

Reflections on the UK Riots

*“Like a Summer of a Thousand August’s
and other seasons”*

Running through riotous London

Monday night in Hackney, where young people who bear the brunt of an austerity crisis took over the streets.



London residents were left in shock as criminal gangs took advantage and chaos intensified [Pennie Quinton]

Yesterday, the streets of London were full of the rage of youth.

When I went out to photograph events, the situation was scary and volatile - but I met children who looked out for me, covering my back when I was using my camera, telling me when gangs and thieves were stalking me.

In the Hackney district of the city, the youth were intent on fighting the police. One boy told me that he was sick of being stopped and searched and that this was a settling of scores with the "Feds", as he called the police.

In 2009, Lord Carlile, reviewing police stop-and-search powers, found that Black and Asian youth in Britain were seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than whites.

Amid the volatile chaos on Monday night, criminal gangs took advantage of the situation. What self-respecting criminal gang would not? I saw a couple of 40-year-old white men heading into the middle of a stand-off between youngsters and police lines, carrying power tools and hammers. A bunch of boys were following, asking each other: "Are they are really going to do so-and-so's shop?"

Lack of awareness

On Twitter late last night, following the main bulk of the riots, I was astonished at the incomprehension

generally expressed as to why they had occurred. There seemed to be an extraordinary lack of awareness that working class youth in Britain are being punished for the financial excesses of the banking collapse.

The public spending cuts this year meant many of the youth summer schemes in London did not run. These riots suggest boredom - and inarticulate rage. The youth are smashing and grabbing the things society tells them to want.

The coalition government's austerity measures have hit this generation hard. There will be no higher education for those who cannot take on burdensome debt. The chance of ever being able to afford to buy a home in London seems remote - except for those whose wealthier parents can provide the deposit for a home loan.

A generation of young people have been left behind by this coalition's policies and the policies of previous governments. How can these young people see that they have anything invested in British society that will enable them to become fulfilled and successful adults?

The comments on Twitter and Facebook, following Monday's riots in London, starkly reflect the class divides within Britain today.

Hitting the streets

After spending much of the day deliberating over whether I should go and see what was happening, on Monday I set off on my bike with a stills camera. I cycled from my apartment in the East London borough of Tower Hamlets across Victoria Park toward the Borough of Hackney, to check out the scene. Would this just be a copycat riot that the police would quickly put down, or was it going to explode into something bigger?

Knowing that the local kids would not appreciate my taking the pictures mid-riot, I planned to get the aftermath shots: upturned, burned-out bins; trashed vehicles; local people wandering through the broken glass...

As I turned onto the main road I saw a red-faced man with a Union Jack flag tattooed on his forehead walking along with two women, drinking cans of beer. One said: "There were loads of masked up Asians swarming outside the Tube station, ready to riot." This man and women were drunk, seemed furious, spoke racist and walked scared.

Tweets warned cyclists to stay out of Hackney's London Fields park - on my route to the area where the riot was kicking off. Gangs, they warned, were robbing people and snatching their bikes.

In the past, gangs specialising in robbing bikes had often lain in wait in London Fields, but during the past decade, with the opening of bijou cafés and the weekly farmers' and arts and crafts markets, Hackney was getting "gentrified". These bike robberies had become less common. But yesterday, old times had returned.

The rocketing house prices and gentrification in East London have left young people in the area aware that they are unlikely ever to be able to afford to buy a home of their own in the area in which they grew up.

The British coalition government's introduction of what it laughably calls "affordable rents" means massive increases in rents for social housing, driving people from their homes and traditional areas into who-knows-which wasteland. In Hackney and Tower Hamlets, luxury apartments sit side-by-side with some of the poorest estates in the country. Raising rents to 80 per cent of the "market rent" of the private sector must mean massive increases.

High tensions

Cycling up Morning Lane, I spotted the first burned-out rubbish bin. The road was scattered with rocks, broken bricks and dung from the police horses. The people walking by looked anxious and on edge. As I approached the junction onto Mare Street I saw four mounted policemen, a bus with a smashed windscreen, overturned bins and smashed plate glass splintered across the tarmac. .

The windows of JD Sports - purveyor of fine tracksuits, "hoodies" and trainers - had been smashed and

were now guarded by four policemen in full riot gear behind a taped police line. Youths on bikes stood around chatting, resting their feet on upturned litter bins. Many people raised their mobile phones to get a shot of the trashed leisurewear shop.

The police stood there frowning. Two helicopters flew above, circling the area.

I met a friend, whose hobby is alternative internet projects and who works as a doctor, along with another journalist friend. Passers-by told us that there were burning police cars amid the social housing of the nearby "Pembury Estate" and that the roads were cordoned off. We rode on our bikes, seeking a way through the police cordon.

There were lines of police at the bottom of Pembury Road, on the junction with Lower Clapton Road. People leaned anxiously out of Victorian three-storey houses, their homes behind the taped police lines surrounded by police vans.

A young mixed-race girl of about seventeen leaned anxiously out of her front window, biting her lower lip.

In the distance I could see riot police in a stand-off. There was no getting a better shot from this angle.

We rode into the housing estate. Youths ran backwards and forwards excitedly in groups between the ages of 12 and 18, black and white, reflecting the ethnic mix that is East London.

In the distance, the police advanced and the younger boys ran back towards us. An older punky-looking man stood swigging from a large bottle of vodka, watching. A young lad asked: "Did you nick that vodka?" "No," he replied, winking. "I bought it." Then they all burst out laughing.

The most vulnerable hit hardest by financial crisis

More kids ran backward and forwards, not safe to get a picture here: we rode a little further north to Hackney Downs road, where police cars had allegedly been burned.

From there, we could see the youth hurling stones and cans. Behind us, more youth stood, poised and tense. The rage was tangible.

I raised my camera to take a long shot of the scene.

A lad came up to me and advised me not to get my camera out and to watch my bike because the gangs were out robbing bikes and cameras. "They'll smash your camera," he said. "A guy down there has already had his camera smashed."

Two police vans drove along the road, riot police emerged and ran towards the stand-off. As I ran forwards to get a shot, cobblestones flew over my head. The youth behind meant business.

As the sun set I left the area, remembering how, on March 1, 2011, Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England, told members of parliament: "The price of this financial crisis is being borne by people who absolutely did not cause it." He said then that government spending cuts were the fault of the City and expressed surprise there had not been "more public anger".

People made unemployed and businesses bankrupted during the crisis had every reason, he said, to be resentful and to voice their protest. He told the MPs' Treasury Select Committee that the billions spent bailing out the banks and the need for public spending cuts were the fault of the financial services sector.

Asked when living standards enjoyed before the crisis would return, King said: "The research makes it clear that the impact of these crises lasts for many years. It is not like an ordinary recession, where you lose output and get it back quickly. We may not get the lost output back for very many years, if ever."

The situation is complex, with the cuts, the closure of services and the contempt in society for communities which are regularly referred to as the under-class - whose youth are now expressing their anger.

Deptford Assembly

Thu, 11/08/2011 - 00:15



On the night of 9th August, Deptford residents held a street meeting to congregate in a peaceful fashion in order to meet each other and reclaim our streets from the fear and misinformation being spread about the riots. It was called by local Solfed members that day after discussions with neighbours over concerns of residential fires. The previous night had seen several shops and bookies smashed in and looted on the high street.

At 6pm a group of 30 residents met and decided to reconvene at 8.30pm with an aim to prevent and put out any potential fires and discuss the events of the last few days. This was not a reactionary vigilantism but a considered act of solidarity and grass roots initiative.

In the night, 100 people came out to support each other and talk. A banner was made to show others what we were about and speeches were given. Many people spoke of the problems that young people and the whole working class is facing and the need to act collectively to make changes. Out of the discussion came a decision to hold an emergency demonstration the next day against the cuts and to highlight some of the causes behind the riots.

BANGED AND OLUFSEND **TO RIGHTS**

Case Study One: Gerald Kaufman MP fraudulently claimed £8,750 for a Bang and Olufsen television on his parliamentary expenses.

He was not prosecuted but asked to repay the £8,750

Case Study Two: A young woman with no previous is alleged to have looted a £750 Bang and Olufsen television (that's £8,000 less than Kaufman) from a store in Manchester

She was remanded in custody to crown court to get a sentence longer than 6 months

PLEASE SPREAD THIS FACT AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE.**'ONE LAW FOR THEM ANOTHER LAW FOR US'**.....as a certain band once sung.

Kaufman could be seen in parliament today demanding ROBUST action against rioters. Robust.....robust..fucking ROBUST....FUCKING ROBUST.....IF I HEAR THAT AGAIN.....ROBUST AAAARGGHH!



Moral poverty and the riots by Keenan Malik

goteborgs posten, 14 august 2011

So, what are we to make of the chaos and disorder that swept through London and other British cities last week like scenes from a JG Ballard novel? For some, the violence and mayhem brought back memories of the riots that tore apart Britain's inner cities in the late seventies and eighties. There is, in fact, no comparison. In the 1980s, British cities exploded in response to mass unemployment, entrenched racism and, in particular, oppressive policing. The rioters were part of no organized political movement but they had a sense that they were taking collective action against racist police. They were driven by a burning sense of social injustice and a desire for social change.

Last week's riots were different. There was no sense among the rioters of being part of a collective, no desire to transform society, just an inchoate, nihilistic desire to cause mayhem and to profit from the looting. The riots were not 'protests' in any way, but a mixture of incoherent rage, gang thuggery and teenage mayhem.

There was certainly looting in the 80s riots but such looting was incidental to the confrontation with the police and the authorities. Last week, smashing up stuff, and stealing it, was what defined the mayhem. In the 80s, people living in Brixton, Tottenham, Handsworth and Toxteth, in the very places wrecked by the disorders, nevertheless supported the rioters. They recognized that the violence and the destruction were not ends in themselves but part of a necessary challenge to an oppressive system. Today, the fiercest opposition to the rioters comes from those who live in the areas they have trashed. There is real rage in these areas against the orgy of destruction.

Many on the left, while condemning the riots, argue that they are nevertheless protests against poverty and social exclusion. ‘Many of the people involved’, the criminologist professor John Pitts suggested, ‘are likely to have been from low-income, high-unemployment estates, and many, if not most, do not have much of a legitimate future’. Many, such as former London mayor Ken Livingstone, have blamed the riots on the public expenditure cuts introduced by the current Coalition government.

There is little doubt that that poverty and joblessness scar large areas of Britain and that the vicious public spending cuts will vastly exacerbate the problem. Tottenham, for instance, where the first riots broke out, is among London’s poorest boroughs, with 54 applicants chasing every registered job vacancy. Britain is less equal, in wages, wealth and life chances, than at any time for a century. A map of the London riots matches almost exactly the map of the most deprived areas in London.

And yet, it is difficult to view the rioters simply as members of an ‘underclass’. Among the first looters who appeared in the courts this week were a graphic designer, a social worker, a teaching assistant, an estate agent, a forklift operator, a lifeguard, a chef, a postman, and a hairdresser. How representative these are of the rioters as a whole remains to be seen. The picture emerging, however, is of riots in which it was not just the jobless and the poverty stricken who were causing mayhem last week.

What the riots revealed was a second kind of poverty that stalks Britain, that as well as economic poverty there exists moral poverty, too. Television pictures of a group of youths pretending to help a young man injured in the riots while casually, and callously, robbing him were flashed across the world this week, pictures that seemed to express the moral deficit of the rioters. It is striking how little the rioters seemed to care for their own communities and how self-destructive their actions appeared to be. Here was a generation disengaged from both their communities and from the political process, with no focus for their anger and resentment, and with no reason feel responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Politicians have been quick to pick up on the idea of a moral deficit. The riots, David Cameron, told Parliament this week revealed a ‘deep moral failure’ in British society. It was an argument echoed by many others, on both sides of the House, in the Parliamentary debate about the violence. These, however, are the very politicians who have helped create the moral deficit through their social and economic policies and are now looking to blame everyone but themselves for the consequences. In that sense they are as self-regarding and nihilistic as the rioters themselves.

The relentless promotion of the market ideology over the past three decades has helped fragment society, tearing apart social bonds and creating a nation of isolated individuals. In working class communities the authority of institutions, from families to trade unions, that once socialized young people and inculcated moral values have been broken. At the same time, the introduction of the market ethos into every area of life from education to health to the arts has helped institute an instrumental ethic in which all that has come to matter is value for money and in which wider social needs and moral issues have been ignored.

Having broken communities and eroded social bonds through the unremitting promotion of the market, politicians responded both by, ironically, expanding the state and by blaming the poor. Where once families, and communities and collective institutions helped define right and wrong, increasingly the state has stepped in to impose such social norms, through everything from citizenship classes for children to parenting courses for adults. As a result, morality has come to be seen not as difficult choices one has to wrestle with, or norms one works through within a collective

setting, but as a set of predetermined rules provided as a state hand-out. Morality has ceased to be *ours*.

At the same time, politicians have increasingly taken to blaming the poor themselves, rather than their social and economic policies, for the breakdown of family life, a lack of social values, a selfish disregard for the needs of others, and a rampant consumerism. The same values that many tolerate among bankers, are condemned in the unemployed and the poor. And with condemnation has come repression, from increased CCTV surveillance to punitive workfare rules.

Because the right has appropriated the arguments about moral failure, many on the left have rejected moral arguments altogether. The left talks much about the social and economic impact of neoliberal policies. But little about their moral impact. Such willful blindness is dangerous. Morality is as important to the left as it is to the right, though for different reasons. There can be no possibility of a political or economic vision of a different society without a moral vision too. Moral arguments lie at the heart of our understanding of social solidarity, and of the distinction between notions of social solidarity and pious rightwing claims of 'we're all in it together'. And that is why it also has to be at the heart of our understanding of the riots. The questions about economic and social poverty, about unemployment and the cuts, are closely related to the questions about moral poverty, about the breakdown of social solidarity and the rise of a nihilistic culture. There can be no challenge to mass unemployment and imposition of austerity without restoration of bonds of social solidarity. We cannot, in other words, challenge economic poverty if do not also challenge moral poverty.

