

**Once Upon A Time
There Was A Place
Called Nothing Hill
Gate.....**



**A True Story With Pictures
By PADDINGTON BEAR.**

Once Upon A Time There Was A Place Called Notting Hill Gate.....

A critical history of the Notting Hill Carnival,
Notting Hill Gate as a whole, and beyond.....

Preamble

The following is a personal account covering a more or less twenty year period in Notting Hill Gate (also called North Kensington and colloquially known as "the Gate".) It's sketchy here but detailed there focusing on the main event: the Notting Hill Carnival particularly the '87 riot and the years of conflict on All Saints Road. It's also full of generalities which apply elsewhere too. One could have gone into an immense amount of detail concerning different situations but the length of the text and the cost and time involved would have been prohibitive. It, therefore, has no pretensions at all to being a definitive critique. Its function is finally a pointer to what might be by taking a drag at the fag ends of the past.

More generally it would be a good idea if others, independantly minded individuals, in particular situations (e.g. other London areas, other U.K. regions or cities or particular work places-hospitals, mills, print, pits, building sites, offices, black economy, community programmes, job training schemes and ethnic minorities)-could put together some kind of critical document of their own experiences. If nothing else, simply as a guide to those who are fresh in there now or will come after, peering in from the outside or just plain nosey. Although one's own experiences may not seem that interesting to the one telling the tale the fact is such documents would in all likelihood be not just fascinating but also help in clarifying the unknown substance of revolution conceived in a microcosm." Be global, act local " as the Americans say. In a sense too, the one great autobiography (sort of) this century - Ciliga's " The Russian Enigma " -, reading like a revolutionary travelogue you can't put down, is also a great indictment of Bolshevism as revolutionary ideology.

A good part of the following was written before the great collapse on the worlds' stock markets. The first rough draft ended with a prediction that the crash was coming. However this was no different from what many others (including Labour Party hacks) had been saying, although the interpretation of what it could mean was quite different. What was important though was that this great event did in fact mean that some of the emphasis of the original had to be changed somewhat. No longer did Notting Hill and London generally seem to be a future of property prices, estate agents and yuppies. Thus a kind of postscript is a series of speculative meanderings of what may be in store for us more generally in the UK as a whole. More concrete than such speculation is seeing where this wheel has been. Or, less metaphorically, seeing what has been the history of Notting Hill that has nurtured its present contradictions. In attacking the present we reveal the past. In making our own history we reveal how much, and in what ways, past history was not our own, or that of our class. This therefore is the tale and as the Irish adage goes: "if there's a lie in it, well let it stand". Not that a lie is intentional but one must remember that all theoretical explanation is provisional and mistakes are inevitably made. Blob's done more than a few. There's bound to be more in what follows, particularly as it has been produced at the beginning of a new period of great changes waiting their turn in the wings.

"----But Notting Hill is the tyrant --- that they try to meddle with everyone, and rule everyone, and civilize everyone and tell everyone what is good for him."

G.K. Chesterton: "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" (1904)

Notting Hill was always an immigrant community. The development of the railway network and a changed policy towards cheaper fares in the mid 19th century onwards, meant that the centre of London was evacuated in order to become more or less a pure commercial space facilitating the circulation of commodities. As the population was decanted to the peripheral areas between 1830 and 1880, London became the first dead city centre we have now become accustomed to the world over. These areas were then often just fields and pastures and were built up from scratch. Notting Hill was one of them, freshly created and colonized by people from central London, then elsewhere in the U.K. and finally from the rest of the world. This movement of the poor was accompanied by a similiar movement, (though not enforced like that of the poor) of the wealthy from central London who generally took the fresher air of the higher ground of the Hill proper. From its inception therefore, the rich and poor lived cheek by jowl with each other affronted by each others unwanted presence. Indeed the whimsical, light fantasy "the Napoleon of Notting Hill" is partially about an earlier resistance to gentrification, although basically the novel is about the richer parts adjacent to Embassy-belt territory and not about the darker, desperate underbelly of the Gate proper. In retrospect however, one likes to think that some of Chesterton's paradoxes ("If a job's worth doing its worth doing badly:" work is the ruin of the drinking classes " etc) which attracted the approval of the French Surrealists may have been a sub-conscious assimilation of the Gate's, often rich, low life.

Notting Hill's special interest as regards the U.K. and elsewhere, is of more recent origin. Whatever importance it may have from a revolutionary perspective is what is highlighted here. What follows is not a funk History Workshop. Its central theme is simple. Far more than elsewhere the lower slopes of Notting Hill sponsored the entrance of post-war "anarchism" - more precisely an anarchic sentiment - into the political arena and party system. Lacking in rigour from the start, its eventual kalidoscopic dispersal covering an enormous range of issues, acted finally as a buttress supporting the nation State.

A WALK BACK INTO NOTTING HILL

Over the past few decades, Notting Hill has been looked upon as something of an unusual area both in London and the rest of the U.K. It had (and to some degree still has) a libertarian ambience though the word is not used as it might be used to describe, say the past and maybe even the present of the Spanish workers' movement. It could be described as a kind of tolerance of free-wheeling attitudes, behaviour and dress. Flourishing and revolving around the formerly large private rented sector of bed-sits (and later squats in private and State sector) the 9 to 5 grind got the thumbs down everytime. It was a place of refuge; a place to escape away from the insufferable constraints of the family background, away from entrenched working class prejudices or career mindedness and a too straightlaced world altogether. Single parent mothers (before it became commonplace) could exist without too much fear of persecution and criticism from neighbours. Social Security snoopers from the D.H.S.S. tried to make up for this absence though. Easy too for Lesbians and Gays when these words were still whispered elsewhere. But above all, Notting Hill breathed an anti-work atmosphere and nobody came on too heavy for just dossing about with no aim in life, even in the long-gone days of full employment.

Closely related to this anti-work ambience, indeed possibly encouraging it, was a certain bohemianism, linked to art. In this respect, Notting Hill was an off-shoot of Chelsea Arts. Though lacking in money, prestige and tradition, it was a place where these poor cousins, unable to make it in the bogus Chelsea pantheon of art could reside. It was from cheap lodgings off the Portobello Rd in the early 30's, that a shabby genteel George Orwell sallied forth to experience being Down and Out in London. Though Orwell wincingly and somewhat pompously proclaimed himself as a 'writer' nonetheless throughout his books there is a constant undercurrent disparaging art which is quite obviously related to the fact that he was always short of cash. It seemed however that the more one climbed the moneyed Hill proper the less art became something to be questioned (and this was as true of Orwell as anyone else). The Sitwell's would look with disdain from their Holland Park mansion down Ladbrooke Grove which, partially because of very basic economic insecurity, had more than a whiff of arts transcendence to it.

It was sometimes more than a whiff but only just. Max Ernst stayed for a short while in the late 30's and Kurt Schwitters, the German Dadaist in exile from Nazism, before moving to the Lake District lived in Notting Hill (from his bed-sit he perhaps began to satirize English obsessions with tea drinking, the weather, etc. ('when I am writing about the weather I know what I am writing about')). In the 30's, the widow of that not quite revolutionary theorist of culture, Walter Benjamin, also resided in the area. More generally it became a place for people with a measure of artistic pretension, unable finally to believe wholeheartedly in art and lacking therefore the push to make it. It would stop short at the abandoned painting and a few scribbled pages of a novel never quite up to grasping the connection between half-hearted artistic fumbling and a critique of capitalism. Any mention of historical antecedents which were critical of art, would be met with a vague acknowledgement but not much more.

This is a common enough occurrence in highly developed countries because authority has consciously set about fostering amnesia when it comes to an appraisal of radical tendencies surpassing art, in the revolution of modern art.

Footnote: This mustn't be too over-emphasized however, because more generally, inculcating a collective amnesia has become one of the prime strategies of the State. In other matters, the UK State has been singularly unsuccessful in accomplishing this. Big events (e.g. the miners' victory in '72 at Saltley Depot) are quickly and vividly recalled by many at the sharp end of exploitation.

Until Punk which marked the on-set of modernist recuperation in the UK, English conservatism could effectively be relied on to do the job, stifling outbreaks at source. As regards the national cultural scene no re-write of the facts ever proved necessary. Indeed most of the avant garde when fleeing Fascism found the United States more congenial. Schwitters it must be remembered also had been criticized by fellow German Dadaists for his petit bourgeois behaviour (e.g. evicting an upstairs tenant who just happened to be in the way of one of his expanding Merzbau's). The point is plain enough: a relevant critique of modern art was simply lacking in the UK and there was nothing in the country's post First World War history (unlike in France for example) which could have been used as a spring board. In places like Notting Hill especially in its "counter culture" period this absence was sorely missed. You might as well have talked to a brick wall as attempt to explain the death of art to this rapidly decomposing La Boheme. Talk of changing life produced a ready response alright. The only trouble was that art was looked on as changing life and not a manifestation, on the most basic level, of an aspect of the same deadly survival sickness, where the distraction of interesting products (and increasingly today interesting but essentially role bound behaviour), mediates and substitutes for lifeless, uncreative reality.

It was however a La Boheme with a common touch overlapping continually with local people who weren't made to feel unwanted as had happened recently with the yuppie colonization. Besides, their economic circumstances were often not all that different doing similar jobs in Lyons corner houses and the like and always behind with the rent. The more avant garde cultural careerists found it profitable to market people's fascination with this marginal life-style which has always seemed so different. Notting Hill is the background, for example, to the 50's film " The L-shaped Room " in which a pregnant French girl running from her parents moves into a crummy bed-sit. In the sub-divided house there is a black trumpeter, an ever aspiring novelist, a dragon of a landlady, a prostitute, an understanding dyke who liked to dress up in military uniform and her cat. This was also the setting for the novels of Colin McInnes who despite all his liberal and cultural garbage, did emphasize the historically unprecedented post war working class affluence and innovative sub-cultures partly associated with it - Jazz, Teds, Blacks and smoking dope. (Why else call one of his efforts "Absolute Beginners"?) Developments from these initial sub-cultural experiments were, of course, to become in later years, an explosive ingredient in riots.

Notting Hill's bohemian heyday was in the 50's. A decade later, the area became the focus of the alternative, underground, hippy, drop out syndrome. Despite its palpable bullshit it did push a few things to the fore. Inevitably the contradictions implied in practising art became more finely stretched the more obvious its banal, unalterable role became in ratifying the status quo. A clearer headed attack on art and one inseparable from a total revolutionary critique, came into focus.

The first pro-situationist group to appear in the UK in the late 60's, King Mob was based in Notting Hill. The delphic slogans which they spray canned on the walls of the area pre-dated those in Paris '68 (they also continued after that) but rarely were as acute and definitely not as consequential. In fact the all-too-obvious flirtation with literature in these slogans was only too appealing to the local counter-cultural poets who just loved them. Their merit lay in remaining

Footnote: This bohemian, artistic ambience was very different from a neighbouring area like Kilburn with more than a dash of lyrical-talking Irish and a popular respect for the Irish poet. There work was looked on as a central, inescapable necessity; the curse of Adam which even rivers of Guinness after work could never cleanse the memory of. (c/f that anti-building company song of the Building Trade, 'McAlpine's Fusiliers', written in a bed-sit down Lyngington Rd in the adjacent West Hampstead area). And where laid-back, loafing, Notting Hill, trying to do as little as possible, was simply a stop on the number 31 and 28 bus routes where engaging weirdos hung out.

anonymous. No one was quite sure who wrote what, nor, was it done with an eye to promoting the group (unlike the anarcho-politicos of today, who sign their grafitti, no matter how bad!) In fact grafitti as promo was taken up several years later by groups like the Stones and others* while the honourable tradition of anonymity was continued in slogans like "Joyless work causes cancer", "We teach all hearts to break" on a school etc. But their revolutionary core poetized though it often was, generally remained a dead letter in the area despite the fact that the anonymity and increased incidence of grafitti suggested otherwise. Blake's "The Road of Excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom" was changed to "Willesden" (a nearby area) - a fitting and knowing response to the pretence of having sprayed it up in the first place.

But what was to follow was even more dire as Heathcote Williams, the alternative playwright, took up the spray can. The earlier grafitti at least was striking and gave one food for thought even in its unammended version. But whatever the ubiquitous "Remember the truth Dentist" slogan meant, Mr Williams alone knows. True it was an ad for one of his rubbishy plays but it had all the hallmarks of that deliberate and elitist obscurantism which passes itself off as profundity. Or for that matter was his word play on Max Bygraves' Sing alonga Max ("Wanka-longa Max") really worthy of practically an entire gable-end wall?* Revolt was turning into that "crab like movement sideways" (Tom Nairn) as subversion was replaced with a more compatible and time-honoured eccentricity which teased rather than indicted. In the process, Eng Lit rather than society, became ripe for renewal as Heathcote Williams sought to update old acting traditions (e.g. in Derek Jarman's outré film of Shakespeare's "The Tempest" which was also featured in The Sunday Times colour supp.) Or, giving a new lease of credibility for example to a stodgy rep theatre in Harrogate with his own play, "Hancocks Last Half Hour". Indeed "Hancock Lives" was one of his few Notting Hill grafitti that reminded people that here was a comic who despite performing on stage and in front of TV and film cameras could still just about say something. But sadly being trapped in the vicious circle of success and failure in society's terms, which in many ways he was so able to parody, was undoubtedly the most important reason for him making sure he had nothing further to say. And for certain Hancock was not contrasting the untutored comic in everyday situations (who really does have an effect) with the comic entertainer who performs to rote.*

Footnote: With punk and after grafitti became an acceptable free method for bands to advertise themselves or their records, doing it themselves or getting their fans to do it seemed like progress (self-advertising) from the crudely capitalist way "It's only Rock 'n' Roll" forced itself on the walls of London. Now, with books and books on grafitti - raking in a packet for their authors - grafitti has also become a devalued form of communication.

Footnote: The subversive joker is the opposite of those comedians of daily life whose only purpose is arbitrary provocation, who provide the inspiration for many professional humourists. We're talking about the winder-uppers who delight in making anybody feel small so as to inflate themselves. Their put-downs never wish to subvert a persons petrifications, change a situation, but merely act as a cynical way of displaying their aggressivity, of dressing themselves up in the seductive image of someone prepared to challenge anything, including peoples' genuine integrity, to confront everything, including the truth. The witty insult, devoid of direction, is particularly prevalent in London now, as more and more people try to make up for their increasingly desperate uncreative impotence and isolation with an assertive image of creative potency, a form of art more subtle and immediate than art obviously dominated by economic criteria but hardly less demoralizing.

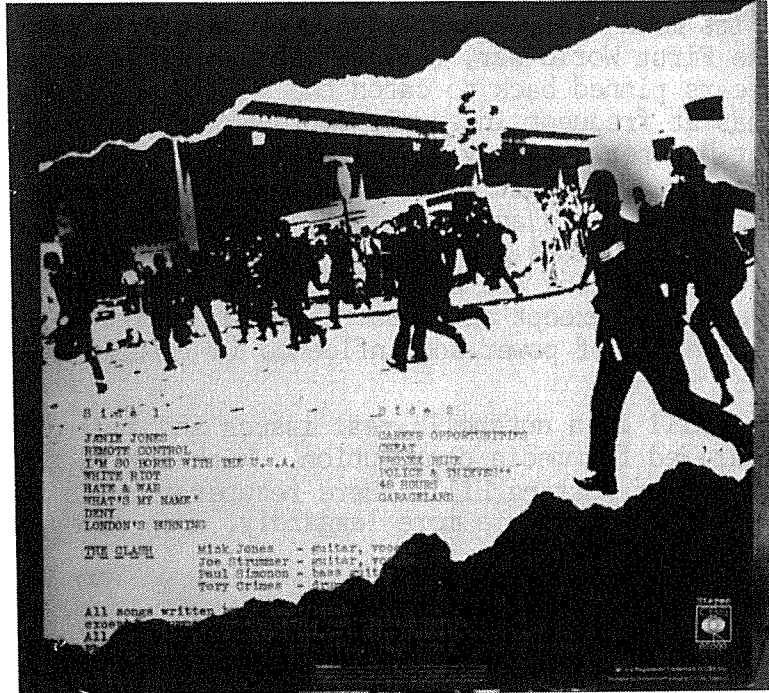
King Mob didn't really attempt to come to grips with the brute realities outside the door. Its self-questioning, pitifully small, remained a jumble of good insight and utter incoherence. Within two years it was riven to shreds by lack of clarity, the onset of economic crises and by the class archaisms of the UK which, almost effortlessly, it seemed to reproduce. Its leaders (and like those of so many groups today, despite protestations to the contrary), quite quickly fucked off for the bright lights and back to the boorjuice from whence they came.

As for many of the rest, the way up not down proved too alluring once their youthfull hi-jinks were played out; the way up becoming part of the post '68 new middle classes. Some (e.g. McLaren,) achieved national renown, their "misspent youth" having contributed to giving them an easy advantage over their staid rivals. It's depressing because they were so promising and if they'd stuck with their original insights/life - and necessarily deepened them - they would have helped lighten the increasing gloom instead of adding to it. Individuals can and do have an effect even though one must be wary of exaggerating that effect. A scant few, cut to the quick, by this shabby behaviour, especially when it involved former close friends, never copped out. In the long night of reaction which is still with us booze, manic-depression and a beckoning madness were their constant companions even though they comprehended that their reactions were reflex responses to the raving needs of a commodity economy gone mad anyway. In a sense they were among the first to ever burst into that silent sea, forced to play many a fine trick on madness - a madness which has plagued the downturn of every major revolt since.

However to return to the early '70's. One of the initial reactions, apart from cynicism, to the shabby, quick compromises of the King Mob milieu was terrorism - which appeared in the form of "The Angry Brigade". Fleet footing in and out of the Gate, the almost ontological warrior strength they projected made others feel inadequate and contemptible - on purpose one suspected. However, to be generous, although in no way justifying their spectacularised substitutionism (which, of course denied being substitutionist) one is obliged to recognise "The Angry Brigade" as the most avant garde terrorist group in Western Europe and one that fortunately wasn't used by the State like the Red Brigades in Italy or Action Directe in France. The potential as in all terrorist groups was there, but their early capture prevented this. Also a certain disdain for a too rigid hierarchy and order taking may have made the task of State infiltration more difficult. However one has to be careful in making suppositions like this. Suffice to say that their manifestoes still have a ring of modernity to them, despite much of their wooden, tub thumping tone. They are refreshingly unlike the quasi-Stalinist/unadulterated blood curdling leftisms of Action Directe or, Red Brigades communiques. Perhaps this is the reason why their manifestoes are still reprinted and "The Angry Brigade" is still held in a certain esteem threatening a second coming like the heirs of the resistance in Italy or France.

Left to ponder on who were the losers in the long run- us or them- the scale of the co-optation was such that the term "revolutionary" became a prime casualty. Its possible to assign different periods to this response beginning with an early '70's derisive rejection of militancy. A cartoon at the time showed a typical Notting Hill street scene. Someone has stopped underneath a budding tree. "Hark" he says, "The call of the first militant of Spring". By the 80's a person's worth was valued for how they lived their life and not for the quality of the revolutionary phrase-mongering. So many revolutionaries without a revolution when one wanted a revolution without revolutionaries.

Later in the '70's, this garbled revolutionism was to be squeezed back into the recuperative rebel music of punk which got at least some of its edge from the Notting Hill experience over the years. "The Clash" formerly the 101'ers of 101, Waltherton Rd - an off shoot of the Elgin Avenue squat-and spawned in the spit and sawdust, Irish-dominated Chippenham pub, were named after the '76 Carnival clash with the cops. "Minder", the TV serial of Cockney low life in the late '70's/early '80's and which



The Clash's first album cover montaged the '76 riot on the sleeve cover. Music of course, along with the rest of the areas cultural-junk pretensions, has been high-profile and the list of pop musicians, resident or passing-through, is endless: Van Morrison, The Pogues, Hank Wangford, Motorhead, Peter Kossoff, Amazulu, George Melly, Delroy Washington etc, etc. Though some of this can be diverted within another context (e.g. Motorhead painted into New York style, naive but often funny, anarcho pro-situ murals in Catalunya in the Spanish spring of '87) there's another point worth making. One would have thought the often rich low-life atmosphere of inner-city Notting Hill would have stimulated some original edgy blues. Instead that incisive expression of black experiences funnelled through the UK's originally white social apartheid - at the moment of rock's brief late summer - came from some dull and uninspiring few acres in London's Surrey suburbia which spawned Jeff Beck, Ritchie Blackmore and Eric Clapton. At their best they weren't so short of Hendrix's guitar licks...It goes without saying that these are comments about a recent past and of no relevance to the present situation when music has nothing to say except turn the lights off and "go to sleep."

began to popularise more than ever cockney rhyming slang and accent throughout the UK (eg. Bradford Asians occasionally slipping in a cockney phrase and accent etc.) was often shot on location in Notting Hill and its environs. The Mangrove restaurant appeared in one episode with a local, instantly recognisable giant of a Rasta playing a heavy bit part. Possibly even the fragmentary but ever present anti-art rhetoric, rubbed-off on one episode where a rich, eccentric DJ, shouted, "Death to music".

It's also interesting to note that some of the actors who first found their feet in the Merseyside soap for interlectshooals "Brookside" can be seen quite regularly on the streets of Notting Hill. Brookside was a media fall-out of Liverpool insurgency, particularly Toxteth in 1981. But the name itself goes back to the Shrewsbury trial arising out of the national building workers' strike of '72 when, Ricky Tomlinson, a Liverpool building worker, (later to become the Brookside actor) was sent to jail, with two others, accused of really cutting-up untidy on a scab building site. The name of the site? Brookside!

Liverpool is the most artistically conscious of northern cities. Going back to the 20's and 30's its main bent was literary, then literary/musical in the 50's and 60's. Since the First World War, the art that has stamped the city has always been "committed", ears pinned back to catch the sharp turns of phrase Liverpool is noted for. It has at frequent intervals obliquely raised the question of "art and revolution" but has persistently shunned radical critiques.* It's an observation as true of John Lennon as it is of Jamie Reid, the pro-situ recuperator and thief of other peoples leaflets and stickers who is now a friend of Mersey actors. The fact that "Brookside" actors are turning up in the Gate merely serves to underscore the similarity in outlook and ambience between the artistic scene in the Gate and the one in Liverpool - except of course the Gate is incomparably wealthier and closer to the real centers of power and influence in TV/film and theatre.

That's Notting Hill in a nutshell: real issues and real conflict instantly spectacularized for media consumption. With regard to recuperation a point must be made about Notting Hill. Here recuperation is instant, clever and quite out of synch with a more laggardly, even archaic means elsewhere in the UK.

A Half-Way Libertarianism.

However given the areas general libertarian ambience finding toes to tread on wasn't difficult. Try and be more rigourous and concrete and you were really courting ostracism. Its phoney classlessness was not really to be questioned. The issue of class was always fudged, ignored and a muddle-headed liberal individualism could so quickly turn into a disregard for basic human needs and a helping hand which more solidly working class neighbourhoods give priority too. (Though less and less so in London) Moreover there was a tendency to disregard those subtle changes of attitude amongst workers. Passing almost unnoticed it meant that a lot of the old prejudices (get a good job, get married, honour the nuclear family, racism etc) were being thrown off. Partly this was happening in response to the high degree of visibility this somewhat elitist libertarian scene gave to scanning such prejudices.

Escaping the constraints of an overbearing family was fine but then to have no back up whatsoever was also often a recipe for mental breakdown and suicide which happened only too often. The only other alternative at hand were hard drugs, especially heroin, which in Notting Hill was initially spectacularized as romantic, daring and free and the ultimate "junk" commodity - at once spoof and liberation - surpassing the philistine need to acquire a car, nice carpets and go on a package holiday. Not being able to take our desires for reality, heroin ran a close second. But this was well before its extension into working class communities became commonplace and where its destructive, pacifying, function was

Footnote: Compare for instance the lives of Jack Common and George Garrett, one from Tyneside, the other from Liverpool. Garrett, a docker, sailor, tug-boat man and beach comber went to New York where he became a Wobbly before deported back to Liverpool. Increasingly attracted by theatre and literature, he took to writing short stories and plays about Liverpool in the 30's. He died a tug-boat man and not an artist. Due to structural changes in capital since - which needs art for its own reproductive ends - a Garrett today would necessarily have to cease being a worker and join the well rewarded, professional world of finks like Willy Russell and Bleasdale. Even in Garrett's day, however, Common - unemployed for much of the 20's before moving south - developed the outlines of a strikingly original and radical critique of art. It was only after World War Two and the dashing of his revolutionary hopes, that he took to writing novels.

only too obvious. Indeed, King Mob, constructed a float for the 1969 Notting Hill Carnival on which a girl 'Miss Notting Hill '69' sat with a jumbo sized jacking iron sticking out of her arm from which ketchup was pouring. Sure it was meant to be a tasteless, disenchanting comment but one which refused to sit in judgement. It was a comment on the fact there was junk and junk, the hard stuff or, the heroin of mindless routine and consumption. To condemn one without condemning the other, was simply pissing in the wind and when some thirteen years later, smack was more explicitly condemned (because now it was a mass problem), some of the slogans which appeared had, all the abstract poetic dash one had come to associate with the district: "The junkies you've created are committing slow-motion suicide". Others however, were less so: "cheap heroin - the cure for unemployment".

Inevitably, the libertarian element in Notting Hill was expressed in sexual encounters of all kinds. Not only did whites and blacks meet here but gays, lesbians and others in a unique blend. Marriage and the closed family unit was and still is sneered at. But neither was it entirely liberating. In fact, liberation, was the exception, not the rule.

Though talk of class was frowned on, there was (and is) a lot of rough trade - that typical sexual expression of class. Bohemian middle class meets the working class freak. Given the class-obsessed nature of the UK, it's an explosive mix. Both attractive and ruinous, as each try to point-score and get their own back on each other. For the patrician bohemian, a means of consciousness-raising and turn on by a wild animal. For the freak, a sexually demagogic dictatorship of the proletariat, even if rarely expressed with this degree of clarity. Inevitably these relationships would break up in bitter mutual recrimination, as libertarianism shaded into decomposition. A former actress of the Maria Aitken rather than the Julie Walters school, her affectations and composure becoming frayed through too many gins, would go on the game looking for some ready dosh. When it comes to naming a shop and independent record label (and which was to become one of the UK's most successful recording labels) "Rough Trade" was just right for the area.

Plus Multi-Ethnicity and Work.

