

intention were not to present a selection representative of all phases of Togliatti's career, it would have been better to limit the scope of the anthology to the last period of his leadership, when he developed the theory of 'polycentrism'.

One of the most interesting articles in Chantal Mouffe's collection of essays on Gramsci's Marxism, by Massimo Salvadori, deals with the question of continuity. Can Gramsci really be presented as the intellectual ancestor of the 'historic compromise'? This is not just an academic debate, since it involves the key question of the party's interpretation of the 'democratic pluralism' to which it now subscribes. Salvadori argues powerfully that the presentation of a democratic Gramsci is mistaken and that his conception remained in essence Leninist. Marxism was for Gramsci an entirely self-sufficient philosophy, the basis of a 'total integral civilisation', radically opposed to all existing philosophies and religions. Ultimately, it was destined to absorb all other world-views, and Gramsci's insistence on the need for the party to secure ideological hegemony by persuasion during the 'transitional' phase did not imply any repudiation of the legitimacy of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Chantal Mouffe insists against Salvadori that Gramsci did believe in pluralism, but 'certainly not a liberal pluralism for which all elements exist at the same level, democracy resulting from their free concurrence (sic)'.

But this really proves Salvadori's point:

either the Italian Communist party is committed to *this* conception of pluralism, or it is not committed to anything at all. This doesn't mean that the Gramscian heritage is irrelevant to a new democratic strategy; one could argue that the latter is a logical deduction from Gramsci's premises, given the change in historical circumstances. It is certainly entirely appropriate that the debate on Gramsci should be at the centre of the discussion between Communists and Socialists in Italy. For perhaps Gramsci's major achievement as a theorist was that he restored ideological debate to full dignity as a form of political action.

A brilliant essay by the political philosopher Norberto Bobbio in the Mouffe volume points out that in Gramsci's theory ideologies become the prime movers of history. Bobbio's essay has been challenged by other scholars as over-emphasising the importance attached by Gramsci to cultural preparation as distinct from other forms of political action, but it has the great merit of bringing out clearly the truly original features of Gramsci's approach. In lesser measure, this is true of some of the other essays in Mouffe's volume, which represents fairly the various tendencies of present Gramsci criticism in Italy and France. It forms a useful introduction to Gramsci's thought, although it is a pity that the language of some of the contributions is almost impenetrable. Gramsci troubled to make himself understood; his interpreters often obscure him.

found in his foreword where he bemoans the lack of a concluding chapter on the (no doubt beneficent) role of Scotsmen in the Metropolitan Police.

Mr Ascoli's own appreciation of, or sensitivity to, contemporary issues is quite clear from his short and histrionic summary of the post-war years 'Change and Decay'. He laments the 'destruction of the greatest empire of modern times', the 'immigrant tidal wave', the "'compassionate fools" [who allowed] the liberalisation of abortion and homosexuality', 'militant trade unionists' and – finally – the fact that, during a 16-month period in London, 71 children under 12 years old were arrested for taking cars and driving them away. It seems fitting that he and an equally reactionary and anti-intellectual Metropolitan Police Commissioner should spend their forewords battling over McNee's desire for a 'pibroch on every page'.

A Conservative politician with an eye on the Home Office front bench (presently the Minister of Transport), Norman Fowler, has written a much more moderate, interesting and up-to-date book on policing, *After the Riots*. He examines the major police forces of western Europe, and their responses to political stresses from the Weimar Republic and the Nazi occupation to the Paris uprising of 1968 and the Dutch *Provos*.

It is an intelligent and liberal account surveying first the police forces themselves and then the more contentious modern issues which all face: organised crime and terrorism, complaints, moral issues like drugs and pornography, even to some extent, traffic policing. On all these issues, Fowler's reporting is pleasingly readable and balanced. But the author's careful balance produces an inability to advocate particular points of view or reach unequivocal conclusions on any topic.

That leaves his purpose in writing the book in some doubt: is it a series of features for *The Times*, a policy study to which policy conclusions dare not be joined by a 'leading Conservative politician'; a reader in comparative policing for students of the subject at large: which?