Ironically, perhaps, way forward shown by those who stood up to rioters. In many communities in Britain last week, local people patrolled the streets, protected buildings and confronted the rioters. They did so largely because the police were unable or unwilling to help. In one sense, such community action helps camouflage the government's public expenditure cuts, help making up for the services the state should be providing. But, in another sense, such action is much more than an ersatz form of Cameron's Big Society. In taking matters into own hands, and in accepting responsibility for own communities, those who stood up to the rioters were taking the first steps towards restoring the moral deficit by recreating the bonds of social solidarity.

Thoughts on the riots in England

Posted: 15 August, 2011

by Colin Clarke (Ex IWCA member)

This article attempts to make a short and rough analysis of the riots. Writing the article from a distance of 11,000 miles makes it hard to get a real grip on the meaning of events. In the fullness of time, we will produce other accounts of the events.

The social and economic background to the riots

Riots almost only occur in societies that are in crisis. While there are always particular incidents that might set them off, it is the bigger picture of what is happening in society that gives us a clue to what is going on.

Britain, since the riots of 1981, has been on a downward curve, economically, politically and socially. Successive governments, Labour, Conservative and the current coalition, have made it a point of principle to attack the living standards of the working class, both directly and indirectly. The economic policies of the governments

during the same period have seen a total embracing of the doctrines of neo-liberalism. Despite its relatively small role in GDP, the finance and banking sector has been held up as the key to Britain's future success. Of course, it is only the people in these sectors who gain from this.

The deliberate destruction of manufacturing industry begun under Thatcher, the cutting of workers' rights and the subsequent fall in union membership has led to a growth in low paid, temporary work. The idea of a job for life which was common even in the 1970s has long gone. The state sector which grew in terms of employment throughout the Blair/Brown years is now undergoing severe cuts under Cameron and Blair.

At the same time, the privatisation of state assets and the opening-up of what is left to private companies has not only led to a long-term fall in wages but has also resulted in major cuts in the quality and quantity of social provision. Both of these latter points can be seen in particular in the housing sector. The selling of council (state) houses to individuals has led at various times to bubbles in the housing market as well as a decline in council houses available to rent.

However, the neglect of the remaining council stock has led to whole estates being dumping grounds for those who have nowhere else to go, thus breaking down community spirit and social ties that had been built up over generations. This has, in turn, given rise to huge social problems in these areas as well as a growth in the quantity, though not the quality of rental properties elsewhere

All of the above, and many other factors, including the pushing of Multiculturalism as a state-sponsored ideology have created a fractured society that has no obvious shared or coherent values. From the same roots, an underclass has grown that has embraced a culture that idolises violence and crime for the sake of it.

As the Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) put it in an article in 2009, <http://www.iwca.info/?p=10134>:

... once a lumpen mentality is allowed to take root over a generation or more, a pattern is set seemingly for other socio/ political relationships too. In place of civic pride, community spirit, or basic empathy and solidarity (none of which have any place in their world) there is instead an over-developed sense of individual entitlement combined with a perverse pride in subverting a core socialist tenet: 'you only take out exactly what you've put in'. It follows that outside of what affects them directly as individuals or maybe immediate family there is a malign indifference. After all what is society to them, or they to society? All told, the corrupting consequences of the no-work ethic appear to be numerous and hardwired.

At the same time that all this has happened, the ruling class and its hangers on are openly corrupt in a way that harks back to the Nineteenth Century. Look at, for example, the links between Rupert Murdoch, politicians and the police that have been revealed in the last month or so. Then there were the revelations about MPs fiddling their expenses a few years back. Less publicised but happening frequently over the last 30 years or so, has been the exposure of collusion between the police and criminal gangs, and especially those who are drug dealers.

The background to the riots is that Britain is an economically, politically and socially unstable country where there is a glaring class divide between the lives of the majority

and those at the top. The student demonstrations at the end of last year showed the level of anger around and it was clear that a spark would set it alight.

The riots

As has been the case so often in the past in Britain, the riots were sparked off by the killing of a black man. Mark Duggan was shot dead by police in the back of a cab in Tottenham Hale. Initial claims by the police that shots had been fired at them turned out to be untrue. While he was carrying a loaded gun in a sock, he made no attempt to reach it and was killed by a shot to the chest. In short, it was a police execution. And as usual, they lied about the incident.

British police have a long history of killing people, both in the street and in custody in police stations. 333 in custody since 1998 and not a single police officer convicted. In short, the police continually get away with murder. It's no wonder that things kicked off in such a spectacular way.

Two days later, a demonstration outside the local police station in Tottenham asking for answers as to why he was killed became the start of the riots when a 16 year old girl was hit by police with shields. The riot immediately got out of the control of police. Shops and other buildings were burnt down. The nearby Tottenham Hale retail centre was attacked and looted and it spread around the whole area.

The initial period of the rioting showed the way that riots spread; incoherently and out of control. Crowds of people fired up by a chance to just show their anger and defiance of authority. The crowds grew in size and seemed to be from all parts of the community. There was even footage on the BBC of Hasidic Jews joining in the riots. Over the next few days, the riots began to spread, first to nearby areas and then to other parts of London. Then, other areas of the country took over.

What became clear early on was that while the initial riots took the pattern of riot first and then looting, very soon it was reversed to be looting first and only. Anecdotal reports from London suggest that by the second day, there were organised gangs travelling from one area to another, not to confront the police but to loot. This puts a different gloss on the events than the one pushed by some sections of the left that the riots are an uprising of the oppressed.

Interestingly, local rumour suggests that there was something more going on than just a spontaneous response to the death of Mark Duggan, who, incidentally, was a well known player in gang circles. A few days previous to Duggan's murder, the police raided around 30 houses on the Pembury estate in nearby Islington and arrested a whole swathe of leading gang members. These arrests were part of the same operation that ended up killing Duggan.

The local view is that the riot was started by gang members as a warning to police about what would happen if the crackdown was continued. As someone said to me via email, 'the police won't be doing this the week before the Olympics start'. This, of course, doesn't mean that the majority involved in the initial riot in Tottenham weren't genuine in their actions; just that we should be conscious, if it is true, that the power of the gangs is something we should be worried about.

The nature of riots

Whilst, as I have argued, there are political, economic and social reasons behind why riots happen, riots themselves explode out of nowhere, triggered by a particular incident. Riots are by their very nature contradictory and incoherent. They are both

political in one sense and apolitical in another. The anger that they encapsulate is against all authority but at the same time, because of their nature they are not able to articulate anything better. That is why they are so unpredictable. Riots produce a negative rage, which is capable of destroying everything in their path.

We have to be very careful about praising riots just because they are seen as fighting against the state. They happen at a juncture where society is sharply divided between classes but they can also foreshadow a future where things just get worse. Riots express the anger of individuals; revolutions express the anger of the whole working class. In the current situation, it is hard to envisage the class as a whole moving in a progressive way as a result of it.

In Tottenham, after Mark Duggan, the first victims of the riot were the people who lived above shops in the area that were burned out, as well as those who had their cars destroyed. While these people were just unlucky in living where they did, as the riots developed, more and more such incidents were reported. In the 1981 Toxteth riots, massive damage was done to the local area but by and large, incidents like the above didn't happen. I remember walking through there on the second night of the riots and being seen just as part of the crowd. There was no menace in the air and people were in an almost celebratory mood.

Aside from the beginning in Tottenham, this doesn't seem to be the case this time round. While I am not going to condemn people for looting goods that they couldn't ordinarily afford, it's difficult to see that there was anything more to much of the rioting than this. It is also clear that much of the working class has seen this as an outbreak of criminality, rather than something they should be involved in. The worrying aspect of this is that it seems to fit in with the analysis referred to above from the IWCA that the working class is split between those who work and a growing underclass that don't and pursue a life of criminality.

The aftermath

It is no surprise, but no less sickening, to see the hypocrisy of the ruling class in condemning the riots and demanding the highest possible of sentences for those involved. Already, a family has been threatened with eviction because a son was arrested in the riots. The reaction will only get worse as the politicians and liberal commentators whip themselves up into a frenzy of indignation. At the end of the day, they are the ones who are culpable for the situation the country is in. As a friend said in a perceptive text, "They've created a sub strata of society for whom 'The Wire' is an inspiration rather than a nightmare."

The working class, as a conscious class barely exists, though, in a faint way, the riots provide the beginnings of what can be done when we move together. As in New Zealand, the left has failed, is irrelevant and has no real connection with the working class. Working class organisation is essential for the class to move forward. Not perhaps the idea of a Leninist style vanguard party but instead a party that comes from the working class and is a part of it. Only then, will there be a possibility of a progressive future.

If this doesn't happen, the future will make the present seem like the good days. While many on the left have written off the BNP, due to recent poor election results, they haven't gone away and they still have a sizeable constituency. Their problems are essentially internal rather than external. In addition, the growth of gang culture throughout the country presents a direct threat to the working class.

The moral decay of our society is as bad at the top as the bottom

By [Peter Osborne](#) [Politics](#) Last updated: August 11th, 2011



Tottenham ablaze: the riots began early on Sunday (Photo: AP)

David Cameron, Ed Miliband and the entire British political class came together yesterday to denounce the rioters. They were of course right to say that the actions of these looters, arsonists and muggers were abhorrent and criminal, and that the police should be given more support.

But there was also something very phony and hypocritical about all the shock and outrage expressed in parliament. MPs spoke about the week's dreadful events as if they were nothing to do with them.

I cannot accept that this is the case. Indeed, I believe that the criminality in our streets cannot be dissociated from the moral disintegration in the highest ranks of modern British society. The last two decades have seen a terrifying decline in standards among the British governing elite. It has become acceptable for our politicians to lie and to cheat. An almost universal culture of selfishness and greed has grown up.

It is not just the feral youth of Tottenham who have forgotten they have duties as well as rights. So have the feral rich of Chelsea and Kensington. A few years ago, my wife and I went to a dinner party in a large house in west London. A security guard prowled along the street outside, and there was much talk of the "north-south divide", which I took literally for a while until I realised that my hosts were facetiously referring to the difference between those who lived north and south of Kensington High Street.

Most of the people in this very expensive street were every bit as deracinated and cut off from the rest of Britain as the young, unemployed men and women who have caused such terrible damage over the last few days. For them, the repellent Financial Times magazine *How to Spend It* is a bible. I'd guess that few of them bother to pay British tax if they can avoid it, and that fewer still feel the sense of obligation to society that only a few decades ago came naturally to the wealthy and better off.

Yet we celebrate people who live empty lives like this. A few weeks ago, I noticed an item in a newspaper saying that the business tycoon Sir Richard Branson was thinking of moving his headquarters to Switzerland. This move was represented as a potential

blow to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, because it meant less tax revenue.

I couldn't help thinking that in a sane and decent world such a move would be a blow to Sir Richard, not the Chancellor. People would note that a prominent and wealthy businessman was avoiding British tax and think less of him. Instead, he has a knighthood and is widely feted. The same is true of the brilliant retailer Sir Philip Green. Sir Philip's businesses could never survive but for Britain's famous social and political stability, our transport system to shift his goods and our schools to educate his workers.

Yet Sir Philip, who a few years ago sent an extraordinary £1 billion dividend offshore, seems to have little intention of paying for much of this. Why does nobody get angry or hold him culpable? I know that he employs expensive tax lawyers and that everything he does is legal, but he surely faces ethical and moral questions just as much as does a young thug who breaks into one of Sir Philip's shops and steals from it?

Our politicians – standing sanctimoniously on their hind legs in the Commons yesterday – are just as bad. They have shown themselves prepared to ignore common decency and, in some cases, to break the law. David Cameron is happy to have some of the worst offenders in his Cabinet. Take the example of Francis Maude, who is charged with tackling public sector waste – which trade unions say is a euphemism for waging war on low-paid workers. Yet Mr Maude made tens of thousands of pounds by breaching the spirit, though not the law, surrounding MPs' allowances.

A great deal has been made over the past few days of the greed of the rioters for consumer goods, not least by Rotherham MP Denis MacShane who accurately remarked, "What the looters wanted was for a few minutes to enter the world of Sloane Street consumption." This from a man who notoriously claimed £5,900 for eight laptops. Of course, as an MP he obtained these laptops legally through his expenses.

Yesterday, the veteran Labour MP Gerald Kaufman asked the Prime Minister to consider how these rioters can be "reclaimed" by society. Yes, this is indeed the same Gerald Kaufman who submitted a claim for three months' expenses totalling £14,301.60, which included £8,865 for a Bang & Olufsen television.

Or take the Salford MP Hazel Blears, who has been loudly calling for draconian action against the looters. I find it very hard to make any kind of ethical distinction between Blears's expense cheating and tax avoidance, and the straight robbery carried out by the looters.

The Prime Minister showed no sign that he understood that something stank about yesterday's Commons debate. He spoke of morality, but only as something which applies to the very poor: "We will restore a stronger sense of morality and responsibility – in every town, in every street and in every estate." He appeared not to grasp that this should apply to the rich and powerful as well.

The tragic truth is that Mr Cameron is himself guilty of failing this test. It is scarcely six weeks since he jauntily turned up at the News International summer party, even

though the media group was at the time subject to not one but two police investigations. Even more notoriously, he awarded a senior Downing Street job to the former News of the World editor Andy Coulson, even though he knew at the time that Coulson had resigned after criminal acts were committed under his editorship. The Prime Minister excused his wretched judgment by proclaiming that “everybody deserves a second chance”. It was very telling yesterday that he did not talk of second chances as he pledged exemplary punishment for the rioters and looters.

These double standards from Downing Street are symptomatic of widespread double standards at the very top of our society. It should be stressed that most people (including, I know, Telegraph readers) continue to believe in honesty, decency, hard work, and putting back into society at least as much as they take out.

But there are those who do not. Certainly, the so-called feral youth seem oblivious to decency and morality. But so are the venal rich and powerful – too many of our bankers, footballers, wealthy businessmen and politicians.

Of course, most of them are smart and wealthy enough to make sure that they obey the law. That cannot be said of the sad young men and women, without hope or aspiration, who have caused such mayhem and chaos over the past few days. But the rioters have this defence: they are just following the example set by senior and respected figures in society. Let’s bear in mind that many of the youths in our inner cities have never been trained in decent values. All they have ever known is barbarism. Our politicians and bankers, in sharp contrast, tend to have been to good schools and universities and to have been given every opportunity in life.

