

# OUR HISTORY

Pamphlet 76

Price 95p

## ARMED RESISTANCE AND INSURRECTION: THE EARLY CHARTIST EXPERIENCE



*by John Baxter*

*OUR HISTORY* is published by the History Group of the Communist Party, 16 St. John Street, London EC1M 4AY. The Group exists to further the study of history from a Marxist standpoint and to put its members in touch with others in the same field. Membership is open to all members of the Communist Party. Non-members may subscribe to *Our History* at the above address. Trade distribution is by Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 9PS.

Our next issue will be Eric Hobsbawm's Marx centenary lecture to the History Group on 'Marx as a historian'.

**ISBN 0 86224 025 5**

**July 1984**

The cover illustration and the drawings at sections III, IV, V and VI are taken from the first and second editions of *Defensive Instructions for the People* by Colonel Macerone. The others come from G.J. Harney's *Red Republican*.

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'Arms are the only badge of liberty'

Andrew Fletcher, 1655-1716

'The fifth and last auxiliary right of the subject is that of having arms for their self defence suitable to their condition and degree, and such as are allowable by law. It is also declared by the same statute, 1 William and Mary st. 2 c 2, and it is indeed a public allowance, under due restriction, of the natural right of resistance and self-preservation, when the sanctions of society and laws are found insufficient to restrain the violence of oppression'

Sir William Blackstone, 1723-1780

'A people insulted, robbed and oppressed and over-awed by a mercenary military establishment, at the call of a wicked tyrannical government, may constitutionally right themselves by arming in their just defence'

Major Cartwright, 1740-1823<sup>1</sup>

## **1. 'Spirits of the past' — the Chartist inheritance of an earlier tradition of armed resistance**

From the formation of the first Chartist organisations in 1837 to the abortive 1839-40 winter risings, working people were called upon to act to vindicate what were regarded as the most ancient and essential features of their constitutional birthright — the right as individuals to have arms for self defence and the right to use arms as a means of defence against intolerable and unconstitutional oppression. Working people responded by arming for individual and collective self defence in the exercise of the limited civil and political rights they possessed and used arms to give them more weight in the unequal political bargaining for political reform along a continuum of options progressing towards the general strike and open insurrection, the ultimate or final act of resistance.

Some measure of armed action had been a feature of the struggles of the 1790s, 1800-3, 1811-12, 1816-17, 1819-20, 1826 and 1830-33. Again in 1842 and 1848 the same call was to be heard. In the early Chartist period the resonance of the call was stronger than ever before. White-headed Jacobins and United men, grey-headed Union Society and Hampden Club veterans and younger democrats from the Political Unions, National Union of the Working Classes and Radical

Associations or the 1830s - representatives of three or four political generations sharing the same idealisation of the citizen-soldier and the same hostility towards standing armies and an armed centralised police force - stood together to testify that working people had a right and a duty to arm and to be ready to use those arms in accordance with their constitutionally prescribed role.

Drawing on sources examined as part of a larger study of early Chartism, some generalisations can be made about the constitutional and wider historical arguments employed<sup>2</sup>. In regard of the possession and use of arms, the origins of popular rights were traced back into the Saxon mists to the popular armed assemblages that advised the king on legislation (wapentakes) and the convening of the armed citizenry as a police force (*posse concomitatus*). The decrees and statutes, slowly limiting, but also codifying and upholding popular rights from the first imposition of the 'Norman Yoke', were cited by Chartist intellectuals in support of Chartist arming. Among such statements of law were cited Henry II's Assize of Arms (1181), 13 Edward I (Statute of Winchester), 2 Edward III (Statute of Northampton), 13 Henry IV, 5 Edward IV (1466), 33 Henry VIII (1541), 13/14 Charles II, c2, c3, 22/23 Charles II c25 (Game Laws) and William and Mary st 2 c2 (Bill of Rights). Enactments covering short periods and wider legislation directly affecting the exercise of popular rights relating to arms which had appeared during the antecedent period to Chartism and which had been used in the recent past to limit the possession of arms, had implications well understood by Chartists who had graduated from the 'school of experience' of 1791-1820. The crucial significance of legislation like 52 George III c 62, si, s7 and 60 George III cl 1 (1 George IV c2 — Unlawful Drilling and Seizure of Arms Act), which gave magistrates restricted powers of search and confiscation, was fully appreciated. Despite the legacy of such laws, the individual's right to possess arms for self-defence — open to varying interpretations — was generally upheld throughout the Chartist period despite the calls for further restrictions by nervous sections of the provincial magistracy and talk of an arms (limitation) bill in Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

The arguments for arming and exercising rights of resistance rested both on idealised views of distant moments in English history — a golden Saxon era under Alfred, King John's treatment by the Barons, the activity of Hampden, Sidney and other 17th century libertarians — and more critical perceptions of others like the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. More recent history presented sharper and more realistic lessons. People had not forgotten and were living through the consequences of the repressive laws enacted in the 1790s. Among the Irish, living in and breathing radical life and fire into their newly adopted English communities, the recollections of repressive violence were the strongest and most vivid. The rising generations continued to be reminded by the Six Acts (1819-20), Peterloo (1819), Calthorpe Street (1833), the Irish Coercion Act (1833), the Anatomy Act (1832), the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), the Dorchester Labourers' transportation (1834) and the trials of the Glasgow Spinners (1837).

In the search for constitutional and historical legitimation on an intellectual plane the writings of a multitude of British statesmen, political writers and other commentators were cited in speeches and in the Chartist press, as had been the

case in earlier climax moments. Among others, chronologically listed, were Matthew of Westminster, Bracton, Fortescue, Coke, Raleigh, Spellman, Wilkins, Seldon, Prynne, Milton, Marvell, Shakespeare, Harrington, Hampden, Needham, Sidney, Temple, William Jones, Locke, Somers, Fletcher, Trenchard, Alland, Ellys, Burnett, Chatham, Hume, Blackstone, Saville, Abingdon, Macintosh, Arthur Young, De Lolme, Stuart, Fox, Paine, Erskine, Brougham, Grey, Attwood and John Russell.<sup>4</sup>

The call for arming was not solely inspired by the relatively narrow range of national historical experience or by narrow constitutional precedent and practice. The invocation was strengthened by a wider moral and practical appeal to the history of the Scottish, Irish, French, Belgian, Swiss, Greek, Polish, Spanish, American, Basque and Tyrolean peoples, to the Old and New Testament history of the Jewish people and the Bible's 'higher' authority and to the political experience and wisdom of the Ancient Greeks and the Romans. Examples of popular armed action were cited from such varied political and cultural contexts as Nehemiah's arming of the people during the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in 445-444 BC, the Covenanters' struggles in 17th century Scotland, the American Revolution, the Irish Volunteers' Convention of the 1780s, the first French Revolution, the Polish insurrection of 1794, the Irish risings of 1798 and 1803, the Spanish rising of 1808, the Tyrolean revolt under Andreas Hofer in 1809, the internationalist insurrectionism of the Carbonari movement in Europe in the 1820s, the French, Belgian and Polish revolutions of 1830, the South Wales rising of 1831, the Lyons weavers' revolts of 1831 and 1834, the Carlist wars in Spain in the 1830s, the revolts of Upper and Lower Canada in 1837 and 1838 and the Parisian rising of May 1839. The recalling of external events was supported by reference to political writings from comparative contexts including those of 'ancients' like Cicero, Demosthenes, Plato, Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Xenophon and 'moderns' like Paine and Volney. Such authorities gave strength to the intellectual strand of legitimation woven by Chartism's *intellegensia*.

That the early Chartists developed a strong internationalist sense of historical justification for their actions is further born out by the way democratic martyrs and patriots who had fought for their rights were selected and celebrated. On toast lists at annual dinners held to remember such as Henry Hunt, Tom Paine and George Washington or in portraits or busts kept in Chartist meeting rooms, the names of Tyler (14th century England), Hampden (17th century England), Sidney (17th century England), Brandreth, Ludlam and Turner (1817 England), Thistlewood (1820 England) and Holberry (1840 England) were merged with those of Wallace (13th century Scotland), Tell (14th century Switzerland), Washington (18th century America), Lafayette (18th century America and France), Robert Watt (1794, Scotland), Kosciuszko (1794 Poland), Arthur O'Connor, Wolfe Tone and Edward Fitzgerald (1798 Ireland), Emmett (1803 Ireland), Frost (1839 Wales) and Hofer (1809 Tyrol)<sup>5</sup>. Verses alluding to armed struggle, drawing on the varied talents of Southey, Byron and Shelley (English), Burns and later Nichol (Scottish), Moore and Knowles (Ireland) and unknown authors of other English, French and Irish democratic or romantic nationalist battlesongs were used to embellish banners, speeches, posters and

other printed literature.<sup>6</sup>

The search for legitimation through appeals to the moral, political or constitutional lessons of justifications of past experience was no desperate ransacking of history, although it is perhaps helpful to recall Marx's critical conception of another revolutionary context in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*:

'Just when men seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past . . . in order to present the new scene of world history in this time honoured disguise and this borrowed language'<sup>7</sup>

The Chartist invocation to arm and if necessary fight was confidently thundered from the movement's newspaper and pamphlet presses, defiantly proclaimed from hundreds of market place and street corner tribunes and was discussed at all levels of organisation from the national conventions held during 1839 and 1840 down to the smallest 'section' and 'class' meetings. It was affirmed in the rituals of response of Chartist crowds to the oratory and occasionally theatrical gestures of the platform: shouts of approval, upraised arms (sometimes holding weapons) and the firing of guns. It was affirmed by private or secretive arming, by drilling and other military preparations. The invocation was received and understood by the great majority of working people drawn into the movement. Only a minority were, for a variety of reasons and in a combination of circumstances, able to respond in a practical way and only a tiny minority remained in a position of being able to fight when the time came in the winter of 1839-40. While it has to be conceded that a minority tradition is being examined, it must be asserted that the tradition was far more important and deserving of serious consideration than has previously been the case.

**II. The Condescension of Historians**

Traditionally the call to arms and more particularly the resort to force by a process of escalation throughout 1837-40 has been denigrated in mainstream historiography. A direct line of historical interpretation which links Mark Hovell to J.T. Ward is consistent in dismissing the call to arms as 'babble and military verbiage' and portraying it as the blustery rhetoric of a few 'unbalanced' or mentally unstable demagogues. The arming and escalations of armed action are dismissed as small scale, incompetent, 'terrorist' and irrelevant and are otherwise misrepresented or ignored. Such influential orthodoxy caricatures the movement as being irrevocably split into moral and physical force factions with the implication that the former adhered to moderate, 'legal' or 'constitutionalist' action and that the latter comprised a small knot of 'violent men' committing 'extreme', 'illegal', 'unconstitutional' and 'terrorist' acts.<sup>8</sup>

Such caricatures, and particularly the pathology of 'deviance' implied, have remained influential despite the more balanced mainstream contribution of Mather (1965) and also that of J.F.C. Harrison (1965).<sup>9</sup> The promptings in E.P. Thompson's important contribution (1963) were of doubtless importance.<sup>10</sup>



More recently D. Thompson (1971) and D. Jones (1974) have, in presenting important primary source material accompanied by stimulating questioning and informed comment, helped to point further ahead towards a more mature consideration of the call to arms, arming and the subsequent gradations of armed resistance.<sup>11</sup> Thompson, pointing to the difference she perceived in the 'verbal bellicosity of Harney and O'Connor from the actual insurrectionism of Holberry', asked us to look at the 'different kinds of violence within Chartism'. Specifically relating to the invocation to arms in 1838 and 1839, she argued that much of its represented a 'style of speech . . . a rhetorical device which both their followers and the authorities recognised to be a form of bluff. She suggested that there were two kind of rhetoric; a provincial one with its emphasis on English political experiences from the Reform Bill agitation onwards and a more revolutionary sounding 'cosmopolitan' rhetoric invoking the spirit of the first French Revolution. My researches leave me doubting this wisdom as anything like absolute. More acceptable is her stress on the 'real threat to authority' posed by 'community-rooted organisations of the provincial Chartists and its 'less articulate' leadership. Thompson also gives an impression that the winter insurrectionary action from Newport onwards was divorced in both intellectual and practical terms from the provincial strand of what she sees as rhetorical argument and that the plotting and conspiratorial forms of organisation adopted owed more to

French than English traditions. Interestingly this argument is not re-iterated in her most recent book.<sup>12</sup> As this essay seeks to establish in its concluding sections, the seemingly 'less articulate' provincial leadership had a 'voice' — one which reflected the styles (often inter-mixed) of national platform speakers who they encountered at first hand on provincial tours or through the Chartist press — but which also derived from grassroots intellectual arguments for arming and armed resistance. The risings it sought to mount owed more to continuities in English than to French influences and experiences.

