

# RIOT AND REVOLUTION

## The politics of an inner city



The wave of "disturbances" which swept Brixton, Southall, the inner cities of most major towns, and parts of several smaller towns during the first two weeks of July have been either dismissed as "riots" or hailed as "insurrections". This article argues that the events in one inner city area of Leeds were an uprising by a small section of the black and white working class. This view is based on an account of the development of political action in this area over the past ten years, and on a critique of the narrow categories used by most sections of the far left when they come to decide what is "political".

The uprising in Chapeltown, Leeds, took place on the nights of 11th/12th and 13th/14th July. Unlike the events in Brixton (9th-13th April), Southall (3rd July) and Toxteth, Liverpool (3rd to 8th July), there was no particular incident which sparked off the action. The mass media were alive with the reports of battles with the police, "looting" and petrol bombs as young people took to the streets throughout the previous week in Liverpool, Manchester and all parts of London. It was obvious to everyone, not least to the police who told business owners to take precautions, that something would happen in Chapeltown. Table 1 provides a not very reliable indicator (police arrests) of the degree of activity in the preceding few days. Table 2 shows that, on the first night of the action in Leeds, youth throughout the country were just as busy.

### CONFRONTATION

On Friday 10th July, at about midnight, a small group of white youth smashed the window of the Jewish bakers and an Asian owned Post Office on Chapeltown Road. There is no evidence that these youths were either fascists, insurrectionists or casual vandals. No-one seemed to take much notice of the incident, despite the rumours that had been circulating over the previous few days. In the early hours of Sunday morning (12th July) a mainly black crowd of youth smashed many shop windows on Roundhay Road (the eastern boundary of Chapeltown) and helped themselves to some electrical equipment. Some say they were provoked by a raid on a blues (a West Indian party). Others say they were on the streets already. In the early hours of Monday morning (13th) a far more intensive confrontation took place. A larger crowd, including many white youth, attacked the police in the

residential heart of Chapeltown. They fought pitched battles, using petrol bombs, and they smashed and burned down a number of shops and businesses. The police say they deployed 300 police with riot shields, and 43 of them were injured. They say £2 million worth of damage was caused.

This bare description can be paralleled in most other inner cities, and in the black areas of many other towns. The fabric of Chapeltown is very like that of other black areas: large terraced houses, long ago deserted by the bourgeoisie, now damp and decaying and being replaced by neat brick boxes. A working class population which is a mirror of colonialism and war; an international working class of West Indians, Asians, Irish, Scots, English, Poles, Ukrainians, Italians, Yugoslavs. In 1975, 39% of Chapeltown's population was born in Britain, 31% in the West Indies and 11% in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

### THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Why should Chapeltown have exploded on 12th and 13th July? When you notice that there were disturbances in virtually all-white towns like Gloucester and Cirencester, you have to be careful not to try and generate a global theory out of your own town's activity, and it must be stressed that this account is specific to one inner city area in Leeds. Extensive research would be needed to derive a more general explanation than that offered here. At best this article might suggest a method of analysis of the politics of the inner city.

A full explanation would have to include an account of the specifics of migration from the Caribbean and Asia to Chapeltown, and an account of the transfer of material resources out of Chapeltown, over the past thirty years. The former is important because it has a bearing on the type of West Indian and Asian organisation which has developed

here, and the latter is important because it helps explain why the plight of the white people in the area has much in common with that of the black people. But here I am concentrating on one other aspect of the explanation of why Chapeltown exploded. I am attempting to make sense of the events in terms of the political processes of the area over the past ten or so years.<sup>2</sup>

When the Leeds Labour Party agreed to changes in the council ward boundaries in 1973, prior to the re-organisation of the council into a Metropolitan District, it knew it was handing over the whole of Chapeltown to the Conservatives. It probably did not foresee that one consequence of that agreement was to sever the connection between politicians (e.g. councillors and council officers) and the people of Chapeltown. The Chapeltown area was already blessed with a Conservative MP (Sir Keith Joseph), but among the rabbit warren of council wards covering the area there was one safe Labour ward which returned three Labour councillors. The councillors were not noticeably left-wing, but they did uphold the view that they were there to help people with their problems. After re-organisation, the merged wards resulted in the election of Conservative councillors, who were quite unabashed in their refusal to hold surgeries or attend local meetings.