Alongside the areas attraction to an art/anti-art bohemia, (which in the last analysis ended up in the art game) Notting Hill has acted as a magnet for immigrant peoples. In fact that was to be the areas special stamp: bohemianism and multi-ethnicity. The Caribbean peoples who started to arrive in large numbers in the 50's are obviously the most well known. There were also the Spanish and Portuguese escaping unemployment and Fascism in the Iberian Peninsula. After the Portuguese coup of April 25th 1974 many local and legless Portuguese celebrated the event, in what seemed every pub in the area. The Spanish took their turn eighteen months later, on hearing of Franco's death. It goes without saying the Irish are everywhere in Notting Hill, because Inner London in toto, is very much an Irish city- if not the biggest in all but name. Bit by bit there were all the other nationalities to be found in Notting Hill probably numbering around 30.

They were always, always escaping----something. Sad, ever so sad looking, Hungarians unable to forget '56 in Budapest. Poles excited about the Polish August of 1980. Ukrainians reminiscing about Kiev, but so pleased to have landed safely in the U.K.'s social security system, never to do a stroke of work again. Downing pints of lager in pubs opposite the Brunel Estate (council housing estate) they were coming round to thinking the English State every bit as bad, if not worse than the Russian! And the stateless Czechs hiding from 'their' Embassy a mile away. All of them a bag of nerves, they would crack black jokes about their predicament. Three Czechs together and one must be

a spy! One reputed spy ran a cake stall, for a short while on Portobello Rd. Pullover on back to front, he seemed to be perpetually drunk. The word got round that he had a flat in the centre of Prague. His cover was blown and Czech home-cooking disappeared from Portobello Road. As his former friends said anybody who can get a flat in the centre of Prague was for certain a spy. Of all the East Europeans in the area though, the Czechs were (perhaps are?) the most aware. They want some autonomous councilist system disliking the Western lefties too. Hating State bureaucracy so much, one preferred to remain Stateless. On the night the LP of the Czech pop group, Plastic People was released, several of them went wild, insisting the English police were liberal and you could kick them up the arse, before they would do anything. It never got as far as this. Throwing gallon jars onto a main road from top story windows, was sufficient to get them nicked. Taken to Notting Hill cop shop one of them when asked if he'd ever been arrested before replied: "hundreds of times - by the Russians"!

Many of the immigrants weren't of course, so inspiring or nice, either being deeply conservative and sometimes even worse. In The Earl Percy pub one evening, a former- or so he said- Latvian SS guard drunkenly lamented that he hadn't killed enough Jews! His eyes bloodshot through drink and maybe lack of sleep, he took a perverse pleasure in being offensive. Maybe he was bullshit-ting; maybe he was acting out a tasteless piece of street theatre for an audience, more fool enough than elsewhere, to fall for "living theatre".

But as a rule the libertarian feel of the area undoubtedly spread its glow over all ethnic groupings and cramping traditions quickly broke up. A Filipino gal would shack-up with a Ukranian. A Moroccan youth would leave the prayer mat for the ganja, while his dad started to carry on with the Irish barmaid, who was having a few hot flushes about not going to mass. Not forgetting the first Asian supermarket on the corner of Westbourne Park Road and All Saints Road, staffed by drunken Pakistanis (how did they square this with Islam?) who let shop-lifters do as they pleased because they were having secret tipples all day from the shelves. A few months later, they were all to get the sack from Mr Big in charge of the growing chain of supermarkets.

Even the media-stereotyped heavies and hards in Notting Hill had a libertarian disposition. Local skinheads objected to being called racist, in the pages of the New Musical Express. Bombhead, one of their leaders, in fact usually got V.I.P. treatment when he hit black All Saints Road, on a Friday evening to collect his weekend grass. The same goes for the West London Hell's Angels who beived in the local Colville and Bevington Arms. In fact one of their members, Mikkelson - and typical of a Notting Hill connected Hell's Angel chapter - a black guy was killed by cops in the south west of London in '85. For ages the press kept quiet about Mikkelson being black, probably because the last thing they wanted to see was open fraternization everywhere between somewhat racist Hells Angels chapters and rebellious blacks. That particular divide and rule had to be kept intact at any cost.

When the first large scale riot broke out in Notting Hill in '76 the whites who joined in the fray, apart from the drop-outs, were mainly indiginous working class. Particularly those who slung bricks at the cops from the modern ten-storey, council-owned Lowerwood Court, a block of flats at the corner of Ladbroke Grove and Lancaster Road. Portuguese and Spanish youth etc did not join in. Maybe they had been told by their parents to keep well clear. Only later in '82/'83 did this begin to change, high lighted by a noticeable incident elsewhere in North London. A mixed gang of Portuguese and black youths went on the rampage trashing cars in a large parking space.

Many of these ethnic groups - all more or less working class - in stark, often schizoid contrast with the anti-work undertow of the area, found low-paid employment in the Health Service, local authorities, service industries, hotels, stores, catering and cleaning. A lot of the women worked, of course as poorly paid clerical staff in State Depts, Head offices of Corporations and banks etc. The close proximity of the nearby Park Royal Trading Estate,

meant factory work was available to some degree. One Spanish anarchist in his early 50's employed in Walls sausage factory, once mentioned how he had forlornly looked at the millionth sausage passing by on the assembly line, hoping for the day the factory would close forever. Later it did....How does he feel to be too old ever to work again? From forced work to forced redundancy - what a choice!

One gets the impression that while one part of night owl Notting Hill was getting ready for bed, the other half was getting ready for work. It wasn't simply just a deviant middle class/working class split (though that came into it) because the night birds included a lot of blacks and cockney whites. The latter were often from pretty tough families, who to reduce the ruinous evils of casualism, had, in the past learnt how to exploit the plethora of charities which had sprung up in London in the latter half of the 19th century, later to become institutionalized into the welfare state. To their name they had a long and honourable tradition of "never work" before the couplet had come to signify, post '68, a more conscious refusal to sell one's labour power, so another could profit from it.

In common with most other inner city areas, Notting Hill has its share of petty thieves, but few make a proper living out of it. Unlike the East End, it's not an area noted for heavy villainy. Even so if you wanted to make a quick visit to the casualty ward, or even worse end up in Kensal Green cemetery you only had to chat up a villains broad in "The Pig and Whistle" next to Latimer Road station. Ironically in Notting Hill valorising/promotion of the image of villainy came from an unexpected quarter: that of a decomposed revolutionary scene around the former Angry Brigade, gone money-mad.* The job of subverting capitalist society got mixed up with a fetishization of crime and the proceeds arising from crime, which can be very considerable.

Romantically and mistakenly, crime, Big Crime, tended to be regarded as as a left-handed form of human endeavour rather than the foundation of many of the world's business empires. Rubbing shoulders with villains on the Costa Del Crime became the contemporary, moneyed version, of the 19th century adulteration of brigandage which, however, did have links with protest movements. When De Sade's, "Crime is the Highest Form of Sensuality" was sprayed up on Portobello Road, it didn't mean three cheers for Ronnie Knight or, the Kray Twins.

The splendid French tradition of great criminals, stretching from Lacenaire to Mesrine and its fictionalised representation in "Pepe Le Moko" or, "Touchez pas au Grisbi" couldn't be arbitrarily transplanted to the generally vicious and visionless exploits of the typical London villain. In saying this, one must also make a clear distinction between villainy and the gangs of London Jack-the-Lads often with a magnanimous and chivalrous disposition who hold up banks, building societies etc with guns which often aren't loaded. These lads often despise muggings and any form of cheap assault, but want the readies for a wild time.

Footnote: Getting hold of a lot of dosh can be very useful at times and no one's making any silly critique of bank robbery here. The trouble comes in spending it. So often those "subversives" - none too clear theoretically - use it as a short-circuit access, grabbing all the glitz capital has to offer. Or else, deposit it on useless leftist propaganda projects (e.g. funding the now defunct News On Sunday) when dosh for autonomous projects is a crying necessity. Even printing a good leaflet which attempts to make some practical suggestion, costs a lot.

Then of course there are the buildings - always the buildings - as a steady source of North Kensington employment. Full time, casual or scrounge. Blacks/Irish/Sikhs and Cockneys, in the pub, downing ten pints, moaning about bad paying sub-contractors, hating architects. They chat about how they would draw the line at being recruited to build a cop shop or law court. They are all staggered by the rise in property prices, well aware they could never afford to live in what they are building. Sighing about what's to be done. London one big building site and the poor, decanted. But alongside them and in sometimes greater numbers, there is always to be found the dumb fuck building worker; the ever potential scab who voted Tory because a stock exchange boom meant work, work and more work and to hell with everything else. It was a joy seeing such narrow self-interest crumble in the face of the stock exchange crash, as subbies raced to finish jobs all over London, knowing that at the top end of the market every delay meant more knocked off the selling price. Quite suddenly the options market in property was over and London began to breathe a little once more.



Oct 4th '72.
Building Workers
Throwing Out
Notting Hill
Squatters.

A workman of the housing trust in one of the scuffles yesterday with members of the Gay Lib commune

COMMUNITY POLITICS: THE STILL LIVING DEAD.

There was one other important employer in Notting Hill; one which had and has an importance, cachet, cudos - call it what you will - out of all proportion to its size: community politics. Since the 1958 race riot (the subject of "Absolute Beginners") when Black Americans GI's stationed in England showed their Caribbean brothers how to make molotovs, Notting Hill became a trend setting area for a whole assortment of inner-city initiatives which, like all reforms, had to be paid for a thousand times over in that fundamental oppressive currency - social control. Over the years these initiatives have coalesced into what is commonly known as community politics, depressingly familiar all over the UK.

The Notting Hill Social Council funded by well-heeled organizations and charities, was set up in November 1960 and it became a forum for all those who had begun to work in the voluntary social agencies in the area after the '58 riots. Quite quickly the Social Council began to change, expand and acquire a new image. Notably through the impact of a "new" left coming into the area, after the traumas of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in '56. In fact there was little that was "new" in it, though it took years for that to become apparent. It had merely been forced to ditch Stalinism - that's all.

These new groupings developed outside the Labour Party. In particular the local Labour Party in the 50's had been overtly racist, calling for an end to immigration. There was a whiff of puritanism, a fear of miscegenation added to this anti-black stance borrowed from Oswald Moseley's English Fascists who were active in the area at the time prior to being driven off the streets by the blacks and the nascent Trot WRP around Gerry Healey in '58. The local Labour Party in response to shame and outside pressure from those who had outflanked it, gradually changed. It took them more than twenty years to recover the ground they had lost. They could only do that by becoming vastly more receptive to the moods of the time.

This face-lift was in retrospect to add up to something far more than a local event. Wedgewood Benn* was to use this local, shell-shocked, rapidly modernizing North Kensington Labour Party as a spring board of the parliamentary "new left". In the process what might now be termed a new rainbow alliance was added to familiar Labour left concerns. It was to shine in the skies of Notting Hill well in advance of anywhere else. Only the bucket of gold at the end of this rainbow, was not an autonomy of many different hues, but a parliamentary seat. Extra parliamentary activity, which Notting Hill played such a key role in pioneering, was usually guided by Parliamentarians and was conceived eventually as an adjunct to Parliament. If you like it was phraselological parliamentary concession to "direct action".

As most of these initiatives ostensibly outside Labour Party control were funded by State or charity organizations, they were vulnerable to Labour Party manipulation, in any case. For quite a time, they were able to keep it at arms length. Behind the libertarian veneer peculiar to the area, which altered the character of local initiatives to some degree, there was a hostility to entrenched political structure. As a result the real intentions behind these initiatives, which were never more than capital permitted, became veiled and, many a local person hoped to make good their loss with the help of these initiatives. Indeed the Carnival was originally a multi-ethnic invention, of a white social worker.

Footnote: Wedgewood Benn lives in nearby Holland Park. At the time a lot of these initiatives were in their infancy, Benn, possibly unaware of them, was the highly placed, Minister for Technology, in Harold Wilson's '64/'70 Labour government. It was only later and out of such high office, that Benn began to take an interest - obviously hoping to use them for a comparable high position at a future date.

It has its funny side too, One labour Party Councillor became a councillor so that he did not have to work, or so it is laughingly maintained in the area. He thus has a legitimate defense all the way, from Unemployment Review Officers to Restart. The allowances he claims for attending meetings, is his moonlighting dosh, which others had to illegally scrounge for.

After a certain period of time had lapsed, the Labour Party was able to spring its trap, relatively unimpeded on groupings as disparate as the local toy Bolsheviks like the Italian group, Lotta Continua* as well as various single issue bodies like the battered Women's Refuge centre etc.

The often crushing psychologising and bossiness increased the more links with the local Labour party, who helped run the centre in an unofficial capacity, were forged. This development caused some local women to criticize the centre, on the grounds of common sense. For example, they objected to the case-con psychologizing of refugees, when what they needed most, was enough space to be left alone, without hassle, until they felt able to pull their shattered lives together. But behind all this was another very real factor. Anti-squatting laws enacted by the '74/79 Labour Government ensured that many squats which Women's Aid had readily snapped up, were closed down. It was at this moment that a cunning Labour racketeering and infiltration could then cheekily shift the blame somewhat on the women victims - mediated of course, through women members of the party. As always psychology became the means of abstracting from concrete social relations.

Throughout Notting Hill the more these para-State initiatives, slowly, but then more obviously began to move within the orbit of the Labour Party, the more they started, interestingly enough, to be criticized from below. It was a purely spontaneous response however and nothing like a coherent critique of Labourism appeared. Initially though, these projects were welcomed and people held their fire, as concerns and issues formulating around particular pressure groups began to mushroom all over Notting Hill from 1960 onwards. To give a detailed, historical account of each of these essentially para-State bodies is too boring and rather irrelevant. But to get some idea of how thick on the ground they were, consider the following list: The Police

Footnote: Lotta Continua, through the C.A.C. had an influence on Carnival policy. What the initials C.A.C. stand for doesn't matter. The drift, for some at the time, was that C.A.C. meant cacky (i.e. shite). In Notting Hill, Lotta Continua's group was called "Fight On". But it would have been better to describe it as "the show must go on". Endless meetings were held, and on demos, red flags would be shoved into peoples' hands to "politicize" them. In '74, they attempted to stage a glossy evening of militant entertainment. A chic photographer in bright red costume (what else?) recorded the historic occasion on film. A dreadful film they'd produced on N.Ireland was screened. The sending of troops to Ulster was put down to "the deepening contradictions between labour and capital". If it only had been that simple! The only amusing side-show to this happening of world revolution was the bizarre buffet of free cornflakes and milk. The Lotta Continua elect were the only ones to partake as if needing to guide the people even on this score. Towards the mid 70's, "Fight On" was to be seen hanging around with Labour party types more frequently. It was not apparent at the time that their more explicit Parliamentarism here reflected what was happening in Italy. At the Rimini conference in 1976, Lotta Continua, agreed to dissolve itself as a vanguard organization, not because the strains of autonomy were ripping it to shreds (a view widely held at the time) but because the electoral gains of the Italian Communist party (the moment of the "historic compromise") rendered the need for their separate party, superfluous. It showed yet again, how in advanced countries, Bolshevism always falls back into Parliamentarism.

Group, The North Ken Playspace Group, The Neighbourhood Service, Notting Hill Community Workshop, The May Day Manifesto Group (sociologically-updated nationalizers under workers' control) Colville Gardens Action Committee The St. Stephens Group. The Housing Group, Powis Playgroup, the Lancaster Neighbourhood Centre, The Mothers Traffic Group, The Group Group etc.

The number and variety does sound limitless, and for those too young to remember, it can indeed sound impressive. Living as they do in a period in which civil society is being intensely pulverized, they cannot know what it was like to have lived under an apparently endless proliferation of these bodies, amounting sadly to nothing of historic, world-shaking importance. Indeed, although most people living in Notting Hill would vaguely register the fact, that these outfits existed, basically 90% of the population, took no interest in them. In fact these outfits, as they got progressively weaker, related to no one but themselves and in that sense became more remote than Trade Union hierarchies, who are forced in their topsy turvy way to acknowledge to some degree the realities of a workaday world inhabited by alive and kicking people and not just, the bureaucratically minded, converted.

At one point in the early 70's, it was even suggested that, some of these para - State initiatives, by then emanating from a Peoples Centre, were parallel with the worker/student Action Committees in France in May '68. Whatever the unevenness and inadequacies of the French Committees, they were genuine responses to a genuine situation of intense class conflict. Even if they did not issue organically from the Workers' Occupation movement, nevertheless they remained throughout the French general strike, part of the real base of contestation. They were not formed or funded by this official body, or that charity, with all the invisible strings attached. In contrast the para-State committees in Notting Hill were down on any effective direct action or violence, signalling out in particular, the activities of an unholy alliance between anarcho pro-situ's and Maoists. However confused and unworked out actions as a whole were, they were ever ready to take on the cops and go in for commando style operations. (e.g. when successfully tearing down fences surrounding private gardens, so they could be used for childrens play space).

Of course some, if not all of these pressure groups arose out of real needs (e.g. children being killed by cars, appalling housing etc.) But they all looked forward to the creation of a liberal benign State, ever ready to resource, fund and satisfy an infinity of needs. Inevitably for sincere and naive individuals, who wanted action against the State now, it would bring confusion and even crippling demoralization. For others more shrewd and cynical, it was the first rung of the ladder, to a career in local and central government agencies.

At certain moments, these bodies couldn't help but reflect profounder currents in the air - which is not to say they deepened these currents - merely that they had no resistance to them. For example the 1966 London Free School, set up in Notting Hill, brought together disparate tendencies - most notably - a kind of seemingly disengaging educational, social work and, a seemingly disengaging cultural drift, away from institutional frameworks.

The dreadfully naive, non-violent and wimpish, hippy alternative, "International Times" got some charge here and Peter Jenner, later of Pink Floyd, who was also there, no doubt found some inspiration in this Free School, for, "Just another brick in the wall" - with lines like - "Teacher leave those kids alone - etc. By the time the LP was produced ten years later, a hip, north London headmistress had given permission to use her pupils for the back-up chorus!* Some Free School! But then a Free School, like a Free State was always a nonsensical, unrealizable object.

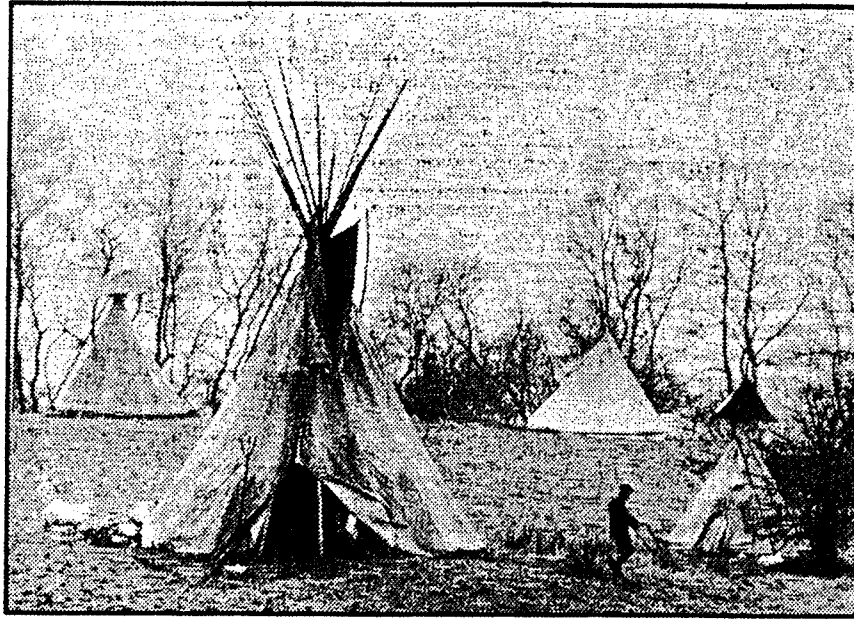
Footnote: Equally contradictory, the words from the song, "We Don't Want No Education" were spray-painted on a polystyrene wall as backing for a display of shop window models advertising school uniforms in Top Shop at Brent Cross Shopping Mall in the early 80's.

Then there was the Notting Hill People's Association, an umbrella body which appeared in the late 60's which claimed to draw all separate threads together and give them a focus. In spite of its "oppositional" stance the capitalist division of labour went largely unchallenged. They just did not feel, in the gut, the unbearable parcelization capitalism was thrusting on humanity. It was folly to even raise it with them. Culture? - nothing wrong with culture, except there's not enough of it and it goes to the wrong people. (As if culture wasn't intrinsically one of the hierarchical methods of judging "wrong" people from "right-on" people.) However in what participants fondly imagined were grass roots organizations, there was some unease about the use of professionals, whether they were "socialist" lawyers, social workers etc. To these potentially damaging perceptions of roles, quick correctives were suggested to confuse the issue and render the personnel staffing the para-State more impervious to criticism. There were proposals for "partisan community workers" and "full time socialist engineers" or "anti-capitalist dam busters" (an appeal for ghost busters would have been as sensible) What these riddles mean are best left to the imagination of the addled cadres, who pretend to believe that all work is the same. But one thing is for sure, depending on the local Mr or Ms Fix It, it meant a job, easy money and status. At no point did this bureaucratically latitudinarian passion for organization ever become autonomous. Some of the more gullible participants who read "quality" newspapers thought it did. Just what is one to make of sophisms like "semi-autonomous"? One community organizer even called for an "Anti-Community Disorganization"! Within the orbit of the State it may have represented the ultimate in self criticism: in relation to sound, practical questions it was gobbledy gook.

Possessing a half-baked critique of institutions meant these initiatives were vulnerable, easily absorbed by the very institutions they had feebly criticized in the first instance. Since they occupied the same platform as managers of discontent, the bigger, older established institution was more likely to swallow the smaller (e.g. The Housing Action Centre, in no time, moved in with the Council's Information and Aid Centre, when flashy modern premises were built in 1974). But all of it had the look of newly tilled ground which indeed it was in terms of the recuperation of real needs.

Another first was the "Summer Project of Community Action" in 1967 where students sporting the first mass produced "community action" badges, paid to come and work in the area. What mugs! It was in Notting Hill that the first Law Centre opened in 1970 and from which point was to emanate all the bullshit about radical lawyers being able to defend the proletariat against the ravages of the law. In fact most people who've had any dealings with them are left with a sour taste in their mouths. They've felt they've been given a stern lesson in law. Not only as an objective fact- which is to be expected- but also secretly in the opinion of the "radical" solicitor. "Whose side are they on"? is a complaint often muttered.

To practise at the bar a solicitor cannot have a criminal record. Should they be convicted of a criminal offence, they are instantly de-frocked by the Law Society which looks after their interests, (very well). It also polices them. Of course solicitors generally are, in private practise, a bunch of swindlers, but their fiddling goes largely undetected. Radical lawyers disapproving of the stereotyped solicitor (at least to begin with!) frequently come across as insufferably self-righteous individuals, who will defend a shoplifter, for example, but are never able to empathize with them. Tending to substitute a political hierarchy for the more frequently encountered lawyers fascination with criminal hierarchies, they look down on shoplifting and the like, as something "sub-political" and squalid in comparison with terrorist idiocy for example. (Though without apparant contradiction, but reflecting



Elgin Ave Squat

The best struggle by far in the early 70's occurred on the boundary of Notting Hill and Maida Vale. This was the massive squat housing around 1,000 squatters in Elgin Avenue owned by the G.L.C. It was to last several years until all the squatters were rehoused in other G.L.C. properties and, the Victorian houses demolished, making way for a modern council estate redevelopment which was later privatized. It was an exhilarating squat involving fights with the cops, disruptions of official meetings and the occupation of the LEB showrooms in Notting Hill in Jan '74. By the time Elgin Ave ended (it was a 'victory' of sorts) most of the squatters were, in one way or another, exclusively working class (e.g. street cred hippies).

Throughout its existence, there were regular "street unity meetings" and a committee answerable to these meetings was elected. Though it was an example of direct democracy, skilled manipulators were able to soft-soap these street assemblies. One spokesperson who became well known was Piers Corbyn. He was a Trotskyist apparatchnik belonging to the International Marxist Group (before the IMG dissolved itself into the Labour Party). His influence was immense as regards general Elgin Ave policy and the line taken by the squatters newspaper (EASY-Elgin Avenue Squatters? Yes!) This newspaper emphasized getting support from this or that institution (e.g. Young Liberals or, Paddington's then Labour MP) and rubbished the libertarian current which called for "Free Housing for all"; instead of the usual "nationalize the land" nonsense. The former demand was put forward by The Diggers who had a few years earlier been based elsewhere in Notting Hill. Later they were to become the backbone of the Rainbow Tribe Teepee people (c/f photo) and The Peace Convoy. Despite all the mystifications and contradictions surrounding an alternative lifestyle, they nonetheless in Elgin Ave and elsewhere called for a radical approach to housing. Although Corbyn was an adept entrust and able, at times, to push para-State bodies like Student Community Housing (SCH) and the obsessively legalistic, Family Squatting Advisory Service (FSHS) he also kept getting way-laid by the libertarian atmosphere of Notting Hill. He once noted for instance how a guy known as "Shaky Dave" found in building street barricades, more therapeutic help than anything social workers, asylums or, drug dependence had to offer. Later -befitting the trajectory of the IMG - Corbyn became a Labour Party Councillor in Southwark (Elgin Ave was rehoused in Camberwell) where from his bureaucratic perch, he defended the Pullens Estate and other Southwark squatters against the more Militant-controlled Southwark Council who were evicting them. Many a Southwark squatter has mouthed-off about Corbyn, often saying how his presence spreads the illusion that something can be done by reforming the Council, thus pacifying the necessary direct action. One anarchist even punched him in the face.

the change from public to private practise, they will follow the former terrorist into big-time racketeering.) Nor can radical lawyers encourage people to break the law (e.g. squat, occupy factories or offices etc) though privately they might concede it is right to do so. Radical lawyers can never be the subject of a genuine revolution and are only able to conceive of change within a judicial, Statist framework. Perhaps that is why Shakespeare in Henry VI has Dick the Butcher, one of Jack Cade's Kentish Rebels say, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers!"

Alternative Social Agencies.