Something has gone horribly wrong in Britain. If we are ever to confront the problems which have been exposed in the past week, it is essential to bear in mind that they do not only exist in inner-city housing estates.

The culture of greed and impunity we are witnessing on our TV screens stretches right up into corporate boardrooms and the Cabinet. It embraces the police and large parts of our media. It is not just its damaged youth, but Britain itself that needs a moral reformation.

The Story So Far, in Summary.

August 10, 2011 [tower hamlets alarm](#)

Since Saturday night, the UK has seen disorder on an unprecedented scale, with eruptions of mass anger appearing in major cities and towns all over. Here we look at some of the different aspects of this disorder and attempt to offer some analysis.

1) The shooting of Mark Duggan, the community response.

Mark Duggan was clearly the victim of an extra-judicial execution by the state. The police bullet lodged in the police radio clearly confirms this. Mark Duggan was one death too many at the hands of the Police. The community responded by coming out in solidarity with Mark's family to ask questions of the police on a demonstration at Tottenham Police Station. There was no violence on this demonstration until a Police officer started beating a 16 year old girl with a baton for no justifiable reason at all, providing a second catalyst to an already angry community. The situation escalated and before long Tottenham went up in flames. This was, plain and simple, war between the police and the community, with symbols of wealth and power being attacked along the way. Fires did spread to domestic premises, yes. But they were not the target of attacks. Similar disorder in nearby areas with similar social & economic grievances.

2) Stop-and-searches implemented, the third catalyst.

In true Met Police style, Monday saw aggressive and "intelligence led" (see also: anti-working class and racist) stop-and-searches implemented in working class areas across London. Unsurprisingly, it kicks off in these areas as well, with corporate targets attacked and police fought before being pushed back into residential areas, where barricades were erected. However, this tactical shift on the part of the met – to clear commercial centres and to contain disorder in residential areas meant that the anger and frustration people needed to express got taken out on their own communities. This third night of rioting saw things take a clearly anti-social turn, with muggings and domestic burglaries taking place, as well as attacks on people. However, this did not happen on the scale that was implied (most of the attacks were on the police and businesses). That said, the anti-social aspect is undoubtedly unacceptable and should be challenged whenever possible. We should never take out our anger on each other in times of conflict with the state any more than in times of 'peace'. But let us not forget why this is happening – because the state thinks nothing of us and our communities, because the private interests of the rich and powerful and the process of gentrification is far more important to them than any of our struggles. Because we have a whole new generation of people brought up in the most alienating, disengaging and hostile circumstances ever known, for the benefit of a global economic system that keeps the majority of people in poverty to feed the extreme wealth of a few.

3) Rioting spreads outside of London

It should be no surprise that Birmingham was the second to go up, with West Midlands Police being second to the Met for racist murders. It is not long before

working class cities and towns across the UK are looting commodities from chain stores and attacking the police. Commercial areas lie in ruins across the UK as the police are desperate to regain control.

3) Public backlash, calls for the state to “get tough” on the rioters

In realising that the state was more busy defending commercial interests than community ones, working class areas become divided over supporting/understanding the factors that cause the riots and calling for an increase in the violence of the state as a means to quell the disorder. Those who do not have an understanding or an experience of what the rioters have experienced become desperate to return to capitalist social peace, without grasping the fact that it was that very ‘social peace’ that is to blame for the extreme anger of the most oppressed sections of the class. Rubber bullets authorised for use as a result.

4) Rioting continues outside of London due to reshuffle in Police resources.

Commercial centres across the UK go up on Tuesday because all the cops are in London. London is relatively quiet despite heavy-handed stop and searches.

5) Community clean-ups, Community assemblies.

Community clean-ups begin on Wednesday. Whilst it is always encouraging to see people respond to a situation as a community and engage with each other, these clean-ups will be doomed to failure if they are simply part of a process of collective denial over the severity of the social and economic situation in this country. Are you cleaning up your community as a self-organised solution to the inadequacy of the state? Or are you cleaning up your community to, quite literally, sweep all memory of this disorder and unrest away and return to normality (only for this to happen again and again)?

Far more interestingly, Tuesday night saw community assemblies in Haringey and Hackney, which called for a demonstration that seeks not to condemn nor condone the disorder, but to instead articulate an understanding that without a future for the younger generation, this is bound to happen again and again. This is an initiative that should be supported wherever it occurs.

<http://www.peoplesassemblies.org/2011/08/north-london-march-sat-13th/>

As anarchists, we **MUST NOT CONDEMN** the riots. That is, we should support the vendetta against systemic police repression and the vendetta against capitalism and the rich. All serious anarchists will be able to relate to that feeling of total anger at this vile society. The playing field has been in desperate need of a levelling – we have taken a beating every day of our lives for far too long.

We should not support or excuse the anti-working class behaviour of some of the people who took part in the riots.

The kind of people that think it's okay to rob off their own will do that in their everyday lives anyway. People who mug others are often desperate and opportunistic. Why is it surprising that they see a greater opportunity for these behaviours to take place when the cops are caught up with angry people fighting back against years of oppression and misery? Also, why is someone getting mugged in Hackney now a national news item when no one gave a shit before?

Yes, we hate mugging. Yes we hate domestic burglary. We dont think we should be fighting amongst ourselves and victimising each other. But there is also a huge part of this that is about making the state and capital pay and that cannot and should not be forgotten.

We have also heard alot about how people shouldn't be targetting local businesses in their own community. By and large, we agree that it is not tactically wise to do so. However, do you not think that this speaks volumes about the degree of inequality in the UK? When the working class is so impoverished it sees those in the middle class of it's locality as the enemy? That feels the gulf between their social experiences and opportunities that painfully?

Lets also not forget the fact that the robbery of the ruling class is far greater and far more violently enforced than any opportunistic street mugger could ever envision. As anarchists, we should also support aspects of the community response to the riots. That is, we should engage with the emerging discourse on what form and function communities should take and meet people in our areas who want to help and support each other and achieve positive social change. We should also engage with these processes to steer them away from the blaming, shaming and alienating of the rioters and instead towards a more pragmatic and inclusive approach. That is to say, we should support community responses that seek to bring the class together and crush the divisive and anti-working class aspects of them; the idiots who want to unite under the banner of greater police power and a masochistic desire for greater violence on the part of the state.

We should also be there to keep the role of the middle classes at bay. That is not to say that we unthinkingly hate everyone who is middle class, but that we recognise the middle classes have a tendency to take over and to transform organisations into just another institution for the advancement of their own class interests. If they have any respect for the complexities of this situation, they will understand that this is something they will largely have to stand aside on. We cannot let the interests of the gentrifiers gain even more privilege and power than they already enjoy. We cannot let them stitch up these actions for their own advantage. We have seen on the news what alot of these people think of us, how the self-proclaimed "educated classes" don't know their arsehole from their elbow when it comes to the situations we face on a daily basis. How they are always interviewed complaining how they have lost all their worldly goods. Sure, it's not nice and we certainly wouldnt wish it on anyone. But the fact that it is those who have lots of worldly goods in the first place who are put up on a pedestal for us all to feel sorry for is truly sickening. Intensive gentrification has decimated our communities on a scale far greater than any of the urban riots have. More local businesses have gone under from the Westfields, Starbucks and Waitroses of this world than any expression of class anger.

And this is what this essentially comes down to – class anger. The longer this class anger is repressed, the more ferocious and imperfect it is when it is unleashed. When people look to condemn the acts of the rioters as being indiscriminate and without any real focus or direction, we remind them that this is the logical concequence of a society that is hyper individualistic and socially violent. When people say it isn't like the the riots in the 80s, we say OF COURSE NOT. Because since then, we have had the most aggressive and repressive periods of capitalism ever, with extreme social alienation, inequality and a propaganda machine that has aimed to break down community identity and class solidarity at any cost. All for the interests of the ruling class scum that are responsible for the financial crisis and the austerity measures that will undoubtedly make our lives a misery for years to come. Both the riots and the community responses are flawed and imperfect. But with a push in the right direction,

both could contain what is needed to start building a better future for all of us. We cannot shrink away from this or wish it away. Our rallying cry as anarchists should be maximum engagement and uncompromising criticism of all divisive aspects.

We want a better future for ourselves, now is the time to build it!

London rioters point to poverty and prejudice

* Widening gap between rich and poor exacerbates tension

* Inequality felt most keenly in London, say charities

By Mohammed Abbas and Kate Holton

LONDON, Aug 9 (Reuters) - Just yards from the east London street where riots erupted on Monday stands a house for sale that sums up the depth of division in the area.

With five bedrooms, three bathrooms and its own coach house, the elegant property has been put up for sale with an asking price of 1.7 million pounds (\$2.75 million). The main attraction, according to the advert, is the sought-after location.

Many residents of the diverse borough of Hackney said it was this ever widening and very visible gap between the rich and poor that has exacerbated tension in recent years, especially as government cuts to welfare payments have started to bite.

Britain, one of the world's major economies, has a bigger gap between rich and poor than more than three-quarters of other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, according to a 2008 report. Charities in Britain say that inequality is most keenly felt in London.

"It's us versus them, the police, the system," said an unemployed man of Kurdish origin in his early 20s, sitting at the entrance to a Hackney housing estate with four Afro-Caribbean friends who nodded in agreement.

"They call it looting and criminality. It's not that. There's a real hatred against the system," he added, listing what he saw as the police prejudice, discrimination and lack of opportunity that led him and his friends to loot shops, torch bins and hurl missiles at police on Monday.

"There's two worlds in this borough. More and more middle classes are coming and we're being pushed out. The shops are pricing stuff like it's the West End, we can't afford the rents. We're the outcasts, we're not wanted any more.

"There's nothing for us."

Those who were out on the streets on Monday night, and those who had gathered amid the debris on Tuesday morning, said there was no interaction between the two distinct communities, even though they live practically on top of each other.

The rioting in Hackney was the third night of violence across the capital, sparked by the fatal shooting by police of a man in another poor borough.

"Youths are frustrated, they want all the nice clothes. They ain't got no money, they don't have jobs," a 41-year-old youth worker told Reuters, stood outside the Pembury estate, the scene of much of the trouble on Monday night and home to mostly young black people.

"To live, to have money in their pocket, they have to steal, they have to rob.

"The people that run this country, they got money, they are rich, they got nice houses. They don't care about poor people."

"SCREWING THE SYSTEM"

The statistics confirm the problem.

In 2007 Hackney was ranked the second most deprived local authority in England, behind Liverpool. More than 10 percent are unemployed. Some 11,000 people rely on state benefits to live, meaning some 24 people are competing for every available job.

According to the council, Hackney is ranked sixth out of the 32 London boroughs in terms of crime.

At the same time, small one-bedroom flats regularly cost some 300,000 pounds. On a nearby street, smart cafes are full of young families attracted to the parks and transport links to the nearby financial district. Pricey organic food shops stand next to 'pound shops' -- where all the items cost one pound.

Professor Mike Hardy of the Institute of Community Cohesion said it was not just the division between rich and poor that caused the problem, but the fact they lived so closely together.

"There is a much greater visibility of the difference," he told Reuters. "In London, the current troubles are almost focused entirely not on a cause or a protest, but on greed and personal want. 'I haven't got something and I can take it'."

Britain's coalition government has made deep spending cuts since coming into power last year to tackle a big budget deficit. The poor say they have been hit hardest, with people in Hackney pointing to the closure of many services.

"The only way we can get out of this is education, and we're not entitled to it, because of the cuts. Even for bricklaying you need a qualification and a waiting list for a course. I signed up in November, and still haven't heard back," the Kurdish man said.

The government has also raised university tuition fees since coming into power, putting a higher education further out of the reach of youths from places like Hackney.

"They're screwing the system so only white middle-class kids can get an education," said another man, who declined to be named. He said politicians were the real criminals, and pointed to a 2009 expenses scandal in which several lawmakers were revealed to have cheated the taxpayer out of thousands of pounds.

"The politicians say that we loot and rob. They are the original gangsters. They talk about copycat crimes. They're the ones that's looting, they're the originals," he said.

One of the Kurdish man's friends pointed to alleged payments made to the police by journalists, claims currently under investigation as part of a wider phone-hacking scandal centred on the now defunct News of the World newspaper, part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp media conglomerate.

"Everyone's heard about the police taking bribes, the members of parliament stealing thousands with their expenses. They set the example. It's time to loot," the youth said. (\$1 = 0.617 British Pounds) (Additional reporting by Tim Castle and Paul Hoskins; Editing by Jon Hemming)

Criminality and Rewards - Max von Sudo

tags:

- [riots](#)
- [UK against austerity](#)



An article by London anarchist 'Max von Sudo' published on London Indymedia on the looting in his home neighborhood of Brixton.

What is the crime of looting a corporate chain store next to the crime of owning one?

-- Luther Brecht

Looters don't give many press conferences. This made all of the conversations on today's BBC morning show a little bit one-sided.

Having been out last night in Brixton, I feel as qualified as anybody to offer at least a bit of perspective as an anarchist living in the area for the past six years.

First things first. None of the people hauling ass out of Currys last night will ever pay £9000 annual tuition to David Cameron's shiny new neo-liberal university system, so beloved by the young people of London. Although Britain has a bit more social mobility now than in the

Victorian era which Cameron seems to idolize, the racist overtones in the Great British societal symphony are still pretty loud. Most of the black people who participated in last night's looting of the Currys over on Effra Road may never make it off their housing estates and into the Big Society. They don't have a hell of a lot to lose.

Despite this, the fairly mixed (for Brixton) crowd of several hundred was feeling festive last night, as cars lined up on both sides of the road, all the way to Brixton Water Lane. They're not people who are used to winning very often. The chance to haul away several hundred thousand pounds worth of electronics, right under the helpless noses of the police who routinely harass, beat, and kill them, made it a great night. The fourteen year old girls heading for that 60 inch plasma TV of their dreams were polite enough to say "excuse me", quite sincerely, as they bumped into me while springing into the Currys parking lot. Last night, everybody on Effra Road was in a great mood.

This morning, killjoys in the corporate media disagreed.

Many commentators decried the lack of a clear political motive in the riots, and seemed worried about how unrespectable the looting makes it all seem. According to this line of thought, poverty is not political.