## END OF POLITICS

The severing of the connection between conventional politics and Chapeltown can be quite precisely dated. The very last time that significant numbers of people attempted the "normal" method of influencing council policy was on 30th September 1973. Two hundred people packed into Cowper Street School to fire questions and criticisms at the council. Of the fourteen local councillors who, in one way or another represented the area, only the three Labour councillors turned up.

This meeting had been organised by the Chapeltown Community Association. Formed on 31st March 1971, the Community Association represented the efforts of the first wave of white gentrification to establish a conventional

TABLE 1 — THE BUILD UP

Place	Date	Arrests
St Paul's (Bristol)	2 April	100
Brixton (London)	9-13 April	244
Finsbury Park (London)	20 April	91
Southall (London)	3 July	23
Toxteth (Liverpool)	3-8 July	200
Moss Side (Manchester)	10 July	53
London	10 July	385
Birmingham	10 July	42
Wolverhampton	10 July	22
Liverpool	10 July	65
Preston	10 July	24
Hull	10 July	27
Luton	10 July	1

TABLE 2 — THE WEEK-END: mid-day Saturday 10 July to mid-day Sunday 11 July

Place	Arrests	Place	Arrests
Stoke	50	Fleetwood	25
Blackburn	43	Preston	25
Wirral	40	Derby	24
Blackpool	40	Birkenhead	31
Manchester	38	Kettering	21
Leicester	32	Portsmouth	21
Nottingham	29	Huddersfield	20
Sheffield	20	Wallasey	17
Maidstone	13	Leeds	11
Tunbridge Wells	11	Halifax	11
Corby	8	Gloucester	7
Cirencester	4	Birmingham/ Wolverhampton	329
Hackney	103	Bradford	68
Walthamstow	13	Luton	25

political/community organisation. It gathered under its flag a few middle-of-the-road West Indians and Asians, some of the long-established "respectable" white residents, and had a considerable following among ordinary Chapeltown people over the first two or three years of its life. Democratically run by a skillful and energetic town planner, it had considerable success in improving local conditions.

It was made redundant by the emergence of a new form of West Indian organisation. In the early 1970's, West Indian activists began more general organising that took up the issues affecting all West Indians in the area. The two major events were the summary dismissal of the white middle class ladies doing good for the 'disadvantaged' by running the Studley Grange Playgroup (the Chapeltown Parents and Friends Association took control in November 1972); and the strike organised by parents of children at Cowper Street School in protest against the lack of facilities and the racism at that school (Chapeltown Parents Action Group, June 1973).

## MILITANT POLITICS

Both these actions were a testing ground for a confrontational style of politics, and both succeeded. The strike at Cowper Street School was sprung on the council and was completely effective. The Director of Education was summoned to mass meetings of angry and articulate black parents, the Headmaster was "moved on", and resources put into the school.

This activity in Chapeltown was linked to the upsurge of black militancy throughout the country at that time. A black militant organisation — the Afro-West Indian Brotherhood (it did contain women as well) was centrally involved in the school strike. It did not take a vanguard position, however, and worked with the parents, and with members of the island groupings, in order to form a united and combative Parents Action Group.

The Chapeltown Community Association was marginal to all this, but it too went through a process of development. For not only black people were taking militant direct action. In May 1973 a large group of white parents on the Scott Hall estate, often regarded as part of Chapeltown, staged twice weekly demonstrations blocking the rush-hour traffic in support of their demand for a Pelican crossing. They too refused all mediation, and only called off their action after six weeks of protest, when the council made a cast-iron guarantee that the crossing would be provided.

This wave of direct action influenced the more progressive members of the Community Association, but the other factor which transformed the situation was the growing realisation that talks were not going to bring results in a situation of economic down-turn. In March 1974 the council launched its own effort to dampen the militancy in Chapeltown — a "participation planning exercise" which proposed all kinds of new housing, community facilities and environmental improvements. However, it was already too late for the council to try and restore faith in "participation". It leafleted every house in the area to try and draw people into the eight local meetings it organised between March and April. According to its own figures, only 7% of the local adults turned up.