One of the first community printing presses came into existence at about the same time as the Law Centre. We must not forget the innovative alternative social agencies, like BIT information centre, catering for the drifters and dropouts, which the area attracted in large numbers. In some ways these alternative agencies were less bureaucratic, more responsive to real needs, less at the beck and call of more straight-laced set-ups. Nevertheless, "Release" (for drugs) based in Notting Dale, to some extent, sheltered behind the opportunistic shield, provided by the academics of "The Sociology of Deviancy" whose research into drug taking were in vogue, at the time. In their salad days they scoured the area looking for tit bits to advance their careers, bringing streed cred into the remote world of academia. They were not explaining drug taking, it was a plea to authority to be more sensitive and understanding. In this sense, their later more overt concern with police policy and behaviour, in their capacity as shadow advisors to a Kinnockite Labour Party is of a piece with their earlier work, whatever reservations they may now have about "deviancy". (c/f Laurie Taylor on the '81 riots).

These outfits dealing with a more marginalized drifting population (subscribing now to a hippy ideology, then to punk etc) had charity status, like the more orthodox charity-sponsored, community work schemes. However their more relaxed atmosphere, gave the impression they were more gate-crashed by their freak clientele, than they really were. COPE, the alternative psychiatric set up was "taken over" by a bunch of libertarian crazies, (grown up kids really) who then spent a lot of their time, on their knees, waiting for the likes of the traditionally philanthropic Rowntrees etc. to put money in their collecting tins.

The escape clause offered by having charity status also applied to the "Ruff Tuff Cream Puff" squatter estate agency- (the only estate agency for squatters.) Despite its ameliorative social function (Harrow Road police station would occasionally send homeless people there), it did nonetheless initiate some audacious squats. Among them, houses in Norfolk, belonging to the Royal Family, Mick Jagger's unused country home and the Cambodian Embassy in Notting Hill Gate, which was squatted for several years, after being abandoned when Prince Sihanouk was overthrown. Not too mention the brilliant cracking of the huge Palm Court Hotel near Richmond Bridge on the Thames. Ruff Tuffs "property magazine" containing witty descriptions of potential squats is still a delight to read (e.g. "36, St. Lukes Road. Empty two years. Entry through rear. No roof. Suit astronomer") Yet many people entering this squatting agency felt immediately ill at ease, overcome by feelings they were unable to put a name to. Was it because it was run by renegade aristos' with hippy names like Mad Dog and Fluke? Was it Heathcote Williams old Etonian manner of barking rather than speaking? Or similarly his references to endless esoteric, occult mysteries which made you feel like a fool for not having a clue of what he was talking about. The cats name was "Windsor" and that didn't help either. In occupying Crown Property, were

they perhaps settling scores with their parents? They were friendly enough alright; never too stuck-up to say hello when they met you in the street. Yet deep down one felt set apart which palaeontologists of the English class system will instantly recognise.

Out of the Ruff Tuff came the mass squats in run down Council property in Freston Road, Notting Dale. But being North Ken. a mass squat without frills was inconceivable. It was also an act of poetic license, an illusory declaration of U.D.I. This Statelet, whose founding father appeared to be no less than William Blake was proclaimed simultaneously as Frestonia (the Marx Bros' "Freedonia"?) and the Albion Free State. Maybe it was tongue in cheek, but such romantic nationalism should have perished as soon as Blake's "Jerusalem" became compulsory singing in English public schools. To accept such notions as a "Free State" (a contradiction in terms) without quibble is standard Labour Party fodder. The term Albion Free State wasn't contested by the squatters, but others winced at it.

At about the same time another urban experiment with charity status got under way in Notting Hill. This was "Meanwhile Gardens" fashioned out of derelict land between the council properties of Goldborne and the Grand Union Canal. Intended as a "visionary" reply to the usual dreary municipal park, its eclectic borrowings from Japanese landscaping to Celtic Barrows are today yet another mausoleum to institutionalized "freedom". Apart from the occasional free, smallscale, pop concert or, the community bonfire on the 5th of November, it is deserted. Shunned by local residents (but not their dogs) who regard it as something of a dump and eyesore, the park has few visitors today. Brooding over this avant garde cock-up is the concrete and glass monstrosity of Trellick Tower designed by Mars group architect, Erno Goldfinger. Looking at this monument to the failure of the International Style from his "very desirable" residence in Hampstead, Erno Goldfinger fondly thought of it as a veritable modern castle. But to the poor immigrant families who were put there (different floors were given to different races) it was scarcely better than a dungeon suspended in mid-air. On the approaches to Meanwhile Gardens, some were to end it once and for all, taking that great leap into space. Though the alternative landscape architects of Meanwhile Gardens detested Trellick Tower, it is fitting that both these avant garde projects belonging to different era's have been given the bird by the "philistine" locals.

Perhaps the granddaddy of all this urban experiment is to be found in the Adventure Playground built in 1960 in response to the '58 race riots. Another Notting Hill "first" it was initially aimed at pacifying riotous impulses among kids. Way ahead of its time and twenty years before hydra-headed riot was to appear everywhere in the UK, it was the invention, interestingly enough of Lady Allen of Hurlwood, together with local residents whom she'd got interested in her pet project. The spirit of courtly, patrician liberalism and nobless oblige was changing its face ----- changing into the Duchess of the Inner-Cities syndrome.

Adventure Playgrounds were an obviously easy answer to the problems thrown up by an increasingly dehumanised urban environment. The fact too the streets were unsafe for kids to play in and unpromising in terms of the "imaginative" potential of timber walk-ways and ropes to swing on, merely disguised the fact that every inch of space had its potentially rising price. Though on the economic fact sheet, kids were simply a nuisance, lip-service had to be paid to Notting Hill's pretence at knowing how to bring up children better. Today it is one of the greatest paradoxes in London (and not just London) as a whole that the more childhood and adolescence is recognised, the greater is the curtailment of kids capacity for expression and play.

It is perhaps the main reason why in London, innocent larking about tends to rapidly drift into explosive confrontation. Fifteen school kids on a bus and everyone expects trouble. As older Londoners will tell you, it used to be very different. Post war childhoods were played out on bombsites, where property values and rights of ownership were temporarily waived. Only when all this started to go, did this idea of an Indian Reservation of play arise. Go North for example and one immediately notices a more relaxed attitude to kids. Industrial dereliction means that in the big cities there are lots of sites to play on. In this respect not much has changed from thirty years ago. It used to be the canals or railways, because most the mills and factories were functioning. Even so, one must be careful of making too much out of the difference. In the North play also develops into confrontation, far more than was the case with a post war childhood.*

Ever since the area began to take on a radical hue, the abandoned Tabernacle on Talbot Road seemed to beckon as the perfect centre, big enough to house all the separate strands of community politics. A place where radical Muslim groups (on a communist prayer mat!) to the local branch of the Spanish Communist party's trade union organization the CC.OO could feel free (sic) to say what they had to say - which was usually sweet F.A.- or worse. Ironically just as community politics began to fade from the scene, the opening up, and use of the Tabernacle had become a reality. Indeed the pot pourri Tabernacle, was the venue in the late 70's for one of the first foreign conferences of the Anarcho- Syndicalist union, the CNT. However truth to tell it was scarcely more interesting, than the usual run of the community-mill meetings, held there. Old films on the Spanish Civil war like the corny "Furia sobre Espana", which casts Durruti as the heroic, benign, great liberator - in presentation at least similiar to Chinese films adulating Mao- were shown. It testified to the fact that the revived CNT, sunk in a glorious past, could never break through into a real analysis of modern alienation.

However there was something refreshing about the first Irish Ceiledh held in the Tabernacle. Even the gabardine mac. brigade felt at liberty to dance with the young gals. It was a fine illustration of the splendid sociability of the Irish. (As a former Dublin based friend said: "there's a lot of sociability in Ireland, but no socialism"). In later years the Ceiledh sociability was pushed aside, as the community organizers emphasized all the showy tartan- the costumes, the kilts, the pipes and all the wearisome stifling tradition. The Tabernacle Ceilidh began to go down like a lead balloon, especially among the guinness drinking Irish pub crowd.

If something of greater interest happened (like a radical printer getting planted with forged bank note plates) then more General Meetings would take place, though not necessarily in the Tabernacle. At these meetings, accusatory terms like racism or sexism, would be thrown around like confetti. It was a hilarious show for those at the back, who just went along for the fun and games. It would take too long here to go into all the very many amusing, off the wall, incidents breaking through this elaborate web of fake community involvement, which continually kept running up against the reality of an absent community.

Footnote: In the North, there is a recognisable continuity between now and a post war experience. Then, however, fire raising was restricted to that familiar Yorkshire game of setting railway bank sides alight and the occasional plate layers hut, (how those tarry sleepers burnt!) But it didn't occur to anyone to torch a mill, even though they were regularly broken into and bales of mungo and shoddy used for the sheer fun of building a fortress, then taking it by storm. Though frequently chased by adults in authority positions, no one really thought they were law breakers. Despite the fact that nowadays, play in the North has got much more vandalistic, (e.g. mills are burnt down) even a post war response would now end up as youth custody cases. There is in operation today over West Yorkshire, a camouflaged "hooligan special" train, full of cops to catch and stamp out for good, all that old familiar railway track-side vandalism. In '87 they spent a long time patrolling the Fitzwilliam/South Kirkby/Frickley mining areas in particular.

However, one or two incidents were too good to miss. Like the shabby genteel baby sitter, on call from the alternative Co-op/Agency "We People" who, on going to do an evening baby-sitting stint, found a big black guy in diapers and frilly bra waiting on the doorstep, to be put to bed with a titty bottle....Or the posh woman going bananas in Holland Park, finding her cleaners asleep, fully dressed and snoring in her four poster bed after having drunk all of her liquor cabinet. Scrawled across the wall of the squat above the agency desk top were the words: "I'm sick and tired of waking up feeling tired and sick".

Unfortunately it was this side - splitting oddness of an area like Notting Hill, that the left, with an obligatory alternative and libertarian image, reserved their most severe frown for. To them it was simply not funny. On hearing about such things, barely a trace of a smile would flicker across their faces. Rather it reflected the depth to which humanity had sunk under capitalism. For the socialist priests of authentic communication, salvation was to be found by confessing their sexism or racism or whatever and following their pure example in every walk of life.

The House That Jack 'n' Jill Built

"Don't Trust the Trust" (70's wall slogan)

One of the biggest concerns of the recuperative social agencies in North Ken. was housing. Notting Hill in the late 50's/early 60's became the main focus of the campaign against Rachmanite slum landlordism. Rents were often extortionate, repairs non-existent and there were cases of families being thrown out, to make way for gambling shebeens and organized prostitution. The trouble was; condemnation of often appalling housing conditions stopped well short of a thorough-going critique of the forced and false scarcity of housing. Outspoken, rebellious tenants courageously fighting these often murderous landlords were, more often than not, vulnerable to manipulation by bodies dedicated to housing reform. In particular the Housing Association movements with their links with one of the biggest landowners in the UK, the Church of England. Some were to get jobs in these bodies believing they were furthering "socialism" whereas they were just another brand of landlordism. Eventually their genuine fury would become bitter and twisted, the more they were squeezed by their petty authority position. As a whole however, tenants struggle was channeled towards the elimination of the ruthless private rented sector in favour of Council Housing and particularly Housing Trusts.

In fact the Housing Trust movement goes back to the late 19th century when Octavia Hill started managing property in North Ken, for private landlords. Its illustrious drawing room beginning, altered over the years, receiving money from the Housing Corporation and latterly the Council but its patrician style basically remained. Thus tenants were to have no statutory rights, expected to go cap in hand, subdued for evermore, by their gracious protectors. Rebellious tenants in run down housing owned by ruthless landlords, were flattered by this gracious helping hand, mediated through faithful Trust Workers. The fire burning under a tenants revolt quickly got dampened down by demands for cheap "fair" rents administered by them. If not that, they then might suggest approaching the Council for a C.P.O.

But such was the anger, over housing needs, spilling over into a more general anger, that Tory Councillors were taken prisoner one night in '73 and held under lock and key for the duration, to face the anger of the residents. The struggle in Notting Hill was focussed on the elimination of racketeering private landlordism and its substitution by some form of State housing, characteristic of an interventionist Capitalist State.

Obviously, because of the degree of controls existing in this sector, which favour tenants far more than the private sector, (including Housing Co-op's or Associations), it is hardly surprizing that people in housing need are instantly going to call for more, cheap, secure, rented Council accomodation. The chorus of approval with few dissenting voices, backing their demands was unusual. Even for the post war "welfare" concensus which then held sway. it was simplistic anti-Toryism. Very few had any idea of just how dire the housing built by local Labour authorities could be. Because for some time the North Ken. Labour Party had not had its hands on power, it was able to maintain its pristine image more easily. One typical community politico visiting the North East, appalled by the vast housing estates of Felling, Jarrow and Gateshead, thought it would be a good idea to bring the North Ken Labour Party to take a look for themselves, at the reality of decades-long Labour Party control of local authority. The fact that public housing was much more available in London and the rest of the U.K.tended to retard in Notting Hill an all round critique of housing. By the time Kensington and Chelsea Council had built a sizable housing portfolio in North Ken, the rent strikes, in response to Heath's Tory government, Housing Finance Act of the early 70's,were almost over. The area was not to see the binges made possible by Council tenants spending their rent money on booze- and having the courageto do so, because solidarity was so high. This infectious merry-making aspect of the rent strikes of the early 70's has never been given the importance it deserves*

Footnote: If in the face of the growing housing crisis, we get channeled into a defence of Council Housing, we are merely being manipulated by a facet of State Capitalism. Engel's good pamphlet, "The Housing Question" which has been regarded for many a decade as a leftist scripture, surprizingly does not call for land nationalization or Council Housing. This is ironical, coming from a generally banal prophet of the Workers' State. On the contrary, the text has at least something of the aura of a squatters manual, calling for immediate expropriation of "a part of the luxury dwellings belonging to the propertied class and by compulsory quartering in the remaining part". Its central thesis remains the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, itself inseparable from the supercession of the antithesis between town and country. Despite the pedestrian nature of some of the pamphlet (e.g. paying rent after the revolution) and some wrong facts vis-a-vis recent history, it's still a very necessary text to read for anybody wishing to update the critique of unitary urbanism.

Council Housing on a mass level in the UK only really took off as a response by the State (Liberal governed at the time, then followed by the Tories) to the very threatening mass rent strike in Glasgow during the First World War. This mass rent strike was the beginning of revolution in housing. Council Housing was the institutionalization of this tremendous struggle and, basically an extension of Joseph Chamberlain's municipal liberalism first practised in Birmingham a few years previously. The large-scale extension of Council Housing was first propagandised through Parliament by an erstwhile member of the revolutionary Clyde Workers' Committee who subsequently joined the Labour party. Hardly surprizing too, that Council Housing in the UK became one of the shibboleths of the Labour party to be furiously defended against all comers, not just Tory Estate Agents, but rent strikers and squatters as well.

THE HIDDEN WORKERS?

Although Notting Hill was predominately working class, off the weirdo streets there was hardly a factory to be found. There were large employers like St Charles and St Mary's Harrow Rd, hospitals, but the area sorely lacked a mass working class visibility. Though workers went on a strike in the area they never stood out as a bunch with the possible exception of the garbage collectors. There was a vast separation between work place and living quarters. They did not seem to tie up at all. What effect this absence has had on the growth of para-State initiatives is anybody's guess.

It is doubtful the majority would have ever gotten off the ground, if the area had possessed a powerful Trade Union presence. In fact Notting Hill has never had a strong network of Trade Union branches and inspite of the endemic libertarianism of the place, people were generally amazingly laggard when it came to a thorough going critique of such bodies. Attitudes to them would range from an abstract justification, lacking any experience, to a vague right wing libertarianism, opposed to corporate restrictions on the individual. There were never any unofficial committees in the area, which could have begun to act as a corrective, to either extreme, (even though the majority of these committees got caught up again in the union hierarchy.) Not to mention the complete absence of any development which might have moved towards genuine base committees.

When links were made over particular struggles, they generally seemed somewhat forced and wooden. There was an overlap between squatters and some Trade Union branches, but inevitably one felt it had been done according to a formula (e.g. "to widen the struggle", "to get the workers involved") For example, a nearby A.E.U. Engineering branch, approached by squatters in the early 70's put out a statement supporting North Ken squatters, "in their efforts to find and make homes in property that has long been empty". However, it ended with the usual trades' union rhetoric that A.E.U. sponsored Labour M.P.'s had to make certain that rates be paid on empty properties. In fact this kind of resolution-passing and unconvincing show of unity merely covered up often deep antagonisms, which were widespread in Notting Hill and elsewhere in London.

It didn't take much- or so it seemed- to whip up building workers employed by Housing Trusts or even Direct Labour Depts to chuck out dishevelled, work-refusenik squatters, then gut the properties and brick them up. It was easy to demagogically work on anti middle class attitudes amongst the workers, because in a good number of cases it happened to be true. But the nasty vengeful acts only served to restore, under the guise of the legitimacy of the Council waiting lists, the Council as the biggest absentee landlord in the country.*

Footnote: It's perhaps worth pointing out that there is a difference between the immediate post war squatting movement (e.g. when Yorkshire miners came out on strike in the mid 40's in support of mass working class squatting in Sheffield) and the contemporary squatting movement, beginning in the late 60's. Put very generally, the latter in contrast to post war squatting, was inter-class, based more on a recognition of the futility and stupidity of work in an epoch when machines could so easily be directed to carry out most essential tasks. But before the immanent liberation from age-old drudgery, priority was giving to cutting one's personal living costs down to a minimum which included paying rent. For some, not so minded, it was of course, simply a means of saving money to put down for their future mortgage. At the same time, however, squatting was a basic need - not just an ideological refusal to pay rent - and it is this basic need, in response to the desperate housing situation, that has come to dominate the squatters scene in the 80's.

Fortunately however, it was by no means as clear cut as this all the time. The same group of workers would vacillate between pro and anti-squatters, all depending. A community mediated support for striking garbage collectors in the early 70's was reciprocated later when North Kensington garbage collectors were prepared to man (woman?) the barricades to stop an Irish working class woman being evicted from a squat.

Tensions between squatters and fully employed working class people is complex, in other respects too. The Ruff Tuff squatters got much information about empty properties from sympathetic telephone engineers, postal workers, Council office workers as well as a British Gas official! At the same time, though, LEB and gas workers at the behest of their management - themselves pushed by Council top officers - regularly tried to turn off energy supplies to the Elgin Avenue squat. Similarly there was tension between squatters in Council property and Council tenants, who wanted to see squatting in private property (this was before the Labour Governments Trespass Act of 1975) but were averse to anything they saw as queue jumping the points list and possibly affecting the chances of their sons and daughters being given cheap rented accomodation. It was a division much exploited by the media which neglected to say, that a lot of Council squatting was in property Council tenants would not inhabit anyway. This often bitter, internal wrangle was overcome to some degree in Elgin Avenue by the sheer determination of the squatters themselves to fight off the bailiffs with their police back up. Barricades marked a change of relationship as rent paying tenants became impressed with the squatters resistance. It was a rarity though and tenants hostility to squatters is still very strong. It's a dialectical problem which, as it were, remains suspended in mid-air. Anti-squatting laws meant the slow peaking, over the years of mass mid-70's squatting and increasing unemployment meant the decline in rent strikes. And with rent paid through Housing Benefit, this saw off the possibility of a very visible, inescapaably concrete overlap between striking council tenants and squatters. It was nipped in the bud. Unity is however very much there as a low key invisible backdrop in many a bout of London's inner-city rioting. And in late '86 the rent-striking council tenants and squatters on Pullens Estate in Southwark joined forces to defeat the anti-squatting policies of the Militant dominated Southwark Council some of them covering the cops and bailiffs with green paint. More recently both squatters and council tenants attacked Hackney's leftist Council, forcing them to flee the Council chamber.

More generally however, in a concrete way in Notting Hill, it was the more mundane, common or garden gesture, that proved to be more successful in building links with workers, simply because they were less tendentious. Like simply looking after the kids of striking postal workers, or collecting money for striking hospital workers in '73 or, giving advice to strikers on how to collect social security.*

Footnote: The area had one of the first Claimants Unions but what marked it off from the majority of other Claimants Unions then, promoting a split within their ranks, was its anti-work bias. Staffed frequently by "crazies" who knew how to play the mental card against the State's work enforcement officers, they were yet able to make sense of the mounds of bureaucratic jargon, setting out claimants rights and turn it to good advantage. Subscribing to a vulgar situationist ideology with one breath, they would, with the next, deliver a peroration on " the starving masses" never suspecting for a moment there was a contradiction here. In fact, they were quite impossible ideologues, humourless and difficult to get along with and easily open to ridicule behind their backs. The area of course still has a Claimants Union but of the routine variety, unable to come to terms with anti-work, even though, the abolition of work - with computerized robotniks everywhere - is a more objective possibility than 20 years ago.

In terms of aiding direct action, perhaps the one real practical contact that took place, was in the Building Workers' strike of '72, when the Housing Group of the Peoples Association supplied a list of speculative re-hab schemes in the area, to striking building workers, who then proceeded by flying pickets to stop all work on them. Some shop stewards who had played a part in that strike were attracted to Notting Hill, even though the area had very little trade union presence to it. It was something of a strange contradiction. Drawn by its libertarian impulses, they fell for the trendy radicalism of fledgling community politics. During the strike, building work on play huts, parks, adventure playgrounds- all the infrastructure of the new "caring" sensitized face of capitalism- were exempt from blacking. What mattered was to nationalize Mowlems/McAlpine's etc and let the State, (a Workers' State of course,) direct these conglomerates to implementing good works the length and breadth of a red U.K.! Even today individuals belonging to the builders rank 'n' file group, live in Notting Hill. They still persist in promoting the separation between the Lump and on-the-cards building workers, despite the fact that some of them who support UCATT's founding perspectives (changing somewhat but not necessarily for the better) are on the fiddle or scrounging. Apparently they are quite prepared to gloss over the contradictions between their lives and the moral exhortations of UCATT.

As the tempo of struggle changed on the working class front after the Labour victory of 1974, the image of community politics in Notting Hill lost its shine. So much of its inspiration at its peak had been anti-Tory. It couldn't cope with the reality of a Labour government. There couldn't be a comparable process of subterranean struggle in the sphere of community politics as amongst the working class, which was later to express itself so brilliantly in The Winter of Discontent. Instead what was germinating in the inner cities, were the seeds of sporadic but increasing riot. There was a brief minority rallying cry which went unheard, calling for localized general strikes to change the housing situation in North Kensington. It was one of the last calls, but about the best. Despite the activist rhetoric of community politics, there was something untypical about it, almost one might say, beyond their N.Ken.

After 1974 community politics became a much more official and officious affair, dominated more by single issues, rather than seeking to establish links with even, the official representatives of the Labour movement. Its propensity for hysteria, meant it became the butt of ridicule. But at the same time as people took the piss out of it, they did it behind closed doors, in the company of trusted friends, because it was not something to be taken on lightly. If you did it openly, your name was blazened in neon lights in order to be harried on many a street corner. Being the victim of more than one such campaign of vilification makes one of the writers of this blurb only too aware how nasty such things can be.

So The Winter of Discontent in 1979 passed over a community politics more worried by the fact that it was a strike against a Labour government rather than treating it as an opportunity to forge links. As for the subsequent period of urban riot, on this their terrain, they could only guess at what was happening. Not knowing what to say, they fell silent, using sexism as a shield to criticize "macho-politics", (the macho-politics of rioting!) and later, anything outside the accepted rules of the game, including the threat to oppose rate capping!

However during the 1984/85 miners' strike, their profile was more visible, feeling on safer ground because the strike, to some degree, was contained by Trade Unionism. Typically, they were able for instance, to hi-jack tenants collections, in the various Housing Co-op's, presenting the money, to the miners' wives, in a personal capacity, as though they were the donors.* Without a hint of embarrassment, they still receive Xmas cards addressed to them

Footnote: They weren't the only ones to play this trick: endless political sects up and down the country got away with this con.

personally. This imposture is merely an outcrop of what happens in Housing Co-op's where there is a self-perpetuating, self-elected elite, who are periodically re-elected by a show of hands - providing anyone can be bothered to raise them. It is a trick form of democracy for subordinates, because the major decisions have already been taken by the Housing Corporation. The job of local management is then to get from local Housing Co-op's a democratic ratification of the undemocratic.

Though the weight of these ossified community politicians was considerable, they were far outweighed by the no-goods, who were not part of some securely funded, para-State body. At worst they were an irritant but not much more. However, in the late 70's, the structure of Notting Hill began to change.

The former bed-sit land of multi-occupation swiftly became a thing of the past. Squats were closed down, becoming single homes and tenants somewhat ghettoised on the huge council estates. The private rented sector virtually disappeared and the number of Housing Co-op's grew. As the former reference point of the Gate's popular element declined, the self-importance of institutionalized community politics appeared to increase. In fact these cadres were more and more to acquire the characteristics of a distinct managerial stratum, no longer trying to keep their supposed local constituency sweet, but quite openly bent on rubbing them. For them, the term working class became synonymous with sexism and racism, a contempt which was only to be outdone by the scant regard they had for the local unemployed and declining number of the casually employed. Any mention of autonomy was thought either right wing or romantic.

The radical veneer to community politico clap-trap didn't last long - at most ten years. The change was apparent across the whole spectrum, not least in the rehabilitation of professional roles, once thought very dicy. People trained to become architects, planners, proper social workers, lawyers and took up jobs as Trade Union bureaucrats. Making lots of "legitimate" money ceased to be frowned on, but the illicit proceeds from scrounging or from failing to declare all income to the Inland Revenue if one happened to be a mere tradesperson were looked on with increasing suspicion by these leftist professionals. In these essentials, standards were reverting back to the conservative fifties and worse, proclaimed by people whose detestation for Thatcherite Toryism was "genuine" enough.

Generally though, the community politico's critique of this society, going off at half-cock in the first instance, meant that when the harsher reign of Thatcher came along, they could quite easily climb back into the saddle of career roles, as laid down by capitalism in a particularly reactionary phase.. In many ways Notting Hill has been a kind of training ground for the more up to date, inter-disciplinary professional; one with a more rounded awareness of how to deal with Billy Muggins and missus down below. In the post-Thatcher era there are many mansions and they will patiently sit it out until they get one. But even now we can get some idea from the streets of Notting Hill, of the changing face of the modern trade union bureaucrat.