David Jones' open minded but less ambitious offering, at least, in pointing to the 'long British underground tradition', reminded us (as did John Foster (1974) and Baxter and Donnelly (1974, 1975) ) of the deeper historical rooting of the constitutionally prescribed resort to arms in English working class history.<sup>13</sup>

Neither the recent examples of English scholarship, including D. Thompson (1984) nor the contributions of American scholars like Kemnitz (1973), Maehl (1975), Kemnitz and Jacques (1976), Vicinus (1976) and Epstein (1982) have gone far enough in explaining the question of the call to arms and the progression towards insurrectionism.<sup>14</sup> The American scholars, like their English equivalents, have taken the question much more seriously, but concentrated too much on leadership from above. Kemnitz's short essay shows a concern for the Chartist political 'centre' (or national leadership) and explains O'Connor's action or strategy as 'intimidational' and different from 'moral' and 'physical' force. Similarly in looking at J.R. Stephens contribution to the 'centre' or national leadership, Kemnitz and Jacques contrast the open call for arming and resistance of Stephens with the more complex position of O'Connor. Maehl's essay, building a competent earlier study of north-eastern Chartism, manages to get away from conventional stereotyping in a more convincing way. Less pre-occupied with the influence of the 'centre', he moves his emphasis to provincial reality and to the shifting strategies and in particular the call to arms and consequent escalation of violence which he claims followed. Seeing the bargaining process between the Chartists and the authorities as the dynamic, perhaps under-rating its class basis, Maehl described the 'continuum of options' in strategy which 'varied with the strength of opposition'. Maehl's continuum spanned 'moral', 'intimidational' and 'physical' force. Refreshingly, Maehl's study showed some understanding of the nature and character of the repression which confronted Chartism and he showed how repression initiated the sequence of Chartist option taking which led to the activation of Tynesiders in the 1839-40 winter risings. Maehl, while he touches upon it, still underestimates the inequality of the bargaining and he significantly undervalues the constitutionalist and historical reasoning of the north-eastern working class and its traditions. As with other recent American scholars, he lacks a full enough appreciation of the more distant working class experience. For example, the William Parker he cites making a speech 'more truculent than anything yet heard' in Newcastle on Christmas Day 1838, had been involved in post-war radicalism in London between 1816-20 and had also fought in the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s. Another Tyneside speaker advocating arming early in 1839 testified to having left Scotland and come to work in the local pits to avoid the political witch-hunt for

democrats in the 1790s. Maehl should have at least made more of backward linkages with 1819-20. The villages of Winlaton, Blaydon and Swalwell, the 'arsenals' of north-eastern Chartism in 1839-40, were, with several other centres like Blyth, centres where arming and preparation of arms had taken place in the latter months of 1819.<sup>15</sup> Evidence of such 'continuities' and particularly linkages of personnel — further vindication of the insurrectionary tradition are also produced from West Riding experience in the final sections of the essay presented here.

Martha Vicinus' short study was far less inspiring, but it still contains some suggestive ideas. She favoured the 'moral', 'physical' and 'intimidational' typology or classification and looked at the 'style' of speakers representative of these types. While she and other scholars are correct to place emphasis on the role of platform speakers as educators and while she is justified in looking at the 'sym-biosis' or dependent relationship of the platform and the crowd, it should not be forgotten that the educational process continued in other forms and was not necessarily always initiated from the platform. Apart from the influence of the Chartist press, group discussions and other educational reinforcement in small, 'democratic' situations contributed as much or more to the general understanding and political literacy of the body of political activists.

Further work will doubtless push us further away from the artificiality of some of the existing compartmentalisation of strategies and strategists which restrict our understanding of Chartist arming and insurrectionism. Epstein, who acknowledges the essential constitutionalism of the early Chartist arming at least up to the moment of the insurrectionary outbreak, has shown in his revisionist study of O'Connor that so called 'moral' and 'physical' positions could be articulated in the same breath by individuals the traditional type of interpretation has consigned to self-exclusive compartmentalised boxes.<sup>16</sup> Two instances must suffice to demonstrate this. George Edmonds of the moderate, middle class dominated Birmingham Political Union would be described as an archetypal 'moral force' Chartist in traditional terms. Speaking in the autumn of 1838 when the BPU had issued several statements re-asserting the free-born Englishman's constitutional right to have arms and under extreme circumstances involving the denial of other civil rights to use them to overthrow 'unconstitutional tyranny', Edmonds described the linkages of 'moral' and 'physical' force in terms of 'shadow and substance'. He approvingly described 'physical force' as the 'substance that lent weight to the shadow of 'moral force'. How would traditionalists and most recent revisionists view Edmonds? Was he still a 'moral force' man? Was he an 'intimidationalist'? Surely he was not a 'crypto-revolutionist'? Similarly Epstein quotes a statement of O'Connor speaking of 'moral' and 'physical force' as 'man and wife' in the summer of 1839. He stated that, 'moral force was die wife, and knew when to call in her husband for aid'. Was O'Connor, traditionally presented as a leader of violent 'physical force' Chartism and latterly as an 'intimidationalist', here expressing similar sentiments to those of the archetypal moral force leader Edmonds? In revisionist terms was this part of the 'rhetoric' or 'bluff' of the 'intimidationalist'? Was O'Connor after all a 'revolutionist'? While the constitutionalist reasoning of the Chartists remains

undervalued or ignored, the confusion the traditional and even the revisionist compartments create when applied to individuals and strategies will always remain. The main thread of Chartist reasoning, that followed by seemingly very different individuals like Edmonds and O'Connor and appreciated by individuals supposedly far removed like Harney, Peter Bussey, Samuel Holberry and Dr Taylor, was expressed most succinctly in an article entitled 'Resistance vs Aggression' which the London chartist journal, the *Charter* printed in July 1839. Commenting on the background of arrests, the mobilisation of hostile class forces and the repression of civil liberty that followed the rejection of the national petition it stated:

'We deplore physical aggression on the part of the people. Tyrants alone accept this method. Resistance is altogether a different matter. That is not only allowable, but right; and sorry we are that it has not been more frequently resorted to. The constitution permits every man to possess arms, and wherefore, let us inquire? To hang over the chimney piece by way of ornament? No, to be taken thence by way of use when occasion shall require. And, we say further, that in the last resort, when all constitutional means, through the medium of the legislature, have been adopted, to awaken a government to a sense of their duty, to a recollection of public rights withheld, although recognised; those means failing, we say, that the people are justified in taking up arms and compelling such government to yield to them. This is not aggression but resistance, unless it be shown that governments ought to exist independent of the people. That they do we need no proof.'<sup>17</sup>

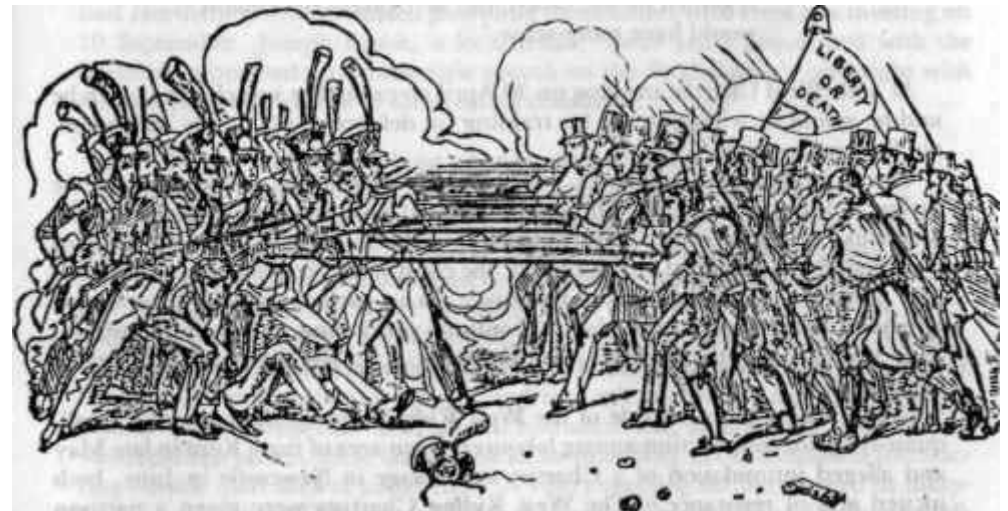
Such statements echoed the massive constitutional authority of Judge Blackstone and other 17th and 18th century jurists and law givers recognised by the early 19th century Establishment. It was this understanding of rights and this reasoning that had provided the intellectual mainspring of the arming of the English Jacobins and United men, the 'political' Luddites and the Hampden Club and Union Society insurrectionists of 1816-17 and 1819-20. Now it signposted for the early Chartists the main direction in the taking of constitutional actions by-passing the irrelevant legislative process. The remainder of this essay presents evidence of the progress of popular reasoning in the West Riding, a region with a well-established insurrectionary tradition, which with Tyneside, the far north western counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Lancashire and Cheshire and districts in the East Midlands was in the van of the campaign of armed resistance during 1837-40. The analysis stops short of the winter risings, the necessary re-appraisal of which requires more space than this pamphlet allows.

### III. The Stirrings of Resistance — Anti-Poor Law and early Chartist agitation in the West Riding 1837-8.

The call for arming and resistance echoed again in the West Riding from late

1836 when attempts were first made to impose the New Poor Law.<sup>18</sup> During 1837 the first Chartist organisations were established out of the surviving Political Unions of the early 1830s and the newer mid 1830s Radical Associations.<sup>19</sup> Against this background, the first specifically Chartist calls for arming and resistance were made. In an August 1837 edition of the radical *Leeds Times*, Robert Nichol, young Scottish editor and writer of libertarian poetry inspired by a political baptism at the time of the Reform Bill crisis, wrote about resistance in a series of articles on the 'Radical Creed'. Recalling 1831-2 in Scotland he warned, 'if the Aristocracy fight, the Working Men's Associations must be ready to fight . . . physical force should be used to back moral force if necessary'. Nichol further reminded his readers of the three heady days in Paris in July 1830, the insurrection in Brussels in 1830 and Lyons in revolt in 1834 when 'a few starving weavers kept at bay the best troops in France'.<sup>20</sup> Nichol anticipated repression (a continual and justified preoccupation throughout the early Chartist period) and his fears were justified several months later when the military were called in to help the civil authorities impose the New Poor Law in nearby Bradford in the winter months of 1837-38.<sup>21</sup>

In the last months of 1837 English and French Canadians rose up to establish a more democratic form of government. The subsequent military repression which followed their failure coloured the reaction of the West Riding Chartists assessing how best to oppose the violent enforcement of the New Poor Law by what O'Connor told a Bradford audience in December were 'the bayonets and bullets of the base, bloody and brutal New Poor Law Whigs'.<sup>22</sup> Peter Bussey, a foundation member of the newly re-organised Bradford Radical Association, told fellow members in January 1838 that 'if moral force would not do, physical force was then necessary' and that 'every Englishman ought to provide himself with a musket in accordance with his constitutional rights'.<sup>23</sup> At a big Leeds rally held at



the same time to unite workers in the light against the NPL, to further the campaign for universal suffrage, to support the Canadians and to obtain the release of the Glasgow Spinners, several speakers alluded to arms. Dr Taylor, editor of a Glasgow Chartist paper whose libertarian sympathies went back to the Greeks' struggles of the 1820s, told the audience that, 'every man ought to strike down the villain that dared to put into operation a law which separated a man from his wife and family'. Another visitor, Augustus Beaumont, an American who had been radicalised by witnessing the 1830 revolution in Paris and a slave revolt in Jamaica in 1831 and who now edited Tyneside's *Northern Liberator*, castigated the government's actions in Canada declaring that, 'to violate the constitution of Canada; and so to compel them to take up arms was a violation of the allegiance due to the sovereign by the people'. Beaumont talked of a coming hour of necessity which would require a blood sacrifice. In his speech he recited lines written by Tom Moore concluding:

'Blood like this  
For liberty shed so holy is  
It would not stain the purest rill'<sup>24</sup>

The threat of the implementation of the NPL continued to be a dominant influence on Chartist discussion of arming in the West Riding throughout 1838. Abraham Hanson of Halifax was reported saying at a Chartist meeting in late January that to meet its threat they should 'follow the example of the Canadians'. Peter Bussey was reported similarly alluding to arms at a Dewsbury rally in April:

'The rights of the people were taken from them  
by the sword and he was going to say they would only be  
regained by the sword, but he thought the villains  
would have more sense.'