## PLANNING TO DECEIVE

A pamphlet produced in July 1975 by the community newspaper *Chapeltown News*<sup>3</sup> to coincide with the publication of the council's final ideas about the future of the area, attempting to put the exercise in a materialistic context.<sup>4</sup> It highlighted the growing economic crisis. It pointed out that two months after the council had suggested an improvement programme for Chapeltown it had announced that it could not afford to employ any new staff. It showed that the crisis in building was acute (1970-74: price of land up by 195%, cost of building a house up by 50%). It correctly predicted that there would not be enough money to meet the promises.

## ROTTING FISH

It is unlikely that many people in Chapeltown saw the situation in the precise terms described in this pamphlet. But there is no doubt that there was no faith in conventional political activity. Even the Community Association had organised direct action in piling rubbish in Chapeltown Road to stop the traffic, and tipping rotten fish on the Cleansing Dept. office floor to protest against the lack of proper street cleaning (July 1974). In the autumn of 1974 there was unprecedented activity among the Sikh community, including demonstrations, in opposition to the local busworkers' and

means lie elsewhere, in the productive core of society, the factories and mines and docks."<sup>8</sup>

Even Stuart Hall seems anxious to assure his readers that the riots are "not the beginning of Armageddon . . . not even the birth pangs of St Petersburg 1917", although he later discards this facetious approach and talks of "civil disorder" and a "culture of resistance".<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, those who do regard these events as politically valid — for example the Brixton and other Defence Committees — provide no justification for their assertion that they were "uprisings" rather than riots. It is necessary therefore to try and spell out the conditions under which events gain the status of being "political" and against the status quo. We have to look at the terrain on which the action takes place, the type of people taking part, their ideology and political consciousness, their method of organising and the actual effects of their actions.

Chris Harman, in the quote above, maintains that the area for struggle which is defined as political is the "productive core of society". Harman fails to recognise that the rule of capital extends beyond the walls of the factory. The modern ruling class, in particular since the advent of the welfare state, has long recognised that the discipline of work is insufficient to control the working class. It uses its control of social life, via education, housing, leisure and welfare benefits policies, as one means of containing and directing the grievances of the working class. The areas where people live — affectionately, if sometimes inappropriately known as "the community" — thus become terrains of struggle against the state.<sup>10</sup> As the number of people drawing benefit or working "on the side" grows, the city streets will become an even more frequent site of struggle.

So far, this article has suggested that the people taking part in the uprising in Chapeltown were young, and mainly black. One reason for arguing that the action was not an important political rebellion is that such a small section of the population took part. There are various points to be made here. One is that there were a large number of white youth taking part. Many of them live in the area. Many others came from nearby white working class estates. It has been said that some of those white youth came into Chapeltown because they saw an opportunity to fight against the blacks, while others came to grab their chance to deal some blows against the police.

Whatever their motives, it is an important fact that so many white youth took part. Nor is it surprising. In Chapeltown, the housing conditions, the schools, the social facilities are common to all, white and black. The police vendetta against local youth is almost as ferocious for whites as it is for blacks. On the outlying estates, social conditions are, in some areas, as bad as if not worse than, those in Chapeltown. While autonomous political organising in Chapeltown has been uneven, it has brought some gains, in the form of new housing and projects; but in the white estates it has been almost entirely absent; the only political activity is to deliver the vote to absentee Labour councillors.

The second point is to remember that, while only the most militant or the most foolhardy actually took part in the violence, hardly anyone in Chapeltown condemned them. On the Sunday morning after the first night of window breaking, many of the older people seemed worried and upset. On the Monday morning, there was an atmosphere of jubilation among many of the youth, surveying the smouldering ruins of Chapeltown Road. Crowds of older people expressed their concern, and many, young and old, criticised the destruction of the local shops. But this criticism did not turn on the question of destruction per se: several older West Indian men wanted to know why they burned down "our" shops instead of buring down the "Town Hall". Even the right wing Community Relations Council (CRC) felt it unwise to condemn local people. Rev. Glendenning, the white Senior CRO said "Last night I witnessed a disturbance largely managed by whites" (meaning outsiders).<sup>11</sup> It goes far beyond what Stuart Hall describes as a "loss of consent" or a sense of social injustice.<sup>12</sup> It amounts to popular support for the most direct methods of political expression seen on mainland Britain.