On the radio, on the web, and in the papers, there's a lot of talk right now about the 'stupidity' of the rioters, burning down their own neighbourhoods. All of the commentators who follow this line of argument haven't considered some pretty basic facts.

Outraged Guardian readers, I say to you: you're only partially correct. It's true that the guy carrying that cash register past Brixton Academy last night probably didn't conceptualize his actions according to rational choice economic theories. However, when compared with four years of failed state capitalist attempts to catapult us out of the economic crisis, his maneuvers were in fact the height of rationality. Destroying evidence by turning on the gas cooker full-blast and burning down the Stockwell Road Nandos is pretty crazy. But it makes a lot more economic sense, for Brixton, than anything so far attempted by Labour, the Conservatives, or the wizard brains of the City of London.

Smashing windows in Brixton is probably a surer road to prosperity for most people than any of the more respectable paths already explored.

The guy who showed up today to fix the smashed windows on Brixton Road may live just down the street from the shattered glass lying on the pavement; it's unlikely that he's a currency speculator or a hedge fund manager on the side. Any money he makes from fixing the windows will be mostly spent back in the local community.

The merits of endlessly sucking money out of the pockets of working people into the reserve accounts of the supercharged risk-takers at Canary wharf are quite a bit less clear to me, at present. The crisis is entering year five. Throwing hundreds of billions into the endless rounds of bank bailouts, corporate tax breaks, and other props for a global economy which increasingly resembles that of the USSR circa 1987 is not clearly a winning strategy.

The eruption of economic chaos in the Eurozone, and the police bullets which ripped into Mark Duggan, ending his life, are now two events which are bound together in a massive sequence of riots in London, the European continent's largest financial centre.

These riots are remarkable chiefly for the role-reversals they bring about, and most of the outrage in the corporate media is a reflection of this. The outrage is really interesting if you stop to think about it.

For instance: retail profit is a kind of theft. It's economic value which is hoovered out of a local community via corporate cash registers. The decisions about where to re-invest the profits are the preserve of corporate managers and shareholders, not the decision of the people from whom the value was extracted. The whole process is fundamentally anti-democratic.

This daily denial of basic democratic political rights is "normal", and may last for years, decades or centuries. Corporations may steal from poor people - but any attempt on the part of poor people to steal back must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Similarly, I had multiple conversations today about Saturday night's riots in Tottenham. They invariably referenced the case of Keith Blakelock, the police officer who was killed during the Broadwater Farm riots of 1985. Not one of the conversations I had included any reference to Cynthia Jarrett, the woman whose killing during a search of her apartment sparked those riots in the first place.

In the same way, I doubt whether any of the outraged middle-class commentators on the BBC 4 radio show this morning gave much thought to the dozens of people that the cops have killed in custody, or to the more or less daily humiliation of black youths who get stopped and searched outside my house. The message conveyed by all of this is pretty clear: police attacks on poor people who can't defend themselves (especially black ones) are normal. Conversely, popular attacks on police are an outrage, especially if they happen to succeed. And don't ask that guy who nicked the cash register to give his side of the story.

None of this is to say that the fire truck which just screamed past my window is a good thing. The political and economic problems of Brixton are complex. It's too easy to spout platitudes about how nothing will ever be the same again - but for a few hours last night, walking down Effra road with plasma screen TVs and Macintosh laptops, the losers were the winners. And that could have a powerful effect.

....

Further comments by the author published on Indymedia in response to criticisms:

Hi people,

As I said at the end of the article, the fact that people are running around burning things down isn't a positive thing. I'm much rather live in a society where this sort of thing doesn't happen. There **should** be better ways for this kind of frustration to be expressed. Right now, though, it's unclear

to me what the formal political options are for people who live on housing estates in places like Brixton.

Vote Labour? Vote Tory? Get really wild and go with the Lib Dems? This has all been tried, and it's not really working out.

What we're seeing all over the UK are massive spontaneous outbursts of frustration on the part of the poorest people in British society. I would think that this should be obvious to anybody.

But the point I was trying to make, is that it's not **only** hatred and desperation, at least not with the crowd I was with in Brixton on Sunday night. People were thrilled that the cops were helpless. They were happy at the prospect of getting free stuff - there are reports that one of the people arrested in Currys worked there. In a quite English way they were even courteous with each other. To me, this seemed worth saying, on a site like Indymedia London, because it's supposed to be about alternate views. Very few media sources have any views from inside the looting, or offer any serious examination of why people might be doing these things.

With only one exception, a Portugese cafe, every target in Brixton was a major corporate chain store. It may of course be different in other neighbourhoods. It could also easily change, if people go back out tonight, or if the conflict escalates into major streetfights with police.

Lastly, as someone who lives at the intersection of about 4 different housing estates, I'm only too keenly aware of the potential for my house to be burned down tonight, so don't tell me about that guy in Croydon. It's awful what's happening. The first step towards really solving this whole set of problems is in understanding why the riots and looting are happening.

So, what are some answers? You're young, excluded, and you've got no future. The horrifying dead-end factory jobs that you might have had 40 years ago have been exported by Thatcher, Major, Blair, Brown, and Cameron. The government is rapidly passing legislation which shrinks your options (education, for one thing, but there are hundreds or thousands of other cuts which are starting to affect you).

The number of young people who fall into this category is clearly not small - and for better or worse, they now understand that they can take control of large sections of the UK's major cities at any time. They have no articulate spokespeople, no Cambridge-educated wing of intellectuals who can explain them to the world. I don't have many answers, I'm just saying that the situation is far more complex than the drumbeat of fear and contempt pouring out of the corporate media would sugges

LIKE A SUMMER WITH A THOUSAND AUGUSTS

The Wise Brothers pamphlet 'LIKE A SUMMER WITH A THOUSAND JULYS' is still the best guide to the summer uprisings of 1981. Similarities with now are many like the

spread round the country but I'm going to explore the differences. The riots of '81 were always in the areas where the rioters lived – mainly the old front lines like St. Pauls and Chapelton. In the last spasm of rioting in 1992 it was the peripheral council estates that rioted – Hartcliffe, Stoops – but again never transgressing the boundaries of the locality. Tottenham this weekend started like a 1981 riot but ended up a very modern 2011 riot.. What is different and so perplexes the cops is the new Retail Shopping Centre riot whether local like Tottenham Hale or City centre like Oxford Circus and the Arndale. The Wise brothers lamented the fact that the Toxteth rioters never made it to the Shopping Palaces in the city centre.

In Newcastle in 1992 the rioters of Scotswood hovered all day like Visigoths on the margins of the city centre. There was panic in the town – shops closed early. The rabble inspired fear and loathing – they were coming to get what's theirs. But they didn't. Yesterday's painicky mood all over London was like that – rumours, boarding up, finish work early. But now the mobs do dare. They are no longer content to press their faces to the plateglass shopping palace windows or mooch around picking fights with a fiver an hour security guard. The flashmob model harnessing BMB technology is no longer in the mood for dancing – but looting. The Visigoths can descend and loot at will. In Manchester yesterday the police had full prior knowledge of what was going to happen and couldn't stop it. 14 year old generals are outwitting senior cops with all their technology. It might be a Purley Way outta town centre or an Arndale. it might be Bluewater. The Holy grail is Westfields. The locusts are gathering – one day they'll swsarm over Westfields. In the meantime they'll refuse a rematch with the Met. Which boxer gives a loser another chance. 16,000 wankstained cops sitting in riot vans all night bankrupting the government. I'll pass on that one guv.

England's dreaming -of cabot circus, the Arndale, bluwater, Brent Cross.....Westfields. 'They're only in it for the money' disillusioned anarchists tell me.....'.unlike the TUC marchers for gold plated pensions' I reply. There's more than one way to redistribute wealth comrades.

A crisis of ideology and political leadership. posted by lenin

You've probably heard it said a dozen times today: "It's like *28 Days Later* out there." Every thirty seconds, there's a new riot zone. I've rarely known the capital to be this wound up. It's kicked off in East Ham, then Whitechapel, then Ealing Broadway (*really?*), then Waltham Forest... It's kicked off in Croydon, then **Birmingham**, then (just a rumour so far) Bradford... The banlieues of Britain are erupting in mass civil unrest. Until now, the claim has been that this is merely a criminal enterprise. At a stretch, it was orchestrated criminality, using Twitter and Blackberry messenger. If you're following what's happening in the UK, that's an impossible position to sustain. A few looters here and there might be evidence of little more than opportunism. But clashes with police in several major cities, including the two largest cities, doesn't look like mere entrepreneurialism to me. And as it spreads to hitherto unexpected places, it certainly doesn't look orchestrated.

Part of the reason for the spread is probably that the aura of invincibility on the part of UK riot police has been seriously damaged by these riots. Protesters in the UK are used to being contained and out-manouevered by police. That makes it seem as if the police are omnipotent. This situation has underlined very clearly that law and order is generally maintained by consent, not coercion. The police are not all powerful, despite their technological and organizational advantages, which is why they rely on good 'community relations'. In those areas where there are long-standing grievances and sources of

resentment, it seems, that consent has been withdrawn. As a result of the unpredictable way in which this unrest has unfolded, the police have ended up being out-played, and sometimes out-numbered.

Yet, as important, there is also an underlying crisis of ideology and political leadership for the police. Amid the Hackgate scandal, which has shattered their credibility, and following the killing of a suspect under circumstances that were only ineffectually and temporarily concealed, they are [potentially facing a complete collapse in relations with black British communities. Cameron and the police leadership will be evacuating themselves over this prospect. The painstaking attempts to overcome the complete mutual hatred and distrust that characterised such relations in the 1980s made some headway. Of course, police harassment, brutality, killing in custody, and so on, did not come to an end. Institutional racism proved durable. But there was definitely an amelioration between Broadwater Farm and the Lawrence Inquiry. And that is one advance which, I believe, they *don't* want to put through the historical shredder.

So, despite politicians like the Liberal Simon Hughes ranting and demanding that the police use the water cannon, and despite the ritual denunciations and tough talk about the law from (another Liberal) Lynne Featherstone, I suspect the police are quite unsure as to how they're supposed to be handling this. The fact that Cameron has, with remarkable arrogance, hitherto refused to shift from his Tuscany villa and arouse parliament from its recess, cannot have helped here. (Boris Johnson's absence has merely allowed Ken Livingstone to start his re-election campaign early.) One doesn't expect this disorientation, if that's what it is, to last long. The police and the executive will coordinate some sort of policy response that seeks to isolate the 'troublemakers' while making reassuring noises about 'understanding' that 'people have many valid questions' etc. But for now, the crisis is sufficient to allow these openings and, as a result, riots are breaking out in new places with stunning frequency. (Just as I write, I've learned that Woolwich has joined the riot zones).

Though the media is putting a lot of labour into the effort of racialising this issue, the underlying **class dimension** is just as obvious. The US press seems to get it. The *New York Times'* **report** ascribes the riots to a combination of spending cuts and anti-police sentiment amid a generalised ideological crisis for the cops:

Frustration in this impoverished neighborhood, as in many others in Britain, has mounted as the government's austerity budget has forced deep cuts in social services. At the same time, a widely held disdain for law enforcement here, where a large Afro-Caribbean population has felt singled out by the police for abuse, has only intensified through the drumbeat of scandal that has racked Scotland Yard in recent weeks and led to the resignation of the force's two top commanders.

They also quote a rioter saying they're **taking on "the ruling class"**. And of course, the ruling class press is deeply attuned to this sort of scenario. Only a month ago, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote of how **the global rich fear the coming violence of the poor**:

A new survey from Insite Security and IBOPE Zogby International of those with liquid assets of \$1 million or more found that 94% of respondents are concerned about the global unrest around the world today. ... the numbers are backed up by other trends seen throughout the world of wealth today: the rich keeping a lower profile, hiring \$230,000 guard dogs, and arming their yachts, planes and cars with military-style security features.

So, even if politicians are in denial, the rich aren't. You may well say, "bollocks, they're not taking on the ruling class, they're just destroying their own nest, hurting working class people and small businesses". I can hear this, just as I can hear the sanctimony in its enunciation. The truth is that riots almost always hurt poor, working class people. There's no riot that embodies a pure struggle for justice, that is not also partly a self-inflicted wound. There is no

riot without looting, without anti-social behaviour, without a mixture of bad motives and bad politics. That still doesn't mean that the riot doesn't have a certain political focus; that it doesn't have consequences for the ability of the ruling class to keep control; that the contest with the police is somehow taking place outside of its usual context of suspicion borne of institutional racism and brutality. The rioters here, whenever they've been asked, have made it more than abundantly clear what their motives are - most basically, repaying years of police mistreatment.

Somewhat less on your high horse, you may go on: "but even if there is some sort of mediated logic of political class struggle unfolding here, the rich have nothing to fear as this sort of destruction is at best counterproductive". That may be correct, though it's the sort of thing people tend to assume rather than argue for. Major riots in the twentieth century included Soweto, in South Africa, and in US inner cities in the 1960s up to and including the Watts rebellion. Major riots in recent British history have included those in Brixton in 1981, and Broadwater Farm in 1986, as well as the poll tax riots in 1990. It would be foolish to claim that these made no contribution to achieving the objectives of their participants. The fact is that whatever problems riots bring to the communities affected by them - and they're real, no question - it can't just be assumed that they're *stupid*. The participants may not be glibly articulate, and some of them may be engaging in indefensible behaviour, but they shouldn't just be written off as mindless, apolitical thugs.

A more sensible assumption, perhaps, is that you have a lot of young people with complex motives - avarice and adventure, sure, but also anger and defiance - some of whom are educated in certain traditions of resistance. For example, *The Guardian* reporter Paul Lewis (who is worth following on Twitter, by the way) was surprised that Tottenham residents all knew of the IPCC and were very critical of it. This surprise was misplaced. Those who are most likely to suffer police repression, and thus have to make use of complaints procedures, are of course going to be in possession of certain repertoires of knowledge concerning policing and the criminal justice system. They would make it their business to be informed, out of self-defence. I don't buy the idea that these kids are just clueless about the political background of their oppression. And I think they're most likely on a learning curve now, as yet undecided as to what wider political conclusions they will draw from all of this. Like it or not, they are now part of the wider ideological crisis, now a key ingredient in the slow-motion collapse of the political leadership. How they see their involvement here, and how their perception changes, long after the smoke has cleared and the empty rhetoric has stopped, should be of some interest.

