for searches and hostage sieges — the common justification for the existence of such units. But now, according to chief constable George Fenn, 'this original concept has been enlarged' and the unit now also escorts dangerous prisoners and, with the Cheshire special branch, provides VIP protection.

A very similar Tactical Firearms Unit was set up in Leicestershire in 1978. Also arranged in teams of eight, it trains weekly and two-thirds of its work in 1979 was on protection. Hampshire's Tactical Firearms Unit came into operation in 1979 and consists of six teams of five. Other forces with similar units are Cleveland, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Suffolk. It is highly likely that other forces have them too. Even Jersey maintains 'a nucleus of experienced snipers', but several forces have developed weapons specialisation within other, often older, squad structures. Finally, there is the Metropolitan Police's 20-strong firearms-trained unit, D11, based at Old Street under the command of Chief Superintendent A.J.E. Robbins and which is also responsible for firearms training in the Met.

### **How often are police armed?**

Official figures given in parliament showed an annual rise in the number of occasions when arms were issued to officers in every year of the last decade save 1977 (5 February and 28 July 1980). In England and Wales, they show a rise from 1,072 occasions in 1970 to 8,374 in 1979. In 1978 (the last year for which a detailed breakdown is available), a vast proportion — 5,835 or 78.2 per cent — were in the Met. The next highest total was 215 in West Midlands. Five other forces exceeded 100: City, Devon and Cornwall, Hampshire, Kent and Merseyside. In Scotland in 1979, there were 699 gun issues of all kinds. However,

none of these totals shows how many weapons were involved on each occasion. Above all, in the case of England and Wales, the figures **omit all protection arming.**

The 1979 annual reports suggest there has been a major upsurge in this field. Much of it related to the general election period following the killing of Airey Neave MP in April 1979 — so 1979 may prove something of a freak year. In South Wales, for example, guns were issued 261 times, 'mainly in connection with the security of visiting royalty and other persons'. This exceeds the figure for all crime-related gun issue in South Wales between 1970 and 1978. Thames Valley too notes 'a marked increase in protection duties'. In Hampshire there were 96 issues of guns for criminal incidents and 137 for protection. In short, it is reasonable to estimate that the official figures showing crime-related gun issue only reveal about half of the picture of armed policing in Britain today.

Police are reluctant to talk about guns. However, in a speech to the Yorkshire Monday Club at Harrogate in June, the Police Federation secretary, Jim Jardine, observed that in the mid-1960s, 'the police service was virtually an unarmed service'. The subsequent growth in firearms training and issue means, Jardine said, that 'we can no longer pretend that ours is a totally unarmed service'. And he continued, 'I cannot forecast what the position will be by the end of the eighties, but the trends are ominous.' But firearms policy is fundamentally a chief constable responsibility and here there is a tendency to discuss arming solely in terms of its use against criminals and not in terms of protection arming.

However, the long tradition of unarmed policing still means that the British police remain cautious about actually firing the guns which they increasingly carry. Apart from 208 occasions between 1970 and 1979 on which the police in England and Wales used their guns to destroy dangerous animals, guns were fired on about 20

occasions (though how many shots were fired is not known). These incidents resulted in six deaths and five injuries. There were three such incidents in 1979 (in London, Essex and West Midlands).

It is not clear whether police have national guidelines for the use of firearms — equivalent to the army's 'yellow card' procedure in Northern Ireland. However, some indication of the procedure in London was revealed in the Met's 1978 annual report when, describing one shooting incident in which police killed an armed robber, Sir David McNee stated: 'the officer acted in strict accordance with instructions; he did not fire until his order to the criminals to throw down their weapons was ignored and he himself was threatened.'

But if the police rarely disclose or discuss firearms policy, they are relatively open on the subject by comparison with their policy on the possession, and use of CS gas by the police. Although only four forces (Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Kent and Sussex) make any reference to gas, every police force has maintained stocks of it since the mid-1960s. In some forces, their most highly trained firearms officers are also trained in the use of gas. Sussex has 26 gas-trained officers, while Leicestershire's Tactical Firearms Unit are trained to use 1½" gas guns. Hertfordshire's Special Firearms Team has new Remington pump action shotguns (see above) 'intended primarily for rapid delivery of Ferret CS gas cartridges and the destruction of dangerous animals'. Gloucestershire — one of England's smallest forces — has a 25-strong 'Gas Squad', 10 of whom form a special Protection Squad. But in some forces, the special patrol groups are known to be gas-trained; in Kent, for example, all 38 members of the Support Group (SPG) are trained to use CS gas. The use of gas is still governed by a statement of the Home Secretary, Sir Frank Soskice, in May 1965 that it is 'for use in dealing with armed criminals or violently insane persons in buildings from which they cannot be dislodged without danger of loss of life.