There's the example of the jodpur wearing N.U.P.E. representative; a faded aristocrat in workers' clothing, whose nose is stuck up so high in the air, it is in danger of obstructing the Heathrow flight path. Having flirted with dropping out and avant garde art, he breathes contempt, retrieving his privileges a little, as the local representative of hospital workers, although never really working on the hospital floor. He still chips away at his rubbishy sculpture all night - thoughtlessly keeping his neighbours awake. He is in the same mould as his boss, Rodney Bickerstaffe, head of N.U.P.E. who rose to power on a qualification from Newcastle Poly. This is only one sordid detail as it effects a particular locality from the never-ending tale of modern separation in a workers' bureaucracy, that is now being re-vamped. We have not by any means seen the end of all this. For cultivating all this pioneering shit

and never defining particular issues/problems in anything like an anti- Statist perspective, places like Notting Hill, may yet feel the sting of retribution on the eve of the revolution.

However there is a glimmer of hope, even for the guinea pigs of Notting Hill, tired of being strapped to a community dissecting table, without an umbrella or typewriter in sight. Most of the half well-intentioned but essentially bogus community endeavours lacked a real power base anyway because they were situated within the Tory Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

They were pilot schemes that pointed the way- more often than not- to the Labour Boroughs of Hackney, Brent and Islington etc. and eventually the Labour controlled G.L.C., becoming the bete noire of the tabloids. There was talk at one point in the early 70's of forming a breakaway Soviet ("The Golborne Soviet") which, in spite of the colourful rhetoric, was nothing other than an attempt to return North Ken to the safe Labour constituency it once was, prior to having its boundaries redrawn by the Boundaries Commission.

What has happened in Notting Hill over the years undoubtedly played a pioneering role. But the distortions, half truths and downright lies are not that important. It is the capacity to see through this that matters and this actually does happen in an individual, almost solipsistic, manner in Notting Hill. More commonly the reaction is one of "untheorised" cynicism, or a feeling of being let down and fucked over to the point of breakdown. But that might be beginning to change. It has to because the onslaught now being launched in London is just too ghastly to take lying down.

A tenants committee on the Brunel Estate has been mooted. Labour party councillors are to be banned (which in the U.K. implies all Trotskyist etc. hangers on) Local Labour Councillors are annoyed but impotent to do anything about it. The danger is that it's just another of these bodies which from a fine gesture ends up getting sucked up in the orbit of Labourism ---but we shall see, what we shall see. One maybe making too much out of it. Tenants committees in Notting Hill, like tenants committees elsewhere have been ineffectual, dominated by people with close links to local council management and officialdom in general and, often run by paid full-time workers who aren't even tenants on the estates for which these associations are meant for. There is a great lack of trust in them. The Brunel proposals could be interesting considering that existing tenants associations in Notting Hill were set up in the first place by Housing Association management.

THE '87 CARNIVAL AND THE LIMITS OF AN URBAN PACIFICATION.

The Notting Hill Carnival riot of '87 proved to be the most exciting riot, since the great Sunday of Carnival '76, which lit the fuse on what proved to be the first of many explosions, throughout mainland U.K. Unlike the '58 race riots, this was a class riot with blacks and whites fighting the cops together. Considering all the other "first" in Notting Hill, listed in the last few pages, the '76 riot was, apart from the squats and a few other interventions, the only one to be proud of. In a sense too it marked a watershed in community politics now eclipsed by something which really did open vistas on the urban terrain and beyond. Innovative community politics were ceasing to inspire illusions, the more it was becoming obvious the rhetoric of community militancy had not changed things for the better. However the corny Notting Hill applecart was upset by black's coming in from the rest of London and elsewhere in the U.K. Since then it's largely been this "outsider" element which has provided all the real trouble in Notting Hill. There is no point in going over again the details of what took place in '76 because they are reasonably well known.*

However in the intervening eleven years, many changes have taken place both in Notting Hill and elsewhere- not least in the deployment of an immense variety of counter-insurgency techniques- subtle and brutal at one and the same time. The Carnival is part of this process. It is minutely prepared every year by all contending factions, repressive and cultural, police and the feuding Carnival and Arts Committee. Every danger is examined afresh and a contingency plan is on standby, should anything happen. As darkness fell on that warm August Bank Holiday Monday night in '87, what was inspirational about the riot, was that it cut through all the years of accumulating modernist recuperation. (Remember Notting Hill is untypical of the U.K. in this regard.) It took place on a terrain which has become very hostile to anything significant happening, other than the planned-for ritualized Carnival. That was its real victory: exposing the limits of the immense recuperation that has taken place. At the same time however, all the deadweight deployed against the rioters still successfully stopped things getting out of hand.

In '76, the unexpected happened. The business-oriented Carnival organizers and the police caught unawares, were at a complete loss. The battle was intense and furious. Off licences and stores were looted, cars burnt and builders skips overturned, their contents used as ammo. The police protecting themselves with hastily nicked trash can lids, received one helluva hiding. Eleven years later, nothing could be more different. Come Carnival time the shops in the commercial area (particularly Portobello Rd) are boarded up. Builders skips are hauled away and sites covered with corrugated iron sheets. Liquour stores are guarded, often by an army of heavies, clubs at the ready. Above all, the police have been tooled up with an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of riot shields, helmets, batons, gas and guns.

Over the years too, the police have used the Carnival more and more as an experimental testing ground for techniques to be deployed elsewhere in the UK mainland at a later date - ironically, as it turns out - another of

Footnote: Suffice to say the best account appeared in a paper with the dull name of "Socialist Voice", an ex-Trotskyist group who had gone ultra left after being thrown out of the SWP. After promising beginnings, the group just disappeared into thin air by 1980. It's a fate which in particular seems to befall disillusioned Trotskyists in the UK. The pity is, this vanishing act leaves the mainstream Trotskyist heritage, as endemic to the UK as anarchism on a higher level is to Spain, more or less unharmed.

the famous Notting Hill "firsts". The snatch-squads (originally used in Northern Ireland) were deployed in the Carnival mini-riots of '81 and '82. During the UK summer onslaught of '81, these snatch squads had not existed as a pre-arranged tactical force. In '87, Carnival was, for the police, an experiment in using the new crowd control techniques which one presumes, are going to be used in the near future (perhaps against the unfurling strike wave as well as soccer matches?)



Notting Hill
Carnival '76

As regards the police, it makes sense to concentrate on the big crowd-pulling events, which are being torn apart, particularly in the U.K., from within. This crisis in the audience/ performer nexus is axiomatic if contemporary spectacular society is to breakdown. The crowds are drawn by the performance, in any case, but what then ensues is on a scale, so devastating as to dwarf the cliches of political upheaval and political activism.

On that August Bank Holiday, one needed only to look elsewhere in the U.K. Violent confrontations between police and spectators occurred at four other leisure events. A football match between Portsmouth and West Ham, broke out into trouble and for the second time within a month, soccer hooliganism erupted at Scarborough. Also there was trouble at the long-established Reading pop festival. Finally there was something of an innovation: at the recently devised Californian-style surfing competition at Newquay, Cornwall, a beach party erupted, as one thousand punters battled cops and fire brigade crews when they moved in to break up the merrymaking. Fresh ground indeed. Such incidents are by no means unusual. They happen most weekends in the U.K. though not in such a concentrated fashion.

If Carnival is anything to go by, these new control techniques do not, as the authorities hoped, nip trouble in the bud. On the contrary, they seem positively to encourage it. From little incidents eventually came a bigger response at Carnival. In the afternoon and early evening there had been the usual steaming- the not particularly pleasant, indiscriminate ripping off of valuables here and there- regardless of social class (although one photographer, to a steamer's credit, was stripped of £5,000 worth of cameras) but it was nothing like '77 when gangs invaded everywhere, including steaming into pubs and making off with the tills. However in '87 when a gang tried, when dusk was falling, to prevent a cop arresting a youth, a carefully rehearsed police plan came into operation within minutes as 1,000 cops moved in, clad in full riot gear. As the "Daily Mirror" reported a day later (Sept.1st) "they were backed up by about 2,000 uniformed officers, some of whom only minutes before had been dancing in the streets with the Carnival crowd..In one sudden charge about 200, including women officers in riot clothing charged the crowd in Ladbroke Grove."

In all likelihood though, for the authorities this was the planned scenario in any case: Carnival as a real life extension of the Hounslow riot training centre; a place to try out their new gear and techniques. New protective fire proof clothing complete with C S gas canisters and plastic bullets in the pouches of black waist jackets were issued. A new crack force of some 250 riot cops appeared on the streets, though most of the rest were drawn from the Territorial Support Group. All rather different from the inner cities of late '85, when, the ordinary copper, deployed as a social worker one day, was put on riot duty the next. The separate roles were so conflicting as to cause disorientation and much muted anger and protests amongst cops. This drastic and impossible to handle telescoping of functions, had not disappeared by August '87 but it was in the process of being replaced by a more rigid division of police labour. Carnival '87 for the authorities had been a roughly rehearsed over-reaction, which did not prevent the rioting getting out of hand, spreading farther and wider than before. Notting Hill '87 saw the first deployment in a U.K. mainland riot of bullet-proof Land Rovers with gun ports. An armed police detachment equipped with Koch and Necklar automatic sub-machine guns, launched a dramatic swoop on a house in Westbourne Park Rd probably to pick up somebody waving a replica gun. Ever since Broadwater Farm in late '85 where a shotgun was fired, the cops have been nervous about any repetition and this deliberate over-reaction was also a dress rehearsal, for what might happen in the future.

In other respects too, Carnival was a means for working on another police idea. An extensive array of video cameras were employed all over the area and connected to banks of TV screens in the usual police H.Q., the Issac Newton school at the corner of Lancaster Road and Ladbrooke Road. There is nothing particularly new about the use of video cameras. For two years throughout the country they've been increasingly deployed in soccer stands, high above the terraces, not in order to spot the ball but the hooligan. It has been highly effective and the Dawn Knock, has sounded for many a guy caught on video. However it is the first time video has been extensively used over an urban area for a particular event. One cannot help but feel this innovation of Carnival '87 is but one stage in the blanket videoing of entire urban centers. This is almost certainly going to happen in Wolverhampton. Dire though these Big Brother developments are, nevertheless one hasn't got to get too paranoid. If hacking is anything to go by, hi-tech re-equip is the most technically vulnerable to sabotage of any prior development in the capitalist mode of production. Moreover the permanent videoing, night and day of All Saints Road in Notting Hill, from all sides of the street, over the last five years or so, never once stopped trouble or ever really rumbled clandestine activities on the street.*

It is not only overt police control which is tried and tested at Carnival. Counter-insurgency in Notting Hill has been a focus of year-in, year-out strategy. Through different building projects- often encouraged and sometimes funded by the local Kensington and Chelsea Council- various flash points were (or so it seemed) neutralized to prevent any re-occurrence of the 70's trouble.

Aclam Rd, near the M 40 Westway was one of them, where in the late 60's/ early 70's local opinion prompted by a fledgling community politics had got rid of a proposed bus garage and a proposed car park wilderness under the Westway flyover. Tenants overlooking this noisy traffic artery, were moved elsewhere and the old Victorian houses were taken over by a multitude of local pressure groups under the aegis, finally, of the Amenity Trust. In the mind's eye of the latter, concentration may have heralded a new dawn of community experiment. Having got rid of the most gross commodity, the car, expansion moved into alternatives (like turning two bays under the Westway over to

Footnote: Further knock-on effects have become clearer recently. It's been proposed by British Coal that they intend videoing every miners' picket engaged in unlawful, secondary action, with the intention of dismissing those involved. Like the inner-city rioters learnt balaclavas have become essential.

"committed theatre"). However in the best laid plans there are things that escape control. Thus in the late 70's these buildings became the focus of reggae and dub sound systems during Carnival and with reggae richoshade in its prime, Aclam Rd, became the scene of quite heavy rioting in '78 and '79.

No doubt with these unwelcome incidents in mind, shortly afterwards the last remaining dilapidated Victorian houses were demolished. In any case that probably had been part of the plan all along, making way for modern sound-insulated council houses, cunning anti-pedestrian walls and a fashionable paved mall for small traders. Ironically, the alternatives, unable to pay the high rents demanded by the Amenity Trust were finally displaced by up-market fashion shops, boutiques and stores, trading in expensive trinketry and food stuffs. The complex is now known as Portobello Green Market. The communal wasteground has been turned into an uninviting, nasty little park.

The same was true of other flash points, like the bays under the Westway in Portobello Road and Ladbrooke Grove. Old brick walls, on or near these flash points-walls-which were easily pushed over for ammo-were re-built with stylish engineering bricks, costing £1.00 each and with long iron railings firmly embedded in the top. Failing that, walls all over the district were built high and finished off with a top course of bricks, each one placed at 45 degrees to the others to prevent anyone from sitting on them, to chat and watch the world go by. The first to be built were the walls fronting the council flats on Westbourne Park Road, which faced All Saints Road. People aware of what was taking place at the time, were critical of brickies engaged in the tasks of building these walls laying the finishing top course. Most likely they were employed by the council, so surely they could have gone on the sick or refused to do it? What was it all about? To stop communication at any cost. Stay off the streets and remain indoors. Loud and clear, this was the message being put across.

All these accumulating nasty little urban tricks must be set in a more general context: Notting Hill was slowly throughout the late 70's becoming a choice area for gentrification. In the 80's the process began to very rapidly accelerate. After clearing out the streets around Powis Square/ Talbot Road during these years, only one real flash point remained: The press/ T.V. notorious street of All Saints Rd. On July 1st '87 over a couple of weeks after Thatcher's third election victory and her expressed "concern" to do something for the inner cities (i.e. her concern to punish them even more), a police swamp was launched over Notting Hill. Its real aim was to finish off All Saints once and for all. However more on that later. What is at issue here is urban counter-insurgency and the swamp, had been surreptitiously prepared and coordinated with other interested parties, particularly Notting Hill Housing Trust, who owned most of the property there.

The black squats largely in abandoned commercial property were closed by the filth, as building contractors moved in on the same day to renovate a number of them. Though in some cases building work did not commence immediately, builders lean toos were erected to fence off the properties. Within days a house in Mac Gregor Road, leading off the Saints, was to fetch £300,000. The very centre of Carnival revolt in the '80s had finally fallen and the light had gone out on the last remaining shambles of an urban trouble spot. There were minor attacks on the building operations- some windows broken, some skips overturned- but nothing like a mass response.

The Role of Carnival Stewards And Cultural Recuperation.

On top of this, there were other, even worse pernicious forces at work: those coming from the black community itself. Since '76, the Carnival and Arts committees had increasingly helped spawn quite an array of black stewards, who step in when trouble breaks out at the Carnival. In many respects they were the forerunner for similiar structures, that have been set up in many inner city areas, where blacks reside in fairly large numbers. During the smaller riots which occured at Carnival in '77 '78 and '79, the stewards were sometimes heavier than the police and occasionally used iron bars on trouble makers. In '87 they used baseball bats and even knives. Indeed some of those at the receiving end of the stewards wisdom were more condemnatory of the stewards than of the to-be-expected police attack. Moreover, it's often impossible to tell the difference between a steward and any other black guy, so you're never sure whether you're amongst people who'll be with you if you chuck a bottle or people who'll bottle you if you throw one.

These stewards are more or less complimented - and for all year round vigilance - by a growing array of black social workers (or more accurately "community workers" because generally they are disdainful of social workers) who in spirit have been influenced by such pioneering para - State bodies like the Black People's Information Centre on Portobello Road. However there are differences between black community workers and their white cousins. Black community workers often tend to be heavier, more ready to cut out liberal sentiments and act tough, just to get their hands on some readies. All rather different from their guilt stricken white counterparts who, frequently coming from much wealthier backgrounds, couldn't act tough and hypocritically disdain a vulgar interest in money.

In late Autumn '86 a small number of community youth workers attached to the Mangrove restaurant mini-Empire at the end of All Saints Road, were able to stop a midnight explosion of spontaneous anger, when news of a black guys death in police custody, reached the Saints. Critchlow, "the Mangrove boss" whose credibility rests on the fact that in the 70's he'd been arrested several times by the cops (including during the '77 Carnival riot), his restaurant raided, cooled everyone down by saying it'd be best to organize a proper big march later, taking the wind and fire out of the situation. The controlled demos protesting the guys death (his nick name was Crumpet) in the following days, orchestrated in tandem with other official bodies by the black community workers, even though they did slip the leash, had none of that raw anger the midnight explosion would have contained. Though by now the rich in the area had really made their presence felt and any flare up couldn't have connected, house by house, as in Brixton and Toxteth, nonetheless a spontaneous conflagration of sorts couldn't be entirely ruled out. As it was, in the days following the news of the death, Portobello Rd had been boarded up and the market and pubs put under police curfew. Most of the trouble came from invading black gangs from the massive Stonebridge Park Estate, 2½ miles away. In the controlled demos, the cops forewarned, kept a low profile. They didn't try arrests despite being attacked with stones outside Notting Dale police station. After some cop cars had their paint work scratched by missiles, they kept well clear of the All Saints/Portobello Rd area, for fear of provoking trouble. Nevertheless, trouble there was: all the windows in Barclays Bank were trashed; a clothes shop, a butchers, Tesco's liquor dept, an Asian supermarket were looted; a chemist run by a guy well-known locally for his insulting, vicious manner (always prosecuting shoplifters etc) was wrecked - in all 15 offices and shops attacked aswell as one or two yuppie houses.

How is it, these community workers plus stewards have had such a devastating effect on suffocating black (and not only black) anger? The official structure of Race relations community politics- older, long standing and up-

standing bodies who regularly meet the local cops for a chit-chat, have been pushed aside and blanked long ago. They have no effect whatsoever and could not successfully calm anything down. They are rightly seen as respectability seeking money grabbers, salting away for themselves any dough they can get their mittens on. Its these people who climbed aboard Thatcher's pre-election, well-funded, inner-city Task Force projects and pilot programs oriented towards, among other things, the creation of black businesses. There is one such Task Force now in operation for Notting Hill. No, the most effective bodies are those which have sprung up since '81 and have an unofficial aura to them, although they do receive moneys from various sources including Caribbean States. They are full of anti-cop rhetoric and won't have anything to do with any cop liason, open or backstairs. At critical moments it's this stance which makes them so effective because being anti- police they are able to protect property all the better for that. How long they can maintain this pure-as-the-driven-slush image, remains to be seen and for certain the authorities in the U.K. now want to repay them for services rendered. Carnival Chairman, Alex Pascall, after the Notting Hill '87 riot, appealed for direct government funding to bring about better stewarding. Bearing in mind, growing State authoritarianism, Pascall will probably get what he wants. Moreover, Condon, the Carnival's deputy Police Assistant, praised the stewards alongside his own men. Maybe they had been reflecting on the help stewards had provided elsewhere over the previous couple of months.*

Finally in considering the deadly role recuperation plays, one has to look at the increasingly integrative role of Carnival culture. Although the traditional Trinidadian costume/steel band merry go round, was despised by the young blacks in the mid '70's, (c/f "July Summers" and "Socialist Voice"), its expansion since has been enormous. A whole local job creation culture has been built around it, as Carnival has become more oriented towards business like appeals for increased private spending and less State funding (except where law 'n' order is concerned). In fact it shadowed the era of privatization. In some ways the organizers would like Carnival to be more like American festivals, where for instance Schlitz Beer sponsors a complete Country and Western jamboree in Tennessee.

However for the insurgent forces present at Carnival the arguments for or against State-funding or private sponsorship are academic and irrelevant. Containment has to be registered at another level outside the contending forces of State versus enterprise- that of culture itself. Reggae teased with rebellion at the same time as it contained rebellion. But reggae as a forum, through which rebellion could be reflected and to some degree pacified, also had an extremely short creative life, as it rapidly succumbed to disco programming. In its time however, there were certain musical moments of collective improvisation (e.g. some of Burning Spear/Third World etc) which nearly equalled the best of New York be-bop in the '50s. In an effort to maintain

Footnote: The role of the black stewards was no more sadly demonstrated than in Chapeltown, Leeds, just days after Thatcher's third election victory. Without the services of the community youth workers attached to the local Nelson Mandela Centre - who, being only one rung up the hierarchy, often seem as close as your mates- Chapeltown could possibly have gone through the roof during the three days of midnight battles with the police. It would have been a much needed whisky and mac in a rather demoralized but nonetheless simmering North and a few miles away trouble brewing once again in the Yorkshire coalfield. What a missed opportunity to make a vital connection! And what a riposte to Thatcher's "concern"! Youth workers, some as young as 13 or 14, (probably flattered to be part of the Mandela Centre and the cudos surrounding the very name rather than the economic rewards) followed their own teeny peer group into dark alleys stopping them fire-raising or, luring cops into ambushes. It worked. And the cops must have been laughing all the way to Armley Jail because once the disturbances had died down, they moved in on the local people - smashing down doors at five in the morning - just as if there had been a major riot.

some kind of authentic street cred, reggae garnished by some dub gave way more to the sound system dub/rap "poetry" and D.J. poets, around which, all the Carnivals mini-riots of the early '80's took place. The blacks noted the demise of grass roots reggae alright, but were at something of a loss to know what to put in its place.

Just after the year long miners' strike in '85 there was one hilarious incident. Some blacks down All Saints, probably a mite choked by the dull routine of reggae, suddenly began to blast out brass band music. Close your eyes and you could have been in the Riding's shopping mall in Wakefield on a Saturday morning. It pointed to a levelling of all musical style: if brass band (hardly "rebel music") was a cultural back drop to what was happening in the mining villages and towns, then it was every bit as "subversive" as Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves". One might as well listen to anything because capitalism is a born leveller when it comes to pretending to express rebellion through culture.

As for the sound systems, which in the 70's were glorified juke boxes and treated as such, they were becoming more expansion minded, more entrepreneurial as business sponsors took them under their wing and the trucks out of which they operated got larger and more costly, to hire or buy. The heavily backed three way "Instant Edition" sound system, of near wall collapsing reverb, on All Saints Road, (which would whip up a friendly nationalist sentiment - e.g. "anyone here from Tobago, St Lucia, J-A-M-A-I-C-A" - huge cheer) just prior to the mini-riots around All Saints, which would invariably close Carnival was, in '87 completely subdued. They had been told to cool it by Carnival and Arts and they obeyed.

On the Sunday night of the '87 Carnival, the sound systems closed down at 8.30 pm. It was unheard of! The following morning and one of "Instant Editions" banks of sound had gone. Again it seems Carnival and Arts had been obeyed. By nightfall, it had become, all too clear, to many revellers what was happening. Most sound systems started to shut up shop one and a half hours before pub closing time. In other years, they had gone on far, far longer.

More than anything else, the sudden realization that the sound systems had become a fully intergrated part of the system, was too much to take and what had been skirmishes here and there, broke into hydra-headed, though admittedly well-controlled, riot everywhere. (One couple in Portobello Rd showed they didn't need sound systems or any kind of music to have fun: they danced rock 'n' roll style with gleeful faces to the sound of nothing but bottles breaking on riot shields). Some sound systems weren't of course so blatantly on their knees to authority. Continuing to preach peace and love ("no violence") the sound system outside the K.P.H. - Kensington Park Hotel - (ironically known locally as the G.B.H.) - on Ladbroke Grove, carried on for a while longer and was charged by the cops. The charge was unprovoked and the riot police stopped only inches in front of the sound system. It then shut up shop, the police ushering the van through the blocked-off area. A smaller sound system, backed by the steel framed concrete of the Brunel Estate defiantly stuck it out in the midst of the bottle throwing. But essentially dub had had its day and was, en masse, falling in line behind Lynton Kwesi Johnson's status seeking: resident Caribbean expert at Warwick University and ex-Oxford poet, who'd contemptuously dismissed the slogan scrawled up in Brixton in 1980 - "Bristol Today, Brixton Tomorrow" - as the silly dreams of white anarchists, which he'd written in that great upholder of mass insurgency, "The Observer" just a few weeks before Brixton became more exemplary than Bristol. Lately Johnson has become an implicit if not explicit supporter of Chapelton's stewards in dealing with open insurgency.

The collapse of all cultural ranking, was complete enough to doubt if there was any real difference between sound system and The Met's Harmony police band. Except had the latter ventured down All Saints during the Carnival bluebottle reggae would have received more than a little audience participation.



Portobello Rd
Carnival '87

Although the '87 riot in Notting Hill, could not have had the ferocity or intensity of spontaneous inner-city uprisings, it was inspiring (as stated before) because it took place within an arena of near total containment- or what should have been. It seemed to indicate something: no matter how finely tuned recuperation in pockets, becomes in a country like the U.K. where, in the past few years confrontation and outright repression has been more to the fore, it still fails to work.

The old foci of revolt were precisely the spots where the trouble initially flared; the junction of Portobello Road and Aclam Road/Ladbroke Grove and Lancaster Road/ All Saints Road and Westbourne Park Road. Interestingly enough, none of the newspapers could agree because truth to tell, the rioting that followed broke out virtually spontaneously in many places around 9 p.m. and lasted sporadically some three and a half hours. Bricks, bottles and thunderflashes were thrown, 70 people were hurt, 13 coppers hospitalized and a W.P.C. was stabbed, ("riot yobs slash girl cop" said a tabloid). Stalls were looted, including one selling hammocks, (what a commodity to sell or nick at Carnival). By midnight rampaging mobs had broken down police barriers at police H.Q. although this had been happening intermittently beforehand, throughout the district. However describing the riot isn't that important (it was small beer in comparison to Brixton '85 etc.) Being so dispersed and more importantly (and it portends better possibilities) it started, for the first time to spread to the fringes of the big estates: the Brunel near Queensway, the Lancaster West Estate towards Shepherds Bush and the estates on upper Ladbroke Grove towards Kensal Rise. Running battles took place down Elgin and Blenheim Crescent, in the very heart of freshly conquered Yuppie territory, where slogans like "Fuck Yuppies" had recently been scrawled on the walls. There was even a ferocious punch-up with cops round the corner from Kensington Park Road, where at Rockways, Sting has his business centre.

Though never, as far as one can be certain, going on to the estates, the rioting went dangerously close, particularly to the Brunel, part of which is now to be sold off by Westminster City Council. However the geographical spread of the rioting reflected the intentions of the Carnival organizers to disperse the Carnival as much as possible. In an effort to defuse central tension, the watch-word has been, de-centralize. Carnival chairman, Alex Pascall wants the Carnival, in future to become even more spread out, making the task of crowd control easier. Neither the police or the Economist mag agree, because it is likely to make the job even harder. Nearby Harrow

Road is one of the streets proposed, but it's the centre of a popular street life and at one point merely one hundred yards from one of the Met's constant fears: the dreaded Mozart Estate! (In the Top Three on their list of potential Broadwater Farms).