At a Sheffield Chartist meeting on 30 April an ex-soldier was cheered when he said he would be willing to use his training 'in defence of my family, my home, my fire and my rights'.<sup>25</sup>

The struggle against the NPL continued to involve the call to arms in the spring and summer of 1838. The specifically anti-NPL message of the Rev. J.R. Stephens and Richard Oastler included a powerful invocation to arms. Stephens had reminded a Bradford audience that 'the constitution requires and commands and presses it upon the subject to resist'. As in earlier political generations, Stephens' hearers were reminded 'to continue petitioning, then to remonstrate; then would come the passive (disobedience . . . the forerunner to actual resistance'.<sup>26</sup>

Events taking place outside of the West Riding, the breaking up of a small, quasi-religious insurrection among labourers in an area of rural Kent in late May and alleged intimidation of a Chartist assemblage in Newcastle in June, both incited acts of resistance.<sup>27</sup> The West Riding Chartists were given a partisan

interpretation of these events by the Leeds-based *Northern Star*. The paper printed extracts from the rational pamphlets written by the 'madman' leader of the Kentish outbreak. O'Connor, the *Star's* proprietor, made a great deal of the Newcastle event for he had been a principal speaker there.<sup>28</sup>

The fear of repression that such events prompted, justified or otherwise, were further increased with the drafting of Metropolitan police into Dewsbury in August to help enforce the NPL.<sup>29</sup> The *Northern Star* published a long statement made by Oastler on the necessity and legality of arming and resisting the NPL.<sup>30</sup> Oastler had made several speeches on the theme in the West Riding including one at Halifax in July.<sup>31</sup> O'Connor had shared the platform and linked the call to arms to the incitement of the Newcastle events. The *Star* also published an editorial headed 'Physical force' which defended O'Connor's recent Birmingham speech which had offended the Birmingham Political Union moderates by citing a verse of Tom Moore's 'Song of O'Raurk' which included the lines 'go flesh every sword to the hilt' (an invocation which Chartists with an eye for the possibilities of prosecution changed for the more restrained and meaningful 'grasp every sword etc.') The editorial contained quotations from Daniel O'Connell's forceful speeches during the Catholic emancipation campaign of the 1820s, examples of various other threats made by Radical-Whigs during the 1831-32 Reform Bill campaign and various miscellaneous quotations attributed to John Fielden, Oldham's radical M.P., Lord Stanley and the Book of Lamentations 4:9. All these aggressive statements were tempered by O'Connor's insistence on the constitutionally prescribed approach when he declared that 'moral power should be fully exercised before he would lead them to death or glory'.<sup>32</sup>

While national platform figures posed suggestively at West Riding meetings, the Bradford and Dewsbury Chartists had taken their constitutional cue and were actively involved in practical acts of resistance to the New Poor Law. The Bradford Northern Union discussed providing its members with arms at a meeting on 10 September. Joseph Brook, a local leader 'three years acquainted with the firelock', supported a characteristic speech on the Englishman's birthright with his own personal witness to the creed of resistance:

'The day was approaching when it was probable they might have to fight for their rights. An individual would not shrink from that. He knew tolerably well how to use a firelock (cheers). He wished that their rights might be obtained, though he greatly doubted it; and if the day of blood was ordained to come, all he would say was, that the sooner it came the better', (cheers)<sup>33</sup>

In Dewsbury arms were used directly in protests against the NPL. Pistols were fired at a demonstration in August and through September and October men armed with bludgeons and staves hounded the small local garrison of Metropolitan police, these latter seen as an intruding unconstitutional force acting outside their area of jurisdiction. A vestry meeting further showed its disapproval by electing a Chartist candidate to the post of constable and there was talk

ol 'hanging titled people'.<sup>34</sup>

The organised strength of the working class in the textile districts was paraded at a mass Chartist rally at Peep Green on 15 October. Up to 200,000 people marched in **under** sectional banners including some time-worn 'black flags' from the 1819 Peterloo protest meetings. Many banners proclaimed a resistance message. The North Bierley and West Bowling district banner proclaimed the message of Lamentations 4:9, 'they that be slain by the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger'. The Horton division cited Proverbs 2:13, 'he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment to buy one'. The Wapping division appropriated and adapted Tom Moore's lines with the message 'go grasp every sword to the hilt'. The East Bierley Chartists cited Byron's phrasing with 'strike the blow' and (lie Daw Green banner declared that 'at the risk of life we will have liberty, for we had **belief** die freemen than slaves'. The main Bradford contingent carried a banner with the word 'free we live, free we die'. Several speakers referred to arms including Peter Bussey. He emphasised the precedent of the American revolution and the triumph of 'common sense' and 'American rifles':

If the people of England intended to obtain their independence, if ever they calculated upon upsetting this tyranny which presses their **industry**, they would have to provide themselves with rifles too . . . 'This was the inalienable right of every man in the nation and that man was a slave, a villain, a murderer of his own family that did not **provide** himself with a weapon of self defence.

In an emotional climax Bussey called on them to 'swear by their own right arms to be free or die in the attempt'.<sup>35</sup>

In early November, as in other parts of the country, evening torch-lit rallies were held in the textile districts of the West Riding. They were less noisy than those in Lancashire where Stephens combined an emotional appeal to resist the NPI with support for Chartism. The suggestion by Bussey at Bradford on 5 November that 'should the governing classes raise up a Caesar to stand betwixt the people and liberty, he had not the least doubt that the people would produce a **Brutus**' was an **exception** to this.<sup>36</sup>

The authorities first had their attention drawn to the procurement of arms at the nine of the torch-lit meetings. An anonymous letter sent to a Bradford bookseller warned of a smith making pikes in an out-township. In all probability this was Queenshead where a report of 6 November noted 'physical force is the only topic of conversation'. Later in the month a respectable Halifax correspondent informed the Home Office of 'money clubs having monthly subscriptions to buy arms in Brighouse, Queenshead and Keighley'.<sup>37</sup> While there is nothing to corroborate such reports it must be appreciated that arming was taking place and **that** it was a logical consequence of the unconstitutional imposition of the NPL and the calls coming from Chartists platforms.

On the intellectual plane, the *Northern Star* acknowledged the right to possess and use arms in a late November editorial. Recommending that the mobilisation of the 'moral power of the people' take place first, it recognised the constitu-

tionally prescribed consequences of the failure of 'moral power'. Pointing beyond petitioning, the calling of a popularly elected convention and 'passive resistance', it argued that ultimate sanctions would have to be applied:

If the armed force of the rebellious tyrants be exhibited in the shape of muskets, grapeshot and sabres. THEN THIS IS THE TIME TO BRING THE ARMS OF THE PEOPLE INTO REQUISITION<sup>38</sup>

Branches of the Great Northern Union at Leeds and Bradford issued their own statements. At a Leeds meeting on 26 November William Rider proposed a motion insisting on:

'The right of every man in this country to possess arms, and not merely to have arms in his possession, but to use them (when all other means have failed) in defence of his liberty, his life and his property.'

The same evening at Bradford over 1,000 people gathered in the Oddfellows' Hall to hear Peter Bussey, Joseph Brook — again recalling his military experience and quoting the prophet Jeremiah — and Clarkson, a solicitor, all arguing the same case.<sup>39</sup>

Faced with Chartist militancy and further anti-NPL violence, particularly in Todmorden in late November, the Government intervened by issuing proclamations against torchlit meetings and by bringing troops from Ireland.<sup>40</sup> The Chartist leadership responded. The GNU council ordered a cessation of torchlit activities on 6 December. Most centres obeyed although torches were displayed in Wakefield on 10 December.<sup>41</sup> Against this background O'Connor addressed the whole movement through his paper on 15 December:

'Arm, but in nowise use those arms offensively or defensively as individuals. They are not yours for individual protection, nor yet for individual defence, against the worst laws, or the greatest oppression. They must in nowise be used against the constitution, even in your united strength'.

This was a strange denial of rights whose effect is difficult to assess.<sup>42</sup>

Further attempts to suppress the political voice working people were discovering through Chartism, particularly the arrest of Stephens, provoked angry reactions overriding O'Connor's caution. Peter Bussey, speaking in late December, recommended the purchase of rifles and the formation of 'target societies'.<sup>43</sup> Two newly formed Chartist bodies, the Selby and the Hebden Bridge Radical Associations endorsed O'Connor's earlier position regarding the use of arms when all peaceable means were exhausted. At an early January meeting of the latter body a motion was passed declaring that 'arms were constitutionally valid for the defence of the poor man's castle against all home and domestic enemies'.<sup>44</sup>

#### IV West Riding Chartist resistance during the sitting of the Convention of 1839

The calling of the Convention provided a new focus for resistance. At a 7 January Manchester meeting of twenty newly-elected delegates to the Convention to be begun in London in February, several West Riding representatives alluded to arms. William Rider of Leeds emphasised the acquisition of defensive arms citing St Luke's words, 'he that hath no sword let him sell his garment to buy one'. In anticipation of the Government's dealings he declared he 'would put his trust in God, his pike and his musket'. William Gill, newly elected by Sheffield and Rotherham Chartists, already bowed to the inevitable when he declared, 'a resort to force would be required to relieve the sufferings of the working classes . . . nothing else than a demonstration of this description would operate upon their hard-hearted relentless tyrants'.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the weeks leading up to the Convention's opening, the Chartists of the Bradford area led the West Riding's call for resistance. At a meeting at Queenshead on 15 January William Thornton warned of attempts to provoke a 'premature display of physical force' by the Government and, again repeating the defensive emphasis of other speakers, declared, 'we will not be the aggressors in a physical force display'. The same posture can be read into the substitution of the word 'grasp' for the original 'flesh' in the second line of Tom Moore's verse cited on a placard announcing a Chartist dinner in Bradford in mid January:

'On with your green banners rearing  
Go grasp every sword to the hilt  
On our side's virtue and Erin  
On theirs', the parson and guilt'

At the dinner Bussey referred to the musket as 'part of the furniture of every man's house . . . every man ought to know well the use of it'. Rider repeated the argument that arms must be used only when other constitutional means had failed.<sup>46</sup> In late January Bussey continued his advocacy at a Bradford meeting by quoting the *Morning Chronicle* and *Times*' pronouncements on arms in 1831. The former, now an establishment organ, had declared in November 1831 that 'every reformer able to bear arms, ought to possess himself of those necessary articles'. Bussey responded:

'Now my friends, I tell you to follow their advice. Arm yourselves. Let all who can, purchase a rifle. Let those who cannot purchase a rifle get a musket. Those who cannot get a musket, let them buy a brace of pistols, and those that cannot get pistols must get a pike, aye, a pike, with a shaft.'<sup>47</sup>

The Chartist Convention began its work mobilising support for the petition. At the same time the Queen's speech on the opening of Parliament hinted at new repressive measures. The defiant reaction of West Riding Chartists was captured

in a statement made by 'the Radicals of Liversedge' through the *Northern Star* in early February:

'Fellow countrymen, you have seen by the speech from the Throne that the Government is determined to crush us. You must all be prepared to meet the event. With all their cant about moral force, they are evidently preparing to use physical force, and we have therefore no alternative but to sink quietly into abject slaves, or shew the determined front of men who are conscious of their rights, and are determined to obtain them, or perish with arms in their hands in making the attempt.'<sup>48</sup>

The call was strongly echoed on St Peter's Hill at Leeds later in the month. William Thornton of Bradford called for 4,000 volunteers to join the Great Northern Union. A voice in the crowd expressed the view of one section of popular feeling with the shout, 'aye, and all armed'.<sup>49</sup> Bussey, speaking at Bradford on 4 March, included the threat of the new 'rural police' — seen as an equivalent force to the armed French Bourbon police — and borrowed Julian Harney's homily about arming in the face of such threats to civil liberty:

'Time was when an Englishman had a musket in his cottage and with it hung a flitch of bacon. Now there was no flitch of bacon for there was no musket. Let the musket be restored, and the flitch of bacon would soon be restored'.