The tear smoke would not be used in any other circumstances.' CS gas has been used once by British police, at Willesden, London, in 1971.

### **Technical Support**

During the 1970s the police brought the application of scientific knowledge to many different aspects of their work. This included the use of closed circuit television, the creation of specialist Technical Support Units and the use of helicopters for surveillance.

The use of closed circuit television (CCTV) now forms an integral and expanding part of routine police work in all forces, although Scottish forces lag some way behind. CCTV is used for two basic purposes: training and operational surveillance. Its value for training is obvious; however, the use of CCTV for operational purposes is the expanding area in two main ways. First, it helps 'scenes of crime' officers to have a filmed record of major incidents. But secondly, it can be used for more speculative, anticipatory surveillance both of crime and, increasingly, of public order.

Because of the cost of investment in modern CCTV equipment three forces, Kent, Sussex and West Mercia, have forged ahead as leaders and other forces have become increasingly dependent on them for specialist training and for modern videos — a process which is a familiar and important pattern of the modern rationalised training and equipping of Britain's decentralised police. The Kent Police Television Unit produces training videos of very high technical quality — including one made jointly with the Kent Immigration Service. A Kent-made-video on home defence is supplied to home defence regions throughout the country.

The use of CCTV to record public order events has long been known in London. Nine CCTV cameras directly linked to Scotland Yard are permanently installed on key buildings in central London. But the Kent technique shows

that this type of surveillance — with its obvious advantages to officers employed to gather intelligence on political activists — is spreading to other forces. A further example last year, was the deployment of 'sophisticated viewing equipment' at the National Front's annual conference at Great Yarmouth by a joint team from Norfolk and Nottinghamshire — also an example of the mutual support between provincial forces in the technology field mentioned earlier.

Another consequence of the specialised and expensive nature of CCTV is the development by the Home Office of regionally-based Technical Support Units (TSUs). The first was set up in Durham in 1974. There are now six TSUs, providing advanced equipment and specialist vehicles which are neither too expensive or too rarely used to be a justifiable investment for individual forces. TSUs are now based in Durham, Birmingham, Wakefield, Manchester, Bristol and Lewes; together they service 27 forces. In the Met, C7 Department is the equivalent of a TSU, providing sophisticated eavesdropping technology which has been used in every major modern siege. The TSUs also provide testing facilities for new technology under closer supervision by the Home Office Police Scientific Development Branch than might always be possible at force level. It is noteworthy that Scotland has, at present, no TSU — something which led to a strong complaint from the Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, David Grey, in his annual report for 1978. In the absence of a Scottish TSU, Strathclyde force provides much of the specialist technology used by other forces.

West Mercia police are testing a new open circuit television system which links helicopter cameras to the force's Operations Room. 'The results are pleasing and are of considerable operational value,' says the West Mercia report. A similar helicopter experiment, this time with radio, was conducted last year by Devon and Cornwall for the Home Office. The use of helicopters by

the police is an area of some expansion. Only one force, the Met, actually owns its own helicopter; others must hire them commercially.

### **The Special Branch**

Yet another significant, and permanent, development during the 1970s was the growth of the Special Branch. The development is connected with the public order and anti-terrorist roles of the SPGs and PSUs, as one of the roles of the Special Branch is to provide 'intelligence' on demonstrations and strikes at national and local level.

At the end of the 1960s there were just 300 Special Branch officers based at Scotland Yard, and a few of the larger forces started to create local SBs of their own in the early 1960s. The extension of Special Branches to all forces took place after the growth of the Vietnam protest movements in 1968. In 1978, for the first time the Home Secretary disclosed that the total number of Special Branch officers in the 43 forces in England and Wales was 1,259 (**Hansard, 24.5.78**). The figure for the seven Scottish forces was 100, and for Northern Ireland, 279.

Prior to 1978, however, only one force, Durham, included details on the local Special Branch in its annual report. In 1978, for the first time, 23 of the 43 annual reports in England and Wales contained similar section. This year, in their reports for 1979, a further 11 chief constables included sections on the Special Branches bringing the total to 34 out of 50 (two reports, Northamptonshire and the RUC, have yet to be issued). A further nine reports include mentions of their local Special Branches under 'training', HQ staff or secondments.