The third point concerns the role of women. If it were the case that only males were involved with the uprising, then the argument that it represented only a small portion of the working class would hold considerable force. But the reverse is true. In Chapeltown, over the years, the backbone of community organising has been female, among blacks and whites. There were plenty of women on the streets during

the uprising, and it is women who are central to the events after the violence:

"Women, mainly black, [are] left to do the cleaning up afterwards; the women are the ones who face police harassment when the homes are searched; it's the women, the mums, who bear the brunt of the worry finding the money to foot the bill for the kids fined by the court."

"Women are an integral part of the struggle — some of us are daughters, mothers, wives of those convicted, injured, imprisoned, and some have taken to the streets too."<sup>13</sup>

And in Chapeltown, the prime movers of the Defence Committee were women.

## POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION

It is on the question of the ideology and political consciousness of the participants that most will rest their case that this was not an uprising. There may have been one or two militants from left wing groups involved in the street fighting, but few involved would define themselves as political in the conventional sense. But, it depends on what you mean by "political". In its detailed surveys conducted after the wave of black urban disturbances in America in 1967, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders found that participants were better informed politically than non-participants, were more concerned about "Negro rights", had less trust in local government, were more angry about politicians and were less willing to fight for their country.<sup>14</sup> All these are indications of some political sophistication, which, I believe, would be paralleled here if similar surveys were conducted in this country.

There is some evidence available from journalism published in the wake of the uprisings. Very few interviews have been published, no doubt partly due to the hostility people feel towards the media, and those that have are not entirely conclusive. The dominant picture that emerges is one of hatred of the police. The most extreme published statement came from a black youth in Liverpool: "My aim was to kill a policeman. We wanted to leave a few of them in the middle of the road with their arms broken".<sup>15</sup> Some would say this is not a political attitude. But it is arguable that, in a society in which the law is designed to protect the property of the ruling class, and in which the police is armed body charged with the task of enforcing that law, then to take on that force is a political act.

## HERE AND NOW

A final point about political consciousness springs from George Rude's discussion of the riots which preceded the French Revolution:

"Revolutions — as opposed to peasant rebellions or food riots seldom if ever take the form of mere spontaneous outbursts against tyranny, oppression or utter destitution: both the experience and hope of something better are important factors in the story."<sup>16</sup>

In the sense of "experience and hope of something better", the participants and their supporters are clearly politically motivated. Some of the Rasta youth hope for a better future in Africa, but most of them are very clear about what they want here and now, and they see other people in this society obtaining it: enough money and freedom to lead a dignified life. The white youth feel the same. All would identify with the slogan "Looting takes the waiting out of wanting". And they all know that, with society organised as it is now, they will be waiting for ever unless drastic measures are taken. This is not to imply that their political consciousness is necessarily revolutionary. Their sense of the measures required to fulfil their needs may not go beyond local street violence against the police. But their disaffection from the conventional methods of politics, their willingness to take matters into their own hands, even as far as fighting the most oppressive arm of the state, all these are a necessary, if not sufficient, part of revolutionary consciousness.

The next issue is that of organisation. Almost without exception, socialists and communists regard the paraphernalia of their kind of organisation as a prerequisite of truly political activity. If there are no obvious elected or appointed leaders, no hierarchical discipline, no leaflets and newspapers with which to spread the directives of the leadership, and above all no programme of demands and methods of negotiation, then the action is not political.

The point about the disturbances, however, is that most of the relevant factors were present, but not in the conventional forms. There are a number of leading figures among the youth, who are generally organised around particular streets, youth

# Uprisings

management's refusal to allow Sikhs to wear turbans on the buses. Again, militant activity was successful.