Rioting for 'justice' in London

Broken windows and looted stores across London after a police killing became a tipping point for disenfranchised youth.



Young people take control of the streets in the riotous aftermath of Thursday's police killing, which created a tipping point in communities, where a lack of jobs and social services has given angry youth nowhere to vent frustrations [EPA]

On Saturday, hundreds of people gathered outside the Tottenham police station, peacefully calling for "justice" for Mark Duggan, a man killed by officers three days prior.

Police stood in formation, separating the community members from the station they were guarding, until a 16-year-old woman reportedly approached an officer to find out what was going on.

According to a [witness account](#), some officers pushed the young woman and drew their batons.

"And that's when the people started to retaliate. Now I think in all circumstances, having seen that, most people retaliate," said the witness.

The "retaliation", from peaceful chants of "justice" in front of the police station, have since turned into massive groups of Londoners in numerous parts of the city who seem unafraid of breaking windows, looting stores, and burning buildings, doubtless causing millions of pounds' worth of damage.

Scores of businesses have been looted and international media continue to play images of smoldering buildings, in areas where firefighters were reportedly too afraid to enter - for their own safety.

According to witnesses and overhead helicopter footage, police have not been able to control much of the situation, and have repeatedly been forced into retreat by angry rioters.

"The kids realise the police can't keep control of it," said Bristly Pioneer, a Hackney resident and activist with the Space Hijackers, an anarchist collective focused on reclaiming public

space. "And the kids don't give a f*** because no one gives a f*** about them."

"These kids have basically been abandoned - not even just the kids, whole communities have been abandoned by the rest of society," he added. "I can't say I'm surprised this is happening. It's been building for years."

Klara, an activist with [Occupied London](#), a group focused on responding to the European austerity crisis, and another resident of Hackney, asked that her last name not be used. She told Al Jazeera: "It's a bubble of anger and anxiety and oppression that has to be burst."

"When you talk to people in the streets, they're extremely politically articulate. They know the problems in their community," she said.

In a [video](#) posted on The Guardian's website on July 31, youth in the London borough of Haringey described the effects of the closure of eight youth centres, a move they said led to a growth in gang membership and crime - as they and their peers have nowhere to go after school.

A week before any window was broken or store looted, one of the young people in the video said: "The government doesn't realise what they're doing to us". Another adds, "there's going to be a riot".

A tipping point

Tottenham, where Duggan was killed, is a Haringey neighbourhood which has among the highest unemployment rates in London - and a larger than average youth population. People of colour here have particularly felt the effects of deteriorating social services and targeted police harassment and violence, said author [Richard Seymour](#).

"There's kids here who basically no one cares about, and nobody does anything for," said Seymour, a PhD candidate at the London School of Economics. "When the rioters themselves are asked, they will say that they are abused by police, harassed by them, and nobody's done a thing about it."

Seymour also explained that after many of the [333 deaths in police custody](#) between 1998 and 2010 in Britain, "Large, peaceful protests in response [to the in-custody deaths] were more or less ignored" and not a single officer has been prosecuted.

As a result, Duggan's killing crossed a threshold for young people, angry with the systems that have left them behind, and tired of non-violent protest that goes without much response.

"I saw a whole load of kids, ranging from teenagers, and also grown-ups, in the streets. Most people seemed very happy, there were a lot of smiles in the streets, and a sense that people finally had control of something ... And then there were people who were extremely angry at police," said Klara, the Occupied London activist. "It's just surprising that something like this hasn't happened before now."

Meanwhile, a local shop owner told Al Jazeera: "I'm very shocked ... I'm so devastated. I don't know how to explain myself."

The chaotic situation has left many Londoners, and people around the world, wondering when the destruction will stop - and how the government will respond to the anger born out of alleged police racism, cuts to social services and unemployment.

Criminality

Just moments before Britain's prime minister made his first post-riot statement, Seymour told

Al Jazeera: "The dominant response of the political class is to say it's all criminality ... that's something that could undermine anything towards seeking justice."

The alternative, he said, would be "addressing the political crisis" on a deeper level.

David Cameron, the British prime minister, played the card Seymour had predicted, saying: "This is criminality pure and simple, and it has to be confronted and defeated."

London's acting police commissioner, Tim Godwin, agreed, saying: "This is not a game - this is criminality, burglary and violence ... There can be no excuses for this behaviour." Calls to Scotland Yard went unanswered.

"Everyone is anticipating the probability of more violence as night approaches. Everyone has their theories about this, but I think one of their [the government's] main challenges will be to separate genuine grievance from simple copy-cat criminality," said Al Jazeera's Tim Friend, reporting from London.

But that would mean the government strongly recognises the 'grievances', which is far, at least, from the initial response.

In his first statement on the riot on Tuesday morning, the British PM said at least 450 people had been arrested for riot-related crimes.

Cameron also announced a massing of police officers, with numbers to be increased from 6,000 in the first three nights of rioting to 16,000 on Tuesday night.

"There will be aid from police coming from up and down the country," he said. "We will see that many more arrests will be coming in the coming days."

Speaking directly to those breaking the law, Cameron said: "Justice will be done ... You will feel the full force of the law, and if you are old enough to commit these crimes, you are old enough to feel the full consequences."

Klara said that many people support the increase in police presence and hope that it will force the end of rioting, but warned that the support of intensive policing measures "could spark things off even more, because the police are exactly the problem in these neighbourhoods".

"It's hard to say what type of policing would calm things down and what type of policing would escalate it ... When you're being harassed by police on a daily basis, you're no longer afraid of it."

Finding 'justice' in the rubble

With police absent or unable to control crowds in past days, reports have spread of communities banding together to defend their own neighbourhoods.

"There's a Turkish neighbourhood in Hackney that successfully prevented the rioters from destroying the area," said Klara.

Seymour described similar scenes of people standing outside their businesses with baseball bats, in a vigilante defence from lawless London.

"I talked to residents and they told me they will do the same if they don't feel like their livelihoods are being protected by the police," said Al Jazeera's Charlie Angela, reporting from Hackney,

In a different form of community defence, one of the highest trending hashtags on Twitter

early on Tuesday was [#riotcleanup](#), and many people used it to coordinate cleanup efforts in riot-hit neighbourhoods around London.

What has emerged due to rioting is a lawless sense that Londoners need to create response plans for when police are not able to handle a situation.

Klara said that more than ever, she's seen riotous streets actually become an avenue of democratic action.

"There is a lot of debate in the streets. Everyone's talking about police killings, deaths in custody [and other social woes]."

Meanwhile, no one seems to support the destruction caused by the riots, but many believe that the situation is an expression of political anger.

When asked if the riots could lead to any positive outcome, Seymour said it already had, and described an interview he saw on television in which a rioter was asked the same question.

The rioter's answer: "Yes [it has been successful], because if we hadn't rioted, you wouldn't be talking to us now."

Exclusive: Teen Gang Reveals Looting Spree



By Tom Parmenter, Sky News correspondent | Sky News – 6 hours ago

- Four teenagers who looted in neighbourhoods across London have told Sky News it was like a 'shopping spree'.

Speaking on condition of anonymity the group admitted that they stole iPads, Blackberry tablets, games consoles, laptops, clothes, trainers and even nappies and clothes for their children.

They claim that they used a transit van to move between different boroughs and grabbed so many different items that the van was filled several times and emptied between their sprees.

The young men, all aged 16 or 17, told Sky that they are not part of an organised gang but just disillusioned young men who cannot find work.

One 16-year-old said: "Everything we wanted we could get.

"I couldn't believe the van could hold so much stuff."

They admitted that they spent two nights looting in their home borough of Lewisham but also went to Catford, Bromley and Clapham.

A 17-year-old admitted that his stop in Clapham Junction was solely to target a store where he had been refused work.

He said: "It was Comet - they didn't reply to me emailing my CV, or going up there so this was payback man, payback."

The teens told Sky News that their parents were unaware of their involvement, one even said he had been warned by his parents to stay in his bedroom but jumped out of his window to join in the looting.

They claim to have hidden their haul at homes of friends or had already sold goods onto the black market.

One said he had sold a Blackberry tablet for £400 on the Gumtree website.

Another, wearing a pair of Nike trainers that he had stolen, said: "Right now it looks like there isn't a future for young people, that's how I see it."

He added: "We are not doing it for the fun of it, we are doing it for money to survive."

None of the group was concerned about the unprecedented police efforts to catch those responsible.

They said they believed that because there were so many people looting that their chances of not getting caught were "quite good."

The Metropolitan Police have already arrested over a thousand people across the capital and have vowed that there will be many more as they trawl through CCTV and other evidence.

The teenagers, speaking on the banks of the Thames opposite the financial centre of Canary Wharf, said they believe inequality is part of the problem.

Referring to wealthy bankers and businessmen one said: "They are only interested in one pocket, not ours, the pocket over there."

All insisted they have been doing voluntary work while applying for jobs but often their job applications are not even acknowledged.

One teenager appealed for the Government to help them and said: "They say are going to help us but I don't see any of it, there has to be more opportunities and jobs."

"Help us at least and then maybe everyone will settle down."

Who are the rioters? Young men from poor areas ... but that's not the full story

The crowds involved in violence and looting are drawn from a complex mix of social and racial backgrounds

- [Paul Lewis](#) and [James Harkin](#)
- [The Guardian](#), Wednesday 10 August 2011
-



Those involved in the riots and looting are from a diverse range of backgrounds and age groups. Photograph: Simon Dawson/AP

The crowd gathered outside Chalk Farm tube station at 1am on Tuesday morning was representative of those who had been at the frontline of other riots over the previous 72 hours.

Anyone who has witnessed the disturbances up close will know there is no simple answer to the question: who are the rioters? Attempts to use simple categorisations to describe the looters belies the complex make-up of those who have been participating.

Some who have been victims of the looting resent attempts to rationalise or give meaning to what they perceive as the mindless thuggery of an "underclass". Others want an explanation of who has been taking part – and why.

In the broadest sense, most of those involved have been young men from poor areas. But the generalisation cannot go much further than that. It can't be said that they are largely from one racial group. Both young men and women have joined in.

Take events in Chalk Farm, north London. First the streets contained people of all backgrounds sprinting off with bicycles looted from Evans Cycles. Three Asian men in their 40s, guarding a newsagent, discussed whether they should also take advantage of the apparent suspension of law.

"If we go for it now, we can get a bike," said one. "Don't do it," said another. Others were not so reticent; a white woman and a man emerged carrying a bike each. A young black teenager, aged about 14, came out smiling, carrying another bike, only for it to be snatched from him by an older man.

They were just some of the crowd of about 100 who had gathered on the corner; a mix of the curious and angry, young and old. It was impossible to distinguish between thieves, bystanders and those who simply wanted to cause damage.

A group of about 20 youths were wielding scaffolding poles taken from a nearby building site. They used their makeshift weapons, along with bricks and stolen bottles of wine, to intermittently attack passing motorists or smash bus shelters. A man in a slim suit stood on the corner recording the violence on his mobile phone.

Most of those he was filming had covered their faces. One had a full balaclava with holes cut out only for the eyes and mouth. "Is that you, bruv?" an older man, aged about 30, hands in pockets, asked the man in the balaclava. Recognising his friend, he laughed and added: "Fuck. Don't stand near me – you're going to get me arrested."

Seconds later there was a smash as the minicab office around the corner was broken into. Teenagers swarmed in, shouting: "Bwap, bwap, bwap."

The arrival of a line of riot police from Camden, where a branch of Sainsbury's and clothing stores had been looted an hour earlier, signalled it was time for everyone to move on.

But there was no rush; the group knew from experience that police would hold back for the time being. "Keep an eye on the Feds, man," said one youth.

Overheard snippets of conversation gave an insight into how the disparate groups were deciding where to go.

One man said: "Hampstead, bruv. Let's go rob Hampstead." Another, looking at his BlackBerry, said: "Kilburn, it's happening in Kilburn and Holloway." A third added: "The whole country is burning, man."

And as multi-ethnic areas from London to Birmingham, Liverpool and Bristol burned, a myth was being dispelled: that so-called "black youths" are largely behind such violence.

In Tottenham on Saturday many of those who gathered at the police station to protest against the shooting of Mark Duggan were, like him, black. But others were Asian and white.

By the following day, as the looting spread to other north London suburbs, there appeared to have been a slight shift in the demographic, which started to look younger. In Enfield most of those who gathered in the town centre were white. The youngest looked about 10-years-old.

Those taking part in the battles in Hackney's Pembury estate on Monday included many women. Teenage girls helped carry debris to form the burning barricades or made piles of rocks.

One, with a yellow scarf across her face, was seemingly at the forefront. She helped set a motorbike alight, walking away with her hands aloft. Other women shouted instructions from the windows of nearby flats and houses.

"Croydon is burning down," shouted one woman who looked about 40, from her flat above a shop. Another warned the crowd when police were spotted nearby.

The mix was visible around the same time several miles south, near Peckham High Street. The fact that many youths covered their faces with masks made identifying them almost impossible.

A few young men sculpted impromptu masks out of stolen pharmacy bags, making them resemble members of the youth wing of the Ku Klux Klan. An older girl with them reached into a bag and pulled out a giant bag of Haribo sweets. The atmosphere was akin to a school sports day or a visit to a rowdy open-air cinema.

A few of them tried in vain to start a fire. The girl handing out sweets said: "Why don't they do the hair shop, have you seen the products they keep in the back?"

When another group finished ransacking a pawnbroker's and started cleaning out a local fashion boutique, an angry young black woman berated one of them. "You're taking the piss, man. That woman hand-stitches everything, she's built that shop up from nothing. It's like stealing from your mum."

A girl holding a looted wedding dress smiled sheepishly, stuck for anything to say.

Jay Kast, 24, a youth worker from East Ham who has witnessed rioting across London over the last three nights, said he was concerned that black community leaders were wrongly identifying a problem "within".