Bussey continued, 'let there be no secrecy in your arming, let your arms be where anybody can see them'. This was echoed by a cry of, 'I've mine hinging ower't fire place'. Bussey sternly warned that there should be no more signing of petitions after the current one was considered. This was greeted by cries of, 'we won't, we'll fight'.<sup>50</sup>

Many such calls for arming and resistance cannot be regarded as empty rhetorical gestures or bluff. The movement in the West Riding contained men who had before used or been prepared to use arms for the democratic cause. Some arming had taken place. The earlier reports and the rumours and new reports that had found their way into the 'respectable' press cannot be dismissed out of hand. Subsequent developments given even the seemingly most worthless tittle-tattle some credibility. Varied examples include the *Bradford Observer's* 21 February report of a case of arms arriving in the town, the *Leeds Times* and *Halifax Guardian's* reports of 3 March that Bussey had received consignments of arms from Birmingham and that a 'great number of pikes were now in the hands of the Chartists' and the *Halifax Guardian's* 16 March report of a musket ball being mistakenly fired through the Black Bull inn at Clayton after local Chartists had been on late night 'parade'. In addition there was a report of a wealthy iron monger in the Halifax area being robbed of his guns but his jewels remaining untouched. The *Northern Star* of 28 March reported a Bradford magistrates' court case where a wife prosecuted her husband for neglect. 'He was one of Peter

Bussey's chaps subscribing for a gun', she told the court. The *Halifax Express* contained later reports of guns arriving at Bradford and the *Leeds Intelligencer* reported a drunken Halifax Chartist arrested on 6 April as saying that 'thousands had arms'.<sup>51</sup>

On a more abstract intellectual level, both the *Northern Star* and other widely circulated Chartist papers continued to uphold the right to possess arms. In the Convention the right to possess arms and in constitutionally prescribed circumstances to use them was upheld in a debate in which R.J. Richardson of Salford, a formidable expert on the constitution, played a prominent part. O'Connor re-stated his position emphasising that 'moral force' means must be exhausted before turning to employ ultimate constitutional sanctions. At a mass rally in Leeds on 1 April he employed an elaborate military analogy to emphasise his position:

'They were on the defensive, and, as when an invading army has passed the redoubt of a citadel, the garrison will blow up the mine, that the whole may not fall into their hands, so the moment an unconstitutional war is waged against the people, they will wage war upon their own property!

He further talked about them being 'an army of reserve' which, 'though it might not aggress, would be quick to return the assault'. George White, less concerned with obscure logistics and describing himself as 'not so much a Radical as a Revolutionist', forcefully declared:

'They would never get anything until they were able to take it by force (renewed cheering) and if those who heard him thought they could, they were deceiving themselves'

William Rider spoke in support of men now derided by the hostile middle class press as 'a physical force crew' and stated that 'the people were beginning to find that the citadel of corruption could never be overthrown by paper bullets'. Dr Taylor, again visiting Leeds, gave his support to the harder line with allusion to earlier Scottish history:

'In Scotland they thought that when a government dared even to dictate what should be the national form of worship, then it was time to take the broadsword and the mountain's brow. When the Government dared to impose on them those obnoxious bishops under a pretence of them being ministers of religion, they raised a spirit of opposition that, after many battles, and dyeing their native plains with blood, secured their religious freedom'.<sup>52</sup>

The restraint O'Connor called for was observed in most centres throughout the weeks up to the May presentation of the petition, despite the provocation of the loyalist backlash at Devizes and other indications of the build up of counter-



revolutionary forces.<sup>53</sup>

Bradford Chartists continued to provide an intellectual and practical lead on the resistance question. The female Chartists here, like many Chartist bodies concerned over Stephens, passed a resolution in early April pledging support for 'their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers to defend with arms, that friend of the factory child'. Public drilling sessions commenced in the town on 8 April. A reliable eyewitness — a foreman mason — saw 500 men being drilled at three in the afternoon. Later witnesses testified to the evolutions taking place on three successive Mondays. There were further reports of arms being brought to the town and the magistrates reported 400 sets of muskets and pikes in the locality. The *Bradford Observer*, alarmist as ever, claimed 600 sets in a report of 2 May.<sup>54</sup>

Similar reports came from other centres. A Halifax gentleman informed Manchester's garrison commander on 20 April that 'there are parties in various parts of our neighbourhood, not only in the possession of arms, but undergoing drilling, though without arms'. A few days later another worried local 'respectable' wrote informing the Home Office of 'gun clubs at Queenshead, Clayton Heights and Horton'. Further south in the linen weaving town of Barnsley intensive arms gathering was reported by a correspondent of the *Northern Liberator*:

'The Chartists are arming with pikes, pistols and guns, not only in the town of Barnsley but in its populous vicinity. Such has been the demand during the last fortnight, that the shops have been cleared out of firearms, particularly the pawnbrokers'.<sup>55</sup>

Further south in the metal-working districts, William Gill was touring the scattered ironworks, pottery and colliery communities along the Don valley, east of Sheffield, calling for support for the Charter and for resistance to the New Poor Law and the Rural Police bill by 'arming in defence of their rights'. At the mining village of Greasbrough, mention of the new workhouses prompted a shout of

'take a pistol and shoot Earl Fitzwilliam' {the local magnate and a coalmaster). In Sheffield during April, Gill, Peter Foden and James Wolstenholme (son of Jacobin and United man William and with his father arrested in 1817 for insurrectionary activity) all called for arming at public gatherings. Now the southern area began to mobilise on the scale of the textile districts. The Barnsley area continued to be the most forward southern district and from here in early May came a claim of 'almost public arming at Barnsley, Dodworth and other villages'.<sup>56</sup>

As the Chartist campaign moved towards an anticipated climax with the expected early May presentation of the national petition, the Government speeded up the mobilisation of the forces of counter revolution. More troops were ordered home from Ireland and crack tactical military forces — the Rifle Brigade and the Rocket Brigade — were moved into the Midlands and the North. Other civil and military resources were drawn upon including troops of Yeomanry, the military pensioners and special constables. The systematic round-up of local leaders was begun in various parts of the country.<sup>57</sup>

Set against this background, the Bradford Northern Union's agreement to purchase guns made at an open air meeting held in late April outside their former Oddfellows' Hall meeting room (the trustees had taken note of Government warnings) is more understandable. Edward Whitney declared that 'they should be ready to lake their rights by force' and Henry Hodgson's inquiry about preparations was greeted by a hubbub of affirmations — 'Aye, Aye lad, we've got two guns in our house'. From Halifax came reports of 'secret training' and in consequence the local magistrates established a nightly mounted patrol to seek out midnight drillers (exactly what had happened in the area during 1800-2).<sup>58</sup> What the Leeds Chartists were doing was more obscure but it is worth noting that a sixpenny (2.5 N P) abridged pamphlet version of Francis Macerone's *Defensive Instructions for the People* — a book published for an English audience during the Reform Bill crisis which gave explicit instructions about conducting urban civil war — was available at a local radical bookseller's shop. There is no doubt that it was read in George's White's circle in Leeds and later references to it by activists in the winter risings show it was read by at least Bradford and Sheffield Chartists.<sup>59</sup>

Parliament's consideration of the Chartist petition was deferred as the result of the Government's resignation after defeat on a minor measure during the first week of May. Chartist expectations were transferred to the impact of 'simultaneous' mass Whit holiday meetings which would consider and respond to the aggressive recommendations for 'ulterior measures' in the recently drafted 'Convention Manifesto'. This document upheld the right of having arms and using them to defend or uphold democratic political rights. It declared the present generation to be 'degenerate children who have patiently yielded to one infringement after another until the last vestige of RIGHT has been lost in the MYSTICISM of legislation and the armed force of the country has been transferred to soldiers and policemen'. It warned them to 'prepare for the worst' and posed nine questions to be asked at the Whit gatherings. The fourth asked:

'Whether, according to their old constitutional rights, they had prepared themselves with the arms of freemen to defend the laws and constitutional privileges their ancestors bequeathed to them?'<sup>60</sup>

As the time of the Whit meetings approached more signs of the secretive arming taking place surfaced. A large knife was displayed before magistrates at Wakefield court house supposedly representative of a type recently hawked round the area. A Halifax constable seized a pike and its production in court was alleged to have made a magistrate weep. Shackleton, a Bradford Chartist news-vendor, was reported receiving a new consignment of guns. A Barnsley shop-keeper informed the Home Office of a growing 'powerful body of physical force men'. The local magistrates pointed out one of these as John Vallance, an 1820 insurgent who took part in the march to Grange Moor. There were others like Arthur Collins, an active 1819-20 arms dealer, and now active in the Barnsley Northern Union.<sup>61</sup>

The Whit meetings were well attended despite fears of the military arriving to disperse them. A small meeting was held at Sheffield and a big gathering for the textile West Riding was held at Peep Green.<sup>62</sup> Deliberate restraint was shown by the Chartists. The Leeds Northern Union branch left behind a 'liberty or death' flag and speakers spoke mainly of the defensive use of arms. Samuel Dickenson of Almondsbury commented that the 'poor had as much right to arms as the rich'. Thomas Vevers of Huddersfield, another veteran of the 1817 insurrectionism, told the crowd that they 'should defend liberty to the death'. In the context of the threats of dispersal — which never materialised — O'Connor spoke of 'repelling attack by attack'. Samuel Healey of Dewsbury declared his town 'for universal suffrage at all risks' and George White of Leeds warned of 'the time approaching to make a stand'. Bronterre O'Brien, visiting from London, commented on the way the franchise was kept as 'a privilege by force' and asked, 'surely the other nine tenths would be justified in taking it forcibly?' William Ashton of Barnsley, recently returned from Australian transportation for leading a strike in 1829, also emphasised the need for force. Peter Bussey recalled the 'army of old England' in Saxon times and attacked the exclusive basis of the armed associations Lord John Russell was trying to promote among the property owning classes. 'I trust every man among us willing to fight will receive arms bought with those taxes wrung from the working classes', he commented.