It is now clear that the culmination of this departure from the time-honoured methods of negotiation and compromise was the Chapeltown Bonfire Night incident, on November 5th 1975. About a hundred youth, almost all of them black, had gathered at a traditional bonfire night spot on Spencer Place. They stoned an unmarked CID car which drove slowly through the crowd, and this was the signal for a two or three hour battle in which five policemen were injured, two very seriously, and several police cars were smashed up. The Bonfire Night action marked a turning point for local politics.

barristers for almost all the defendants. A massive victory was obtained in the courts, due to the aggressive tactics against the police adopted by the barristers (led by Rudy Narayan) and to the fact that the jury was almost entirely working class.

But it was a court-room victory. There was no effective grass-roots organising. In the absence of political leadership, the youth were beginning to see Rasta as the only viable option — a process which is even truer today. While it is wrong to see Rasta as apolitical — its affirmation of blackness, its emphasis on black self-organisation and its insurrectionary music are clearly political in one sense — the fact is that almost all Rastas see the methods of politicians, revolutionary or reformist, as part of the Babylon system to which they are fundamentally opposed.

## POLITICAL VACUUM

Nor was the political vacuum in Chapeltown filled over the next five years. The political down-turn during that period — the failure of the Labour government, the rise of racism and Thatcherism — contributed to a drawing up of the horns among blacks and whites in Chapeltown. The white *Chapeltown News* collective handed over the paper to the few black militants who had tried to campaign over the Bonfire Night Trial, but the paper folded in 1977. No political ideology that went beyond the black militancy of the early 70's took root in the area.

Instead, a political method which made a fundamental break with the earlier militancy was adopted by several community leaders. Their efforts were focussed on developing certain community projects. These projects — the Law Centre the Harambee hostel for homeless youth, the "Boys" Club, the (forthcoming) West Indian Centre — all provide an extremely valuable service, and they have insisted on local community management. But none of them are, or can be, a focus for political organising in the community. The educational functions they perform are carefully contained within the parameters set down by their funding agencies (the local and national state), and they live in fear of the accusation that they are "political". Now that several local activists are actually paid by the local state, the potential for militant activity is reduced even further.

## EXPLAINING THE UPRISING

This brief analysis of the recent political history of Chapeltown is designed to highlight the absence of a local organisation which could express the grievances of the people through the methods of militant politics. It suggests that the youth had no other avenue than the street violence of early July through which they could make their feelings heard. It shows that Chapeltown has a long experience of direct action as a substitute for the conventional political methods — methods which have been scorned for many years. But it does not prove that the action by the youth should be regarded as political action, to be dignified with the expression "uprising".

In an attempt to prove this point, I first want to look briefly at the analyses put forward by some other tendencies on the left. In one sense, everyone on the left admits that there was a political dimension to what are frequently described as "riots". It is commonly argued that the "riots" are a result of the political and economic crisis, and that they express the alienation of youth, in particular black youth. Most leftists would agree with Tony Benn:

*"These policies (or successive British Governments) — now described as monetarism — have already destroyed much of our industry, undermined our Public Services, laid waste whole areas of our country, widened the gap between rich and poor, and virtually blanked out hope for whole sections of our population who are now condemned to long term deprivation. These are the real causes of the recent disturbances."*<sup>5</sup>

The International Marxist Group attempted to sum this up in a memorable variation of their CND slogan: "We want jobs, not riot police".<sup>6</sup>

But several tendencies on the left explicitly deny that the youth themselves are taking politically valid action. Tony Benn, for instance, says that "The Labour Party does not believe in rioting as a route to social progress nor are we prepared to see the Police injured in the course of their duties!"<sup>7</sup> Chris Harman, of the Socialist Workers Party, also maintains that the "rioters" are not employing the correct methods for changing society:

*"The power of the rioters lies in their ability to drive the police off the streets. . . but the streets they control are the streets of poverty. They burn down parts of the old society but they do not have the means to build a new one. For those*



Frequently, mass struggle takes place before the appropriate political formations have been created, and this was one such instance. The various Parents Groups over the previous few years had been militant in ways not favoured by labour politicians, but they had always set their demands and made a very pointed intervention against specific targets. While their activities had been on behalf of the youth, and had included some far-sighted young people among their leaders, there was no specific organising with the mass of youth. In fact, by this time the most militant of the black leaders had left Chapeltown, and influence had transferred back to ethnic organisations based on particular islands.