"I've seen Turkish boys, I've seen Asian boys, I've seen grown white men," he said. "They're all out there taking part." He recognised an element of opportunism in the mass looting but said an underlying cause was that many young people felt "trapped in the system". "They're disconnected from the community and they just don't care," he said.

In some senses the rioting has been unifying a cross-section of deprived young men who identify with each other, he added.

Kast gave the example of how territorial markers which would usually delineate young people's residential areas – known as 'endz', 'bits' and 'gates' – appear to have melted away.

"On a normal day it wouldn't be allowed – going in to someone else's area. A lot of them, on a normal day, wouldn't know each other and they might be fighting," Kast said.

"Now they can go wherever they want. They're recognising themselves from the people they see on the TV [rioting]. This is bringing them together."

A late evening walk down the Walworth Road revealed that the Argos and various electrical stores had been smashed up. Police were sealing off banks and retail outlets with tape. A platoon of youths came in from Peckham in the early evening, a man still sweeping up the remains of his shop window said. They cordoned off the road before they began looting, which suggests some level of criminal organisation.

A middle-aged African-Caribbean man explained that some young people were targeting Asian and Afghani shops, the result of petty local disagreements. And there's no denying that a small minority are simply out to hurt people. A Chinese student, the same man said, had been set upon by a gang and beaten quite badly, simply for taking a picture.

All the same, there's more than brute criminality here. When incidents like this happen the authorities are fond of saying that troublemakers have been bussed in from outside.

But there's none of that here. Neither is there any sign of the anti-globalisation or anarchist crowds.

This is unadulterated, indigenous anger and ennui. It's a provocation, a test of will and a hamfisted two-finger salute to the authorities.

•This article was amended on 10 August 2011 to remove a reference to Afro-Caribbean in contravention of Guardian style. This has been corrected.

Tottenham and beyond: neoliberal riots and the possibility of politics

Submitted by [Ramona](#) on Aug 10 2011 11:49

tags:

- [UK](#)
- [police](#)
- [William Wall](#)
- [riots](#)
- [UK against austerity](#)
- [UK riots](#)



Writer and poet William Wall explores the link between neoliberalism and the UK riots.

One of the many things that we hear repeated ad nauseam in the context of the present rioting in London is that the rioters are ‘feral’, ‘yobs’, ‘thugs’ or more generously ‘disaffected youth’. All the talk from Cameron and his cohorts is of crime and punishment and ‘the full force of the law’ - as if these young people did not encounter the full force of the law on a daily basis. We are told variously that there is no political context, no political motive, no political enemy – it is ‘criminality pure and simple’. This is because violence against the police (and therefore the state) is not considered in itself to be political. It is because the envy of, the desire for and the acquisition of luxury goods such as plasma TVs and jewellery is not considered political. The political class and the commentariat cannot conceive of themselves as enemies of the people who live in areas like Tottenham where Tory cuts are closing youth centres, which suffer massive unemployment even while the City is booming, and which are the objects of legislation designed to disadvantage them even further.

On the other hand, the neoliberal state functions primarily as a way of facilitating the accumulation of wealth and hence luxury goods. The purpose of the state, neoliberal theory tells us, is to enable business and industry to function profitably and to this end it must undertake certain activities that business and industry cannot reasonably be expected to make a profit from - road building, for example, or providing a police force – although, as profit margins shrink and markets are flooded by competitors, even these sacred state functions are being ‘de-regulated’ or privatised to allow for profit-making companies to take them over. The proposed privatisation of the prison-service is an example, as is the continuous drive to open education up to exploitation by computer companies. It’s hardly worth mentioning the crazy argument that the NHS in the UK is ‘broken’ and the Tory programme of opening it up to supposedly cheaper and more efficient profit-making companies - despite the fact that all the studies show that the NHS is the most efficient and cost-effective way of delivering health care.

So capitalism is looting the public sphere. Services that citizens have for a hundred or more years considered to be public goods and not to be exploited for the profit of a few – health care, care of the elderly, education, unemployment benefit, old-age pensions, fresh water, sewers, waste disposal, roads and footpaths, urban and rural planning, the postal service, the telephone service, the police, and so on – are subject to systematic and sustained pressure aimed at breaking the link between the citizen and the service. No longer should we think of these things as ‘ours’, except in the sense that we can say a bank is ours. These things are provided to us as goods and services by

companies which exercise their right to make a profit out of them – out of us really, out of our pain, our parent's old age, our children's childhood, our money troubles, our environment. Citizens are to be redefined as consumers of services. The sole function of the state is to regulate the activities of companies so that monopolies do not develop.

The police function as the guarantor of profit. The police are 'ours' only in the way the taxman is ours. The police thus find themselves increasingly (for it was ever thus) with their backs to the corporate wall facing a disinherited citizenry for whom the state is a hostile force. This makes the police political for it is a mistake to think that the looting of the public sphere by corporations and individuals is not political. Of course, nobody on the corporation side wants to call it that. They want it to be understood as common sense. The state is 'broken', they say, or it has 'failed'. Only profit-making companies can do the job efficiently and give good value for money to the consumer. What they really mean is 'We're going to take the money and run'. When you're down and out, feeling low, check your credit rating.

At a time when the gap between the rich and the poor is at an historic high, higher than it was in the nineteenth century when capitalism was at its peak, is it any surprise that unemployed young men from Tottenham, Hackney, Clapham or Peckham have learned these lessons well? In the event of the breakdown of the state, keep your eye on the main chance. Gold is at an all-time high now, it's where all the smart investors are going. They take their money and run. There's always a market for cool TVs, especially with the Olympics coming up – just up the road from Tottenham as it happens. If you're not in you can't win. So get in there and take what you can. In the end of the day it's just business. From MacDonald's to the 'Payday loans' and 'we buy gold' companies that advertise all over East and South London, the message is clear: 'The only value we place on you is your ability to pay. Anyone who can't afford to pay is a scrounger, a scum, a chavvy bastard, a parasite.'

In this world the police are just another form of violence – look at what they did to the anti-cuts marchers. They are the state's weapon of choice for disciplining disaffected youth, for criminalising dissent and for protecting profit. They're not playing the latter role very effectively in London at present, but they've worked hard at the others, which are easier picking. The recent gaol sentence of 16 months for Charlie Gilmour for supposedly violent acts during the recent anti-cuts protest, the worst of which acts seem to have involved throwing a dustbin at Prince Charles' Rolls Royce and swinging from a flagstaff, contrasts sharply with the fact that no policeman has ever been convicted for the death in custody of a black person. The shooting dead of a black man in a mini-cab in Ferry Lane, Tottenham is all of a piece with this repressive function. We now know that there is no evidence to support the police alibi that Mark Duggan fired first. Whether or not he was a gangster, as the police believed, the fact is they would never have shot a bank director. Nevertheless, the banker is the obverse of the coin that has Mark Duggan's face on it. The closure of three-quarters of the youth centres in Tottenham by the present Tory government is directly linked to the supposed stability of the UK economy. The price of the banker's home is paid by the young citizens of North and South London. Today, on RTE's Liveline programme I heard a man who lived in London describe the rioters as 'shopping with our money'. That works both ways. The banker shops with money that should have gone to the communities of Tottenham, Clapham, Hackney ...

That the rioters have only tentatively made that connection is not their fault. If I were the Tory government and their criers-in I would dread the day that the disaffected youth makes a more accurate assessment of their oppressor, when they will move on from the enemy in their face (the police) to the enemy behind the one-way windows and 'iconic' buildings. That they have repeatedly targeted the big multinational chains – Topshop, Hugo Boss, MacDonald's, Sony, and Carpetright (Chairman Lord Harris of Peckham, Conservative Party donor and Member of House of Lords), and that there have been 'disturbances' in Oxford Street is significant. In the meantime they live the poor kid's version of the neoliberal dream, shopping 'with our money' in all the best places, bringing home the latest in sports shoes, technology and that best of all investments, gold.

There is nothing mindless about this violence. It is intelligent, technological and well-organised. Tactically, the rioters have outfoxed the much stronger police force and the intelligence services. It is destructive of community life certainly, brutally hard on small shopkeepers and people living on or near the high streets, but is it as destructive as permanent unemployment, hopelessness and the conviction that the state has abandoned you in favour of the Stock Exchange? That these young people have turned on the most immediate symbols of power and wealth and that they want some of it for themselves makes these riots no worse than the destruction undertaken by Thatcher or beginning under Cameron. And they are quintessentially neoliberal because these young people have absorbed the dictum that greed is good, that you take what you can, that the powerful shall inherit the earth.

Buried in there, under all the false consciousness, there is still a measure of anger deriving from the increasing humiliation of themselves and their parents and their communities. It is accompanied by a certainty that the toffs of the Tory party, the owners of multinational corporations and the police are their enemies. The structure of the thing may not be very clear to them, but they feel its effects. Their lives are looted. They have nothing to lose.

But if [this brave and powerful speaker](#) from Hackney has her way they may find a better analysis. 'Get real black people,' she says, 'if we're fighting for a fucking cause we're fighting for a fucking cause'. She knows that the riots are political, but it's the wrong politics at the moment. They're fighting for the wrong cause. Writer Darcus Howe [says so too](#) (this video may be taken down by Youtube, so share if you can) but, with more experience, he calls it an insurrection.

[As I write London is quieter but the action has moved to Manchester (from which many of London's police reinforcements have been drawn!), Birmingham and Bristol, and a police station in Nottingham has been fire-bombed.]

From [The Ice Moon](#) blog.

Comments

Submitted by [Standfield](#) on Aug 11 2011 04:11.

A good read, really interesting, cheers! I'll forward it as much as possible.

- [Login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Submitted by [AIW](#) on Aug 11 2011 09:36.

"No worse than Thatcher"! You supported the rebellions in Egypt but are scared now that the same things are happening in England.

FUCKING HELL!

The scale of destruction in London is more like the Los Angeles riots than anything previously seen in the UK. The pity is that the only areas that seemed to have escaped destruction are the very rich ones but when people rise up the outcomes are never neatly packaged. People fight where they are and with whatever they can lay their hands on. The ferocity of a long repressed rage has shocked me who only a few days ago was writing 'when will our class ever wake up and fight back'. Thankfully no one has been killed or seriously injured and despite the howls of hypocritical outrage from our political class tomorrow it is property that has been hit – and as we all know property is theft. But it is only by luck that no one has been killed and tonight it's clear that unlike the other nights there has been anti-social behaviour with random attacks on people in the streets and setting fire to houses and flats and small shops often in a reckless way and random cars attacked and many people frightened and scared. This is fucking shit and out of order and to be opposed wherever it occurs. This will not unite our class but divide it but it's happened and we can not wish it away.

We live in an absurdly unjust society where we will see tomorrow our privileged Oxbridge and privately educated leaders fly home from their Tuscan holiday villas to condemn those at the bottom of the shitpile of capitalism. This will be grotesque. The Bullingdon bullies and toffs of the Chipping Norton set – with the Milibands no different in the privilege stakes – have no idea that life is like for those who have been rioting. Social mobility in Britain is non-existent – you can not rise up. The political class controls all aspects of our society and owns all of the land. The bankers get millions while someone who loots a mobile phone will get a long jail sentence. It is a grotesque absurd society – no wonder the explosion when it comes is viscerally ferocious. My own belief is that this day will mark the end of the rioting – all passion spent. We will then have to be strong because to speak positively of the rioting will be difficult in the face of the welter of reaction to come. While all the political class will outdo each other in condemnation it will not be the time for us to duck below the parapet. The rioters will revert back to silence. The Daily Mail will incite the 'decent' working class to ally with the frightened middle class and demand retribution. The witch hunts will begin. The voices of reaction will dominate again but in a way they never dared before. But everything has changed. The police can only operate by consent. Yesterday that consent was withdrawn and they and the government were powerless. They could no longer call the shots. The rioters were the ones with the power. They will now lie low but they will know they can exercise that power collectively again. Maybe during the Olympics. Maybe sooner. But they will rise again. The Tuscan villas will no longer be immune from the sound of class anger. Things are never going to be the same. WE ARE MANY AND THOSE CUNTS ARE FEW. That we now know.

"We spoke to looters trying to get home - the only explanation they gave for their behaviour was that they had no money today

From Brixton to Tottenham, the inequality at the heart of the riots

Posted on [August 8, 2011](#) by [jodymcintyre](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

On Thursday evening, Mark Duggan was shot dead by police officers in Tottenham. The IPCC immediately announced they would investigate; unusual for an organisation known for its inefficiency and regular failures to get to the truth. The media were told that a non-police issue firearm had been recovered from the scene, and that one of the police officers had been injured. Later reports revealed a bullet found lodged in a police radio. The obvious conclusions were drawn.

Now, we know that it was a police bullet lodged in the radio. Presumably, “friendly fire”. The recovered firearm was in a sock. Mark Duggan didn’t fire a single shot. Another man executed at the hands of the police, and more lies and disinformation from the IPCC.

On Saturday night, I was eating dinner at a friend’s house when news of clashes with police in Tottenham filtered through. Twitter was our main news source, and phone calls confirmed that riot police were being deployed in the area. Earlier that evening, the family of Mr. Duggan and local residents had protested outside Tottenham police station. Two days had passed, and they had received no explanation for his death. In similar fashion, their demonstration and demands for answers were ignored.

More people gathered, and frustration grew. Days earlier, Haringey council had announced the closing of eight out of the 13 youth clubs in the borough. Now, a man had been shot dead in the street, and no-one seemed to care.

The context we are told to ignore. These riots have nothing to do with the death of Mark Duggan. These riots have nothing to do with rising unemployment. These riots have nothing to do with the cuts to education and youth centres. Simply mindless violence, we are told.

As I arrived in Tottenham, I could see a huge fire at the other end of the main road. Police officers had cordoned off a large area, and were being occasionally pelted with bricks and bottles in side streets. For the most part, the police seemed happy to let fires burn, even when they drifted dangerously close to nearby homes. After all, this

was Tottenham, not Westminster. We directed fire engines when they arrived. When questioned, a police officer told us he was “here to protect the police”, not local residents.

As the night progressed, another police car was set alight. The attention of the crowd turned to looting, and as I drove away, I saw scores of people walking in and out of JD Sports, piles of clothes in their hand. Did I sympathise with the people who saw their homes or corner shops damaged, yes. Did I sympathise with JD Sports, no.