Carnival however has little choice but to widen out and face the music of all these enjoyable possibilities if only because it gets bigger by the year. Organizers have even commissioned a market research survey to find out exactly how much money is made during the event as Carnival has become more exotically professional and more like Rio de Janeiro; in '87 there were Columbian, Red Indian and Mexican costume dancers. Following in fact the leisure tendency in modern capitalism towards bigger and better display and given the responses to mass festivities in the UK, bigger and better destruction. Even if very right-wing Tories succeeded in getting Carnival off the streets of Notting Hill (which yuppie colonizers would go along with) by staging it elsewhere, it definitely wouldn't mean an end to the trouble. The proposed open ground around Wormwood Scrubs prison, close to Notting Hill is ideal for running battles and incidently is right next to the modest looking, semi-detached Acton estate, where Mod was spawned in the early 60's. Roundwood Park in the Willesden/ Harlesden area- another proposed venue- isn't that safe either. Right in the heart of Brent which has the highest percentage black population in London, it was the scene in late spring '87, just after a small black festival, of a looting/trashing spree in Harlesden High St. Lefties claim crudely that the State (or rather they always talk about the government) wants to totally ban Carnival. This is hysterical nonsense and merely gives credence to all oppositional organizers. What the ethos of Thatcherism basically wants, is more police control (official or unofficial) and more capitalization. If at all possible an entrance fee to get in would be ideal. Above all, the supposed threat to close down Carnival is intended to push Carnival organizers into making sure there are more stewards and that they get heavier than in '87.

Moreover Notting Hill is not now a black area to the same degree as many other parts of London: its blackness is now almost purely symbolic or nostalgic reminder of the 50's. However keeping Carnival in Notting Hill does give the two up to the yuppie attack, now temporarily halted, on all the poor of the area. It was a pleasure seeing them fleeing for the country, on the run-up to August Bank Holiday '87 when their Renault 5's and Volkswagens were conspicuous by their absence.

Mugging and London Pathology

The rioting of that weekend was a fully integrated black and white affair. There was absolutely no racism either way. It's fair to say that this has been the only Carnival occasion since '76 that the relatively isolated incidents of black racism were totally absent.....But what has this to do with breaking the hold of recuperation? Well, after '76 insurgents were unable to get at stores/ clothes/ liquor or what have you. And the gangs wired by an atmosphere which tended to artificially heighten, though not satisfy expectations, sometimes turned on individual whites and gave them a doing. In '79 one of the writers of this blurb, was attacked by two members of a black gang, during a fierce volley of bricks being thrown at the cops; they were pulled off by other gang mates who apologised for the incident. Broadly speaking all the counter-insurgency techniques unwittingly, (though it turned out to be in their interest also) fostered black racism by increasing frustration. 1985 was particularly bad. As dusk fell on a tightly packed All Saints Road, individual white males (though not white women) were often quite savagely beaten up. Obviously if they were prepared to go down that street, they were definitely not white racists. However once real things begin to happen, atmospheres also change rapidly and in the mini-riot of that night, the racist flavour evaporated.

No trace of a racist slant was there at all in '87. This was all the more remarkable considering that for many a month previously, Notting Hill, particularly around the All Saints area, was plagued with heavy muggings directed at some poor whites. Why this happened is quite complex, but the increasing yuppie presence perhaps helped foster erroneous views amongst some blacks, that all whites around the area were well-off and carried plenty of money on them. Consequently an old woman was done over three times, a male nurse was beaten up and robbed, doors were kicked in and unwary tenants (not householders) opening street doors were roughly pushed inside, robbed and beaten up in the hallways. If you didn't have enough money, you were doubly punished. It was really sickening. Even white women with black husbands and boy friends were not exempt from this indiscriminate mugging spree. About the only exception, not to raise an eyebrow, was an Earl's son getting knifed, whilst scoring dope.

Just before the Notting Hill crack down (c/f later), and possibly because people were really getting pissed off, the attitudes of some muggers began to change and some changed tactics. A gang on the Metropolitan tube line, which runs through north Notting Hill demanded everybody turn out their pockets. Now only the well off were robbed, (i.e. those with plenty of credit cards stashed in their wallets). But it was a gesture that came too late and could do nothing to stop the gentrification of All Saints Road and the repression to follow. The day that indiscriminate mugging becomes social mugging, in a situation where it is difficult to distinguish rich from poor, any longer with any certainty, will mean a big difference, a huge difference. What happened on the Met line that day was a gesture and a good one in that direction. Evidently there were similar incidents like this at the Hammersmith Concert, of the Bronx- rap messenger, LL Cool Jay Cloth in November '87, although the press only reported the brutal incidents.

To be completely accurate, one has to consider mugging etc within the context of a growing pathology, especially in London, which cannot be understood using terms like racism in a simplistic way. A festering atomization at home, in leisure, growing worse by the minute, aggravated by yuppie colonization and increasing isolation at work is, taking a hideous toll subjectively. It's taking place within a class society, which is bent on hunting down the more popular, warmer social aspects, contained and accommodated though they were, by capitalism.

Psychopathic behaviour becoming rampant, as in the United States, mounts up in Notting Hill too. A black guy, something of a religious nutter, suddenly murdered his social workery, Communist Party girlfriend. He wanted to get "the evil out of her". She was a nasty little operator and through the looking glass of religious mania, he spoke a social truth, but his exorcism is scarcely to be recommended. In fact it's chilling, because there are better, more coherent ways of dealing with such things and which will be more readily understood. Crummet, before being arrested by the cops and "killed", had slashed a woman: ("killed" is put in inverted commas, because the guy was loaded with coke and given the usual going-over common place at Notting Hill and Dale police stations, a heart attack, in these circumstances, can result in death).

During the first day of the '87 Carnival, there were also more crazed incidents than in previous years. An electrician, Michael Galvin making some pin money trading, was knifed to death. He wasn't a professional trader merely somebody who quite stupidly- considering it was Carnival- tried to make a little on the side. Although it seems the guy wasn't a particularly pleasant character, blacks after the Carnival, through the mediation of a black Labour Party Councillor, organized a few benefits for his family. There were other nasty incidents during Carnival, like when a guy with a broken cider bottle, started plunging it into as many people's faces as possible, both black and white. Another guy started laughing hideously at paraplegics and tried to pull a woman's neck-support off.

London pathology has a different inflection from its New York parent, using the language of a downtrodden class, that is twisted out of all recognition, to express a frustration with themselves and everybody else. The examples above are the hideous extremes of this pathology, though, more generally it's based on a resentment of literally everything in another person's life. A perverted class antagonism becomes an obscene excuse to spit venom. You are knocked for being privileged, no matter what your circumstances are. For having money or not having money ("you're free that way") for having an incurable disease, or for being in the best of health, for having the guts to stick a stretch inside, ("just who do you think you are for having such guts?" etc) or for having stayed on the outside. The awesome proportions of international capital and monetarism in London has brought out a submerged trait that mixes up class antagonism with spiteful deference to the rich. A few drinks and the beast is free, lashing out blindly to the right and left saying and doing the unspeakable with little or no evident remorse. Nasty as these outbursts are remarkably there is never really a racist side to them in Notting Hill (though obviously this is not true elsewhere in London).*

This complicated web must be difficult to comprehend for people living outside London, though there are other dimensions, like the misunderstandings bordering on hostility between northern and southern blacks, that reflect a more broadly based North/South tension. The Huddersfield steel band in the '87 Carnival wanted to be withdrawn sickened by the pushy, "we're the tops" hard drive of its London musical counterparts. In fact there couldn't have been a greater difference between the atmosphere of the June, Huddersfield, largely Grenadian black Carnival and the Notting Hill Carnival in August. The Huddersfield Carnival literally was a relaxed picnic, with a hint of the Labour festivities of the 19th century, keen to project an image of self improvement. One of the floats carried a lollipop, which read "Huddersfield Caribbean Association self aid scheme; reading and writing! There was no dipping or aggro- it was as calming as a spliff, as Rastas from Pennine villages poured in, for a days outing. Despite the nearby presence of the Sheepridge Estate (renowned locally as Huddersfield's Broadwater Farm) a chief Inspector judged the Carnival floats, without so much as a murmur from the participants and assembled onlookers. If anything similar was proposed for Notting Hill, despite, in comparison to Huddersfield, the greater capitalization and brutalization of the area, the outcry would be instantaneous.

But then comes an August Bank Holiday Monday evening. It was as if racism and pathology had never existed. There was an overpowering feeling of release, a surge of re-awakening friendship and the brief opportunity to make friends. The riot was simply enjoyed as also a brief respite in the great communications breakdown ripping London especially to shreds. It was all the better because there had been in the Autumn '85 uprisings, a certain deterioration in the quality of rioting, (muggings/ raping etc). This has to be off-set against the greater fury and destruction of '85 in comparison to '81, because the overall situation has become a lot nastier. This deterioration was largely confined to London, so perhaps Notting Hill '87 may herald brighter things to come. In particular this deterioration in London had one very bad side effect. It has made many women scared of riots, just

Footnote: In comparison, in the heat of the moment in adjacent Kilburn there sometimes is, although resistance to the bosses and all shades of State authority is generally far more consistent. But it's an insult which must be taken with a grain of salt because these "racial" slurs that take the form of, "why don't you get back to where you came from", can be directed at anyone not resident in Kilburn, (as if Kilburn is their property). Sometimes it means nothing more than catching the next 31 bus to the Gate.

at the moment they were beginning to participate in them more. Rightly their completely understandable horror of rape and mugging - and which they have very little defence against - has to some degree intensified an old conception that rioting is purely a macho act. Such responses however mustn't be placed in the same category as the "macho politics" slur used to rubbish all insurrectionary means, spouted by a social democratic mentality anxious to psychologise any struggle which escapes political categories.

One final point. With the stock market collapse and a possible slowing of the invasion of exchange, which has shaped and encouraged pathology, a very subversive characteristic of the London proletariat may well come to the fore: that penchant for taking the piss out of anybody who gets on their high horse, or seeks to instruct in a demagogic manner, or has pretension to leadership. It is a characteristic Emma Goldman, when heckled for a laugh, was quite unable to understand. She considered the London mob behaved as "they would at a country fair, not so much to listen or learn, as to be amused!" (My life). But it is precisely that ever readiness, to have a good laugh at all pretensions and foibles, that make the London poor so brilliant at times.



Notting Hill: 28.9.'85. The night that Brixton blew there was a disturbance at the bottom end of Cambridge Gdns near the Lancaster West Estate. The photo shows a big limousine being burnt out.

Cars in the UK come under more direct attack and sabotage than anywhere else in the world. It's a fairly constant phenomena (e.g. the recent many months long, night-time car pyromania in York). When "cars are dead" was sprayed on the walls of Notting Hill in 1968, there was little tangible evidence then of future anti-car assault. When it did come about - as per usual in the UK - it happened without any accompanying explanation by the car destroyers. It's a limitation which often reduces the vision behind these brilliant acts.

THE SAINTS: AND WHEN THE COPS CAME MARCHING IN.

All Saints Rd was (is??) of course, the nerve centre of Notting Hill and has been for many a year. Even in 1958, it was the centre of the race riots and in the late 60's the scene of attacks, by the then famous gob-bolt of speed, P.C. Pulley (now a gun toting Embassy cop). After the '81 riot, which took place surprizingly at the very end of the July riots, a slow process of attrition began to unfold. Suddenly there was an air of mortality about the place. The central pub, The Apollo, was closed in the summer of '82 on police orders because of the grass dealing that went on there. It had been an O.K. dive, despite the many nights of depression in there caused by absent life. And if it has been missed, it was only because pub life in general has gone from bad to worse in the area. Black and whites mixed freely and there was ganga everywhere and the Guvnor- an ex Irish guardsman- who had onced owned a small pig farm back on the old sod, just let things go, though he could be tough at times. Of course the place was full of bollock-aches too: all 57 varieties of lefties, alternative comedians, alternative this, that and the other and dumbo rebel musicians were there in overplus. Befitting strategies of recuperation in Notting Hill, a grafitti board was placed on the bog wall in the gents. There was one memorable comment. Replying to Engels' remark that had been scrawled up: "drink is the quickest way out of Manchester", some wit had written underneath: "suicide is the quickest way out of Birmingham..." But the closure of The Apollo in '82 marked a moment. Other pubs have been shut down in London, by the cops for short periods since, so that a clean up could take place, (e.g, the '87 closure of the Golden Cross on Portobello Road or the refurbishment of The Atlantic in Brixton,) but the drastic, complete shut down of The Apollo is probably unique.

Things suddenly began to get very edgy. Houses in the mews running up to All Saints were being really smartened up as the trendy rich started to buy some of them. The siege of rapidly rising property prices was beginning and the place was becoming full of dizzy contradictions. For people with little or no room for manouvre, the short fuse they were on got shorter, imploding as much as exploding. A Scottish alchi in a semi-squat, normally a neat quiet guy, flipped and took away part of the head of his best mate- a former Irish building worker- with a broken cider bottle. The reason: his Irish pal wouldn't switch the light off, when asked. Instantly sobering up, the Scot who had always been so friendly, couldn't believe what he had done. Shell shocked, walking slowly he was led away, by the cops, who gave him the gentle touch calling him "Jimmy". He received a murder rap and was locked away in a high security mental asylum for twenty years. For the rest of his life, Jimmy's dreams will be plagued by that nightmare evening. Mental? whats more maddening than gentrification, which catastrophically erodes the social life of the poor and the necessary warmth of contact. Gentrification proceeded literally through murder in this instance.

But on the other hand, many young blacks (All Saints was basically a black street) began to resist the invasion and growing police pressure, because their small-time, dope-dealing livelihood was threatened. Resistance was not merely resistance to a trade that was under threat. There was also the ideology of Rastafari, while a few doors away the menace of the growing community worker/ Afro- Caribbean, black small business scene around the Mangrove restaurant. The Mangrove had been able to keep its radical image throughout the years because of a stupid policy (stupid from the State's point of view) of police harassment of black business in the summer of 1970. In short, it gave the aura of radicalism to a fledgling black middle class who in their turn in the 80's, were threatened by something uncontrollable below, as they fearfully but patronizingly tried to encompass the lively

street scene- even encourage it- whilst also wanting to see it pacified and brought under their control. The Apollo was re-furbished, with the aim of turning it into a black co-operative workshop of various handicrafts and small businesses. It even acquired a post-modernist architectural arcade!

Despite all the bullshit connected with Rastafari (return to Ethiopia/ dislike of Lesbians and Gays) it nonetheless had an ideology of community, an ideology of sharing, of the abolition of exchange. For quite a number of Rastas on All Saints Road, this initially meant going out of their way to keep the rest of the local community sweet, like being nice to the poor whites and those older, straighter blacks who'd never had a joint stuck between their lips. 'Where've you bin all Christmas my man' etc, was a regular greeting after a traditional festivity, to someone not part of the street scene, but who nevertheless lived there.

There were many truly enjoyable and crazy aspects to life on the street. In terms of the protection it offered, it was like a north London Casbah. If you were black you could escape to it and be safe. Simply disappear into the rabbit warren of tunnels connecting cellars. No cops would dare follow. On one memorable occasion, an L.B.C. newsflash reported a stolen car in North London, flying through the streets pursued by cops cars, its occupants heading for All Saints. The car made it, crashing into a lamp post. Wild cheering! The occupants dived into the nearest pavement lights trap-door leading to the cellar warrens and away.

Of course there was an atmosphere of black nationalism in these warrens, but in practise it did not prove all that strong. White women were allowed in, but no other whiteheads....Until one night in a basement shebeen in All Saints, some Glaswegians (who else?) not to be excluded, from an all hours drinking party, barged in, their Clydeside camaraderie quickly breaking the ice. After that they kept coming back, night after night. Indeed at times, All Saints seemed to be like a scene out of a classic Glaswegian slum. Young black guys , holding meat cleavers and machetes, would regularly square up to each other, urged on by their followers. There would then follow a ritual quadrille, to and fro across All Saints liberally peppered with the most basic of insults. Generally they were ritual duels and the cleavers rarely sank into flesh. It was really a matter of honour being seen to be satisfied without loss of face.

....Then there was the Nigerian woman who sold household groceries. The tins on the shelves were rusty with mildewed labels and the fruit and vegetables were mostly rotten. Even the newspapers were a day or two old. When a customer complained, she replied: "well they are only a day late". In the back of her shop was a big tin bath and every so often she'd collar the Irish and Scots alchis', who lived in the squat above her shop, put them in the tin bath and scrub them. They would emerge from the shop all clean and shiny, looking for the next swig of cider. They would return at mid-night, attempt to break into her shop to pinch the cigarettes. But the big Nigerian woman did not mind too much: a break-in meant an inflated insurance claim. In any case , the groceries were merely a side-line for a small-scale grass trade. The Insurance Companies quickly got very wise to the constant burglaries/ fire raising on All Saints. Plain clothes coppers were always asking locals if they had seen this or that hoist. The locals usually kept stum. A couple trying to get enough dosh to keep their shop open, faked a robbery. The guy knocked the girl around a bit, then tied himself up. Because it was so lamentably executed it failed and thus he got banged up for six months.

The street never closed, except possibly for a period from six to nine in the morning: in that sense it had more of a New York than London flavour. Midnight football matches were a regular event. On one occasion a truck load

of cows, passing by All Saints, broke down and the cows escaped, legging it down All Saints. One black guy went up to a cow and said; "want some grass man"?

But throughout, the cops were ever-present and there were literally countless incidents of bottle and brick throwing. The cops generally tended to arrest people in the streets leading to All Saints and they were mainly punters who wouldn't kick up untidy. Only occasionally would the cops attack the main drag directly, but when they did, all hell would let loose. The bookmakers, E.W. Kensington, was a kind of centre and it was often raided, as the cops looked for ganja. It would provoke uproar. The bookies cheekily responded by have-tee shirts printed: "E.W. Kensington, Bookmakers to the Ghetto!" A daft community copper tried single handedly to change the atmosphere by being especially nice. He would say "hello" to everybody, virtually forcing people to say "hello" back. But he ended up getting his truncheon and helmet nicked - sobbing openly in the street. He was never seen again!

During the miners strike of '84 and early '85, though the separate, but connected terrains of urban riot and strike action never came together, except in the pit villages, clearly the impulse was there. The summer battles of Gascoigne Wood, at the heart of the Selby super pits complex, was shown on T.V. news and all the blacks in Bibs restaurant on the Saints, shouted and whistled for the miners. Other blacks, mainly older, would say to some whites on All Saints, "we support the miners!" For the young blacks, it was the sheer violence against the police, they identified with, rather than the need for some conscious inner-city rioting/striking miners unity, (which didn't happen in '84 partly because the State seemed to have told the cops to cool it in the inner-cities).

However the atmosphere generally was going from worse to desperate. The delightful aspects, which also made insurgent outbreaks rich and strange were fading from the scene. The ideology of Rastafari was coming under severe strain and falling apart and reggae was going disco. Yuppie colonization and incoming designer style were taking a heavy toll. The Yardies, the gun-toting hard drugs dealing, Mafia-like mob from Jamaica, who initially were created to guard Jamaica's ex lefty P.M. Manley, for a while moved in on the Saints. They frightened the shit out of those "english" (can one say this?) blacks who dealt ganja as a means of topping up dole payments. Basically, they just did not want to be a part of a "mob" network like that. There were unsubstantiated reports that guys who tried to muscle in on the Yardies scene, were tortured in the basement warrens by applying electric wires to the genitals. Whether the rumour was just rumour, the Yardies, for the moment have left Notting Hill, for more lucrative business elsewhere in London.*

It was portent though of the uglier times ahead. A designer style began to take hold of All Saints and the street atmosphere deteriorated, as it ate into the heart of the rebel stronghold. Not that designer style in itself was either better or worse, than what had gone on before it. After all, working class people, to compensate for a life lived on the margin, need to feel good and wearing the latest fasion can give the appearance of having come out on top. The real trouble lay in the putting into practise of what designer style symbolised- aggressive go getting and love of money, as the key to all possibilities vacated by the failure to transform life. Designer style advertising was a pressurised hot sell, of a brittle scream to "take me, take me" and on the street it scarcely mattered whether that freedom from restraint meant trashing a store front or nicking from a defenceless kid.

Footnote: If any further evidence were needed this proves yet again, how gun-toting, political heavies always fall into horrible, money-grubbing rackets. The Yardies are the worst, that's all

Elsewhere on All Saints Road, black and white artists (particularly the latter) were increasingly moving in, being given favourable leasing or letting terms, by the Notting Hill Housing Trust. Dixon the junk sculpture furniture maker and cretenuous "inventor" of "salvage art" (seventy years after Duchamp's readymades) of colour supp fame, acquired on that basis, a large studio. From this he knocks out at least one chair a day, which one can't even sit on, never mind taking any pleasure in looking at, which go for £1,000 a time, in plush west-end galleries. During the '85 Carnival, Dixon as a public relations ploy - even though he is very snooty - opened up his studio for a little party. Carnival stewards were at the door vetting entrants: these latest and for the moment untypical museum attendants, were ready at a moments notice to stop a riot breaking out.

All Saints was becoming a trade- street, pure and simple. Trade in art. Trade in dope. Forget the good times! Money was a serious business....just weeks before serious money, was to become serious debt for a lot of rich finks. The place seemed to acquire something, somehow, of that pre- crash freneticism and though it was only a shadowy connection, because no "serious money" was being made, the war of one against all on the street was, at times, like a sink version of a futures market trading floor.

People living in the vicinity who used the street daily, were told to get the fuck off the street, if they didn't want to buy dope. And this coming from people who didn't live there! Values got distorted. Poor whites were looked down on as white trash and the white artists were looked up to and left alone. Then the muggings started to increase becoming nastier by the day as heroin and cocaine appeared on the street. (c/f on Carnival '87) Most of this was carried out by designer orientd blacks, those who wanted the flash gear, identifying with the value system that went with it and nothing else. American style, pass-it-on, that monetarist introjected disregard for "fair" exchange - wanting to possess everything immediately as commodity - became relatively commonplace as BMX bikes were whisked away from underneath young kids, often from poor families, who were playing in the street.

However in condemning these forms of muggings, one must recognise, that before the great stock market crash- and which may see the end of such a trajectory- money grabbing was on the verge of becoming a kind of social relation/ central axis of society. A polite veeer, getting even thinner, merely disguised the fact that it was also a form of mugging, but without the brutal honesty of the street, (e.g. the New York "house slaves" prepared to sell every aspect of themselves including lying proclamations of love, in order to move in with a partner while looking out for more lucrative bodies to pillage who owned larger apartments.)

Increasingly cut off from surrounding social basis of support a cornered frenzy on All Saints, would leap out half- crazed from doorways. Links with this basis were always somewhat tenuous on All Saints, but now it was becoming completely lost to it. More and more punters had their dope money stolen from them which just invited retaliation. And sure enough a black guy- who just happened to be there- got savagely knifed by a ripped- off punter, in one of the side streets.

By early summer '87 as many as three mini- riots a day were breaking out. At the same time, there were also in Notting Hill, quite a few skirmishes of a far higher quality. On All Saints, it had become largely self-destruct, having lost its out-going, laughing, communicative edge. So often it was just ugly as the sun glanced off flashing knives, though to be accurate when rioting broke out, it was purely anti- cop. But by now, the cops were getting heavier too, as a particularly nasty crew, known as the "midnight watch" got down to their dirty work. It was becoming all very contradictory and not a simple, beautiful charge as it was in '76 or, on a country-wide level, the heady days of July '81.

Then came the big clamp down on July 1st '87. The cops descended in droves and they came to stay. Within days it had a name: "Operation Trident" and it was much bigger than the police curfew after Crumpet's death (c/f page 34). Though largely drawn from the south west and Devon and Cornwall, amongst their mass presence could be heard Scottish and Northern accents. The typical divide and rule. Send the Met to Yorkshire when there is trouble and vice versa. Play on regional hostility between North and South! For many locals amongst both the black and white working class though, it was a relief. The muggings, the burgling of poor households stopped overnight. The heroin was gone, or rather dealt in a more clandestine fashion. However when the cops do something, or in this case put a stop to something, the truth is left to rot unnoticed. What wasn't revealed in the newspapers/ T.V. during the following days was that most of these arrested for hard drugs were white and not black. A minority of black street kids who had done the dirty dealing, who had gone cynical with the collapse of rasta ideology (which was anti hard drugs) were only mug workers for the white big boys. In the weeks to follow (surprisingly, considering cop vindictiveness) most of those arrested for ganja or hash, over the Notting Hill area as a whole, were released without charge. The rest, including the whites arrested for dealing smack, were kept inside.

The Labour party- even the most dissident- supported the clearing of All Saints and were willing to talk to the cops. Like the locals they wanted rid of mugging and heroin, but behind it too, there was the orderly petite bourgeois ideology of the quiet suburban street; of early to bed and early to rise, ready for an honest days wage-slavery. There is a history to such one-sided, kill joy responses in Notting Hill. During the era of Rachmanism, tenants committees, somewhat commandeered by the Labour party, justly attacking rapacious private sector landlordism, then went on to an indiscriminate taming of the area's wild life. Since the 1950's high on the list of tenants committees, were the proposals to close down shebeens. Sure a basement shebeen can be a damn nuisance, especially when a good night's sleep is essential, just in order to get through alienated work and leisure. But these reproaches were aimed at cutting the top off all highs in favour of a monotonous normality. It does happen to be true there exists a creative dialectic between the "good and the "bad" in areas. Recognition of this does not mean justifying the "bad", merely in dealing with it, one does not impose a stifling watch committee mentality*

On the Saints, the days work over, the cops continued to stay. One got the impression, they were just so country, that they had been brain-washed, during briefings, to believe that Notting Hill was jungle-bunny land, inhabited also by crazed white fiends, with jacking-irons sticking permanently out of their veins. What a tale to tell back home, over a pint of scrumpy with the farm lads in "The Barley Mow"! On the streets of Notting Hill, their country bumpkin eyes were opened wide. They tried to get friendly, not because they were told to do so, but because of their country manners. One sensed they were beginning to enjoy the place.