The Chartist campaign was still on a defensive footing. Parliament's verdict on the petition was still awaited although past experience warned of the outcome. In the meantime delegates were sent out to rouse up new districts. Bairstow of Queenshead and Ashton of Barnsley toured outlying parts of the region in middle and late June and were reported telling their audiences that 'there was nothing left but physical force'.<sup>63</sup>

The arming continued despite the further measures of the Government and the counter-propaganda of Alexander Somerville's series of cheap pamphlet antidotes to Macerone's writings, *Dissuasive Warnings*.<sup>64</sup>

The Convention reconvened in Birmingham on 1 July. In anticipation of Parliament's rejection on 12 July, it ordered the implementation of some of the

**milder** 'ulterior measures'. The attacks of the imported metropolitan police on the Birmingham crowd in early and middle July — the so-called Bull Ring Riots — speeded the Convention's departure to London where it received news of the petition's rejection.

The news from Birmingham and London was received with great anger in the West Riding. Passions ran high at Barnsley where at a protest meeting on 11 July the crowd promised to 'rescue' any of the local leaders if arrested. Four days later Ashton of Barnsley pledged his people to a general strike on a Sheffield platform he shared with Wolstenholme who called for arming in self defence. The rescue theme recurred again at Barnsley in the May Day Green 'Bull Ring' on 18 July. A motion was passed warning that the arrests of the next leader would be 'rebutted as if the stroke were made at the whole working class'. John Widdop was reported calling for arming and citing Swiss democracy and the Saxon past as historical examples of an armed people debating and resolving political questions on a democratic basis.<sup>65</sup> An editorial in the *Northern Star* of 20 July called for patience in the face of provocation and, urging the implementation of ulterior measures, asked, 'has every working man a musket in his house and a reasonable supply of powder and shot?'<sup>66</sup>

The arming continued up to the period when the 'Sacred Month', or as it became, the shortened three day 'holiday', was to begin on 12 August. The defensive significance of arms was now giving way to their insurrectionary significance. A Bradford gunsmith reported an approach for 100 bayonets to local magistrates and also frequent requests for guns and repairs to guns. A constable at **Shipley** reported blacksmiths making pikes and spears. There were signs of such activity in Dewsbury and Halifax.<sup>67</sup> The time of an acceleration in arming in the Sheffield area was later pinpointed by those engaged in the winter insurrectionary activity as the moment in late July when the magistrates tried to stop all public meetings. At one of the meetings held in the town's Paradise Square during the last fortnight in July, Peter Foden openly welcomed the show of weapons in the crowd and expressed a hope 'that he should see more tomorrow'.<sup>68</sup>

The hostility of the authorities and fears of arrests forced the Chartists to adopt guises in talking about arms. In Bradford in early August Thomas Cliffe of Halifax and William Martin, an Irishman living in Bradford, both referred obscurely to arms. Cliffe talked of 'beautiful fire place ornaments' and Martin to the provision of 'plenty of butter'.<sup>69</sup> The armed response to such talk was not universal, at least in the mind of O'Connor who through the *Northern Star* partly interpreted weakness in regard of the holding of a month long strike in terms of lack of arms. O'Connor found support at the Convention and there followed a call on 6 August for the compromise three day 'holiday'.<sup>70</sup>

Seen as an opportunity of demonstrating strength, the 'holiday' was observed in many West Riding centres over 12-14 August. Several other meetings held the weekend before and in the later part of the following week can be regarded as part of this demonstration. Little was said about arms at the gatherings. Some pistols were fired at Bradford and street fighting took place over the right of access to public places in Sheffield and Barnsley. At Huddersfield's Back Green

gathering on 10 August William Martin made reference to obtaining arms. Henry Hodgson's was the lone voice on the Bradford platform which mentioned 'ornaments' to the 10,000 strong crowd. The Barnsley Chartists heralded their placard for the 12 August rally with Byron's lines 'hereditary bondsmen, know ye not, who would be free, themselves must strike the blow'. Gesturing the upward thrust of a pike, Amos Maudsley cursed, 'the damnable and bloody Whigs' and called on the Barnsley people to 'make a long pull and a short pull with a steel point called Physical Font' . . . with our own right arms we will obtain Liberty or by God we will die in the struggle'. The ingenious Sheffielders Foden and Charles Fox, sharing a 12 August platform with visiting speakers including one Clarke of Ashton who had been next to Hunt at Peterloo, entertained the crowds with their own brand of euphemisms — 'biscuits' (for bullets), 'flitches of bacon' (for muskets and arms generally), 'sacks of flour' (powder) and 'sticks to cross drains' (pike shafts). At Dewsbury, on the second of the long remembered 'three glorious days', Bairstow praised the solidarity of men 'who could lay a town or a kingdom in ashes'. At Leeds on 16 August David Black, commenting on the new Rural Police Act and plans for the recruitment of 5,000 more troops, stated:

'If their present agitation was opposed by force, the people should everywhere spring into action, and meet it by fury, till every trembling wave flowed back to its fountain.'<sup>71</sup>

After the 'holiday' the ulterior measures were escalated. In some localities more support from the trades was sought.<sup>72</sup> The movement was thrown back onto an even more defensive position with further disregard being shown by the Government for the few remaining vestiges of civil and political liberty. There were several examples of using religious-type forms of meeting to get round various bans.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile in London the Convention started to wind up its proceedings. One of its last acts in the late August-early September period was to draft and issue 'Thirty Nine Political Articles'. These particularly emphasised the elementary rights now under attack. Citing legal precedent from Saxon times onwards, article XVIII re-asserted popular rights concerning arms:

'It is the undoubted right of the people of the United Kingdom to have, use, carry and practice, and train, in the use of arms for their collective and mutual security, so that the public peace be not thereby disturbed'<sup>74</sup>

The following day the *Star* published its most extensive article concerning the right to possess arms. It traced the possession of the right from the military democracy of the Ancient Britons to the most recent period of restrictions during George III's reign. It reminded them 'not only the subject but the monarch, may be a traitor: the former by plotting against the King without just cause and the latter by violating the sovereignty of the people'. It presented an extension of the working class's alternative reasoning by citing Blackstone:

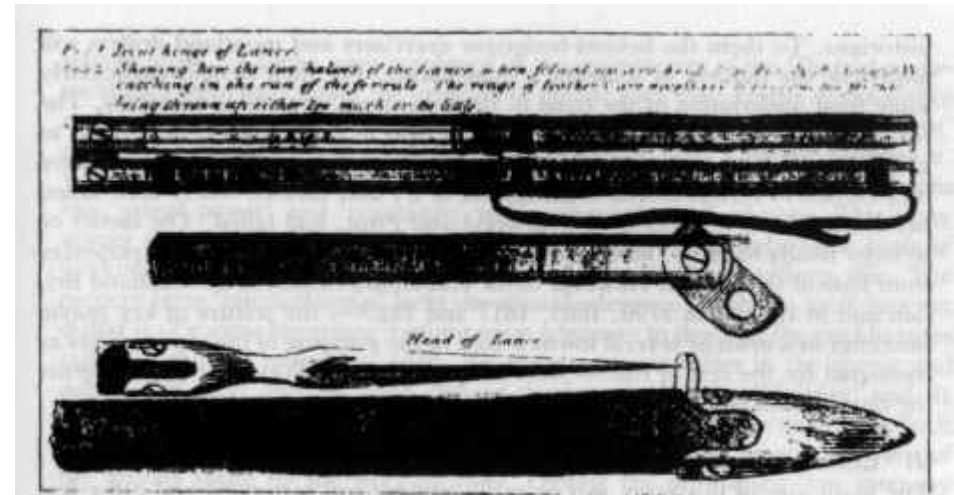
'In one and the same nation, when the fundamental principles of their common union are supposed to be invaded, the only tribunal to which the complainants can appeal is that of the God of Battles, the only process by which the appeal can be carried on is that of civil and intestine civil war'.<sup>75</sup>

## V The Road to Insurrection in the West Riding 1839-40

In mid September the Convention broke up and the delegates returned to their localities; some to take part in planning a rising. Chartist debate and discussion look on a private character in most West Riding centres as repression forced the movement underground. In Sheffield exceptional open clashes of armed Chartists and police — something similar to the 'turmoil' Maehl describes taking place on Tyneside several months earlier — occurred surrounding the right to meet and discuss political issues in public.<sup>76</sup> The secret discussions in 'class', 'section' and 'private' full meetings of Chartist bodies are difficult to penetrate.<sup>77</sup> Peacock's earlier study (1969) and my own (1976, 1978) contributions to an examination of the winter of planning and mounting a rising present the little evidence that survives illustrating the sense of political, historical and constitutional justification shared by the insurgents. While this important phase requires examination in another essay or as a full length study,<sup>78</sup> it is important to recall that in the final planning by the West Riding delegate meetings people like Bussey, White and Black (who had all made explicit statements earlier) were involved. In addition to the activists who had insurrectionary pedigrees stretching back twenty years or more, another figure from the 1820 rising surfaced in the last stage of early Chartist struggle with the election to the delegate meeting of Thomas Kitchenman of Halifax to **represent** his home town in the last months of 1839<sup>79</sup>. A privileged glimpse into the Sheffield Chartist room in a *Northern Star* report at the same time revealed portraits of Einmett, Tyler, Tell, Washington, Wallace, Fitzgerald and Frost. Nationalist and democratic martyrs and patriots continued to serve as talismen. The emotional appeal was however tempered by the rational insistence on rights.<sup>80</sup> A Sheffield speaker involved in a hurried and defiant Paradise Square meeting on 11 November, just after Newport, merged his interpretation of this event with a sense of constitutional right and class directed necessity. He told them there was no longer a need to use disguised language (by implication the insurrectionary moment was at hand):

I tell you plainly it is your duty and privilege to get muskets (loud cheers) . . . Those who oppose us know if you were determined they would no longer wallow in luxury and palaces while you were starving in your dens of misery'

The organisers of this meeting, now resigned to having to make an insurrection, also organised the subsequent election of the town's representative to the District and Border convention in Newcastle where decisions about a post-Newport national rising were made. The election was held on a dark hillside protected by a ring of armed men — at a similar location resorted to by local United



men and visited by Major Cartwright in the winter of 1800-01. The insurrectionary tradition re-asserted itself.<sup>81</sup>

In Sheffield, Bradford and in all likelihood elsewhere, another, mainly practical, influence continued to have effect. Macerone's pamphlet, and possibly the full length book which drew heavily on the French Revolution of 1830, served to inform would be bomb makers and other weapons makers how to set about their task. More important from the point of intellectual justification, a series of articles on 'resistance', including one comprehensively listing English legal and constitutional precedents for having arms and using them, appeared in the late November-December editions of the *Northern Liberator*. There is evidence that this Newcastle-based Chartist organ was now providing more inspiration and was now more in touch with rank and file insurgency than the *Northern Star*.<sup>82</sup>