Two forces announce increases in the size of their Special Branches. The Essex report says that a bombing incident at Canvey Island showed the need to 'improve the Force capability to collect information relating to terrorist and subversive activities'; the size of the SB increased from 20 to 35. South



**SURVEY OF THE SIZE OF THE SPECIAL BRANCH IN ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND FOR THE YEAR 1979**

This survey covers the Metropolitan Police, the City of London Police and the 41 provincial forces in England and Wales. It covers all eight forces in Scotland. A total of 52 out of 53 annual reports form the basis of the survey.

Col A indicates whether or not a section on the Special Branch was included in the annual report. Col B shows the size of the Special Branch given in an annual report. Col C gives the estimated number of Special Branch officers in each force. For England and Wales these figures are based on Mr Rees' statement that there are 850 officers engaged on Special Branch work, excluding the Metropolitan Police, (Hansard, 24.5.78), and adjusted to 1% of the total police strength in each force at the end of 1979. These have been distributed in proportion to the total strength of each police force. For Scotland the estimated figures are based on the statement in the 1979 Inspector of Constabulary Report for Scotland that the Special Branch is 'less than one per cent of authorised establishments'. Figures in brackets refer to notes at the end of the table.

Force	A	B	C
Metropolitan Police	Yes	409 (1)	—
City of London	Yes	—	8
Avon & Somerset	Yes	22 (2)	28
Bedfordshire	Yes	19	9
Cambridgeshire	No	— (3)	10
Cheshire	Yes	13	18
Cleveland	Yes	17	14
Cumbria	No	— (4)	10
Derbyshire	No	—	17
Devon & Cornwall	Yes	—	27
Dorset	Yes	11	11
Durham	Yes	14	13
Essex	Yes	35	25
Gloucestershire	Yes	5	11
Greater Manchester	Yes	52 (5)	66
Hampshire	No	— (6)	29
Hertfordshire	Yes	—	15
Humberside	No	—	18
Kent	Yes	—	28
Lancashire	Yes	—	30
Leicestershire	No	18 (7)	17
Lincolnshire	Yes	5	10
Merseyside	Yes	—	44
Norfolk	Yes	—	12

Northamptonshire	—	—	9
Northumbria	Yes	34	34
North Yorkshire	Yes	—	13
Nottinghamshire	Yes	19	21
South Yorkshire	Yes	34	26
Staffordshire	No	—	20
Suffolk	Yes	—	11
Surrey	No	— (8)	15
Sussex	No	— (9)	17
Thames Valley	Yes	—	27
Warwickshire	Yes	—	8
West Mercia	Yes	12	18
West Midlands	Yes	65 (10)	61
West Yorkshire	Yes	—	47
Wiltshire	Yes	8	10
<b>Wales</b>			
Dyfed-Powys	Yes	—	9
Gwent	No	—	9
North Wales	Yes	22	12
South Wales	Yes	31	30
<b>Scotland</b>			
Central Scotland	No	—	5
Dumfries and Galloway	No	— (11)	3
Fife	No	— (12)	6
Grampian	No	— (13)	9
Lothian and Borders	Yes	—	23
Northern	Yes	3	6
Strathclyde	No	60 (14)	68
Tayside	No	— (15)	9
<b>Northern Ireland</b>			
RUC	No	279 (16)	—

**Notes:**

1. Figure given by the Home Secretary (Hansard 24.5.78).
2. Under the force deployment figures, those for 'Aliens and Immigration' are given as 15 officers plus 7 others in a Port Unit. This is probably the strength of the Special Branch.
3. 3 officers sent for SB training courses.
4. 3 officers sent for SB training courses.
5. Greater Manchester Special Branch also employ an unstated number of civilian clerical staff.
6. 19 officers sent on SB training courses.
7. Under the heading 'Nationality Department' the report states that a total of 18 officers are employed at HQ and in an Airports Unit. This will represent all, or part, of the Special Branch strength.
8. Surrey sent 4 of its Special Branch officers on secondment to the Metropolitan Police; 3 to the Special Branch Joint Unit at New Scotland Yard and 1 to the Special Branch Intelligence Collation Section at the Yard.
9. Sussex sent 10 officers on SB training courses.