If it is a question of where my solidarity lies, and the options are M&S and Footlocker versus young people in the streets, then there is only one answer. The following evening, Brixton erupted in similar disturbances. Footlocker, which is located roughly 150 metres away from Brixton police station, was the first to be raided. For the first 25 minutes of looting, the police chose not to respond.

When they finally did, people were not kettled, as in the student demonstrations, but simply forced further down the High Street as looting continued. M&S, Vodafone, H&M and McDonalds all had their windows smashed. I received a torrent of abuse online for expressing support for the riots. The same abuse I expect Martin Luther King received for saying “A riot is the language of the unheard”. The same abuse I expect Bob Marley received for singing “That’s why we gonna be burning and looting tonight...” Sorry, but my solidarity does not lie with corporations making millions and their fully-insured smashed windows, it lies with human beings who lose their lives and their families. Nor, for that matter, does it lie with the politicians, now so quick to condemn the riots, who sent the British army to burn and loot in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Further down Effra Road, crowds began to pour into Currys. Riot police with weapons attempted to push people away from the Tulse Hill end of Effra Road, but were forced to retreat towards Brixton under a hail of paving stones. Three police vans sped away. For over an hour, a constant stream of plasma screens and other electronic goods were carried out of Currys. There was nothing the police could do.

However, if they want the rioting to stop, there is something extremely simple the police could do. Stop killing people.

Whilst many seek to pin the blame on the inevitable result of decades of oppression in under-privileged communities, the causes of the riots are swept under the rugs looted from Carpet Right. Inequality is at the heart of this. As long as the police see themselves as above the law, young people will take it into their own hands.

On Effra Road, a police helicopter flew so low overhead that I could feel the shaking on the ground. I saw it filming the crowds as people hauled goods out of Currys. Young people without the foresight to cover their faces, and a crackdown is sure to follow. More arrests, more stop and searches, more targeting of ethnic minorities, and the looting will be the excuse.

For this uprising to continue in an effective manner, organisation is needed. Random looting is not going to overcome police injustice. But until then, the language of the unheard will continue to be spoken

Camila Batmanghelidjh: Caring costs – but so do riots

These rioters feel they don't actually belong to the community. For years, they've felt cut adrift from society

London has woken up to street violence, and the usual narratives have emerged – punish those responsible for the violence because they are "opportunist criminals" and "disgusting thieves". The slightly more intellectually curious might blame the trouble on poor police relations or lack of policing.

My own view is that the police in this country do an impressive job and unjustly carry the consequences of a much wider social dysfunction. Before you take a breath of sarcasm thinking "here she goes, excusing the criminals with some sob story", I want to begin by stating two things. First, violence and looting can never be justified. Second, for those of us working at street level, we're not surprised by these events.

Twitter and Facebook have kept the perverse momentum going, transmitting invitations such as: "Bare shops are gonna get smashed up. So come, get some (free stuff!!!!) F... the feds we will send them back with OUR riot! Dead the ends and colour war for now. So If you see a brother... SALUTE! If you see a fed... SHOOT!"

If this is a war, the enemy, on the face of it, are the "lawless", the defenders are the law-abiding. An absence of morality can easily be found in the rioters and looters. How, we ask, could they attack their own community with such disregard? But the young people would reply "easily", because they feel they don't actually belong to the community. Community, they would say, has nothing to offer them. Instead, for years they have experienced themselves cut adrift from civil society's legitimate structures. Society relies on collaborative behaviour; individuals are held accountable because belonging brings personal benefit. Fear or shame of being alienated keeps most of us pro-social.

Working at street level in London, over a number of years, many of us have been concerned about large groups of young adults creating their own parallel antisocial communities with different rules. The individual is responsible for their own survival because the established community is perceived to provide nothing. Acquisition of goods through violence is justified in neighbourhoods where the notion of dog eat dog pervades and the top dog survives the best. The drug economy facilitates a parallel subculture with the drug dealer producing more fiscally efficient solutions than the social care agencies who are too under-resourced to compete.

The insidious flourishing of anti-establishment attitudes is paradoxically helped by the establishment. It grows when a child is dragged by their mother to social services screaming for help and security guards remove both; or in the shiny academies which, quietly, rid themselves of the most disturbed kids. Walk into the mental hospitals and there is nothing for the patients to do except peel the wallpaper. Go to the youth centre and you will find the staff have locked themselves up in the office because disturbed young men are dominating the space with their violent dogs. Walk on the estate stairwells with your baby in a buggy manoeuvring past the condoms, the

needles, into the lift where the best outcome is that you will survive the urine stench and the worst is that you will be raped. The border police arrive at the neighbour's door to grab an "over-stayer" and his kids are screaming. British children with no legal papers have mothers surviving through prostitution and still there's not enough food on the table.

It's not one occasional attack on dignity, it's a repeated humiliation, being continuously dispossessed in a society rich with possession. Young, intelligent citizens of the ghetto seek an explanation for why they are at the receiving end of bleak Britain, condemned to a darkness where their humanity is not even valued enough to be helped. Savagery is a possibility within us all. Some of us have been lucky enough not to have to call upon it for survival; others, exhausted from failure, can justify resorting to it.

Our leaders still speak about how protecting the community is vital. The trouble is, the deal has gone sour. The community has selected who is worthy of help and who is not. In this false moral economy where the poor are described as dysfunctional, the community fails. One dimension of this failure is being acted out in the riots; the lawlessness is, suddenly, there for all to see. Less visible is the perverse insidious violence delivered through legitimate societal structures. Check out the price of failing to care.

I got a call yesterday morning. The kids gave me a run-down of what had happened in Brixton. A street party had been invaded by a group of young men out to grab. A few years ago, the kids who called me would have joined in, because they had nothing to lose. One had been permanently excluded from six schools. When he first arrived at Kids Company he cared so little that he would smash his head into a pane of glass and bite his own flesh off with rage. He'd think nothing of hurting others. After intensive social care and support he walked away when the riots began because he held more value in his membership of a community that has embraced him than a community that demanded his dark side.

It costs money to care. But it also costs money to clear up riots, savagery and antisocial behaviour. I leave it to you to do the financial and moral sums.

Camila Batmanghelidjh is founder of the charities The Place To Be and Kids Company

Tottenham Police Told "This Is What You Get - Fire"



After last night's fighting in Tottenham, the media are of course quick to condemn the rioters, and to suggest that they should have waited for an 'Independent' Police Complaints Commission report into the state killing of father of five Mark Duggan. Though the full story has yet to come out, a couple of alternative perspectives have already been posted on Red Pepper and libcom. The latter is reposted in full below:

Hundreds gathered on the streets of Tottenham, North London, after the police killed local man, Mark Duggan. Barricades were set up and police cars burned as the protests ran long into the night.

On Saturday afternoon, friends and family of Mark Duggan, the 29 year old man shot and killed by the police on Thursday, marched from his home in Broadwater Farm estate to Tottenham police station. They waited for someone to come out from the police station and hear their concerns, and give answers about Mark's death, but they were ignored.

At around 9pm, Haringey Solidarity Group reported on Twitter

Quote:

Riot taking place right now outside Tottenham cop shop about the guy killed by the pigs this week | 200 riot cops deployed |

As the evening continued, reports and photos came through, as about 300-500 people from across the community gathered on Tottenham High Road, and pictures of two police cars set on fire with petrol bombs filtered through to the mainstream media.

Chants of "Whose streets? Our streets!" and "We want answers!" could be heard from the crowd. A protester from the original march from Broadwater Farm interviewed on BBC News said the police attacked a 16-year old woman with batons without provocation, sparking a response from the crowd who up to that point had been chanting outside the police station.

Eye witness reports described police "running and hiding" as they were unable to contain the crowds, who had built barricades and were charging police lines, using makeshift missiles and burning wheelie bins to keep the police away. A stand-off seemed to happen for some time, as police and protesters formed lines, before a double decker bus was set on fire. There have been widespread reports of looting and fires being set, including in the local job centre. By 2.30am, there are now reports on Twitter of rioting spreading into Wood Green, Turnpike Lane, and Green Lanes, as the police are trying to break up crowds on Tottenham High Road. There have been reports of Tottenham Hale retail park being looted, including JJB Sports and PC World.

Channel 4 quoted "Jamal", an eye witness, saying:

Quote:

"These are our ends, we're here to tell the police they can't abuse us, harass us. We won't put up with it, this is just the beginning, this is war, and this is what you get - fire."

The BBC broadcast live footage of young people smashing the windows of an empty police car, and then asked protesters why they were trying to block the camera crew from filming. Both Sky News and BBC withdrew their camera crews from the scene as crews were challenged and attacked. BBC and Sky have quoted the local MP, David Lammy, claiming that the people on the street are not representative of the majority of Tottenham residents. However, their own live footage showed local people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds standing together and forming lines against the police. The police have been insisting that the events are 'localised' and are not spreading beyond Tottenham, eye witness accounts are disputing this, and the mainstream media have been effectively shut out of the area.

Tottenham saw major riots in 1985 in response to the death of Cynthia Jarrett at the hands of the police. Tottenham has also been hit by recent government austerity measures, with several youth centres being closed in recent weeks.

The UK Riots and Capitalism's Decay



London's burning...but why?

Parts of London are still burning after an enormous third night of riots, during which the flames have spread to Birmingham, Nottingham, Bristol and Liverpool. There is huge controversy over the conflagration, and the media establishment is doing its best to condemn, rather than try to understand. As a communist, this is not enough for me. These riots are the sudden bursting to the surface of social tensions that have been building up for many years - tensions that are rooted in the crisis of capitalism.

Amongst all the TV footage of buildings engulfed in flames, it's easy to forget that those flames were sparked by bullets from police guns. Last Thursday, cops shot and killed Mark Duggan on the streets of Tottenham in North London. The nation's biggest armed gang - Metropolitan Police - claimed that Duggan had been a "gangster", and it was reported that an officer had been shot during the incident. It later emerged that the bullet had embedded in the cop's radio, and it was police issue. This added credence to eyewitness statements that Duggan had been pinned down when he was killed.

On Saturday night, friends and family of Duggan gathered at Tottenham police station, demanding answers. Cops then set upon a sixteen-year-old girl with batons, for reasons which remain unclear. The stage was set for a nocturnal showdown between an angry community and the agents of the state. The violence seemed to be the living embodiment of Martin Luther King's quote that "A riot is the language of the unheard."

That was day one. On day two, the idea of rioting appears to have spread by word of mouth and - of course these days - on Twitter and Facebook. Doubtless many of those rioting had the notion that they were settling old scores with the police. Others seem to have seized on the opportunity to loot shops while the police were distracted. This pattern spread yet further on day three. There were also reports of violence against people who had nothing to do with the police.



Toxteth riots - thirty years on

But those paragraphs only take us so far in understanding what happened. Like any major event these days, it has to be analysed in the context of the economic crisis, which was touched off by the ultra-rich, and their losses have been steadily passed down the food chain, with the poorest suffering most. As even a *Daily Telegraph* article admits, this socio-economic vandalism has created the conditions in which such tumult was certain to happen sooner or later.

Two weeks ago I visited a small exhibition at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum, commemorating the Toxteth riots of 1981. Temporal distance had added understanding to the statements which lined the walls, though they went on to complacently claim that Liverpool was a very different place now. Last night, there was rioting in Toxteth's Upper Parliament Street once more.

But in a sense the exhibition blurb was right; Liverpool of 2011 *is* very different to the Liverpool of 1981. Back then we'd only had six years of the neoliberal assault. Now it's thirty-six. The latest crises of capitalism have created a generation of ghetto children with even less to lose.

The problem isn't that oppressed working class people are breaking the law en masse. The problem is that - justified anger at the police notwithstanding - so much of it is ostensibly 'apolitical', and many of the victims are entirely innocent politically speaking. As yet, there has been little leadership from the working class in the workplace. This apparently directionless outburst of rage and destruction is the inevitable result

Sunday, 7 August 2011

In the ashes of a riot

Posted by Phil Dickens at 21:49

Last night, Tottenham was ablaze. Today, the media and officialdom closes ranks to pin blame on a "criminal minority" and ignore the class anger boiling over across

Britain. Already, with the dust barely settled, a narrative built on convenience rather than fact is being billed as truth. It is vital that this is challenged, and people remember what actually happened last night.

To begin with, I'm not going to get into the whole business of condemnation and blame. A riot is not a tactic, carefully thought out and influenced by political debate, but a phenomenon. No amount of carefully-worded calls for calm or "I understand the anger but..." weasel words will stop a similar situation from arising again. It is an explosion of anger, fear, frustration, helplessness, into destruction. To stand back and argue that it was the wrong approach is to step out-of-touch from events as they unfold in the real world. It happened, and in all likelihood it will happen again.



As to why, we know that the immediate catalyst was the shooting of Mark Duggan by police on Thursday night. Following from the news of his death, a number of people - reports vary from 120 to around 500 - gathered outside the local police station. They were demanding answers, asking for someone to come out and speak to them.

The *Daily Mail* reports that the catalyst for the trouble was a 16-year-old girl throwing something at police. They retaliated by attacking her with shields and batons. The crowd surged forward in anger as a result of this, and the ensuing clashes had soon enough become the full-scale riot that we all saw on television. Far from the police narrative of the vigil being "hijacked by mindless thugs," it seems quite clear that the police had at least as much of a hand in starting the riot as anyone and that simmering class conflict did the rest.

But it would be simplistic to presume that the whole thing hangs on one death at the hands of police and one stone thrown by an angry youth.

As Dave Hill notes in the *Guardian*:

Tottenham forms the core of the borough of Haringey, where a fast-rising total of well over 10,000 people are claiming jobseeker's allowance. In Tottenham itself, recent

government figures showed there were 54 people chasing each registered employment vacancy. It would be wrong and unfair to damn the place as a slough of blight and turpitude, but the long, main Tottenham High Road provides few obvious outward signs of prosperity.

Worklessness and its associated subcultures are becoming more deeply ingrained, with Tottenham and neighbouring Edmonton recently failing in a bid to be made an economic enterprise zone and attempts to regenerate the White Hart Lane area threatened by the desire of wealthy Tottenham Hotspur Football Club to move elsewhere.