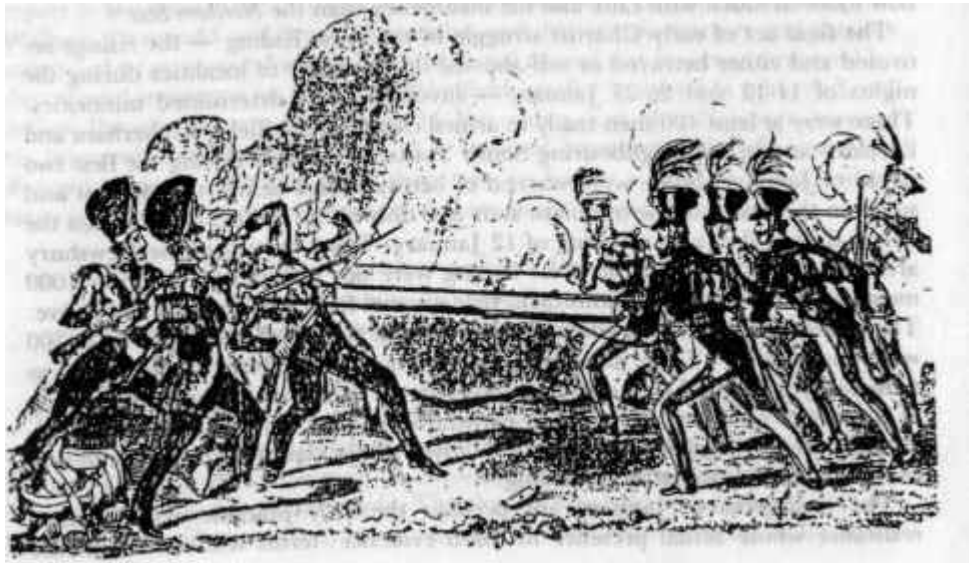
The final act of early Chartist struggle in the West Riding — the risings activated and either betrayed or self-aborted in a number of localities during the nights of 11-12 and 26-27 January — involved small determined minorities. There were at least 400 men ready in armed classes in Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley and in the neighbouring South Yorkshire villages during the first two weeks of January. Some were warned of betrayal days before the attempt and some on the stroke of the midnight start and only about a third came out on the streets during the early morning of 12 January. The Chartists of the Dewsbury area and wider afield in the West Riding were not infiltrated and up to 1000 mustered. There was disappointment that support from Bradford did not arrive. The belated Bradford area attempted rising came a fortnight later and up to 500 were under arms.<sup>83</sup> These armed groups were modest sized but not so modest as to be easily ignored. The numbers involved in the risings are no test or indication of the extent of armed preparation earlier in the year. There is no way of accurately measuring defensive arming. Harney's later claims of the failure to arm cannot be applied to the West Riding.<sup>84</sup>

The insurgents of January are perhaps the only practitioners of armed resistance whose actual presence in 'hard evidence' terms will convince some

historians. To them the behind-hedgerow exercisers and moorland drillers will always be the figment of someone's imagination. For their benefit particularly some final underlining of the basis of the insurgents' actions is necessary. The two thousand odd people who were ready to fight in January 1840 were ready to give practical expression to the last sequence of constitutional logic. Of necessity they turned to conspiratorial organisation to try and succeed where their fallen heroes, Emmett, Brandreth, Thistlewood and Frost, had failed. The tactics or strategy finally fixed on, no doubt, involved consideration of French experiences from Babeuf to Rlanqui. However in the end tactics employed on mainland Britain and in Ireland in 1798, 1803. 1817 and 1820 — the seizure of key public buildings in a town or several towns linked to the stopping of the mail coaches as the signal for the rest to rise — were adopted. For the West Riding insurgents the bitter lesson of history was repeated.

## VI Conclusion

The main aim of this essay was to make professional historians and other less privileged readers more aware of the reasoning of the working class. Deeper appreciation of the constitutional logic employed by the early Chartists in vindicating their arming and armed actions is required. In analysing the shifts of emphasis in strategy it may well be that historians will be more careful in employing terms like 'moral force' and 'physical force' as part of their analysis. It is hoped the term 'intimidationalist' will be seen as inappropriate. As the narrative shows the terms 'moral force' and 'physical force' did at least figure in Chartist vocabulary and unlike 'intimidationalist' had some situational relevance. It should be pointed out that the first two terms were heavily emphasised by the authorities in their ideological attempts to discredit Chartism and also by secessionist middle class elements trying to fragment the movement. In many in-



stances when the terms were employed in the mainstream of the Chartist movement they were used under the pressure of debate with their hostile critics within and without. Such was also the case with another situational term 'revolutionist' used also some twenty years earlier and during the early Chartist turbulence. When Chartists defined their own actions in a more independent fashion, terms like 'moral power' and 'resistance' were commonly used phrases. This essay argues that we should recognise the strong defensive constitutionalist basis of working class action and that such language appropriately reflects this. The modern term 'intimidational' lacks situational relevance but this in itself does not disbar it. To some historians it might seem adequate to describe the torchlit mass rallies in the last months of 1838, the mass open air rallies in the spring and summer of 1839 and the open defiant displays during the 'Holiday' and its immediate aftermath when the authorities' ban on meetings was contested. Such usage however begs the question of intimidation and wholly ignores the basis of the actions taken by the working class. Despite the oft-praised 'low intensity operations' conducted by General Napier and other military commanders their attitudes to the politically organised sections of the working class were as stern as any of their class.<sup>85</sup>

The authorities had the backing of the armed forces should draconian measures have been adopted. The authorities retained a monopoly on field guns, rocket launchers and cavalry and, despite the effects of a long term run down in the army, were able to call in reinforcements from a relatively quiet Ireland. In addition the Government could choose reliable elements from a host of auxiliaries: yeomen cavalry, special constables, military pensioners and professional police. Further support in the shape of employing power and local mainly workplace ideological control was provided by merchant and industrial capitalist employers. The Church, many chapels, the capitalist press and the legal profession also lent their weight to the work of shoring the State up. A monolithic view of the nature of repression such as this does not of course do justice to the subtlety of the modern English State, even at this early stage of its development. Regardless of such complexities, the overall effect of the State's operations was to maintain the unconstitutional political monopoly of the few against the interest of the many.<sup>86</sup> Only on this basis should the angry speeches and the sheer weight of numbers at mass meetings be analysed. On this basis terms like 'intimidational' cannot be seen as the best way to describe working class militancy. Similarly those who composed what hostile sources described as members of a 'physical force party' or 'crew' or the 'knots of revolutionists' are inadequately described. The armed Chartists ready to defend their meetings to uphold their elementary civil and political rights and those who were willing to take out the full option on their constitutional right to resist unconstitutional oppression and fight for democratic rights must be seen as 'defenders of the constitution'. This study represents them as such.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Cited in various places in the Chartist press including *Northern Liberator*, 17 Nov. 1838, 12 Jan. 1839, 20 April 1839; *Northern Star*, 29 June and 7 Sept. 1839; *Champion*, 4 Nov. 1838.

2. Part of a SSRC-funded project 'Armed Resistance and Insurrectionism in the English Working Class experience 1837-40 (HR 5988) carried out at Sheffield University during 1979-80. I have presented papers based on this work at the Society for the Study of Labour History Conference in June 1982 and History Workshop Conference, Sheffield November 1982.

3. C. Greenwood, *Firearms Control — A Study of Armed Crime and Firearms Control in England and Wales* (1972) pp7-17 for a reasonable summary of historical evolution in the legal position concerning arms. The phrase 'school of experience' is used by a correspondent of the *Northern Star*, edition of 24 Nov. 1838.

4. References are widely scattered in the Chartist press and the most emphatic statements include those found in *Northern Liberator*, 13, 27 Oct. 17 Nov. 1838, 12 Jan., 20 April, 13 July, 26 Oct., 2 Nov., 9 Nov., 23 Nov., 30 Nov., 7 Dec. 1839 and 11 Jan. 1840; *Northern Star*, 30 June, 25 Aug., 8 Sept., 24 Nov., 15 Dec. 1838, 6, 13, 20 April, 4, 11 May, 29 June, 13 July, 7 Sept., 12 Oct. 1839; *London Democrat*, 13, 20 April 1839; *Champion*, 16 June, 4, 27 Nov. 1838, 10 Mar. 1839; *Charter* 5, 12 May, 28 July 1839; *Chartist*, 9, 23 Mar., 12, 26 May 1839; *Operative*, 23, 30 Dec. 1838, 27 Jan., 14 April, 12 May 1839; *Western Vindicator*, 23 Mar. 8 June, 2, 9, 16 Nov., 7 Dec. 1839.

5. The listing in the text is not exhaustive. Examples of reports of dinners and speeches where there was recollection of such individual contributions include: *Northern Star*, 10 Nov. 1838 — Manchester dinner, 6 Jan. 1839 — Halifax dinner, 19 Jan. 1839 — Bradford dinner, 13 April 1839 — Stephens' speech as Ashton, 5 Oct. 1839 - Lowery speech, 26 Oct. 1839 - Manchester dinner, 10 Nov. 1839 — 16 Nov. 1839, Ashton dinner.

6. Examples in addition to those given in later text include *Northern Liberator* 13 Sept. 1838 — Burns; *Northern Star* 9 Feb. 1839 — Byron; *London Democrat*, 20 April 1839 - Southey's 'Wat Tyler'; *Northern Star*, 27 April 1839 — Shelley's 'To the men of England', *Northern Star*, 10 Nov. 1839 — Knowles "The Insurrectionists". The 'Marseillais Hymn' appeared in *London Democrat*, 20 April 1839. Birmingham's Charles Whitworth wrote a verse 'Liberty or death' in 1819. This was cited by a Stockport speaker in May 1839, *Northern Star*, 18 May 1839. As regards martyrology I have never come across a later reference to Despard.

7. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, I, (1968) p. 97.

8. M. Hovell, *The Chartist Movement* (1918) pp 118-190 and J.T. Ward, *Chartism* (1973) pp 117-136 make interesting comparison for similarities of language and interpretation.

9. F.C. Mather, *Chartism* (Historical Association pamphlet, 1965) pp 13-16;



J.F.C. Harrison 'Chartism in Leicester' in A. Briggs (ed), *Chartist Studies* (1965) pp 33-34.

10. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968 ed.) p683.

11. D. Thompson, *The Early Chartists* (1971); D. Jones *Chartism and the Chartists* (1975).

12. D. Thompson, *op. tit.*, pp 13-17 and *The Chartists* (1984), particularly 57-87. The contents of this pamphlet are a slightly updated version of the essay dropped at the last moment by the editors and publishers of J. Epstein, D. Thompson, *The Chartist Experience* (1982). I leave the readers of this pamphlet to draw their own conclusions as to the evaluative capability of editors and publishers and whether this offers any insight into the politics of knowledge.

13. Jones, *op.tit.*, p. 147; J. Foster *Class, Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (1974) passim; J.L. Baxter and F.K. Donnelly, 'The Revolutionary 'Underground' in the West Riding', *Past and Present*, 64, 1974 pp 24-32 and 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820', *International Review of Social History*, XX, 1975, pt 3. pp 398-423; D. Thompson, *The Chartists* (1984).

14. T.M. Kemnitz, 'Approaches to the Chartist Movement - Feargus O'Connor and Chartist Strategy', *Albion*, 5, no 1, Spring 1973, W. Maehl, 'The Dynamics of Violence in Chartism — A case study of North-East England', *Albion*, 7, no 2, 1975, T.M. Kemnitz and F. Jacques, 'J.R. Stephens and the Chartist Movement', *International Review of Social History*, XX, 1975; M. Vicinus, 'To live free or die: the relationship between strategy and style in Chartist speeches, 1838-39', *Style*, LO, fall 1976, no 4; J. Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom* (1982).

15. *Northern Liberator*, 29 Dec. 1838 for some background on 50 year old Parker who in 1839 lived in Ouseburn; *Northern Liberator*, 17 Nov. 1839 for speech of Morriss chairman of Hebburn meeting recalled fleeing 41 years ago into the pits of the Tyne; *Newcastle Courant* 6, 20 Nov. 1819, 4, 18 Dec. 1819, *Durham County Advertiser* 11 Dec. 1819 and PRO HO 42/196, 197, 198 for evidence of arming in Tyneside communities mentioned in text and a feature largely ignored in contributions of McCord and Rowe. 1838-40 evidence too extensive to document but most interesting literary expression is T. A. Devyr, *The Odd Book of the Nineteenth century* (1882) esp. pp 198-211.

16. J. Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom, op.cit.*, pp 124-5. Epstein p. 194 notes "Until the summer of 1839, Chartism was characterised by an unprecedented openness and emphasis on constitutional forms of agitation and organisation. However with the rejection of the National Petition, the cancellation of the Sacred Month and the disbanding of the Convention, small groups of Chartists prepared to go beyond such tactics, to cross the threshold of violence and move towards insurrection". There is somehow the implication in this that the right of insurrection is unconstitutional. Similarly D. Thompson (1984) *op.cit.* preface "Every tactic was considered to bring the achievement of the programme about, from rational argument with those in power to the taking up of arms against them" similarly suggests a discontinuity in action that I do not accept.