10. West Midland Special Branch also has 15 civilian clerical staff.
  11. Dumfries and Galloway sent 2 officers for SB training at the Yard.
  12. Fife list 2 SB officers under 'HQ staff'.
  13. Grampian sent 2 officers for SB training at the yard.
  14. This figure was reliably reported in the Evening Times (Glasgow), 7.2.78.
  15. Tayside's report show under 'HQ staff-CID', 'Special Branch'.
  16. Figure given by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in a written answer (13.6.78).
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Yorkshire's SB was increased from 27 to 34.

The juxtaposition of 'terrorism' (which implies violent means) and 'subversion' (which, although it has no standing in law, is officially defined so as to include all political and trade union activity) in the sections on the Special Branch is even more pronounced than before. The Greater Manchester reports says that the work of the Special Branch includes operating 'as an intelligence gathering agency to counter terrorist and subversive activities'; Warwickshire: 'terrorists and other criminally subversive groups'; Wiltshire: 'enquiries into terrorist and subversive organisations'; South Wales: 'terrorist and subversive organisations'; Hertfordshire: 'terrorist or subversive organisations'; West Midlands: 'terrorist or subversive organisations'.

Another link is made between 'subversive' organisations and the maintenance of public order (Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Wiltshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk). The justification for keeping 'subversive' organisations under surveillance is that their activities, however legitimate and lawful, might pose a 'public order' problem for the police. It is the job of local Special Branches to forewarn the uniformed police of such potential situations.

Two other features of local Special Branches stand out in the 1979 Reports. Their structure is usually comprised of a HQ staff, often with additional civilian

staff to collate records and deal with enquiries about aliens and immigrants; a Ports Unit (where there are ports or airports in the force area); and units on a divisional or city basis. On this latter aspect, which relates directly to political and trade union activity in the community, three reports have given a full breakdown (Durham, 1977; South Yorkshire, 1978 and 1979; and Dorset, 1979). Dorset, reporting for the first time in 1979, has a HQ staff, and each of its two police divisions has Special Branch units — four officers at Dorchester and five at Bournemouth.

The second feature is that there are three Special Branch training courses, The Initial Course, Advanced Course, and Port Training Course. The evidence suggests that all Special Branch training is undertaken by the Metropolitan Police Special Branch. Avon and Somerset, and three Scottish forces (Northern, Dumfries and Galloway, and Grampian) report sending Special Branch officers to London for training in 1979.

### **Role of intelligence-gathering**

The Army Manual states that in terms of 'Internal Security' an essential prerequisite is a good intelligence system because, it argues, a good intelligence system cannot be established overnight if an emergency suddenly occurs (Land Operations Vol.III — Counter-Revolutionary Operations, 1969). It further defines the 'enemy' as 'subversives' who take 'action to undermine the military, economic, psychological morale or political strength of a nation and the loyalty of its subjects'. This formula is close to the Special Branch (and MI5) spelt out by Merlyn Rees, the Labour Home Secretary, in 1977 and confirmed by William Whitelaw in 1979.

The shift between the 1960s and the 1970s in state ideology and the brief given to the Special Branch (and MI5) bears re-emphasis. In 1963, in his report on the Profumo case, Lord Denning gave the official definition of 'subversives' as

people who: 'would contemplate the **overthrow** of government by **unlawful means**' (Cmnd 2152, 1962, our emphasis). In 1978 Merlyn Rees, then Home Secretary, said that 'subversion' was: 'activities which threaten the safety or well-being of the State, and are intended to **undermine** or overthrow parliamentary democracy by **political, industrial** or violent means' (Hansard, 6.4.78).

The significance of the growth of the Special Branch in the 1970s, alongside all these other developments covered in this paper, can only be understood historically. From its formation in 1883 the only Special Branch was that based at Scotland Yard. Apart from wartime, the numbers committed to this work were never more than 200 officers, right up to the mid-1960s. Even in 1968, there were only 300 officers in London and no more than 100 in the larger forces which had already started to set up their own SBs.

During the last decade the number of Special Branch officers has risen from 400 to over 1,600. Every police force in the country now has a Special Branch; these are 'decentralised' within each force to cover all major cities. Over the same period their admitted brief has been extended from those suspected of unlawful acts to all forms of political and industrial activity — the very acts against which the units discussed earlier are also increasingly trained and deployed.

### **The police and Home Defence**

The developments in policing so far referred to relate to everyday peacetime policing. Other changes however have taken place, which although theoretically related to exceptional situations like 'states of emergency' or nuclear war, interact with everyday policing, especially in the fields of demonstrations and strikes.