It was not just a military-style operation either. The police tried to work on the division between blacks and other locals. Within days, plain clothes cops (who pretended other) went around to every house in the vicinity of All Saints, to suggest setting up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme- the pet project of the new head of the Met, Peter Imbert. Also a huge police mega-truck moved in, open to all those in the area, who might be interested in beating crime. They got few customers. To top it all, despite the yuppie inroads, the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme failed and not one of the familiar stickers appeared in any window, except in the very low rise flats in Tavistock Crescent. No doubt this

Footnote: This historically is what happened to Storyville in New Orleans when, a hell-fire, lascivious puritanism put an end to all that was creative about the place. In spite of the gangsterism, organized prostitution and scramble to make a buck any-which-way, there was just something unrepeatable and exceptional about those wailing train whistles taking the blue note from the dance halls into the marshalling yards.

still testified to the anti-cop inclination of Notting Hill, although there must have been many punters who didn't subscribe to it out of fear of neighbourly retribution. It was a relief, although it should be pointed out that many Neighbourhood Watch stickers are cynically put in windows, because home insurance premiums are cheaper that way.*

But coppers will be coppers. No matter how washed up and disintegrated, they don't change their spots. In the following days and weeks, sitting in their riot trucks all over the district (not just All Saints) they began to turn their attention onto the local community who had blinkedly, but understandably welcomed them, in the first instance, (rather like the Northern Ireland Catholics who welcomed the British Army in 1969. One agreeable side to "Operation Trident". Most of those arrested were yuppies nicked for driving over permitted alcohol levels. But pubs were turned over too. An Irish plasterer had his half finished guinness snatched out of his hand at closing time and an Irish girl, with a fast food fetish, finishing off her twentieth hamburger of the day, had her feast snatched of her mouth. All over people in pubs were arrested for being drunk, even though they weren't.

Divide and Rule and the Media An Inner-City Big Bang?

There was an ugly twist to the pub raids. Blacks were separated from whites, then searched. The tactic was an attempt at a racist divide and rule, like had never been known before. Over the years the tabloid press had tried to foment racial trouble in Notting Hill, by scandalously distorted reporting (c/f Mikkelson). Throughout the 80's it has got horrible and to verify this, just consider two of the worst examples.

Sometime in '86, a white guy on crutches died of a heart attack, on Golborne Road, on the way to the fish and chip shop. Without checking any facts, The London Standard and L.B.C., picking up on an unsubstantiated rumour, immediately proclaimed, he'd been mugged by blacks. A chill went through the area. Was it true? All day fearful blacks everywhere went out of their way, to nod and smile at whites, whom they only knew as familiar faces. It was an horrendous lie, but it took days for the calumny to be exposed and then only as a footnote in the press. It had been the same three years earlier in '83 when a teenager, the lovely Belinda Greaves, was diabolically murdered by a black psycho-killer. From the front page of The London Standard there screamed a headline stating that a black guy had killed a white girl. What it did not say was that, Belinda's dad came from the Caribbean, although her mother was white....In both incidents, The London Standard's slanted report could have led to revenge attacks, which was probably the intention. That media provocations failed, is down to the on going and long time inter-racial unity built up in Notting Hill (and now elsewhere) over the years, that has come about among the oppressed of all races.

Footnote: Like the Leftists they are, Class War has recently proposed a strategy of entrisism into these para-State bodies. They dream of kicking out the cops from these cop-initiated Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, a vangardist fantasy doomed to failure but which may help to boost the image of these Schemes amongst the poor and confused. Such entrisism is an imagined short-cut a substitute for the harder task of initiating some anti-mugging, anti-cop, anti-heroin, anti-rapist etc project completely independent of the State. It's about as subversive as the Trots whose delerium leads them to believe the Labour party can be turned into a Bolshevikh party; that the State can be turned into a Workers' State.

If these didn't work, neither did "Operation Trident" even though blacks were singled out, as never before by the cops. Black school kids, having a shing-dig the day summer term ended, larking about with foam silly-string, were pushed against the wall and seperated from their white mates by the boys in blue. Anti-police hostility grew. Why were they staying? Was it to satisfy the hated yuppies? Maybe the off-spring of some top bod in Whitehall was now living in Notting Hill and wanted the place cleaned up to look like Chalfont Latimer? Maybe this mandarin had button-holed Hurd, the Home Secretary, one day in the corridors of power and asked Douglas to do something about it."After all, old boy we knew each other at Eton!"

An inter-racial anti-cop unity, common to Notting Hill came once more into the open. Whites protested at the way blacks were being treated.

There was a memorable incident outside The Colville pub on Portobello Rd when some blacks tried to free a white guy shoved in the back of a police transit van. They rocked the van, but failed to push it over. As for those blacks who had become cops, they were called "black Bastards" by black street kids. And as their quisling presence tended to provoke, rather than pacify riot, they had been kept away from All Saints. Fragmented trouble broke out, all over Notting Hill, but it was all disparate, unconnectd and failed to come together into a party.



Black Brothers?
Black Cop and Rasta.
Carnival '87.

As for All Saints, opening the door one morning, it was staggering to find a black guy, ticking-off share ratings in The Times', financial index. From dope dealing to potential insider-dealing, as quickly as it takes for a cop to truncheon a skull! Was this, as it were, "the dark side" of popular capitalism; a species of born-again mugging, providing the opportunity to get rich quick. It strikingly brought out the combined power of Thatcherism and post big-bang, as an international, inter-racial, inter-class force able to suck in broader and broader layers of "the people", especially in the south-east, even able to make inroads into the subterranean depths. (However, "fair shares all round", the monetarist version of social egalitarianism was shortly to have its nemesis on Oct 19th '87, revealing starkly that capitalism had in-built barriers to its popularity.)

Then came the expected liberal lefty official protests. Bernie Grant and Paul Boateng, the recently elected black M.P.s, at a House of Commons press conference criticized the police swamp without, of course, mentioning the real nitty gritty, which led up to the swamp in the first instance. What had happened previously on All Saints, was largely glossed over, and no one dared speak the truth for fear of being accused of racism. The heroin trade, apart from a few comments by Frank Critchlow- boss of the Mangrove restaurant/ community work scene- was particularly glossed over. He said he would have been able to control it- which he wouldn't. The muggings were passed over in total silence and not surprizingly, because these meetings were basically social workery, guilt-ridden, hand wringing affairs. The Trotskyist S.W.P. in "Socialist Worker" went along with all this garbage, their account, being so wide of the mark, it made one doubt even the factual veracity of their reports on industrial disputes throughout the U.K. - the only reason to read the mag- even though you have to ignore their ideological slant in any case.

A white middle class, feminist, social worker, who'd quit Notting Hill, a long time ago, for owner occupation elsewhere in north London, did her do-goody, but very influential bit. In the past to prove how hip she was she'd had a kid by a black guy, but the blacks she'd hung loose with on the Saints, were those on the up. Guys like Jerry Rawlins- the man who was to become the populist army captain and Ghana's head of state.* The same old power-as-an-aphrodisiac trip and never a serious relationship with an estate Leroy. It's very different to what happens when working class individuals - with an attraction or love for each other - get together. They don't spectacularize their off-spring, which, as it were, happen along the way. They don't wear their mixed race children like a race-relations badge as the lefty professionals do.

....Then suddenly the occupation ceased only three weeks before the '87 Carnival. But one felt revenge was going to be meted out at Carnival, because the word had got out everywhere- what are the police doing in Notting Hill? And just before the Carnival, the cop's presence increased with random searches, arrests in Basin St and elsewhere. As for All Saints, the silence continued and has only been broken since by small disturbances somewhat encircled by the Mangrove scene. Critchlow, in his Maida Vale pad, didn't need to worry too much how to play it. His hands were clean. In the interests of black small

Footnote: All Saints after all had an image and a past and aspiring, populist, lefty Third World politicians, would in days gone by, pay frequent visits there, before becoming famous elsewhere. For example, Maurice Bishop, the assassinated head of the New Jewel movement in Grenada, decimated by Reagan's paras, used to drink in the Apollo. Among all this though, was one truly sad incident vis-a-vis the day-glo desperate life of rebel stars. It was on All Saints, that Jimi Hendrix - perhaps the greatest jazz/rock guitarist of all - on the eve of music entering into total eclipse, either o/d or committed suicide, leaving behind his dying-to-be-loved, final farewell on a piece of paper.

businesses, he'd opposed the cops. Nonetheless, since the trauma of Operation Trident, disturbances have begun to take place again in Notting Hill in '88, partly because the cops really want to punish set-backs - and punish hard. (And if it's anything to go by the cops aren't probably going to play it cool like '84).

A Council Estate Spill-Over?

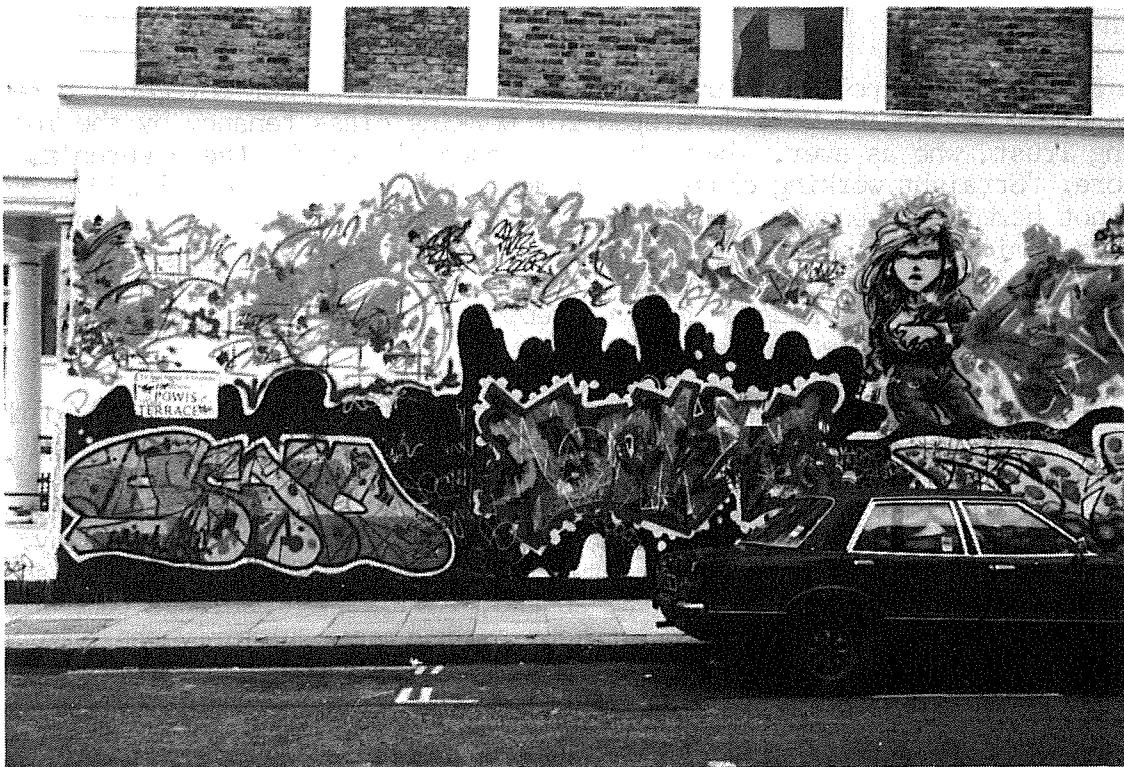
But if the occupation, had ceased in Notting Hill, it has also patchily intensified elsewhere, simply because some of the drug-dealing migrated to the danger spots of the Mozart and Lisson Green estates, in the neighbouring Borough of Westminster. Here the police presence had to be low profile. Even so, having cracked down hard in Notting Hill, in the long term, they had only aggravated their problems elsewhere. We can be thankful for police wisdom, in not letting sleeping dogs lie. Irritation at their constant interference can only swell the furore, which is breaking out in Westminster, over the Tory Council's ruthless plan to get rid of half the Council housing stock there. So far much of this opposition has been orchestrated, by the very marginalized Westminster Labour Party, (which has more than a few members with Bennite leanings, who lived in Notting Hill recently.) It hasn't amounted to much beyond disrupting Council meetings, councillors arrested and miserable night-time candle-lit processions, protesting the closure of St. Mary's Hospital, on the Harrow Road. This hospital, has been sold off, to property developers, with apartments earmarked for sale at an average £200,000 each. With the stock market crash, they won't get anywhere near that price. Such actions provoke a murderous rage, so it's extremely doubtful if the Labour Party can in the long term, contain the mounting anger. The last thing they want is a Broadwater type explosion on the Mozart, which they continually predict will happen, and which they're doing everything in their power to prevent happening. The Tory Council are stupid enough to think the opposition are trying for another Broadwater Farm, but it is the Tories themselves who will succeed in doing this. Lisson Green is about to be sold off, at cut price rate. Mortgages won't mean anything there, as most of the tenants are unemployed. Plenty evictions are sure to follow and that could be social dynamite in triggering things off there.

Both the giant Mozart and Lisson Green estates are late 60's early 70's Town Planners creations and both have turned out quite differently to what the bureaucrats intended. The systems built, deck access, Lisson Green, completed in the mid 70's was more or less earmarked for respectable working class tenancy. Within a few years it rapidly became a sink estate and all who found themselves sinking rather than swimming were re-housed there. Largely tenanted by poor white and black, it recently has received a huge influx of Moroccan families. The Mozart was supposed to be more auspicious than Lisson Green, as it was low-rise and largely brick-built. Many expected it to blow during the rioting Autumn of '85 and rumours, some probably true, ran wild. Recently however Westminster council has set about demolishing the deck access and it has been mooted (though not confirmed) that the better part could be sold off. Selling off Lisson Green and the Mozart isn't so daft, considering the up-market, American style facelift by Regalio properties (re-named Falcon Towers) on formally, unspeakably awful point blocks in Clapham Junction. Certainly tenants on the Mozart are very edgy and ever ready to attack the Council and anything else that gets in the way. Over the last few years there's been a lot of patchy flare-ups on both the Mozart and Lisson Green estates. The inhabitants of the latter ('the Lisson Green Posse') were blamed for rioting in Praed St Paddington, during the miners' strike in summer '84.

There is however a hierarchy of estates, which is pretty effective in stopping inter-estate solidarity. For instance, the brick-built Scott Ellis estate close to Lisson Green, obviously regards itself as being a cut above its neighbour. It is tenanted by people like low paid civil servants, precisely the

types who were originally designated for the Lisson Green, which they keep well off...And would either of these two estates feel solidarity with the squatters on the football terrace like, construction of Rowley Way estate, half a mile away and now being evicted by leftist Camden Council?

All one can say for the moment is this: the situation in London has deteriorated to such an extent that solidarity action, in response to renewed rent strikes, due to cuts in housing benefit or, the new Housing Act, and potential riots, is now more likely, even though unprecedented. Also one must not forget that council workers in London, in response to savage attacks on their conditions of employment, are seething with anger, the likes of which, hasn't been seen for ages. If ever.



The above graffiti was initiated by Brim Fuentes, A New York subway artist from the South Bronx. It may look a rebel art but in fact it was done with the consent of Chelsea and Kensington Council as were other sites in the area. This remedial, halfway house, between the street and the gallery system does not exist in the States to the same degree as the UK. In some cases here, the local State and local education authorities (e.g. Wolverhampton) actually fund such schemes.

Actually New York subway graffiti was a response of the outcast to the failure of radical currents in America. It changed appearances not social relations. Looking back, it marked the recovery of the visual which, from clandestine beginnings on subway trains, became ever more neutral as it spread outover and upwards, replacing the aural as the dominant aesthetic of containment. The transition from street artist to gallery artist is symbolic of this process.

AN ARTISTIC SWAMP.

DESIGNING THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES.

In Central London, there was no comparable street anywhere to compare with the low property prices on All Saints Road. Increasingly throughout the '80's, it became a very desirable residence for chic, artistic business, drawn by cheap rents and the thrill of the place, which did wonders for that precious commodity "street cred". With the police occupation, a big push was given to this tendency. The Legal Light recording company, a no-nonsense black business, opened its doors. Dixon expanded his salvage art mini- empire, acquiring more leased lettings from the Notting Hill Housing Trust, for what seemed at the time, a Warhol- like factory complex. In reality it turned out to be nothing like so grand. But the place was irrevocably changing. A rich and exciting past was coming to an end, its rebellion crushed by art- an old story of modern times.

Backed by the police occupation (completing the pincer movement) a few of the empty properties were developed for working class tenancy by the local Housing Trust, who as ever, always have an answer as to why there weren't, a lot more. "Straight working class people don't want to live on All Saints, so we're not harming anybody". Whilst this is true, it's not so for the many homeless families and others living in Bed and Breakfast (the kind of people living around the corner in the Angel Hotel in Tavistock Rd) who would jump at the chance of being housed (however temporarily) on the Saints. But they are not artists are they?

But the bull market in art was coming to an end. Two and a half months later, the worlds stock market crashed. It didn't scatter the objet d'art like chaff overnight, but it re-established an old master selectivity, where only blue chip taste was safe (i.e. the post- crash world record for Van Gogh's "Irisess") But crucially the index-linking of all art, determined by the top end of the market had come unstuck. It was not that the relationship between art and finance capital was at an end, (Japanese Insurance Companies know better than that) only its 80's avant garde phase. Formerly the typical financial entrepreneur, pitifully believing him/herself at the frontiers of creation, would put money in avant garde stock. With an estimated 50,000 jobs for starters to go in the City, many a gallery will close its doors. In fact this retrenchment, in which Bond St. and Cork St, came to loom over pretenders like Notting Hill, reflects on the financial level proper, the drift back to the City of London away from the proposed new site in Docklands.

Ever capricious, art (at least the ever renewed farce of "creative" art) must now seek out newly emerging trends, as yet only dimly visible to identify with. Come post-crash dawn and it was obvious, the link between the chic figures of the artist and the estate agent, walking hand in hand, both complimenting and understanding each other perfectly and both speaking each other's language was broken. The Estate Agent will survive probably by going down-market, where property values are less affected by the crash. Will the artist metaphorically speaking, follow suit? Maybe we can form an idea from observing some of the main tendencies at work in Notting Hill over the last few years, extracting those which an emerging new economic order may muster to serve capital.

Prior to the stock market collapse, one got the impression that, capital's hope was to make All Saints a malled, multi-media, multi-ethnic, art ghetto, somewhat like Covent Garden, but far more avant garde. A place of daring invention and sanitized ghetto living. The very thought of it leaving one feeling sick, even mugging seeming attractive in comparison.

Art all over Notting Hill, has been the precursor and aesthetic counterpoint to gentrification. Negatively good in showing clearly which side art is on, it hasn't been combatted clearly and confidently. With art galleries opening everywhere and squeezing the number of stores trading in everyday essentials, there's been a lot of muttering and confused anger. Many's the time they've been threatened with fire bombing (particularly the gallery owned by Richard Branson's sister) but alas, only when the drink was flowing. In this artistic deluge though, there's more than meets the eye. To view it as a neo-return to the early 20th century would be very superficial: a reconstructed Montmartre with a replicant Picasso about to break into a replicant cubism or, say, the popular artistic quarter of turn-of-the-century Munich awaiting an equally replicant Expressionism. This is merely the Front.

All this excrecence is really the art junk-bond market, when anything that said it was art, meant an appreciating asset. A time when the miserable pop-art sculptures of Claes Oldenburg, twenty years ago, got turned into an even more miserable yuppie prop. Moreover, and more to the point, this art, these art galleries, looking so traditional with all their seen-it-all-fifty-times-before, avant garde repeats, are, merely service conduits for a very big, up-to-the-minute, media hype. Studios for immediate ideas marketing by ad men and women. Art galleries as front for advertising agencies in a situation where England (particularly as centered in London) is the temporary capital of world hype. With the telescoping of art and business, all pretence about any gap between art and the commodity has vanished more completely than in the late 60's. It's now glaringly obvious to a much vaster layer of the population.

Take the seeming repeats of dead end 60's artistic happenings, all over Notting Hill, throughout 1986 and since, (e.g. The Mattoids and Big Joe Rush). Basically they're simply dress rehearsals for inventive ads promoting products. "Test Dept", with their tin can futuristic music, even bringing in a few Kent miners (forever the populism!) to improvise with them under the M40 Westway, were immediately signed up for a T.V. Heineken lager ad. The end product was on of the most ingenious promo's ever made. In passing one wonders too, if "Test Dept" wasn't also a recuperation of those outbursts of a music made by everyone, when a hilarious drunken evening's camaraderie bursts, seemingly from nowhere, into junk tin-panning and everyone starts playing walls, gas fires, chairs and tables.

Take too, the film of "Absolute Beginners" - was there ever such a build-up? And was there ever such a flop? The greatest movie disappeared overnight without a trace. Absolute Bollocks. But the producer, Julian - "we must create new cliches"- Temple, still holds his court in his local, Notting Hill watering hole, The Duke of Norfolk.

This blatant market orientation is masked by the appearance of a community of artists, and that's how the erstwhile spirit of "community" no matter how bogus, has changed according to circumstances. The Apollo was the communal watering hole of vague libertarianism, which amidst all of its nonsense had something of an anti-competitive, anti-business air to it. Now a similiar venue for a more aggressively entrepreneurial time, The Warwick Castle, with more artistic front has come into being. A mag put together by some of those who work for Rough Trade called "The Roughler" centres on The Warwick. It is a magazine which manages to praise Jasper Conran (the ultimate in designer wear at £500 a throw), the cricketer, Bob Willis, and Class War, in almost one and the same breath. Even The London Standard noted favourably its, "Tatleresque spoofs". In comparison with the Notting Hill underground press of yesteryear, it is abysmal. The, more or less, yuppie "Ink" and "Frendz", whatever their manifold failings, were brilliant in comparison. Yet Class War seem to be unaware just how contradictory their matey relationship with The Roughler is, especially in



The Mondrian visual pun appeared on the cover of Faron Sutaria's Estate Agency, property magazine, distributed gratis to most flats and houses in the area. It is Notting Hill's most avant garde property shop.

Sutaria is an Anglo-Indian who has risen to prominence during the Thatcher years, his career roughly paralleling the Saatchi Bros who have amassed a "famous" avant garde, art collection. Where other Estate Agents may display in the window their more desirable properties in picture frames concealing a staid interior of oak-desks, inlaid with green beige tops, Sutaria's agency is an art/property experience somewhere between an office and a temple. Giant colour transparencies of properties, illumined like stained glass, hang on the back wall while photographs of other properties are framed like the side panels of tryptiches.

Unlike the typical pin-striped Estate Agent of a decade ago, Sutaria, immaculately turned-out in various shades of pastel, goes about the business of selling properties as if it were a leisure activity. His self-image is that of a multi-millionaire aesthete entrepreneur, somewhat akin to R. Branson's Virgin Leisure Industries. Simply buying a house to Sutaria is philistine and suburban. As well as an appreciating asset, it is an unfinished symphony in bricks and mortar; a symbiotic meeting of art and property values. And artists, ever more economically minded, respond to this connotation as if they were selling an appreciating asset. -----A friend wittily suggested that one of the newly opened art galleries should hold an exhibition of Estate Agents boards, comprizing perhaps, an early Foxton, a minimalist Ruck and Ruck, a conceptual Sturgis etc.....

view of their professed anti-yuppie stance. The Roughler is not anti-yuppie but pro-yuppie or, more properly, pro the changing face of yuppiedom, which will opportunistically respond to whatever social forces are eventually unleashed by the crash. One of The Warwick Castle's pivotal punters, is no less than Johnny Rotten, never able to leave his punk posture of wild-eyed artistic "daring" (sic) behind. When posing for today's glossies, his semi-Thatcherite, Restart radicalism (get off your arse and make yourself a job) combined with a very jumbled appreciation of working class extremism may prove a workable blend in a constitutional transition to a post-Thatcherism still stamped with the impress of the old.* In parenthesis, Glen Matlock's status as former Sex Pistol was unable to save him from being threatened with a real Restart interview. One wonders how true this may be of The Warwick Castle clientele - though one would never guess just by looking, because they don't wear their worklessness like a badge, as formerly happened in The Apollo, designer-style being in part a reaction to the stylisation of poverty initiated by punk.

In a sense, The Warwick Castle takeover sums-up what's happened to a lot of the pubs in the area. Gentrified for a new clientele (which somehow never seems to turn up as much as hoped for), the old clientele just won't take the hint and leave. In many other pubs, locals have been barred by trouble shooting gvnors from Yorkshire or Geordieland, (big breweries also using the north/south hostility, just like the police) One of the last Geordie gvnors of the Duke of Cornwall, even cracked a whip at closing time. It was no joke, he meant it. Now that the general climate is beginning to change, the scene seems set for a long drawn out battle. The gvnors, ideologically locked into the past of an eternal bull market, sky high property prices and inflated city salaries aren't going to change just like that.

What has taken place recently vis-a-vis artistic gentrification in Notting Hill is merely a microcosm of a much wider shift in society, though its effects have been more intense and concentrated, than elsewhere. As a generic phenomena artists everywhere, are diligently putting to rights, a trail of havoc left by a none-to-precise anti-art scorn, which 15 years ago, even the most orthodox "artist" had to make some accomodation with. But behind their new found reassurance and vicious ways, lies nothing but the most total and utter creative bankruptcy. And any moments of self- doubt are put down, though hesitantly and with a touch of mock seriousness, to the unavoidable sufferings of the artist (viz in this respect the camp parody of "creative" romantic agony by Gilbert and George.)

During the 70's it was different. In a belated response to the late 60's attack on art- an attack which failed to become an onslaught- artists everywhere altered their image to suit the populist "art for the people" climate. Because a more coherent critique of art was only grasped by a handful of people at the time, it proved to be an attractive, have one's cake and eat it, alternative. Architects temporarily, forsook their role, to work on building sites. In the space of a decade they had gone from sacking trades people if their work

Footnote: Well over a year before the '87 general election, Rotten said of Paul Weller and Red Wedge: "Well they can go on tour up north all they like but quite frankly it's not gonna change the kids point of view. They ain't gonna vote. Period. They just ain't unless it's Newcastle United or Man United they're not gonna vote. They're not, let's face it. The working class are completely, utterly and totally fed up to the fucking eyeballs with the current system and see no hope, and don't want no part of it, which is why they're so bloody violent" ("City Limits", 7/2/'86).

And as for the rehabilitation of art take the PIL tour of Sept/Oct '87. "The stage set was a flourescent, multi-coloured techno-city scape of tower blocks and bridges....The show was modelled on work by the Austrian painter, Friedensreich Hunderstrasse. "We wanted to create somewhere we could have some intelligent fun"...(The Guardian 3/10/'87. Perhaps this is why JR said elsewhere that he preferred the States because the British resent succes - i.e. they dislike the rich like him.

didn't come upto scratch, to seeing what life was like from the other side of the drawing board. The easel was abandoned for collective out of doors painting. "Public Pictures" group artists in Notting Hill, decorated the concrete bays under the M 40 motorway, obviously influenced, (at least in intention more than stylistically) by, American WPA projects in the 30's and Siquieros and Rivera - though lacking even the dubious quality of the American/Mexican originals. A grafitti at the time read; "Public Picture: the cosmetic of misery". And such bright cosmetics are still used everywhere to paint over the cracks of a dull street.