17. *Charter*, 28 July 1839.

18. On the background to the anti-Poor Law agitation see C. Driver, *Tory Radical; the life of Richard Oastler* (1949), J.C. Gill, *The Ten Hours'Parson*, (1959), M.E. Rose, 'The Anti Poor Law Movement in the North of England', *Northern History*, I, 1966.

19. Examples include *Sheffield Iris*, 17 Oct. 1837 - formation of Sheffield WMA; *Leeds Times*, 21 Oct. 1837 - Bamsley Radical Association adopted organisational features of WMA; *Leeds Times*, 6 Aug. 1837 - Bradford RA revived; *Leeds Times*, 23 Sept. 1837 - Leeds WMA formed; *Northern Star*, 10 Oct. 1838 details of Wakefield WMA banner giving formation date as 20 July 1837.

20. *Leeds Times*, 26 Aug. 1838.

21. Driver, *op.cit.*, 364-7; A.J. Peacock, *Bradford Chartism 1838-40, Borthwick Papers*, no 36, 1969 pp 12-13.

22. Driver, *op.cit.*, 361.

23. *Northern Star*, 13 Jan. 1838.

24. *Leeds Times*, 13 Jan. 1838; *Northern Star* 13 Jan. 1838.

25. *Northern Star*, 27 Jan, 21 April, 6 May 1838.

26. *Northern Star*, 10 June 1838, Bussey went on to warn of the new union workhouses housing soldiers.

27. On the Kentish affair see P.G. Rogers, *Battle of Bossenden Wood* (1961) for a popular account. E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, pp 580-2 for analysis. Primary materials are located in HO 40/40; Reports on the Newcastle affair include *Northern Liberator*, 30 June, 7 July 1838; *Northern Star*, 30 June 1838; *Newcastle Journal*, 30 June 1838.

28. *Northern Star*, 9, 30 June and 15 Dec. 1838; *Northern Liberator*, 7 July 1838.

29. *Leeds Intelligencer*. 28 July, 4, 11, 25 Aug., 1 Sept. 1838.

30. *Northern Star*, 25 Aug. 1838.

31. *Northern Star*, 4 Aug. 1838.

32. *Northern Star*, 25 Aug. 1838.

33. *Northern Star*, 13 Sept. 1838; *Bradford Observer*. 13 Sept. 1838.

34. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 2825 Aug., 29 Sept. 1838; *Northern Star*, 25 Aug.

- 1 838; Dewsbury magistrates to Home Office, 6 Aug. 1 838, HO 40/51.
35. *Northern Star*, 20 Oct. 1838; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 20 Oct. 1828.
36. The West Riding torch lit meetings were held in the Holmfirth area on 3 November, at Bradford on 5 November. See *Northern Star*, 10 Nov. 1838 and *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 Nov. 1838. Others included Bolton (30 Oct), Cockermouth (4 Nov), Rochdale (7 Nov), Trowbridge (19 Nov), Bradford, Wilts (19 Nov), and Hilperton (18 Dec). In addition arms were displayed in open day at Wigan (12 Nov) and Leigh (13 Nov).
37. William Emery, Halifax to Lord John Russell, 29 Nov 1 838. H.O. 40/40.
38. *Northern Star*, 24 Nov 1838; *Northern Liberator*, 13 Oct. 1838.
39. *Bradford Observer*, 29 Nov. 1838; *Northern Star*, 12 Jan. 1839.
40. *Manchester Guardian*, 21, 24 Nov. 1838; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 Dec. 1 838; E. Chadwick to Philipps 28 Nov. 1 838 HO 40/38, Philipps to Todmorden magistrates 3 Dec. 1838 HO41/13; proclamations enclosed in letters to Lords Lieutenants 15 Dec. 1838 and request for troops in Phillips to Lt. General Somerset, 14 Dec. 1838 HO 41/13.
41. *Northern Star*, 8 Dec. 1838; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 1 5 Dec. 1 838; J. Brandling to Russell, 1 2 Dec. 1 838 Ho 40/40.
42. *Northern Star*, 15 Dec. 1838.
43. *Northern Star*, 5 Jan. 1839.
- 44! *Northern Star*, 5, 12 Jan. 1839.
45. *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, 12 Jan. 1839.
46. *Northern Star*, 19 Jan. 1839.
47. *Bradford Observer*, 31 Jan. 1839.
48. *Hansard*, vol 45, pp 4-5, report of 5 February Queen's speech; *Northern Star*, 23 Feb. 1839.
49. *Leeds Times*, 2 March 1839; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 2 March 1839.
50. *Bradford Observer*, 1 March 1839; *Northern Star*, 9 March 1839, *Leeds Times*, 9 March 1 839; Harney's speech at Derby is reported in *Northern Star*, 9 Feb. 1839.
51. *Bradford Observer*, 21, 27 Feb. 1839; *Leeds Times*, 3 March 1839; *Halifax Guardian*, 3, 1 6 March, 6 April 1839; *Northern Star*, 28 March 1839; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 13, 27 April 1839; *Halifax Express*, 13 April 1839.
52. *Northern Star*, 6 April 1839; *Leeds Times*, 6 April 1839.
53. R.B. Pugh, 'Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire', in Briggs (ed.) *op.cit.*, pp 182-4 for account and indication of sources on Devizes affair.
54. *Northern Star*, 6 April 1839; *Bradford Observer*, 2 May 1839; Bradford magistrates to Home Office 29 April 1839; examination of John Rhodes, master mason 6 May 1839 and depositions of James Reaney, wooll sorter, Timothy Hudson, soldier, John Spencer, manufacturer, Samuel Binns, farmer and John Turner, banker's clerk, all 3 May 1839, HO 40/51.
55. Col. Weymss to Philipps, 21 April 1839 enclosing J.R. Ralph to Weymss 20 April 1 839, HO 40/43; W. Emery to Home Office, 29 April 1839, HO 40/52; *Northern Liberator*, 20 April 1839.
56. Sgt. W. Wray to Supt. May, 20 April 1839, HO 40/51; *Sheffield Independent*, 27 April, 3 May 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*, 29 April 1839; Wolstenholm's earlier career and details of Sheffield's unique revolutionary or insurrectionary tradition is documented in J.L. Baxter and F.K. Donnelly, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition etc. *art.cit.*'; Sheffield's difficulties are documented in J. Litherland to W. Lovett, 2 April 1839, BL Add Mss 34, 245 A; M. Williams to Home Office, 1 May 1839, HO 40/52.
57. On the co-ordination of the forces of authority see F.C. Mather, *Public Order in the Age of the Chartists* (1959) *passim*. Interesting detail is included in W. Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles Napier*, 4 vols (1857) and bears comparison with the contents of HO 40/53 for 'opinions' left out of the official presentation of Napier's papers.
58. *Northern Star*, 4 May 1839; *Bradford Observer*. 9 May 1839; *Leeds Times*, 11 May 1839; *Halifax Guardian*, 11 May 1839.
59. *Northern Star*, 4 May 1839 advert for a 6 penny (2'/J NP) edition on sale at leading progressive bookstalls including Hobson's at Leeds. A cheaper 4 penny (2 NP) 'third improved edition' was on sale from Linguard's Sheffield shop and Hobson's Leeds shop. Copy of original in HO 40/37; On local familiarity with the book or the pamphlet version see W. Wells statement, December 1840, HO 20/10 and Bradford magistrates to Home Office 29 Jan. 1840, HO 40/57.
60. M. Hovell, *The Chartist Movement (1918)*, pp 147-9 for full 'Manifesto'.
61. *Halifax Guardian*, 18 May 1839; *Leeds Times*, 27 April, 18 May 1839; *Halifax Express*, 18 May 1839; H.B. Cooke to Ld John Russell, 8 May 1839, HO 40/51.
62. *Sheffield Independent*. 25 May 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*. 25 May 1839; the argument concerning an 'aristocracy' among local trades put forward by Gill at the Sheffield meeting is examined in a wider context in J.L. Baxter, 'Chartist notions of "labour aristocracy" in 1839', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*. Spring 1980. 13-16: Reports on Peep Green include *Northern Star*, 25

May 1839; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 May 1839; *Leeds Mercury*, 25 May 1839. Vevers role in 1817 is specified in TS 11/1014/4134. Ashton's earlier career is documented in my PhD thesis, 'The origins of the Social War in South Yorkshire — a study of capitalist evolution and labour class realisation in one industrial region c. 1750-1855', Sheffield University 1976/77 pp 332-339.

63. *Leeds Times*, 22, 29 June 1839; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 29 June 1839; *Northern Star*, 29 June 1839; *Sheffield Independent*, 29 June 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*, 29 June 1839; *Sheffield Iris*, 2 July 1839.

64. A. Somerville, *Dissuasive Warnings to the People on Street Warfare* (1839). Somerville painted the scenes of urban disorder if civil war broke out in a series of 'letters' under this title. Numbers I-IV, each priced 1 penny (½ NP), each dealing with a specific city, are included in HO 40/52. Somerville got mixed reviews in the Chartist press e.g. *Operative*, 28 April 1839 was hostile and *Charter*, 5 May 1839 was favourable.

65. Hovell, *op.cit.*, pp 155-58 and 165-66 for background on 'Bull Ring'. Local reactions reported in *Northern Star*, 13, 20 July 1839; *Sheffield Iris*, 13 July 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*, 20 July 1839; *Sheffield Independent*, 20 July 1839; H.B. Cooke to Russell, 20 July 1839 HO 40/51; J.H. Burland, *Annals of Barnsley*, mss in 4 vols, Barnsley Reference Library, vol 2, pp 112-15.

66. *Northern Star*, 20 July 1839.

67. *Bradford Observer*, 18 July 1839; *Leeds Times*, 27 July 1839; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 July 1839; deposition of James Glover, constable, 26 July 1839 and William Egan, gunsmith, 27 July 1839, HO 40/51.

68. *Sheffield Independent*, 20, 27 July 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*, 20, 27 July 1839; *Sheffield Iris*, 23, 30 July 1839.

69. On the position of the authorities see Mather, *op.cit.*, pp 29-30, on the introduction and passing of the Rural Police Act during July-August, the passing of the Bolton, Birmingham, Manchester and London Police Acts and other measures. As regards local measures there had been some response in Bradford to Lord John Russell's earlier invitation to form middle class 'armed associations'. As a report in *Northern Star*, 1 June 1839 shows the Barnsley Chartists turned the tables on one group of 'associators' and prosecuted them under the law covering military training. On the arming of police with cutlasses see requests from West Riding in HO 40/51 and replies in HO 41/14. *Leeds Times*, 17 Aug. 1839 arrival of cutlasses in Leeds. Sheffield and Bradford police also received arms. On swearing in of extra constables see requests and agreements in HO 40/51 and HO 41/14; *Bradford Observer*, 8 Aug. 1839.

70. *Northern Star*, 7 Aug. 1839. Various West Riding responses, including Bussey, 6 Aug. 1839 and Wolstenholm, 6 Aug. 1839 in Add.Mss. 27, 871 B. For more details and analysis see J.L. Baxter, 'Chartist notions etc,' *art. cit.*, pp 13-16.

71. Reports of events throughout the region in *Northern Star*, 17 Aug. 1839, *Leeds Times*, 17 Aug. 1839; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 17 Aug. 1839; *Leeds Mercury*, 17 Aug. 1839; *Halifax Guardian*, 17 Aug. 1839; *Bradford Observer*, 15, 22 Aug. 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*; 17 Aug. 1839; *Sheffield Iris*, 13, 20 Aug. 1839; *Sheffield Independent*; 17 Aug. 1839, *Doncaster Gazette*, 16 Aug. 1839, *Wakefield Journal*, 16 Aug. 1839; Sheffield magistrates to Russell, 14 Aug. and to Normanby 5 Oct. 1839, and depositions and H.B. Cooketo Russell 13 Aug. 1839, enclosing poster, HO 40/51.