'Home Defence' therefore is partly concerned with planning for nuclear attack. For example, each force is responsible for the air raid sirens in their area which are part of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring

Organisation's operations.

All the reports contain sections on 'Home Defence' or 'War Duties'. However, as already noted, it is not possible to evaluate exactly to what extent 'Home Defence' training and planning affect everyday policing. But the internal organisation of three forces confirms the affinity between wartime and peacetime emergencies. Evidence of police-military exercises receive only one mention in the 51 reports. Albert Laugharne, the chief constable of Lancashire, reported in 1978, under the 'War Duties Branch': 'We have continued to work in close co-operation with the Military in studies and exercises concerned with Home Defence', and continues, 'On 3rd April 1978 we took part in a regional exercise involving military and civil authorities. We also played a regional role in an exercise initiated by the Army during the week commencing 16th October 1978'. His report for 1979, under the same heading, began as follows:

**This year, the Spring exercises were cancelled as all authorities were fully committed in dealing with operational problems arising from industrial disputes'**

### **Regional Police Commanders (Designate)**

At a time of a prolonged 'state of emergency' or a war, the running of the country would be taken over by 12 Regional Commissioners (politicians), assisted by a triumvirate — the Region Military Commander, the Regional Police Commander, and the Regional Controller (one of a region's local council Chief Executives) (see Bulletin No 8). While the Regional Commissioners would be appointed at the time of the emergency, the police and the local state administration — have already been appointed and are known by the title 'Designate'. This has been justified on grounds of forward planning and the need for 'practice' exercises.

Five of the reports state that their Chief Constables are the Regional Police

Commanders (Designate) for their 'Home Defence' regions. These are the Chief Constables of:

**Durham** — Home Defence Region 1 (North: Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, and Tyne and Wear)

**Nottinghamshire** — Home Defence Region 3 (East Midlands: Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire)

**Avon and Somerset** — Home Defence Region 7 (South West: Avon, Dorset, Gloucs, Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall)

**West Midlands** — Home Defence Region 9 (West Midlands: West Midlands, Staffs, Warwickshire, Hereford, Worcester and Salop)

**Lancashire** — Home Defence Region 10 (North West: Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside)

To which can be added Commissioner Sir David McNee as Home Defence Region 5 solely consists of Greater London.

In Scotland, Home Defence Region 11, the Regional Police Commander (Designate) is the Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland. The Region is then divided into 3 Zones: Northern Zone (Central, Tayside, Fife, Northern and part of Strathclyde), under the Zone Police Commander (Designate) who is the Chief Constable of Fife; Western Zone (most of Strathclyde, and Dunfries & Galloway), under Zone Police Commander (Designate), the Chief Constable of Strathclyde; Eastern Zone (Lothian and Borders), under the Zone Police Commander (Designate), the Chief Constable for Lothian and Borders.

Each of the twelve Regional Police Commanders (Designate) has a Staff Officer of superintendent rank seconded to him, and three or four other permanent officers

The five Chief Constables are listed as Regional Police Commanders (Designate) under 'War Duties' headings. Yet there is evidence that the machinery supposedly created for a 'state of emergency' (which has to be declared by the Queen and

agreed by parliament under the 1920 Emergency Powers Act) or for a war has been used in recent strikes — the firemen's strike (1977-78) and the road haulage strike (1979). In each instance Regional and County committees were set up which included the police and the military (see Bulletin No 10). Far from being 'Designates' or simply being engaged in 'planning', these chief constables are already in post and have been in action as such during national strikes (see Bulletins 2,4,8 and 10 on the role of the Civil Contingencies Unit, in the Cabinet Office, for national strike-breaking planning).

### Conclusion

This Background Paper has sought to spell out that not only have certain, permanent, structural developments taken place during the 1970s — like the formation of Special Patrol Groups and the adoption of 'fire-brigade' policing — but that as a consequence the role of the **ordinary** police officer has changed in a way that cannot be reversed. 12,000 are trained in the use of firearms; 12,000 are trained as a riot police; thousands have taken part in 'crowd control' courses; all newly recruited officers are now receiving 'familiarisation' with firearms and 'crowd control' as a part of their standard training; and they are becoming more and more dependent on technology than relations with the community.