A politician of the present régime who calls for a public demonstration of 'effective checks on the abuse of power' and 'accountability to elected assemblies and the law' is certainly a welcome addition to the Government benches – if he means what he says. It is not clear, nevertheless, that Mr Fowler appreciates the current difficulty of bringing any British police chief to account for the operations of his force before any elected assembly, whether local or at Westminster. Increasing erosion of answerability of police forces to local authorities seems to have accompanied the increasing ability of minority and underprivileged classes to be represented in these assemblies through enfranchisement. It is well nigh time to turn that tide.

Just one section of one of these police forces – the Dutch – comes under the critical scrutiny of Dr Maurice Punch in what is undoubtedly the most fascinating and interesting of this selection of books. Punch spent months participating in and observing the work of the police in an inner city district of Amsterdam – the Warmoesstraat red light district, an area of high crime and predictably complicated social problems and stresses. He reports not in the customary jargon of the sociological trade, but in an open narrative characterised by frequent, lengthy and honest

Duncan Campbell

As Free as the Police

The Queen's Peace: the origins and development of the Metropolitan Police, 1829-1979 by DAVID ASCOLI *Hamish Hamilton* £9.95

After the Riots: The Police in Europe by NORMAN FOWLER *Davis-Poynter* £7

Policing the Inner City: A Study of Amsterdam's Warmoesstraat by MAURICE PUNCH *Macmillan* £12

Policing Freedom by JOHN ALDERSON *MacDonald & Evans* £7.50

Crime and Police in England 1700-1900 by J. J. TOBIAS *Gill & Macmillan* £10

Review of Security and the State, 1979 compiled by State Research *Julian Friedmann* £10

It is healthy and helpful to see so much study of the critical issue of liberty and policing in democracies. Some of these authors, unhappily, have little of contemporary relevance to elicit from their studies. David Ascoli's presentation of the first 150 years of the Metropolitan Police contains the jammy gloss over contentious issues expected of speeches at a school prizegiving.

Here, one supposes, was a golden opportunity for prising open some of Scotland Yard's stickier doors in order to write an authoritative history. Ascoli claims the advantage of widespread contacts throughout the Force, and access to 'internal papers'. Yet what he produces does not add at all to major studies already in existence: Critchley's definitive *History*; or Cox, Shirley and Short's account

of recent corruption, *The Fall of Scotland Yard*; or even the well-worn story of Sir Robert Mark's first few embattled years at the Yard. Ascoli is 'not an investigative journalist', 'make(s) no claim to be a professional historian'. This shows.

Curiously, there were to have been two accounts to mark the 150th anniversary, the other, more promising, coming from Heron House. It appears to have been abandoned before completing the course.

Almost a quarter of Ascoli's tale deals with the years before the Met was established. He justifies at length the introduction of the 'New Police' (the term 'police' was then most familiar from Bonaparte's dictatorship) in the face of widespread concern for liberty. Neither this concern nor arguments about the democratic accountability of the police are allowed to appear as legitimate in any more modern times.

Little more than a further quarter of the book deals with the postwar world, and that section barely does more than recount the major law-and-order news stories of the last 30 years – plus giving an obsessive and detailed account of Life at the Top in Scotland Yard, a full chronicle of the dance steps of Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Assistant Commissioners *et al* as they move from job to job. The present Commissioner, Sir David McNee, obviously thinks this approach attractive, although the best measure of his wee-mindedness is to be

observations from the policemen themselves. Scholarliness is not lost in this style, a remarkable feat.

Over the course of two years, Punch – in fact a Briton – studied the police, their attitudes and work, at the major inner city police station. He records their virtually total detachment from a community which had largely become the province of outsiders. London, one imagines, would hardly be very different, and the picture Punch paints is instructive and revealing; the sources and consequences of police bitterness and confusion about their role are well drawn, frequently in the words of his police interviewees. In London or indeed elsewhere in Britain, similar research by independent academics has always been vetoed by the secretive watchdogs in the Home Office. A major reason for the move to Amsterdam was that the Dutch police had sufficient independence to allow an outsider to work with them and scrutinise everything they did.