A climate of right populism developing throughout the 80's changed the real picture completely. Today's born-again artists are the acknowledged legislators of a romantic monetarism of egotistical greed and faith in their creative mission. And architects, grabbing a bigger percentage of dosh than ever, are becoming once more prima-donna personalities, reflecting the shift from public to private investment in construction with many more, much smaller sites and fewer operatives. In spite of the unspeakable horrors of post-war urban renewal, the local authority architect was to some extent faceless. Now they are to be found poking their noses everywhere, imagining they are constructing an architectural jewel, demanding engineering perfection and a high productivity ratio. They have also become generally much more business-like, employing swines of sub-contractors whom are bad payers etc. But take heart this renewed positivism at all levels of culture, especially so today, only mirrors economic performance. It cannot survive a slump or severe recession without a jolt. Whether it will shatter this time, is up to the strength of a genuine revolutionary critique and practise.*

However even before the world stock market crash, the yuppie epoch was running on to the rocks. It appeared to peak ideologically even before the economic tumbrils. Now as they begin to fade from the scene we can see them for what they are - a particularly obnoxious form of the middle class spoilt brat, corresponding to an era of global financial deregulation when governments were foolhardy enough to "risk handing over to stock markets the job of steering the worldeconomy" (The Economist 26th Dec '87 and Jan8th '88). Yuppie was never a term of approbation anywhere in the world. Rather it was sneering, contemptuous, derisory and in the U.K. in particular, few would unashamedly call themselves yuppies. The long hours of sterile work, the unremitting pressure, the sting of never getting a society like the U.K. to submit to a winners and loses division, was for some enough to spark trashy fantasies of the moon and sixpence, in preference to a docklands suite and end of the year bonus. Before the nose dive in share values, yuppies were leaving the City to pursue the washed-up muse of art, not as a consumer, but as a creator! Having refused the link between art and finance, they are likely to seek a new creed but one, no less securely tied to the circulation of commodities, because either a Gauguin or a market-maker is today a false alternative. Having taken a back seat for so long, perhaps the left yuppies of "Marxism Today" may provide us with potential clues as to this new creed?

Footnote: In spring '86, artists and staff belonging to the avant garde Air Gallery in collaboration with Islington's so-called socialist council, set up an open air exhibition of ready-made, junk sculpture on a bit of green space used by the tenants of the council owned, Hartnoll Estate. As they were bringing culture to the plebs, the tenants weren't soft-soaped and asked for their consent. As a result, artists were attacked and on occasion roughed up. These actions brought down upon the tenants the wrath of The Guardian's, hysterical, numbskull art critic, Waldemar Januszczak with the familiar accusations of philistinism. One annoyed Hartnoll Estate resident wrote back to The Guardian's letter page replying to the idiot Januszczak. Though sadly not supporting residents decking artists (it goes without saying that the urge to get your dabs on artists is a creative urge) he clearly pointed out that Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades had made the point much better many moons ago.

This either/ or dilemma (banker or artist) is perhaps too archaic formally implying e.g. an exclusive respect for old conventions like easel painting. This will continue to exist (it is surprising the degree to which old artistic forms, like oil painting, sculpture, lithography and etching, no matter that it was all unbelievably bad, were saved from the trash can, in the main by the financial revolution,) but only as a subordinate cog in a much bigger machine. For instance the number of galleries catering for this latter day resuscitation of the Fine Arts, was far outweighed by the number of print shops opening in Malls etc selling "Art" postcards, film and pop star posters and framed photographs- thirty years ago, a mere handful (but growing steadily in number) would have "daringly" argued for photography as "art".

The dominant tendency will be towards a "mediafication" of life replacing the increasingly wearisome, conservative surrealism, of music promo videos. In this sense the Labour Party's slick, T.V. dominated 1987 election campaign may prove to be something of a forerunner blending message, advertising agencies, copywriters, designers, film makers and ex T.V. producers. It need not be mind bendingly boring, nor politically tendentious either, because if it is, it won't have an audience. The invasion of the advertisers world by comic artists or, artist comics, already a fait-accompli, could also metamorphose, sponsoring a kind of freak consumer protection or, surreal government warnings. Aimed at a broad viewing public, it will be a product requiring much money, team work and professionalism, worlds apart from the amateurism of Public Pictures in the 70's who survived on meagre local council grants and the like.

Besides, this form of artistic expression was linked to squatting and the tentatives, no matter how faint, to lay hold of the urban environment, repair and shape it, according to human need, irrespective of legal entitlement. With the disappearance of mass squatting the basis for it has, in this respect gone. What is left is a pale resemblance in the opposite direction. The wretched, folksy, decorating of unadorned 19th century engineering structures - like the railway bridges in Chalk Farm and Camden, has been covered up, the girders picked out in alternate primary colours (no return to uniform return to uniform grey here.) On the S. East rail network, this painterly hype rather than capital renewal means one thing- getting the region ready for privatization- and includes, everything from the flash S. East designer logo of railway stations, to the ornamental coats of paint on aging diesel engines. And as for the democratic moulding of townscape implicit in squatting, this has been seized on and trivialized beyond measure by the growth of home ownership and the inalienable right in theory of everyone to buy rather than actually having, an inalienable right to shelter.

No post-crash scenario, which does not involve total upheaval will fundamentally alter this retreat into the home and design-conscious interior or alter the central place occupied by T.V. and the video. It is difficult to imagine there could be an explosion of "radical theatre" without getting wind of it on TV. In the not-too-distant future, reformist rucs could centre on the question of access to the media and attempts to curtail the monopoly of control exercised by programme directors. The media artist could then be placed in the unenviable position of managing this discontent channeling it, so as not to spill over into a general popular recognition of the creative poverty of life as a whole. After all their monopoly of uncreativity will depend on it, when the real creative battle is going to be the subversion of hype and the media. No promo, no "radical" TV appearance, no gob-shite to journalists but how, with the aid of technicians, to destroy media nonsense once and for all!

Also, most importantly a new inflection is needed challenging the boundaries of art and life, differing from the '80's banking as a money aesthetic. "As capital money is both money and more money" (Paul Mattick) it could lose its enticing glance, reflecting visions of '68 turned inside out, becoming

once more a banal instrumentality that puts labour to work, if it is to function as capital. And the rehabilitation of work as a creative experience in banking, (another grim achievement of the 80's) could undergo change and become "creative concern" expressed through a sort of voluntary work as living drama.

But enough- this is all speculation and we have no means of knowing and it is too early yet to get any clear indication. Suffice to say, that in Notting Hill, the terrain of community politics now fallen completely into passive consumption, (gigs, cabarets etc) has increasingly been occupied by artists looking for a socially more acceptable future. Going back many moons, community politics used to be pole of attraction and experimental laboratory for sociologists, would be politicians, social workers and the like. Now their mantle seems to have fallen on artists, though without the ideology of grass roots participation which was their originally. The wheel turns full circle, but never quite coming to rest at the same point.

"So ends the Empire of Notting Hill. As it began in blood, so it ended in blood....."

G.K. Chesterton: "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" (1904)

Is Notting Hill finished? Well that seems unlikely, though if it were to lose its special avant-garde position, that would be no bad thing. Certainly the area is very tense, but what place isn't in the UK? It can no longer claim to be in the vanguard in this respect and, nor can any other area. In North Ken, as it was in the beginning, so it is at the end, with the rich still living, cheek by jowl, with the poor. The quickening pace of the area's invasion by the rich, since the late 70's - amounting to an onslaught - has caused the place to lose most of its free and easy character. Driven mad with each turn of the screw, the poor - still by far the vast majority - slide into derranged frenzy. But hopefully gentrification has now stopped in its tracks though unlikely to go into quick reverse. "For Sale" notices multiply and buyers are cautious not wanting to be caught out paying a hefty mortgage when the value of property is starting to decline. And to think just weeks ago how overpowering was the pressure to escape, even for a few hours respite to adjacent more conducive areas like Shepherds Bush, Cricklewood, Hammersmith, Willesden and Kilburn where gentrification hadn't made the same inroads.

Basically, it was escaping from a once hallowed refuge to another "village" - London being a series of urban villages - possessing all the inward, localist, outlook of village life, which one hardly sets foot out of. This is not to say anomie, typical of big cities is absent - in fact, very much the reverse.

Generally, unlike Liverpool or Newcastle, London doesn't really possess the atmosphere of a city, although the waves made by the financial Big Bang of October '86 have to some degree devastated this separate village-like identity. It has in other respects involved a significant degree of change: finance capital in the U.K. far more than industrial capital, has been the guardian of that complex of manners and ritual recognisable as historical tradition. With the invasion of foreign financial houses, particularly American and Japanese, in the wake of Big Bang, this patrimony has now been broken at its core in the City of London. Finance capital in the UK now approximates more to how Marx described it, in his conclusion to "Theories of Surplus Value":

....."In the capital which produces interest, the automatic fetish is perfected: we have money producing money. Nothing at all is left of the past, the social relation is no longer anything more than the relation of a thing (money or commodity) to itself...." (From Notting Hill to Nothing Hill).

It's not that in general Londoners are taking this lying down, or crawling defeated into their beds to die, finally suicided by the bankers. On the contrary. As ex-chief of the Met, Newman, on the day he retired in the summer of '87, strikingly (for a police mind) put it: "London now is in a state of slow riot". Notting Hill is merely one area covering a vast terrain.

Things are so far gone in London, that it appears, the place needs riot as a human adjustment. The North, on a practical everyday level has a feeling of community, even if it is only a smile or a friendly acknowledgement. After months spent in London, these simple responses, take on an enormous even exaggerated importance. In London and the dense urban/ hi-tech corridor of the M 4 to Bristol, community in all but the most superficial aspects has disappeared. And the Hungerford massacre stands as a warning to what can happen under these conditions. A simple basic need to re-establish human contact must be one of the gut motivating forces behind the sporadic, flash flood mini-rioting, which began to take place all over the S.East corner of the UK during '87 and the beginning of '88.

One further point. Many people say rioting doesn't change anything. Like today the past was peppered with them and they were just as inconsequential. Looking at the last hundred years it is hard to believe their incidence was anywhere near what it is now. This contestation, breakdown, even mindlessness, must add up to something. To dismiss it out of hand usually says more about the arrogance and complacency of the person who does. A reporter in The Independent (2nd Sept '87) after the Carnival, said rioting had been:.. "A relatively common event in the 1920's and 1930's".. This is overstated. There weren't that many and those that did occur were among unemployed workers, led by the C.P. stalwart, Wal Hannington. Besides these riots were largely defensive and a response to unprovoked police baton charges, when weary marchers would enter unwelcoming towns. There may have others of a different nature, notably the set-to at Harwood Colliery in N.Notts in 1938 when the breakaway Spencer Union was thrown out in favour of the National Union. But unlike today, one really has to look very hard to find even the remotest sign of turmoil in the sunset cities of the North and the sunrise cities of the Midlands or London. What's more, today's rioting is not circumscribed by a political/trade union framework, like the afore-mentioned examples. At the antipodes of politics, these riots are spontaneous, unpredictable, unnerving, constantly catching authority on the hop.

It is the sphere of consumption rather than production, that has recently tended to prove so explosive in the UK, though with renewed strikes everywhere in '88, an explosive overlap becomes a possibility again. However spirited the response is to the failure of leisure, it will get nowhere unless ultimately it involves the productive forces. Otherwise it will simply joy-ride off into the gloom. Meantime how to do it justice? Autonomy seems too tendentious a word involving theory, consciousness and knowledge of what was best in the revolutionary movement of the past twenty years. If not totally alien these notions just somehow do not entirely suit the uncontrollable lust-for-life, often enough set free by the contents of the bottle and constantly running up against the thin blue line, between us and the good time. It is not class war as the professors of class war understand the term, but there again, few would deny that it had class implications, or that leisure is becoming increasingly valorized (multiplication of theme parks, gentification of pubs etc) to serve the interests of the leisure moguls. This sort of leisure management is never relaxing; on the contrary, it is stiflingly at odds with spontaneous enjoyment and the enemy of a genuine surprise. It is for instance impossible to get a drink in Alton Towers in Derbyshire, forerunner of many other theme parks, like the Heights of Abraham, Gullivers Kingdom and the American Experience north of the Trent. Maybe here we have a hidden acknowledgement that drink is doing more to further real destructive rebellion right now in the U.K. than a traditional, union-shackled, shop steward movement.

More so than in the period '82 to '84, there's been a virtual media blank of all the mini-riots which have taken place over the last 18 months or so. While there has been no major conflagration in the inner-cities since late '85, riots appear to have spread to places unaffected by '81 or '85. Most of it seems to have taken place in the so-called well off, money-obsessed conformity of the insulated deep south. Places like Pevesney in East Sussex, Wallingford in Oxfordshire, Newport Pagnell and Milton Keynes, Cheddar in Somerset, Wrecklesham, Wokingham and Marlowe just outside London. In short: nowhere places - the above list being by no means comprehensive. In Spain, Police Chiefs and Hotel Proprietors complain bitterly about the awesome vandalism of the drunken Brits, in this ironically, the country of anarchisms' past destructive practise and vision. The boisterous camaraderie of generally poor Brits-out for a good time-induces a kind of infectious internationalism as it's passed on to German, Dutch and even Spanish. Though a minority of Spanish workers in creating anti-union, inter-enterprize coordination are way ahead of their British counterparts, they don't as yet have the latters furious, destructive quality.

cheaper than going into bars.

In Benidorm British youths went on the rampage, smashing up parks, breaking bottles and throwing food across hotel rooms.

One group caused a bomb scare when they dropped a firecracker

and terrified holiday-makers.

The shame of Britain is there for the rest of the world to see — displayed by the Union Jack T-shirts and shorts the rowdies inevitably wear.

A spokesman for the Spanish Embassy in London said the British holidaymaker had been welcomed in Spain for years.

"They always had a reputation of being very well behaved. It is sad it is being spoiled."

Meanwhile the pain in Spain goes on . . .

DAILY MIRROR, Friday, September 18, 1987

Riots that go unremarked

Why is there a conspiracy of silence about the "white riots"? They are rarely reported, still less commented on. Yet they now occur in almost every part of the country, and with increasing frequency. Screaming newspaper headlines would have announced the fact, had those involved in some of the more serious disturbances been black. Pompous editorials would have preached at us. Had the riots occurred in Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side, or somewhere similar, then judicial inquiries would have been launched, the Home Secretary would have made a stately but discreet visit, and every aspiring sociologist in the country would have been on the scene, searching for causes.

The white riots attract none of this attention. Yet, according to the Police Federation, they are now common in many areas. It has expressed its concern at what it calls an "extremely disturbing" trend for mob violence and hooliganism to occur in places not normally known for violent disorder. No police force area in England and Wales has been exempt from this new experience. Indeed, the problem has become so serious in certain parts of the country that police forces have been compelled to set up special task forces to deal with what they call "mini-riots".

Let us be clear what we are referring to. We're talking about gangs of hundreds of drunken white youths, often wielding knives and machetes, rampaging through otherwise peaceful towns and deliberately seeking battle with the police. Only a couple of weeks ago, hundreds of white youths stormed through the sleepy town of Stroud in Gloucestershire for two consecutive nights, pelting the police with stones, glass and bottles. Two policemen were injured and two patrol cars were damaged. Few newspapers reported the incident.

Nor is this the only recent case. Much the same happened in Mansfield in Nottinghamshire, when some 500 youths hurled bottles and glasses at the police, passing cars, a fire engine and a bus. On this occasion the police actually donned riot gear, and called in the horses. Even then, 11 policemen were injured.

These are not isolated incidents. Indeed, perhaps it is precisely because such outbreaks have become so routine that they go largely unnoted. No doubt that is why we make little of the fact that police in dozy Shrewsbury in Shropshire fought with 500 youths outside a nightclub, and were sprayed with CS gas for their pains — the third time, incidentally, that CS gas has been used in public disturbances in Britain this year, and not once by the police. Perhaps it also explains why we

make such little fuss over the riot in Oxford (where 150 youths attacked police with metal stak bottles and clubs); in Buckingham where 30 youths were involved; Fletching in Sussex; Chertsey Surrey; Llanelly in Wales; Bristol and elsewhere.

All these are, of course, additional to the hooliganism and rowdiness we have come to expect as almost a normal feature of British seaside holiday weeken. Already this year there have been gang fights in Bournemouth (where nine people were taken to hospital, two with stab wounds); in Weston-super-Mare (where 2 were arrested), in Morecambe, Brighton and, increasingly, seems, in Portugal and Spain.

What, then, are the reasons for this disturbing new phenomenon? What can we say straight away that none of the traditional excuses will wash. Unlike the rioting of young blacks, the white riots do not take place in the decayed inner cities and the slums, or even in the large, depressing and deprived outer housing estates. Broken homes, deprivation, homelessness, unemployment — none of these seem to play a part. Alienation might, though from what difficult to determine. In this respect, at least, Mrs Thatcher's new initiative on the inner cities is not relevant. It is welcome, overdue, but it has nothing to offer in terms of a solution to large-scale mob violence and vandalism in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire.

Drug-taking appears to play some part. Stroud certainly seems to have a problem with soft drug. This, inevitably, causes problems if only of resentment against police making arrests of users and pushers, which can tip over into anti-police violence. The Police Federation actually suggests that there is an anti-police culture among many of the young and that, encouraged by their own large numbers, and emboldened by drink, they are not merely prepared, but often enthusiastic for a battle.

If that is true, then it is serious and depressing. So also is the effect of alcohol. Whatever the causes of the white riots, the police seem to be generally agreed that drink is a contributory cause, and a major problem. So is that culture of under-age drinking. The police in Stroud estimate that 10 per cent of its drinkers are under-age, and formed the core of a Christmas Eve riot in the town. Perhaps Douglas Hurd should take all this into account before he flings open the pub doors for all hours. It will be even better if he paid a little more attention to, and openly discussed, riotous behaviour by young whites.

© Times Newspapers, 1987.

The author was a Merseyside Labour MP, 1974-86.

Ever since The Winter of Discontent in '79 and, until recently, the employed working class in the UK has been more and more squeezed back into union led disputes, despite the atmosphere and reality of inner-city rioting - and its knock on effects - making the action, in and around these disputes, exhilarating and volatile (e.g. the miners and printers at Warrington and Wapping.) Now that we're beginning to see as the general rule, the return of wildcat organization, what was missing in the general potlatch is in the process of being re-defined again. But this general movement is also taking place in a dire, up-and-down, manic depressive atmosphere - an atmosphere which is also getting worse by the day and one it's necessary to go into in the following postscript.

It is worth asking to what degree has rioting been a stand-in for the energy that was formally unleashed in wildcat strikes, serving as a rallying point nationally for pent-up frustration and passion. (A major aspect of the British Disease, Thatcher, until recent events, claimed to have cured.) However, one has to be careful about such comments. They can be a form of leftist rubbishing of destructive impulses. An old point forcibly comes to mind when considering the UK's exemplary vandalism: just what is worth preserving of this old world? Nonetheless, there is a risk of falling into an ideology of riot in the UK, like there is an ideology of assembly in Spain, everyday life in America or, theory in France.

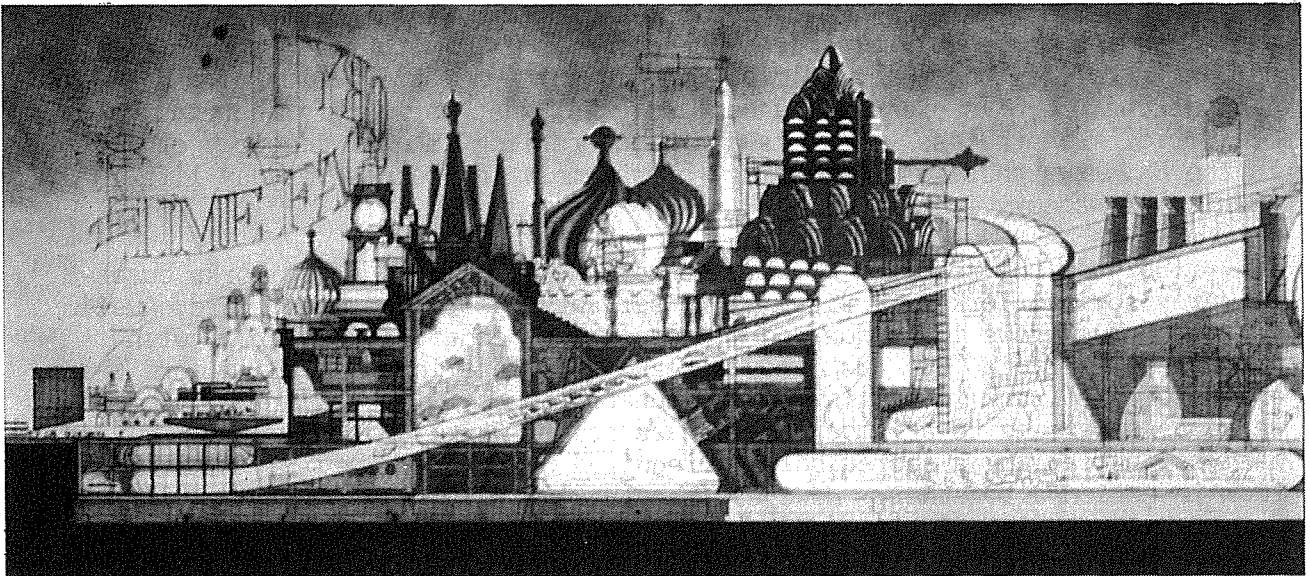
1987 saw the re-birth of wildcat activity in the UK (West Yorks buses in early spring, Yorkshire pits, civil servants, postal workers, Ford, Austin Rover and bus crews in London and Scotland) and, continuing to grow, with amazing rapidity in '88. But they'll have to cohere into something more than a resuscitated rank 'n' filism. Unfortunately these wildcats are tending to serve as a warning to a lumbering bureaucracy to waste these inspiring initiatives, by calling a secret ballot (required by law), so they can attempt to fuck in action altogether. However, Thatcher's, "give the union back to the membership" is also double-edged and tending to back-fire. It has ironically, tended to take away authority from the union bosses - an authority capital is going to desperately need in the future. Its encouraged workers, in an unexpected way, to handle their own affairs and take matters into their own hands. Finally its worked-on and stimulated a rare depth of hostility to trade union manipulation which could well break through into something else. But it'll need more than just a spontaneous anti-bureaucratic explosion to get anywhere and for this frustrated rebels could do worse than look at the planning and self-organization of the French railway workers (Nov '86 to Jan '87) or, the Italian base committees, or, the Spanish dockers Co-Ordinadora for inspiration.

An historical note. In the final years of the First International, Bakunin, got some of his confidence to breakaway from what he rightly perceived as the growing authoritarianism, Statist goals of Marx and his followers, from English Trade Unionists, (it is not clear what kind of T.U.'s they were- were they for instance, forerunners of shop stewards?) who were mouthing-off against the Great Teacher. Has it stayed like that: unerring quick-fire responses that suddenly falter and get lost, vacillating between a fatalism and a far from compliant insight into what went wrong? Or, considering those subterranean processes which one can hardly fathom, are things now subjectively very different, more rebelliously sure-footed among the UK proletariat as a whole? Whatever their yawning inconsistencies, we hope so.

Since we are dealing with a past that is still very much alive, we may recall that the origins of anarcho- syndicalism, go back to the insurrectionary notion of a "grand national holiday! (i.e. general strike) advanced by Tyneside workers in the early 19th century. The day of classic anarcho-syndicalism has passed ultimately fouling up, just like any other trade union

form. However, what is striking here, is the colourful turn-of-phrase and the nascent libertarian tendencies, emerging once more, at the end of a long drawn-out process of trade union implantation, forever side-stepping the most fundamental questions. It may just be the ingredient needed to leap the extremes of contestation, in work and leisure and, in so doing, recast both in an autonomous mould.

The Time Factory: A new mall and theme park for Los Angeles. destined to be the largest in the world



The Shape of Shopping to Come?

Shopping Centers and Malls are also a foci of trouble. Though the Gateshead Shopping Centre on Tyneside (with facilities e.g. for men to change babies nappies) is a pioneering example of retail modernity their incidence, though generally on a small scale, is greater in the S.East. This is not the place to go into a comprehensive analysis of the tensions they generate or, to compare Britain with America where the malling retail revolution is far more of a total experience in space and time, creating a parrallel "reality". However consider the following from The Guardian (16.9.'87.) - which is something of a departure from its usual bland repotage.....

"The urban riots of 1981 and 1983 (sic) didn't just happen in decaying inner-city areas. Over the past decade most new towns have experienced fairly serious outbreaks of rioting (which often never reached the national press) and these usually occurred in or around the new shopping centers. In many places I visited there was an almost palpable hostility between those spending with credit cards and those with UB 40's and nothing to do but watch. In Oxford earlier this year it was reported that the pedestrian shopping precinct has been the scene of often quite violent clashes." (Part-Time Places).

Equally however, one could mention the frequent distrurbances at N.London's Brent Cross shopping centre where shop-lifters have been pulled away from security men and police. This response does seem to be frequent in Britain's malls.

POSTSCRIPT: SOMETIMES WE SEE A CLOUD THAT'S DRAGONISH.....

Under the guise of restoration, the last decade or so has witnessed the inversion of the revolution glimpsed so dramatically in 1968. Reaction has in the process laid hold of the revolutionary themes and redefined them for its own ends. The 'idea' whose time has come, has been turned inside out and the language of revolution monopolized for conservative ends, even taking credit for coining the word "revolution", (Thatcher's recent talk of a "cultural revolution") because, what is under attack is some vague "60's permissiveness" which substitutes for the spectre of a total social revolution, too fearful to be ever openly acknowledged.