The consequences of these changes is that the ordinary police officer have, to use the words of a respected police historian, T.A. Critchley, come to 'rely more on the exercise of oppressive authority' than on consent and persuasion. Tens of thousands of officers who are trained to employ aggressive tactics to be used on the streets, cannot be expected not to bring some of that aggression to bear when policing the community, or when using the greater powers which they are vociferously demanding.

# REVIEWS & SOURCES

## BOOKS

**WRITING BY CANDLELIGHT, by E.P. Thompson. London: The Merlin Press, 1980, 286 pp, £2.70.**

E.P. Thompson has published a score of his essays from the Seventies which have a remarkable homogeneity. They concern what he calls 'the means employed today to manufacture what is then offered as a consensus of "public opinion",' and he concludes that 'this manufacture (and suppression) of opinion has now acquired an unprecedented reach, which threatens the democratic process, not at its margins but at its very centre.' Britain is thus 'approaching a point of crisis in which not fascism but a peculiarly British form of authoritarianism, working behind the back of the democratic process, is now bringing national life within its general closure. This closure is named "consensus", and the media manufacture that.'

The author places this role of the mass media within the context of 'the official culture of power,' which 'is busy all the while. It is arming the police, preparing contingency plans with the army, vetting the juries, perfecting its files and its surveillance, plotting provocations, undermining the trade unions, repealing abortion acts, selling off national resources, destroying the urban environment, and establishing centres of genocide, under the sole control of United States generals...' It is this constant activity of the state which makes it impossible for citizens to turn aside to build an alternative culture, 'for during that time the official culture of power is not politely waiting...'

Thompson thus addresses himself to the full range of state activity in the

Seventies, and its apologists. Among his subjects we find the affairs of the files on Warwick University students, the record of Prime Minister Wilson, the power workers' strike of 1970 and the first miners' strike under the Heath government, the referendum on the UK and the EEC, Mrs Gandhi's state of emergency, the journalistic practice of Mr Bernard Levin when considering a strike, the ABC Official Secrets trial of 1978, judges and the attack on the jury system, state secrecy and the official leaks industry, and the appropriation by NATO of all decision-making on matters of life and death.

E.P. Thompson's command of language, his mastery of satire, polemic, nuance and the extended metaphor so enhance his themes that he establishes himself as one of the leading political essayists in the English language. Gore Vidal may come close to him for riotous humour, and Chomsky for the ability to accumulate overwhelming evidence of the perfidy of the state, but Thompson may demonstrate the greater combination of talents in standing received wisdom on its head. His readers are in turn entertained, informed and uplifted, but never lectured; they will, however, rise from this collection aware that it represents a most formidable analysis of key issues of the Seventies. And beyond.

**THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM IN THE 1980s' by Dan Smith, Croom Helm, London 276p, £6.95**

A vast amount gets written about British military affairs and about the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), to which nearly all British forces are committed. But most accessible literature is straightforward propaganda which tells us that what is must be, while governments and professionals carry on unintelligible discussions within shared but arbitrary preconceptions using jargon and secrecy which prevents consideration of fundamentals. Given this literature, and the twin buck-passing farces of NATO's internal politics and of 'they-threatened-us-

first' East-West politics, most citizens give up the quest for comprehensive understanding and adopt moral and political viewpoints or fatalism. People who do wish to understand have looked in vain for a sensible guide to the whole subject. Dan Smith's excellent survey is therefore a major break-through.

He does not presuppose that there should be fundamental changes in British military policy, but carefully shows what policy has been, how effective it has been, what the military, strategic, industrial, technological, economic and political problems have been, and why changes will have to be made if defence is not to take up an increasing proportion of Gross National Product. This intellectual seriousness sets the book apart from existing material and repays similar seriousness on the part of its readers. It should be widely read both in the circles which concern themselves with military policy and among those of all political and moral persuasions who are concerned about military affairs during the present war-scare.

The book begins by defining its subject — the organisation of force by the state in support of foreign policy — and the first two of ten chapters lay the conceptual base for what follows. Two more chapters look at British military policy in context of NATO and US-Soviet relations (detente) and of the East-West military balance. Chapter Five on specific military policy decisions of the 1970s, states the core point: 'Management of British defence policy is a constant compromise between the availability of resources forever inadequate to provide the desired capabilities, and the super-availability of military industrial resources able to produce what the budget cannot afford.'