## RASTA INFLUENCE

The aftermath of Bonfire Night highlighted the political vacuum. Almost all the black adults were shocked and dismayed by the severity of the assault launched by the youth. The leading figures among the youth themselves were turning towards Rastafarianism and were thus unwilling to mount an overtly political campaign. The few remaining people in the community who had experience of the earlier militant organising were unable to set up a defence campaign. *Chapeltown News*, the community paper started in October 1972 and by now a local paper with a political and international analysis carried reports and comment which was uncompromisingly in support of the youth. It was avidly read, but was incapable of organising in Chapeltown because most of the collective were white.

By the time the youth came to trial in June 1976, however, one major step had been taken by the black community leaders. They had organised a legal defence composed of black



clubs, football teams or sound systems. For the black youth, the 12 inch import record, or toasting over a backing track, communicates the political views of the time (they have superseded the nineteenth century newsprint). As for discipline, every "riot" has its story of premises and people known to be valuable to the community being protected. In Chapeltown, Mr Steffensen described how his shop was guarded by the youth he had watched grow up.<sup>18</sup> And the police give ample testimony to the speed with which forces were deployed against them, disappearing and regrouping at will.\*\* A programme of demands does exist, but again it does not conform to the pattern jealously nurtured by the revolutionary leadership: "This economic thing is crap. It isn't just unemployment. If you are black and come from Liverpool 8 you can't get anywhere."<sup>20</sup> They want the police off their backs and they want to "get somewhere". These are non-negotiable demands, and they will struggle in the way they think best until they get them.

Finally, we have to look at the actual effects of the disturbances. If they were not political events, they certainly had the most dramatic political consequences. Mrs Thatcher described early July as her ten most worrying days.<sup>21</sup> Lord Scarman has been conducting a judicial version of Custer's Last Stand in almost continuous session since 15th June, in an enquiry set up to look into the causes of Brixton's first upsurge on 10th to 12th April, but which has been extended to cover the further events in July. Environment Minister Michael Heseltine, in an unprecedented move, was sent to Liverpool for a full two weeks to investigate the Toxteth uprising. It would appear that the revolt of the Tory wets has gained much of its force from an understanding that the "riots" show that all is not well with Thatcher's Britain.

In Chapeltown, the effects have been equally significant. George Mudie, the Labour council leader, took an astute initiative in calling all the ethnic community leaders together for a series of meetings designed to get their views on what needed to be done to solve Chapeltown's problems. Certain momentous changes were immediately forthcoming. The unemployed got concessionary prices at the local Sports Centre. The Boys Club was given a stereo. The leaders heard in advance what projects were receiving money under the inner city programme (drawn up before July). There might well be some genuine gains from these "Liaison Committee" meetings, but the council appears to have succeeded in its major aim of enmeshing the leaders in talks and diverting attention from the youth.

These political effects do not lead to any conclusions about the politics or "programme" of those who look part in the uprising. They merely prove that they youth shook the shit out of the establishment. The real question for revolutionaries is "what happens now?" and it is to this that we now turn.

## WHAT NEXT?

It might seem strange to have devoted so much space to crying to demonstrate that these events were deeply political. But there is almost no evidence that the white left press has been able to comprehend these events. That is not altogether surprising, given the white/male/factory blinkers worn by the left parties and groups. My argument here is that, in order to begin to think about what needs to be done after the uprising, an analysis which includes the dimensions of race and sex, as well as class, has to be developed. Such an analysis must entail an understanding of the political dynamic outside the waged workplace, in the working class "community". This article is an attempt at such an analysis, and it is obviously inadequate, but, hopefully, it is a start at making political sense of what has happened over the past ten years in Chapeltown.

The other point that this analysis should have made clear is that there is a certain rhythm to political development to which revolutionaries must attune themselves. Each struggle in Chapeltown has had its gains and losses. The gains have usually been tangible: one kind of material resource or another. The losses have been key people getting tired or impatient and moving on to pastures new. There has, however, been one ever-present problem. No grouping has been able to provide a forum for an open-minded evaluation of the politics of each of the struggles over the whole of the period in question. So it has been almost impossible for collective political development to take place. The rhythm of struggle has been dictated, in the early period, by the aspirations of the militants, but in the later period the key factor has been the street activity of the youth — and in the past few years there has never been a political force which can itself begin to

dictate events.