Policing the Inner City is sociology as adventure; Punch is out on the streets most of the time, punctuating his observations with detailed and often exciting excerpts from interviews and field notes. He recounts that his early belief in the possibility of detachment from what he was observing was soon eroded. He and his companions became 'colleagues'; he frequently ended up behaving as a policeman himself, assisting in searches and arrests, but fortuitously escaping any more serious complications of his dual role.

Despite this non-detachment, the account is wholly authentic. Misjudgment, police violence, racialism and other biases are scrupulously observed and reported. Thus too the demoralisation of the police: an inability to take a preventative role towards major and minor crime meant that they worked in two different ways; as a 'fire brigade' in response to particular incidents, and secondly in repressive action against 'conspicuous deviant groups in the district'.

The social volatility of the districts being policed, and ambivalence in the civil administration had led to increasingly ineffective policing, and 'repressive norms' of law enforcement. Denied the opportunity to be part of the community, the police took these easy ways out.

Another view from the inside is John Alderson's. Now a Chief Constable, Alderson was previously at the Yard and also Commandant of the Police Staff College at Bramshill. One suspects that the staccato rate at which Alderson shoves through topic after topic (30 chapters in 200 pages or so) has its cause in the origin of the book as lecture-course notes, to which he has added a motley selection of documents he has written at one time or another. It is valuable to see what teachings Alderson, a widely quoted liberal police spokesman, has on the contemporary topics as examined above.

Sadly, his views are generally superficial, with occasional and equally superficial tilts in the direction of sociology. We cannot derive much real meaning from his visions of a 'New Model Police Force' which will 'contribute towards liberty, equality and fraternity in human affairs', or 'work to dispel criminogenic social conditions' unless a deeper analysis of conflicts and their causes in society is also to be found. Alderson offers no such analysis. He regards law and a properly behaved police force as a 'neutral' instrument in political and

social affairs. He ought to know better.

Alderson has also experimented with ways of involving communities more closely in the work of the police, and has carried out serious experiments, which have been manipulative rather than co-operative; the police present the crime 'problem' and community members and groups have then to help 'solve' it. They are not offered a say in the definition of the problem, or in the allocation of police resources. That might be a step to genuine democracy in control of the police.

The account of Alderson's tinkering with conventional ideas makes interesting reading; the rest is valuable as a record of what a top cop teaches the new recruits.

J. J. Tobias is also a one-time Bramshill lecturer, whose modest history of two centuries of early policing and punishment is a reminder that certain traditions were not always as they are popularly believed to have been. Effective policing took place well before Sir Robert Peel set up the Met, through watchmen and parish constables; the standard was naturally very variable. Another interesting observation is that early magistrates in Britain were also investigators like the contemporary French *Juges d'instruction*; the present system came along with later police reforms.

Only State Research's implied critique of the state and its organs has any radical prescription to promote, although the two studies of European police forces should open some eyes. The work of State Research – reporting on the police and military, repressive law, internal security and espionage – fills a void somewhere between radical militancy and liberalism, and aims to satisfy both constituencies. Their reporting of developments in these areas eschews bland liberal assumptions about incorruptibility and accountability made elsewhere. They have grown up over the last two years as part of a lobby which has succeeded in bringing considerable attention to bear on the repressive and menacing aspects of organisations like the Special Branch, the Special Patrol Groups and their like. The continued scrutiny of State Research – a watchdog lobby of a type more familiar in Washington than in London – is a valuable bolster to our deficient democracy.

Their view at least offers new models and new ideas. Historical accounts make much of the original development of policing as an arm of the community rather than as an arm of the state, but offer no route back to this model. Those within the service naturally prefer to run large and powerful forces and deal with like-thinking civil servants, and not the irritations of small communities or state researchers. Those without too often merely observe the development of the police arm of the state, identify its problems for both state and civil liberty but offer no further development. Some prescriptions along these lines would be welcome as an ultimate goal, beyond tinkering with accountability and powers, as we do at present. We are only as free as the police outside will let us be. How do we bring them in, and under democratic control?

Next week: Edward W. Said on Stansky and Abrahams' *Orwell*; Jonathan Mirsky on books on China; A. S. Byatt on recent literary criticism; J. L. Gili on Lorca.

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

London Branch Office
67/91 New Bond Street
London W1Y 9LA.
Tel: 01-499 2084