72. Baxter, 'Chartist notions etc' *art.cit.*, pp 13-16.

73. 'Churchgoings' or Chartist attendances at church on Sundays with consequent political meetings held in the church-yard were held in various West Riding centres — 4 Aug. at Dewsbury, 11 Aug. at Dewsbury and Bradford, 18 Aug. at Sheffield. The July actions of the Stockport Chartists reported in *Northern Star*, 29 July 1839 stimulated this activity. For other religious guises for open meetings see J.L. Baxter, 'Early Chartism and Labour Class Struggle: South Yorkshire 1837-40', in S. Pollard and C. Holmes (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (1976) especially pp 143-46.

74. *Northern Star*, 14 Sept. 1839.

75. *Northern Star*, 7 Sept. 1839.

76. W.H. Maehl, The dynamics of violence etc, *art.cit.*; *Sheffield Independent*, 1, 14, 21 Sept. 1839; *Sheffield Mercury*, 7, 14, 21 Sept. 1839; *Sheffield Iris*, 3, 10, 17, 24 Sept. 1839, *Northern Star*, 14, 21 Sept. 1839; Col. Marten to General Napier 13 Sept. 1839 and related correspondence in Col. Marten's papers deposited in Hull University Library: Sheffield magistrates to Normanby, 14 Sept. 1839, HO 40/51.

77. *Sheffield Iris*, 3 Sept. 1839 — first report of classes established in Sheffield; *Northern Star*, 21 Sept. 1839 — formation of 'sections in Barnsley': *Northern Star*, 2 Nov. 1839 — confirmation of 'sections' in Bradford.

78. Peacock, *op.cit.*; J.L. Baxter, Early Chartism etc. *op.cit.*, and J.L. Baxter, B. Moore, S. Holmes, *Samuel Holberry 1814-42: Sheffield's Revolutionary Democrat* (1978).

79. Kitchenman's role in 1839 is indicated by reports in *Northern Star*, 5 Oct, 2 Nov. 1839. Detective work involving materials in TS, HO (including census material), ASSI (Assize) and Halifax Burgess rolls has established Kitchenman's role in the 1820 Grange Moor rising, activity in 1839 and probably 1848 when Thomas or a son of the same name was arrested for drilling men in the Halifax area.

80. *Sheffield Iris*, 22 Oct. 1839.

81. Fuller text of William Bradwell's speech appears in Baxter, 'Early Chartism etc' *op.cit.*, pp 147-8 and Baxter, Moore and Holmes, *op.cit.*, 13-14; The local 'Cartwright connection' is recorded in F.D. Cartwright, *Life and Correspondence of*

Major Cartwright, 2 vols (1826), I, p 260,

82. *Northern Liberator*, 26 Oct. 2, 9, 23, 30 Nov. 7 Dec. 1839, 11 Jan. 1840.

83. For Sheffield, see Baxter, 'Early Chartism', *op.cit.*, especially pp. 148-50. The Dewsbury numbers can be estimated from a range of reports, including: *Leeds Times*, 18 Jan. 1840; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 18 Jan. 1840; *Leeds Mercury*, 18 Jan. 1840; Harwood to Normanby, 16 Jan. 1840, HO 40/57. The Bradford numbers are suggested by reports including: *Leeds Mercury*, 1 Feb. 1840; *Leeds Times*, 1 Feb. 1840; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 1 Feb. 1840; Bradford magistrates to Normanby, 29 Jan. 1840, HO 40/57.

84. Cited in J. Bennett, *The London Democratic Association 1837-41*, in J. Epstein and D. Thompson, *The Chartist Experience* (1982) pp 96-97, Harney to Engels, 30 March 1846.

85. A point argued in J. Baxter, 'Revolutionary Moments', *Bull. of the Soc. for the Study of Labour History*, no. 36, 1978, p. 40. Those who subscribe to the traditional view of Napier would be well advised to read Napier's letter to Philipps, 9 May 1839, HO 40/53; a letter not included in his family's reprints of his correspondence, W. Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles Napier*, 4 vols (London 1857). Thompson (1984) *op.cit.*, p 72 appears to not recognise this facet of Napier.

86. Epstein, *op.cit.*, ch. 5 suggests the lack of possibilities of any success by would be insurrectionists in the light of the strength of the State's forces. I am more inclined to the open view of Ray Challinor, "Chartism — Essay in review", *Bulletin of Society for Study of Labour History*, 45, Autumn 1982 pp 41-3. The bigger questions relating to the state are dealt with by Steadman Jones, 'Rethinking Chartism', in *Languages of Class* (1983) and touched on by John Saville, Introduction to Report of T. Rothstein 'From Chartism to Labourism' (1983).

## APOSTLES OF RESISTANCE:

Background on all public advocates of resistance reported in existing sources:

### 1, 1838 - Sept. 1839 — the open phase of early Chartism

Aitken William	{Ashton-under-Lyne, teacher)
Armitage Issac	{Stockport, shoemaker)
Armstrong John	(Carlisle)
Ashton William	(Barnsley, linen weaver)
Ayre James	{Newcastle, mason)
Bairstow Jonathan	(Queenshead nr Bradford, wool comber)
Barber Jonathon	(Nottingham)
Batchelor James	(Sunderland)
Beaumont Augustus	(Newcastle, newspaper proprietor)
Benbow William	(Manchester, shoemaker)
Beniowski Major	(London, retired army and political lecturer)
Binns George	(Sunderland, shopkeeper)
Bird Thomas	(Bury, grocer)
Black David	(Leeds)
Black Thomas	(Arnold, Notts)
Booley Robert	(Ipswich)
Bradley John	(Hyde, dogger)
Bradwell William	(Sheffield, painter)
Broadbent J.	(Stockport, watch and clockmaker)
Brook Joseph	(Bradford)
Brookes —	(Leigh)
Brown Edward	(Birmingham, shoemaker)
Brown Miles	(Stockton, tailor)
Bussey Peter	(Bradford, publican)
Butterworth James	(Manchester, cotton spinner)
Byrne William	(Newcastle)
Capper Joseph	(Burslem)
Carrier William	(Trowbridge, hatter)
Chapel —	(Burnley)
Charleton, Edward	(Newcastle, bricklayer)
Clarke, Thomas	(Stockport, weaver)
Clarke —	(Ashton)
Cliffe Thomas	(Halifax)
Cobbett R.B.	(Manchester, barrister)
Cockburn John	(Newcastle, blind ex-collier)
Cook Samuel	(Dudley, draper)
Coombe J.C.	(London, baker)

Courcey Henry De' (Mansfield, brushmaker)  
 Cowley Daniel (Bolton, blacksmith)  
 Cronin Henry (Bedlington, Northumberland, stonemason)  
 Curry Ralph (Newcastle, joiner)  
 Davies Charles Daniel (Stockport, spinner, publican)  
 Dean Christopher (Manchester, stonemason)  
 Deegan John (Stalybridge, ex-cotton spinner)  
 Devyr Thomas Ainge (Newcastle, journalist)  
 \* Dickenson Samuel (Almonsbury, weaver)  
 Doubleday Thomas (Newcastle, soap manufacturer)  
 Duke James (Ashton, publican)  
 Edmonds George (Birmingham, teacher, solicitor)  
 \* Ellis Thomas (Leeds)  
 Hessler Rev. William (Stockport, dissenting minister)  
 Fearguson — (Newcastle, collier)  
 Fenny James (Westhaughton, ex-shoemaker)  
 Fletcher Dr (Bury, surgeon)  
 \* Foden Peter (Sheffield, baker)  
 \* Fox Charles (Sheffield, cabinet maker)  
 Fussell John  
 \* Gill William (Sheffield, scale cutter)  
 Gillespie John (Bolton, weaver)  
 Goulding Edward (London —)  
 Hampson — (Heywood)  
 Hanson Joseph Broom (Carlisle, hand loom weaver)  
 \* Hanson Abraham (Halifax, hand loom weaver)  
 Harney George Julian (London, political lecturer)  
 Harley — (Durham)  
 Hayward — (Stroud)  
 \* Healey Samuel (Dewsbury)  
 Henderson Dr E.D. (Bedlington, surgeon)  
 Hepburn Thomas (Newcastle, collier)  
 Higgins Timothy (Ashton-under-Lyne, cotton spinner)  
 \* Hodgson Henry (Bradford, wool comber)  
 Howarth Thomas (Stockport, cotton carder)  
 Ireland Thomas (London, porter)  
 Jackson Rev. R.V. (Manchester, ex-shoemaker)  
 Jacobs Samuel (Bristol, cabinet maker)  
 Jarrett Charles (Loughborough, framework knitter)  
 Johnson George (Ashton, hatter)  
 Johnson Issac (Stockport, smith)  
 Knox Robert (Sunderland)  
 \* Lawson — (Rotherham, mason)  
 Lee Abraham (Middleton)  
 Lindon William Smith (Dudley, moulder)

Linney Joseph (Manchester, bookseller)  
 Livesey John (Manchester, agent for gunmaker)  
 Lloyd George (Bolton, beershop keeper)  
 Lowery Robert (South Shields, tailor)  
 MacDoual Peter Murray (Ashton under Lyne, apothecary)  
 Maitland — (London)  
 Marsden Richard (Preston, handloom weaver)  
 \* Martin William (Bradford & Sheffield, shoemaker)  
 Mason John (Newcastle, shoemaker)  
 \* Maudsley Amos (Barnsley, linen weaver)  
 Mellers — (Leicester)  
 Mitchell James (Stockport, beerseller-ex-spinner)  
 Morgan — (Bristol, tin plate metal worker)  
 Neesome Charles H (London, tailor)  
 O'Brien Bronterre (London, newspaper editor)  
 \* O'Connor Feargus (Leeds, newspaper proprietor)  
 Oastler Richard (Fixby, steward)  
 Owen James Bald (Stockton, basket maker)  
 Parker William (Ouseburn nr Newcastle, shoemaker)  
 Peddie Robert (Edinburgh, staymaker)  
 Pickles — (Tottingen, Lanes)  
 Pilling Richard (Stockport, power-loom weaver)  
 Plant Job (Heywood, teacher)  
 Potts William (Trowbridge, druggist)  
 Powell — (Birmingham)  
 Redhead William (Thorneley)  
 Rich Thomas (Holt, Wilts)  
 Richardson R.J. (Salford, bookseller ex-joiner)  
 \* Rider William (Leeds)  
 Roberts David (Manchester, tailor)  
 Roberts W.P. (Bath, solicitor)  
 Rushton (Manchester)  
 Shaw (Hyde)  
 Smith George H. (Manchester, boot and shoemaker)  
 Stephens J.R. Rev. (Ashton-under-Lyne, dissenting minister)  
 Taylor James (Spotland, Rochdale)  
 Taylor Dr John (Ayrshire/Carlisle, political lecturer)  
 Taylor William (Newton Heath nr Manchester)  
 Thomason William (Newcastle, glassmaker)  
 \* Thornton William (Bradford, solicitor)  
 Tillman William (Manchester, shoemaker)  
 \* Vallance John (Barnsley, weaver)  
 \* Vevers Thomas (Huddersfield)  
 Vincent Henry (ex London/Wilts-printer)  
 Waddington Samuel (London, boot and shoemaker)  
 Warden John (Bolton, gardener)

Wareham George	(Stockport, weaver)
Wilde John	(Ashton-under-Lyne, shopkeeper)
Williams James	(Sunderland)
* White George	(Leeds/Bradford, woolcomber)
* Widdop John	(Barnsley, warehouseman)
* Wolstenholme James	(Sheffield, working grinder)
Wood	(Bolton)
Wright John	(Stockport, cotton spinner)

•Yorkshire activists referred to in this Study

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