This political force cannot be conjured up. It can be parachuted in — several white left groups have tried it, and are resuming their efforts now — but failure is inevitable. To some extent, it can be built by the few black and white militants with revolutionary politics who are rooted in the area, so long as they realise that the organisation has to grow organically with needs and the human resources of the area.

It is in this respect that the youth are central. Black or white, their style of life is not conducive to the revolutionary routine of meetings, leaflets and demos. Nor are they easily impressed with the rhetoric, reformist or revolutionary, of the self-styled leaderships. So the tactic of using a Defence Committee as a vehicle for recruiting youth to an existing political grouping is a non-starter. The "practical" tactic of setting up youth oriented projects, which actually begin to cater for their immediate needs, could be helpful in providing a base from which the youth can be encouraged to organise themselves, but this is likely to fall foul of the funding agencies should it become at all subversive.

In this, as in every other area of political work, there is no escaping the conclusion that there has to be a long, hard struggle to develop a political analysis relevant to the particular situation of the multi-racial inner city, and an organisation which embodies that analysis. In Chapeltown, this would mean a new organisation. For it to relate to the youth in the post-uprising period it would have to recognise the fact of their autonomy: the fact that they expressed needs, for money, freedom and dignity, which are quite separate from the needs which capital is able to fulfill; and the fact that they use methods which are quite separate from those employed by the conventional forces of protest. And it would have to understand that they want *power*. In the first instance, power to control their streets, to walk without harassment.

To build such an organisation, the militants would have to be able to demonstrate their understanding of these facts by their words, writing and actions. They would have to draw the youth into activities which improve their immediate situation — by organising against police harassment, by schemes which provide money, by making cheap ways of enjoying themselves. These cannot be provided for the youth; the youth have to make them themselves. An essential component of this would be self-education — in particular, the youth talking and writing about their own situation, its causes and the way out. In the process, some will get jobs, or move away, or "settle down" — and some will become revolutionary militants. Then a new cycle will begin. The twelve Bradford Asians, presently facing trial on conspiracy and explosives charges, formed a revolutionary organisation — the United Black Youth League — precisely because they wanted to move beyond the conventional political forms. They are now facing the consequences. But there is no alternative.

MAX FARRAR

~~Paul Holt~~

## NOTES

1. "Chapeltown Residents Opinion Survey" conducted by Leeds City Council (1975).
2. Much of what follows is based on the writer's own research.
3. *Chapeltown News* is available for reference in Leeds City Library. It documents almost all of the events described in this article.
4. *Planning to Deceive* is in the Library of the Leeds Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre, 6 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2.
5. Tony Benn press release 18th July 1981 from Labour Party Publicity Department, 144-52 Walworth Road, London SE17.
6. *Socialist Challenge*, front page, 9th July 1981.
7. Tony Benn op cit.
8. Chris Harman, *Socialist Review* 16 May-14 June 1981.
9. Stuart Hall, "Summer in the City", *New Socialist* No.1, Sept/Oct 1981.
10. Marion Tronti derives this argument from the Grundrisse in his article "Social Capital" (*Telos* No.17, 1973). Some of the stimulus for my views on the uprising come from another Italian theorist, Sergio Bologna, in his "Tribes of Moles", in "Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis" (*Red Notes/CSE* 1979 from BP 15, 2a St Paul's Road, London N1).
11. *Yorkshire Evening Post* 13.7.81.
12. Stuart Hall op cit.
13. *Spare Rib* September 1981.
14. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Bantam Books 1968) pp.134-5.
15. John Shirley's article in the *Sunday Times*, 12.7.81.
16. George Rude, *Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815* (Fontana 1964) p70.
17. Conversation with the writer.
18. *Guardian* 14.7.81.
19. *Sunday Times* op cit.
20. Various newspapers 14.7.81. Unfortunately Mrs Thatcher does not appear to have explained *why* she was having such a bad time.