Chapter Six, on 'costs and technology', explains why: 'The determination to provide technological improvement in succeeding generations' of military equipment, even when cheaper and simpler alternatives are available and sophistication is inappropriate' (because the equipment is vulnerable to destruction)

means that successive generations of weapons are hugely more expensive than those they replace. Without a constantly increasing real military budget for equipment, less and less weapons systems can be bought. And these, though more sophisticated, expensive and 'multirole', may be more vulnerable to new varieties of precision-guided munitions, so that less effective military force is purchased at much greater cost. At the root of the pressure for ever increasing sophistication (vulnerability?) is the British state's commitment to maintain a large specialised military industry. Its corporate research and development teams must be kept employed on new weaponry if they are to return to a place in international military-technological rivalry.

Chapter five is also a devastating description of the consequent record of British defence policy and its inability and unwillingness to deal with the problem of making choices about what to do within available resources. The Labour government decided in 1974 to hold the military budget steady in real terms and then, under NATO pressure, agreed 3 per cent real increases each year. In 1977 defence economist David Greenwood argued that 'severe pruning of any combination of two of the three services would be necessary in the early 1980s not to reduce the budget but simply to hold it'. Smith's review of the decisions about each of the three forces in the 1970s demonstrates the failure of each to bring the range of missions for which it claims to be equipped within cost limits of the budget planned by the government. Since then the Thatcher government has added the unnecessary replacement of Polaris by Trident to the Bill, without stating 'which other equipment programmes it is prepared to sacrifice' or explaining what role in any rational defence strategy it will play. One reason: 'within the British state there is no identifiable mechanism for defining where and how the basic reordering should be carried out and then doing it. Options emerge from this failure to budget for a feasible defence policy: a

6-10 per cent per annum increase in real military spending for several years, some kind of supra-national state in whose collective defence arrangements Britain could lose some military roles, or a fundamental change in present assumptions and the adoption of a defence policy outside NATO's military arrangements.

The next two chapters consider ways in which the technological-economic imperative might be either coped with (by some form of deal with NATO allies — either the US or European arms industry policy) or might be broken (by steps towards disarmament). Neither of these is very probable. The last two chapters consider the likely outcomes. First, some rearrangements of transnational capitalism in the 1980s can be expected and this combined with changes in Eastern Europe might bring to a head the underlying differences in conception of NATO strategy between the US and Europe (Europe naturally depends on deterrence and has no interest in actually fighting a limited war in Europe, while the US develops notions of usable nuclear weapons). Given NATO's nuclear confusion there is a case for withdrawal, not least because it is 'difficult to identify a threat to which British defence policy after disengagement from NATO might constitute a response, Smith outlines how the precision guided munitions of the 1970s could be the technical bases for restructuring our defence forces in Britain (p234). However, he continues, though such a policy is a realistic possibility in technical and strategic terms, it is not on the political agenda. With the British state apparatus, only the last two of four broad options for British policy are realistic: a return to British imperial commitments, withdrawal from NATO, closer ties with European military arrangements, or with the US (both within the NATO). Short of 'majority support for radical change in defence policy' which is inconceivable 'unless that majority is also seeking radical change in the entire fabric of the British state, in the economy, and in society' the

basic question is *how* to be a member of NATO. And given Britain's 'decline', it seems 'that the military field is where the British state can find its bargaining counters' in NATO in the 1980s. But to maintain Britain's military strength would require such substantial budget increases as to require radical changes in the opposite direction to those required by withdrawal from NATO.

In the 1980s, then, Britain's military policy in relation to NATO can involve three broad possibilities: some form of continuation of present commitments and chaotic budgetting, of steps towards integration of military forces within NATO either on a European or an Atlanticist basis (which cannot get far in the 1980s), or disengagement from NATO. Since disengagement could find only two marginal social bases — the socialist movement and the nationalist movements of Scotland and Wales — the most probable course is continuation of the present defence policy mess. Given that there are no powerful voices calling for reduction in roles of the forces, the 3 per cent per annum real increases will not be sufficient, and the chaos described in chapter five's review of policy in the 1970s will repeat itself. 'Sensible budgetting on the basis of current force structures and levels requires a programme of budget increases of up to six per cent per annum in real terms for at least five years' and, since in return for the greater expenditure there will be pressure to explain what the extra money buys, this may not be enough.

The book contains a great deal more, and is essential reading for anyone with a serious interest not only in military affairs but also in the British state and the implications of the military budget for cuts in other public expenditures.

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\*Due to lack of space pamphlet reviews and the sources section have been held out of this issue.

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