Despite a small fall in reported crime in the year to June 2011 compared with the previous 12 months, Haringey saw an increase in burglaries and an alarming rise in robberies against the person – up from 884 offences to 1,204.

Edmonton, which lies just across the borough border in Enfield, has become grimly associated with fatal stabbings of teenagers in recent years. Spending cuts have led to Haringey closing eight of 13 youth clubs with reductions in community police officer numbers soon to come: small sticking plasters that help stem the flow of blood in a city where violence against young people has long been rising ominously.

In such a climate, an event such as the shooting dead by police of 29 year-old father of four Mark Duggan on Thursday night is more likely to provide in some minds, especially young ones, a pretext, a rationale or an opportunity to jettison any respect for the law or regard for fellow citizens and let rip.

Of course, the liberal perspective on this says that such a "rationale" is wrong-headed. The police need only to "show that justice is being done" in order to restore calm. People "think they are overpoliced as criminals and underpoliced as victims," and if we can show this as wrong then they will stick to "peaceful protest" as the outlet for their frustrations.



But the fact is that more and more people are having their illusions in social democracy shattered. On the sharp end of capitalism, they can see its reality. In ALARM's words, "an economically bankrupt society, people being pushed out of their homes by gentrification, the NHS is being privatised, schools failing our

children. Transport, food, shelter, electricity all utterly unaffordable. All of this is held in place by the murderous force of the Metropolitan police."

This reality compounds a sense of alienation, frustration, and powerlessness. Politicians say what they need to when elections are coming, but none of them speak for working class and no matter how your vote is cast nothing ever changes. The left talk of fighting the cuts, but with an obsessive, insular focus on public sector unions and tactics such as A to B marches that continue to achieve nothing they have little relevance to those at the sharp end of austerity. Or of capitalism in general. This leaves a vacuum, within which the only options are despondency or violence - and it's the mark of someone who'll never have to face that choice to condemn someone for choosing the latter.

Then there's the police. Since 1998, 333 people have died in police custody, without a single officer ever being convicted. Thugs like Delroy Smellie know they will never have to face justice. Cynthia Jarrett's death sparked the last Tottenham riots. Blair Peach, Jean-Charles de Menezes, Ian Tomlinson, and Smiley Culture are just some of the more high-profile deaths at police hands.

On the other side of the law, much lesser crimes by Charlie Gilmour, Francis Fernie et al have fallen foul of politically motivated sentencing. Even anti-fascist action warrants jail time. Not to mention that youths hanging out on the streets and football fans can tell you of police heavy-handedness just as readily as protesters. Ultimately, there is no shortage of resentment for the police, and once you learn what their true role within society is, it is hard to un-learn it.



Not that any of this will seep its way into the mainstream narrative, of course. There will be some acknowledgement of the underlying causes from more liberal commentators, but only in the name of understanding condemnation and an offer of social democratic illusions to placate the seething masses. Conservatives will go beyond the bounds of the absurd, accusing everyone who acknowledges anything beyond evil as a cause of masking up and joining in themselves. Stories of how

"Twitter fuelled the riots" will continue to circulate, and the distinction of "peaceful citizens" and "criminal minority" will persist.

But this will not alter reality. It will not stem the rising tide of resentment and alienation across the working class. It will not stop the next riot from erupting when the right spark is created. When that happens, there will be a simple choice. Either we take the side of a working class in revolt or we take the side of the state.

INCUBUS

[August 9, 2011 at 12:23 pm](#)

I'm fucking sick of all the carping horseshit here, with its racist subtext, the same kind of fucking drivel on twitter and inspector gadget (where at least they have the honesty to vomit up their bigotry).

The criticism here of 'anarchists' is a bloody joke- those who run and profit from this shitty class ridden society are the ones to pin the blame on- This is the return of the repressed- What you sow, you reap- anarchists didn't build prison-like estates, set the dole at a subsistence levels, cut EMA, or spoon feed youth with bullshit celebrity dreams and psychotic computer games and 'torture porn' movies, anarchists don't humiliate kids on the streets and slap them about as if they were colonial subjects, like the old bill...

An entire generation, nationally, has been chucked on the shit-heap, dispossessed. The language used against them is redolent of the nazis-'scum', 'feral rats' - people talk of calling out the army, why, so they can cut off black kids fingers as trophies? Light up entire families with SA80s? You want to have a 'Syrian Solution'? Bollocks!

INCUBUS

[August 9, 2011 at 12:48 pm](#)

Audio clip on BBC News Channel from Radio 2-

Two 17yr old girls in Croyden drinking "free" Rose wine at 9.30 in the morning one tells the BBC hack-

"We're just showing the rich people we can do what we want"

Hack then asks "Will there be more trouble tonight?"

"I hope so, I really do..."

london riots – quick report from hackney

9 08 2011

One of a few Commune members who has been observing the events in Hackney gives a brief report. For updates, follow our twitter. More reports and analysis to follow.

Yesterday in Hackney there was an air of anticipation and waiting, some kind of word had gone round that "Today's Hackney". People were hanging around on corners and shopkeepers were standing on the pavement outside their shops. There was some running backwards and forwards, then the flashpoint came when the police stopped and searched two black men on the Narrow Way. A big crowd gathered and surrounded the police, and people were shouting that police harrassment was the

cause of the riots in Tottenham. Reinforcements quickly came with riot gear and started chasing people around and trying to block people in.



The crowd ended up on Mare street and a pattern soon developed where the police had a strong line to the north of the street, slowly advancing, and also blocking some side streets, and the crowd were gathered and moving slowly south. Whenever the police advanced people panicked and ran but in general the police were not trying to make arrests or charge seriously. Possibly their main priority was keeping people away from the shops in the Narrow Way.

The businesses that were damaged on Mare Street were fairly targetted: businesses seen as parasites like the bookmakers, cashconverters and so on; a bank; and places with valuables such as a sports shop and a jewellers. The petrol station was also looted for drinks and people handed out bottles of water to strangers. The only cafe looted was one which is a big chain and also has no atmosphere and really crap tea so I had no problem with it. Quite ridiculously one of the few arrests early in the day was a kid who had looted a packet of crisps from there. A man with a good grasp of targetted looting was shouting to the crowd “if it ain’t gold, don’t be bold!” The atmosphere during the day was pretty friendly and open, the crowd was very multiracial and of different ages and there was lot of passive support. The line between spectators and participants wasn’t clear. There was only one attempted mugging which was broken up quickly by the crowd.

Later on in the night people were gathered around Clarence Road, next to the Pembury Estate. Possibly the police were trying to keep them there away from the shops and main roads or maybe people felt comfortable there. There were quite a few burning cars and a line of riot cops that every now and then someone threw a bottle at. The atmosphere there was pretty different, heavier and nastier. There were some robberies of people in the crowd and I didn’t feel as safe as I did earlier. The convenience store on Clarence Road was looted for drinks which was upsetting and today I can hear lots of people objecting to: “He’s been here twenty years”, “we all shopped there” and so on.

Today walking around that is the only small shop attacked that I have seen apart from one optician, the rest are electrical goods shops or big brand stores. Contrary to what I’ve heard I didn’t see any houses burned but there were a lot of burned out cars. One thing that I keep hearing people say is “What’s the point of cleaning it all up when it’s all going to happen again tonight?”

Be decisive



Sick ... masked hoodie and car on fire in Hackney

Published: Today

 [Add a comment \(43\)](#)

THE Sun calls on PM to take action against the yobs. Here The Sun speaks its mind:



Action needed ... David Cameron

NOT a moment too soon, David Cameron abandons his holiday to deal with the anarchy in London.

The Prime Minister has returned today to confront one of the most serious outbreaks of mass violence in decades.

The capital has witnessed three nights of shameful scenes which show no sign of letting up.

Increasingly, the arson and looting seems out of control.

With the London Olympics less than a year away, our reputation is being damaged at the worst moment.

For three days, shops and cars across the city have been torched by mobs in scenes that terrify the rest of us.

The mayhem has spread to suburbs like Croydon and even to Birmingham.

As The Sun has said, this has nothing to do with protests over the shooting of a Tottenham man by police.



Rioters ... in Hackney

This is anarchy, pure and simple. And it presents a serious threat to life and property.

So why are police not reacting with equally serious measures?

The Sun admires the bravery of London cops on the front line who have been taking a pasting.

But where are the water cannon and tear gas when yobs are burning cars and ransacking stores? Both would be justified. Both would already have been used elsewhere.



Spreading ... trouble in Birmingham

And why have our leaders taken so long to respond as London burns (and the economy crashes)?

Home Secretary Theresa May came back from holiday yesterday. But Mayor Boris Johnson is only now heading home.

David Cameron and George Osborne have continued with their breaks, with the PM only deciding last night to return.



Mob ... rioters in Liverpool

This lack of leadership may be why cops are hesitating to use water cannon and tear gas.

Mr Cameron must today order police to do whatever it takes to reclaim the streets.

This anarchy must end.

Saving grace

IT'S not much of a silver lining. So let's make the most of it.

The global financial panic is cutting oil prices.

That means cheaper petrol. Asda, Morrisons and Tesco have already knocked off a penny or two.

But as the AA says, that's not enough. The big fuel firms and supermarkets could do more.

The Sun's Keep it Down campaign will be pushing for bigger reductions.

Meanwhile, we've some good news for you ourselves.

Captain Crunch has £10 in vouchers off your shopping today. Find the pull-out in the middle of the paper.

An Open Letter to David Cameron's Parents

August 10, 2011 by Nathaniel Tapley

Dear Mr & Mrs Cameron,

Why did you never take the time to teach your child basic morality?

As a young man, he was in a gang that regularly smashed up private property. We know that you were absent parents who left your child to be brought up by a school rather than taking responsibility for his behaviour yourselves. The fact that he became a delinquent with no sense of respect for the property of others can only reflect that fact that you are terrible, lazy human beings who failed even in teaching your children the difference between right and wrong. I can only assume that his contempt for the small business owners of Oxford is indicative of his wider values.

Even worse, your neglect led him to fall in with a bad crowd. He became best friends with a young man who set fire to buildings for fun. And others:

There's Michael Gove, whose wet-lipped rage was palpable on Newsnight last night. This is the Michael Gove who confused one of his houses with another of his houses in order to avail himself of £7,000 of the taxpayers' money to which he was not entitled (or £13,000, depending on which house you think was which).

Or Hazel Blears, who was interviewed in full bristling peahen mode for almost all of last night. She once forgot which house she lived in, and benefited to the tune of £18,000. At the time she said it would take her reputation years to recover.

Unfortunately not.

But, of course, this is different. This is just understandable confusion over the rules of how many *houses* you are meant to have as an MP. This doesn't show the naked greed of people stealing plasma tellies.

Unless you're Gerald Kaufman, who broke parliamentary rules to get £8,000 worth of 40-inch, flat screen, Bang and Olufsen TV out of the taxpayer.

Or Ed Vaizey, who got £2,000 in antique furniture 'delivered to the wrong address'. Which is fortunate, because had that been the address they were intended for, that would have been fraud.

Or Jeremy Hunt, who broke the rules to the tune of almost £20,000 on one property and £2,000 on another. But it's all right, because he agreed to pay half of the money back. Not the full amount, it would be absurd to expect him to pay back the entire sum that he took and to which he was not entitled. No, we'll settle for half. And, as in any other field, what might have been considered embezzlement of £22,000 is overlooked. We know, after all, that David Cameron likes to give people second chances.

Fortunately, we have the Met Police to look after us. We'll ignore the fact that two of its senior officers have had to resign in the last six weeks amid suspicions of widespread corruption within the force.

We'll ignore Andy Hayman, who went for champagne dinners with those he was meant to be investigating, and then joined the company on leaving the Met.

Of course, Mr and Mrs Cameron, your son is right. There are parts of society that are not just broken, they are sick. Riddled with disease from top to bottom.

Just let me be clear about this (It's a good phrase, Mr and Mrs Cameron, and one I looted from every sentence your son utters, just as he looted it from Tony Blair), I am not justifying or minimising in any way what has been done by the looters over the last few nights. What I am doing, however, is expressing shock and dismay that your son and his friends feel themselves in any way to be guardians of morality in this country.

Can they really, as 650 people who have shown themselves to be venal pygmies, moral dwarves at every opportunity over the last 20 years, bleat at others about 'criminality'. Those who decided that when they broke the rules (the rules they themselves set) they, on the whole wouldn't face the consequences of their actions?

Are they really surprised that this country's culture is swamped in greed, in the acquisition of material things, in a lust for consumer goods of the most base kind? Really?

Let's have a think back: cash-for-questions; Bernie Ecclestone; cash-for-access; Mandelson's mortgage; the Hinduja passports; Blunkett's alleged insider trading (and, by the way, when someone has had to resign in disgrace *twice* can we stop having them on television as a commentator, please?); the meetings on the yachts of oligarchs; the drafting of the Digital Economy Act with Lucian Grange; Byers', Hewitt's & Hoon's desperation to prostitute themselves and their positions; the fact that Andrew Lansley (in charge of NHS reforms) has a wife who gives lobbying advice to the very companies hoping to benefit from the NHS reforms. And that list didn't even take me very long to think of.

Our politicians are for sale and they do not care who knows it.

Oh yes, and *then* there's the expenses thing. Widescale abuse of the very systems they designed, almost all of them grasping what they could while they remained MPs, to build their nest egg for the future at the public's expense. They even now whine on Twitter about having their expenses claims for getting back to Parliament while much of the country is on fire subject to any examination. True public servants.

The last few days have revealed some truths, and some heartening truths. The fact that the #riotcleanup crews had organised themselves before David Cameron even made time for a public statement is heartening. The fact that local communities came together to keep their neighbourhoods safe when the police failed is heartening. The fact that there were peace vigils being organised (even as the police tried to dissuade people) is heartening.

There is hope for this country. But we must stop looking upwards for it. The politicians are the ones leading the charge into the gutter.

David Cameron was entirely right when he said: "It is a complete lack of responsibility in parts of our society, people allowed to think that the world owes them something, that their rights outweigh their responsibilities, and that their actions do not have consequences."

He was more right than he knew.

And I blame the parents.

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SEPTEMBER 28th, 2011

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