It has not, in the UK, been an easy task engulfed during the 80's from time to time by titanic struggles, threatening to sweep away the slow progress made in the opposite direction. But meantime, an ill-thought-through anti-statism is twisted out of recognition, to support cut backs in welfare payments and promote privatization, which parrots the ideology of nationalization (public control) and is also a false critique of bureaucracy at the same time. A wish for genuine liberty is deflected into a resuscitated doctrine of entrepreneurship, the right to exploit others and, most recently of all, the proposed right to scab, protected by the law, even if there is a 99% majority in favour of strike action. And on a subterranean plain, desire has been caught by the tail, on the trading floor of the Stock Exchange promising dreams money can buy. And what adventure could be more fabled than the rise of the Saatchi Brothers advertising firm, in a position, only recently to threaten a take over of one of Britain's top five banks, the Midland? Or Revlon, the cosmetics firm, mounting a table-turning bid for Salomon Bros, Wall Streets leading brokerage house! Whilst against a backdrop of mass unemployment and mounting poverty, anti-work combined with a freedom for want - not long ago the hope of millions - is what drove many a city whizz-kid along, looking to retire at thirty, having made a pile. Not forgetting the multiplication of exotic services whose endless variety, catering to the tastes of the connoisseur consumer have "enriched" the meaning of work, changing the spirit of capitalism from a work ethic to a work aesthetic. It may one day be useful to draw up an exhaustive list, but let these items suffice to give some idea of its scope and breadth. Until Black Monday its onrush was so powerful as to render "the work of the negative" almost a spent dream.

What is exciting, about the biggest most international stock market crash in history, is that their piece meal ad hoc innovation, adding up finally into a total strategy of containment, has been left stranded in mid-air. Particularly in the U.K. the leading exporter of "popular capitalism" slavishly imitated, even by an emergent super power like Japan, there is now a gaping hole, a populist vacuum which is exceedingly dangerous for power. The bourgeoisie were the first to build a bridge to "the people" and in all subsequent phases of its political domination, particularly in the 20th century, where the presence of the masses was keenly felt, all government whether Liberal, Social Democratic, Fascist, Bolshevik, Post Second World War Consensus Politics and latterly Monetarist, had to appear to embody a popular will, for at least some of the time. Once this consensus had broken down irretrievably and could no longer be conjured out of thin air the rulers were in mortal danger.

With the crash a central plank of monetarism in the U.K. immediately snapped. After the disastrous B.P. share issue the Tories privatization programme is now in ruins. For the foreseeable future, the small investor (ideologically of supreme importance) will be scared off. Even the marketeers of share issues began to have qualms- an indication of just how far wide and quickly disillusion can spread, because advertising is a leading glamour industry

that has flourished like never before under the Tory government. A post B.P. flop article in "The Financial Times" (November 12th 1987) remarked-"critical assessment of the creativity of privatization advertising has been superseded by questions about the morality of it all"- going on to say "City observers are concerned with the increasingly dogmatic tone of advertising- in three years the slogans have moved from "you can share in B.T.'s future" to "If you see Sid tell him" for British Gas to "now its your turn to say yes" for the Trustees Savings bank, to B.P.'s "Be part of it."

This hectoring tone born of an unshakeable conviction, that if you follow the instruction to the letter, it will be to your great advantage, will now turn into government dictat without even the glimmerings of popular ratification. In a volatile stock market, one cannot command people frightened for their State pensions to buy unit trusts or frightened for their lives, to take out costly medical insurance paid for out of stock market winnings. And what happens if the froth already knocked off the des. res. property markets effects less desirable residences? And the average houseowner accustomed to vicariously enjoying their locked-up assets, start to see property values decline wholesale? This could happen both as a result of renewed inflation or lower wage settlements, if a recession really starts to bite. But whatever, such people feeling they have been had are going to cast around for a political life boat.

No brand of political populism is ever quite the same. And no Chesterfield conference of trotskyists, left Labourists and re-nationalizers opportunely held only days after the crash can ever hope to suddenly catch fire in the hearts and minds of the masses, though it did attract a lot of media coverage. (Had there been no crash, it probably would have gone unnoticed). Nor will the rainbow of issue politics (co-ops, radical music, fundamentalist feminism etc) ever be like it was because populism doesn't work like that. It needs time to cohere into something that little bit special temporarily pulling the rug from beneath the feet of the canniest observer. The crash has opened Pandora's Box and pondering the shapes of the future almost inspite of themselves, city commentators were moved to quote Mark Antony: "Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish, a vapor like a bear or lion!"

This shadowy foreboding may indicate there's a falling rate of populism, a nearing of the bottom line when it comes to drawing up a credible alternative. Nationalization is probably a more durable form of modern capitalist organization than monetary privatization (the British government is obviously deeply embarrassed by the Kuwait raid on B.P. shares amounting to a 20% stake) but to acquire 90's sex appeal it's going to have to work hard on its public image, enough to waylay a workers' onslaught. Perhaps the coming period may only serve to show that all the old options, no matter how glammed up with hi-tac, are worn through and out of Pandora's Box there springs a revolutionary period. But after so many disappointments and outright failures, there is a danger of getting carried away into wishful thinking. (The miners for all their optimism up to Christmas '84 were plunged into a year or more of utter gloom after their strike.)

The ramifications of the stock market crash, are to put it mildly, perplexing. It is the view of most "experts" with any specialist grasp of the "dismal science" (Ricardo) which again shows how useless specialists are generally when confronted with a threatening event. No one knows for certain what is going to happen, especially as each tentative measure causes more red signals to flash in another quarter.

The politico/banking fraternity had after the initial shock to give the appearance of being on top of things. Liquidity was injected into the system and bank rates reduced eventually, world wide. Strenuous efforts were made to talk-up business confidence and the message was since 1929 we have

learnt a thing or two, meaning there was going to be no return to trade protectionism, higher interest rates and bank failures.

But the system ultimately cannot be manipulated just like that according to the will of powerful individuals armed with the best advice there is. Capital acts behind the backs of people and with the best will in the world everything points to an interest rate hike in America.

There is the ever present danger, Third World debt will be triggered once more especially if there is a severe recession. And though banks are making a provision against bad debt in the Third World what happens if the threatened debt moratorium becomes a fact? Not only Third World countries become evermore a bad risk to lenders, but every borrower, large or small (but especially the latter) could take it upon themselves to unilaterally cancel debt. And the impact that, could have upon the mechanisms of exchange is nobody's business. So much of 80's glitz was dependent on borrowing - a banking response to Third World indebtedness going into overdrive - wooing customers like never before, because small ticket credit multiplied a million times was judged sounder than awesome loans to developing countries. 80's individualism was largely defined by the rediscovery of individual banking. And the consumption aesthetic made more available by the credit card revolution - pretending to be beyond money - concealed the awesome reality of Third World and corporate debt.*

What the crash has provoked is a grudging return to economic interventionism on a massive scale, even though at the moment it is largely restricted to the central banks. But it is only that - there is no insistent demand for a new order. However the most far sighted members of the bourgeoisie are thinking along these lines, which should it ever arise must be something more than an economic event. It is in this respect instructive to recall that Roosevelt's New Deal was not some predetermined plan but a series of temporary measures largely determined by an increasingly restless American Proletariat which eventually turned out to be good for capital as well.* No matter how severe the recession, the bourgeoisie will try to develop Latin American countries and certain countries in Africa and Asia, creating a modern consuming proletariat. And depending on the level of the fight back in the highly advanced countries it will need to have a convincing doctrine that what is good for one is also good for the other, possibly expressed through an ideology of internationalism tailored to suit both proletariat and bourgeoisie. There could even be a State directed, more self-interested version of Geldof's "Live Aid" aimed this time at developing countries not right-offs like Ethiopia. Capital's control would be just as vice like though appearing more just.

Footnote: It is just so hard to imagine Oxford St denuded of commodities - with soup kitchens rather than January sales - but even if it did happen it wouldn't last long. Either a reconstituted bourgeoisie or, a revolutionary proletariat doing away with shops would end an impossible state of affairs. The final drop of water being rung from the falling rate of profit is always tendentious. Whatever substance and merit there maybe in Bordiga's economic fatalism, we cannot really know until the best of his writings on the critique of political economy are published into English.

Footnote: It is impossible to condense the welter of legislation produced by the New Deal into a paragraph, or, go into the opportune nature of some of the acts forced onto a reluctant Roosevelt Administration to divert a workers' revolt in America - even though some of his placebos encouraged that revolt - (the USA was incomparably more strike torn than the UK in the 30's and 40's). But through the Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, labour received guarantees on wages and hours and industry permitted to raise prices to get out of a deflationary spiral. To aid the redistribution of income (and hence distribution of commodities produced by industry) corporation tax was raised as were taxes on high earners. However, in an apparent about turn in 1937, Roosevelt attempted to cut deficit spending by mainly curtailing Federal funding of the gigantic construction programme. There was an instant economic collapse and unemployment rocketed. In late 1937 the cuts were rescinded and extemporisation gave way to habitual policy.

On a strictly economic plane "The Economist" is already proposing a world economy that would get rid of altogether the damage caused by fluctuating exchange rates. Maybe this is the next logical step on from the Bretton Woods agreement effectively abandoned by governments in the early 70's. In this "Economist" editorial (Jan.9th 1988) there lurks the phantom of World Government ("until real co-operation is feasible - ie until governments surrender some economic sovereignty") and a price control mechanism that appears to end capitalism in the form we know it: ("The law of one price - that an item should cost the same everywhere, once prices are converted into a single currency-will increasingly assert itself"). Is this Glasnost gone forever because suitably doctored, it could have come from the pen of Joe Stalin, himself. Note also the loan words from another epoch: "co-operation", "control", the stress upon unity not free-wheeling division, are words that also could be employed to trip-up a threatening workers' revolt in this coming period.

The UK remains a weak economy despite manufactured illusions stating the contrary. The Treasury is in surplus, but it would have a budget deficit as bad as America's, if it wasn't for once and for all sales of State assets. The currency is fundamentally weak, only appearing strong in contrast to a declining dollar. A huge balance of payments problem is postponed only by North Sea Oil (now running dry) and an exceptional imbalance between financial and industrial capital, partially reflects the growing South/North divide.* Then there's a pattern of wage drift combined with low productivity (though in some sectors this is no longer true) and a feeble manufacturing base, which has only just begun to reach the levels of the late '70's again. Any, or all of these chickens will be coming home to roost and then watch out! Of all highly developed capitalist countries the UK is still the diciest. This in large measure explains the ferocity of the Thatcher Government, whose chief task has been to try and curb the country's turbulent inhabitants and having to stamp on more bourgeois responses in the process.

Though resting on a re-jigged class alliance, the Thatcher government is likely to become even more of a power State that can only foam at the mouth - almost parodying those of its inhabitants beneath it, whom it really has sent mad. It will fight like a cornered rat pressing home its monetarist version of the final solution the more it becomes surrounded so to speak. It has stood firm against wave after wave of miners, print workers, health workers, rioters etc. Any other European country would have sort to placate but the grotesquely unfair political system in Britain which has continental cephalologists guessing means a landslide can be conjured out of less than 40% of parliamentary votes. To more enlightened apologists for bourgeois parliamentarism in W. Germany, Ireland, Italy, Denmark etc it appears an offence against reason. Obviously this must not be taken as a plea for political reform but it does point to, along with many other instances, the basket case characteristics of UK society.

However, all is not doom and gloom. The signs are we could be heading into a period of great social unrest which the disturbances of the last few years may prove finally, to have been the fore-runner. The total shut-down of Ford UK, the Seafarers strike, the Nurses strike action, and, as the tocsin of revolt spreads, the threat of trouble here, there and everywhere. And who knows what marvellous blooms are being nurtured by the determination to avenge past defeats?

The attack upon work conditions, the carnage resulting from ignoring health and safety, the introduction of casualism and contract work over a wide sector of society, the intention to replace the NHS by a system of private health insurance, the phasing out of the dole - all this is creating the con-

Footnote: Celebrating the advent of Big Bang, The Financial Times (29.Oct '86) wrote, - a year and seven days to Big Crash - "continental centers have hardly been in the picture - the idea of a free wheeling financial centre is not to continental taste.

Continental financial markets have been constrained to save industry or finance governments and tight regulations has been part of the framework - the dangers of conflict are seen to be great."

ditions of negative unity. And it is important this draconian government is destroyed in inner-city streets, the offices and the factories and not electorally. If the Iron Lady suffers the same fate as Wilson, Heath and Callaghan - all brought down by a rebellious proletariat - that will be excellent for a morale which has got jaded throughout the 80's. It destroys the mythological aura that will surround Thatcher's name if she is permitted to retire gracefully at a time of her own choosing. No more heroes, especially not political heroes.

This movement now underway will undoubtedly have its moments, creating a fruitful legacy future movements can draw on. But the weakness of the proletariat vis-a-vis a sound critique of the State will most likely mean an attempted re-creation of a providential State promoted by various oppositional political racketeers. Even so, it means a post-festum State paying lip-service to this ideal will have to be more respectful towards the people it governs and "helps". In that sense the destruction of a particular government rebounds upon the State as a whole having to use more manipulative methods until it feels safe enough to put the boot in once more. The State will have to do this fairly quickly - after any initial breathing space - because capital's room for manoeuvre in the UK is very limited.

Of course, this very threatening movement now underway is not certain of even limited success. However the indispensable checks and balances provided by the trades unions have (as mentioned previously) been so hamstrung by legal requirements that power is slipping towards the shop-floor in an amazingly unmediated fashion. It is just so nice, for instance, to hear a boring, legal historian of labour law, Lord Wedderburn bemoaning the inability of trade unions to control their members now that finally, trade union law has produced the opposite of what was intended. "And how", he worriedly asked, "do you negotiate with a leaderless mass? It's the law of the jungle". Of course, it's nothing of the kind, rather it is a basis for autonomy. However it is still not as clearly articulated as in Italy for instance where, over the past year or so, base committees (the COBAS) have sprung up in various sectors all, more or less, independent of control by the major trade union confederations. But what movements in the UK lack in consciousness they make up for in elemental power and, a sheer mulish brilliance among a minority of strikers to willingly stay out on strike forever, if necessary.

It does seem with the decline of America, Thatcher is crazily mad, hellbent on creating a new super-power in the West to match that of Japan. To do this, she wants practically the whole of society on its knees - from the unemployed, to jobs-for-life civil servants, to skilled engineers, and even professionals like hospital consultants. However to be successful in her megalomania, Thatcher would have to go some way towards allaying the fear and insecurity of the base. In fact ignoring the lessons of history she is doing the opposite. Also, she would have to curb the outward expansion of British capitalism and become more of an aggressive economic nationalist, harnessing the mighty financial institutions to an indigenous industrial base. And that is a complete anathema to her. But she will go out for a crushing victory (even though it could take a few years to achieve) and, if she does succeed you can bet your life it will be due to widely-held beliefs in trades unions and obeying trade union leaders.

If that happens: WATCH OUT! Because life truly will not be worth living at all. What has been sketched out on a local scale here could be magnified onto a far broader terrain, and a psyche catastrophically damaged by defeat and repression vent itself in hideous acts which wind-up legitimating power. It won't just be dog eats dog. If ever the potential behind hooliganism is driven into a permanent psychotic fit, the urge to kill everyone, who just happens to be in the way, will be over-riding. Or if not that, mass suicide as a more developed, progressive form of The Final Solution, one offering choice.

Before it is too late, let us seek to combat this threatening nightmare with an optimism of the will and a practical and imaginative intelligence.

APPENDICES:

A Further Note on London Pathology and it's Possible use by The State.....

It's not only Notting Hill of course. Elsewhere, an everyday tabloid assault plays on pscho-horror - its grim reality always spiced with suggestive innuendo.

Take one incident. Two little girls were horrendously murdered in Brighton on Oct 10th '86. Afterwards, the police wanted to interview a fat man who could perhaps give some lead. But that's not the point here. For sometime - and highlighting soccer hooliganism - the cops have been looking for "the fat man" who was ostensibly "the leader" of 30 youths who went on a particularly horrible knife-slashing spree after a Chelsea/Man United game in London on the 29th of Dec '84. Since that day, off and on, the tabloid press has gone on about "the fat man". Finally a guy who was purportedly "the fat man" was arrested and came up for Crown Court trial just days before the Brighton murder. The tabloids, plus radio and TV news - deploying a form of subliminal suggestion - tried to montage these two incidents together, even though there was no connection.

A general hypothesis: The UK State, via media suggestion is trying to pathologize (more, much more than reality suggests) all kinds of spontaneous flare-ups. It's something like a warning to each individual; a warning which isn't clearly spelt out (it would lose its effect if it were). It's something like: if you let yourself go you'll only breakthrough into a nether world of dark pathology; of ghastly sexual horrors and sado-masochistic mutilation. Moreover, with an on-going breakdown of traditional patterns sometimes resulting in sad monstrosities, the UK State finds fertile ground for its own psycho-promo assuming the warped and twisted face of a chastizing, hideous hell-fire preacher using sexuality as scapegoat. Certainly the strategy works reasonably well in keeping a sizable sector of the oppressed fearful of what lurks inside and outside themselves.

When Protestantism reaches its end it explodes because it is based on the organization of everyday life. These infringements of the repressive order are then condemned as madness and perversion - a point H.Lefebvre noted in "Everyday Life in The Modern World" in the '50's.

Violent response in London runs a gauntlet between what is inspiring and what is sickening. It's more of a complicated thorny problem than one dares to admit. This is true elsewhere but in London violence acquires a special edge closely connected with London's rapidly changing character as almost a pure catchment area for investments related to the City's bankers. In the North it's always been somewhat easier to simply identify exploitation as related to the industrial magnate or the machinations of a distant Whitehall, despite the abstractions inherent in the process of industrial capital accumulation, in comparison to an earlier feudalism when the Lord of the Manor's rip-off was plain for all to see. Finance capital, though one of capital's antediluvian forms" (Marx) has an almost objectless, unfathomable, mysterious feel to it. In London it's as though money is what makes the world go round and not the exploitation of labour power - something which is nearly impossible to grasp situated within a wealth seemingly flowing in all directions but your own. It's as though everybody is out to con you, slip you a Mickey Finn, take you for a mug. It individualizes in a bad way as a disturbed economic unit implanted as an alien force in the psyche. Threatened by a commodity bombardment seemingly closing in from all sides, it's hardly surprizing that the drifting, atomized being (and often cut loose from the family) lashes out in a frenzy at these nearly invisible menacing forces. So that old woman walking down the street is the one causing you to feel so fucked-up isn't she. Finance capital encouraging, even implanting a random psychosis, should be looked at more closely

This frenzy explodes all over London in a fearful way as it also gets worse month by month. Fortunately there is still plenty of an historical class identity, experience and a feeling of simple togetherness in London to mitigate its worst side-effects. But it is an identity which is on-the-run and almost chaotic in itself too, tending to increasingly gell welcomingly with hooligan responses reaching out into insurgency. The media through its distorting lens

tries to grotesquely distort this process of tentative empathy particularly when some psycho-horrific act is perpetrated. It's not inconceivable (though admittedly for the moment far-fetched) and taking into account a declining but general, lascivious puritanism, used by the media - artificially boosting its legacy - plus, something of a general obsession with the darker "Wuthering Heights" side of sexuality (in a country where the collected works of the Maquis de Sade are still banned) that riots in London could be increasingly marginalized from the popular support they now enjoy, as the provocations of sex-mad muggers, child rapists, senior citizen murderers and demented sex-crazed, drug fiends. The "increasing aggression of the heart catastrophically sickened by everyday life" (Artaud) must move more lucidly into a clearer social insurgency, otherwise the UK State will take up the theme, maim it, cripple it, promote it and turn it (via something like a 24 hour media barrage) into the most effective counter-revolutionary strategy it has for its own long-term survival plan - a survival plan which apart from some inadequate but fairly predictable, ad-hoc measures - is still in its infancy.

THE STAR EVERY WEEK...
£125,000

BRITAIN'S LIVELIEST DAILY SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1986 18p (19p CIs)

VICTIMS



OF THE FAT MAN

TWO LITTLE GIRLS MURDERED

SEE PAGES 2 and 3

EVERY DAY...

£25,000

DON'T MISS YOUR LUCKY STAR

PLUS

PHONE LINDA AND WIN A



£10,000 BONUS

It all starts on Monday

-SEE PAGE 2

The above poster-type illustration appeared on the front of The Financial Times (27.10.'86) centrefold, celebrating Big Bang. The allusion to Bolshevik modes of propaganda was unmistakable. It's more than a conceit (e.g. Hungary has a Stock Exchange) but an oblique recognition of the debt owed to a resurgent Bolshevism which played a large part in capsizing all that was best in late 60's/early 70's subversion.

Given the obsessional anti-Bolshevism of monetarists world-wide, this statement appears absurd. However the presence of subconscious forces has to be guessed at through tell-tale signs. What Monetarists and Bolsheviks have in common is a hypostatization of the State and political party. And all that was new in terms of the revolution of daily life was redefined within these givens. The con having worn thin by the late 70's, and to head-off the risk of a rediscovery of revolutionary themes - by then a real danger - the revolutionary essence was once more perverted by being appropriated by the right wing of the political spectrum. Bank underground station (taking its name from the Bank of England) was also done-up with Suprematist designs recalling El Lissitzky and Malevich, the at times, fellow-travellers of Bolshevism.

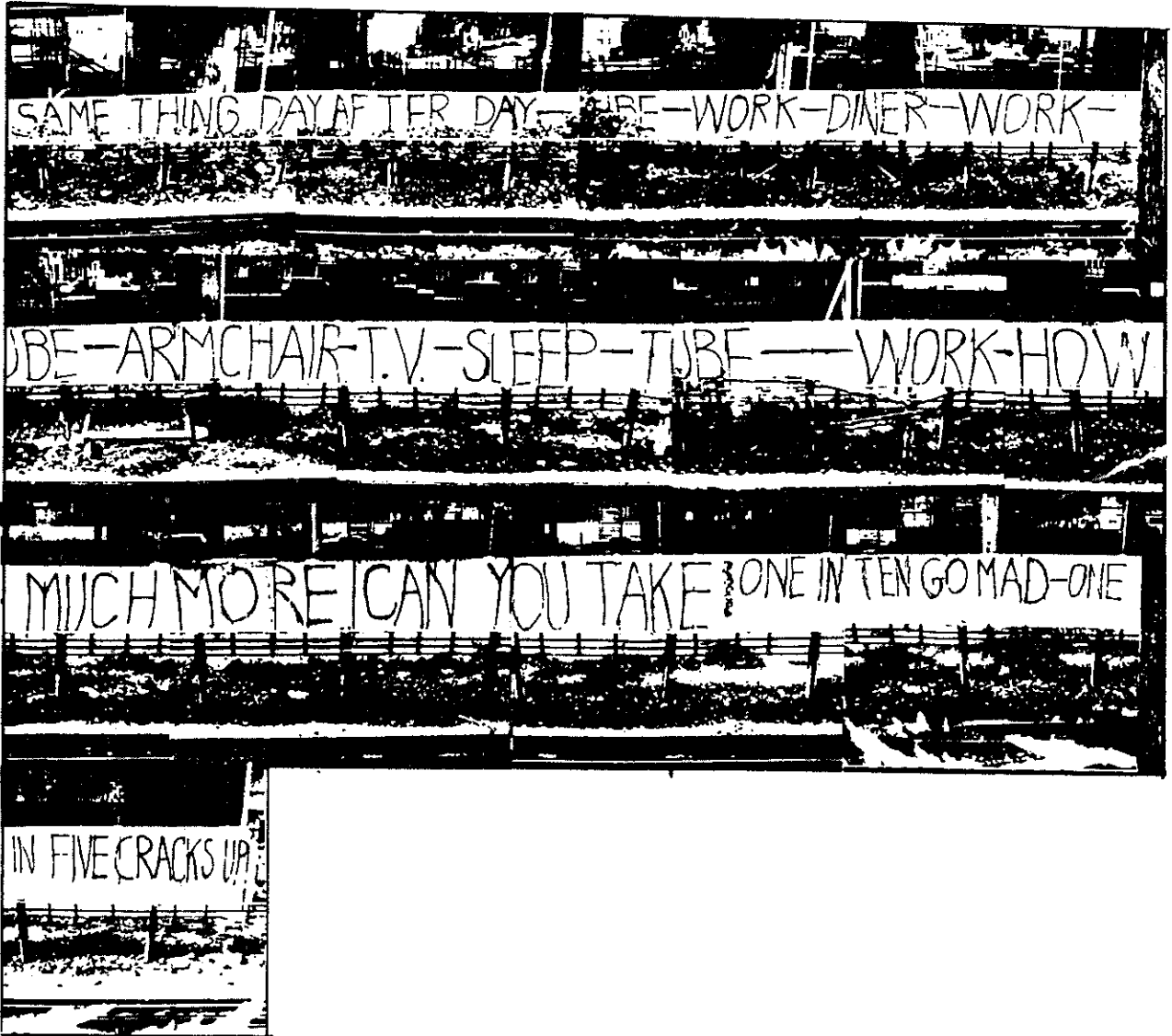
A week before The Crash, the City was brimming over with confidence. There was a Big Bang Ball celebrating the "exchange's revolutionary reforms" which financial deregulation had brought in. A financial columnist in The Observer (11 Oct.'87) described this "brave new world" (sic). "The filthy rich are now a classless society. The aristocrats are depleted but still there. The difference is that now they have to share the dance floor with the grammar school boys and worse, the dreaded barrow-boys made good". Big Bang had also been called "The Cockneys Revenge" but, this assault on the City was the very opposite of East End mobs pouring down Shoreditch High St to really put paid to the City. Rather it reflected a far broader recruitment basis than hitherto, drawing in "beastly types". In any case, it was given a prominence out of all proportion to its actual size. This scum-down iconoclasm would also upset traditional Covent Garden Opera goers when City louts would burst into a chorus of "here we go" when a striker on stage was about to launch into a well known aria-----.

But there was also a counter-vailing tendency at work. Well-bred City gents would also affect working class mannerisms. Though a crash course at "the school of street cred" was an advertiser's invention, a night at the dogs wasn't. "There is disturbing evidence that some dog meetings are becoming the latest yuppie fad", noted an article in The Independent (11.1.'88)

Now The City cannot hope to preserve its popular "classless" image which lasted rather less than a year after Big Bang. It is highly probable City blue-bloods will come to dominate financial services at the upper end of the market once more, re-establishing the link between top Public Schools and a job in The City. Popular currents (i.e. not revolutionary) will move in a different direction - perhaps eventually settling for a new-fangled edition of one nation patriarchs attentive to the voice of discontent as expressed and contained within the trade union.

Bolshevism and Monetarism?





One of the first and most direct graffiti in Notting Hill. It was sprayed alongside the Metropolitan tube line, underneath the Westway.