

# Red Action

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## THE LAST CRUSADE?



When all the threats, deadlines, ultimatums and insults are counted up, America's brinkmanship against Iraq since the invasion of Kuwait will count as the most prolonged and intense rehearsal of actual war in the history of modern conflict.

Why then, has Bush been carrying on like a man who doesn't know his Baghdad from his Cairo, being totally unable to communicate the not only the ultimate 'necessity' of military action, but also the transparent dithering before implementing it?

US Presidents have not previously indulged in such virtuoso displays of procrastination.

In 1964 the CIA quickly fabricated the 'Gulf of Tonkin' incident to sell the Vietnam war to US domestic opinion. The invasion of Cambodia was simply kept secret. The marines steamed into Grenada and Panama without warning. The principles regarding the right of aggression were rather different then. At the time of the Panama invasion, the US ambassador to the UN claimed that Article 51 of the Charter gave the US the right to use 'armed force to defend our interests'. When Libya was bombed by the USAF Washington claimed that

Article 51 permitted the right of 'self-defence against future attack'. Yet in the case of Iraq, which has annexed a piece of its former territory snatched by the British in the heyday of Empire and dubbed 'The Kingdom of Kuwait', these rights have been withdrawn. It follows that, basically, it's OK for the US to use force to invade whoever it sees fit; but if anyone else does it, the US will attack them. To add insult to injury, when the International Court fined America for unlawfully mining the harbour of Managua, Nicaragua's capital, the US government refused to pay. This is being called by President Bush, 'standing against aggression against those who would use force to replace the rule of law'.

Given this level of cynicism, why didn't American forces just steam into Iraq months ago and damn the consequences if they felt it was that vital? Above all, if the entire UN is supposed to have authorised action, why is it that the US military is running everything? Fundamentally, because none of the alleged war aims of the 'allies' justifying military intervention in the Gulf are the real ones. Nor does the

umbrella of cold war ideology any longer automatically cover the role of global intervention assumed by the US.

All commentators have maintained a dubious silence as to why Saddam's explicit threats against Kuwait prior to the August invasion were allegedly not taken 'seriously', and in particular, how it was that no-one spotted the prolonged and massive Iraqi military build-up along the Kuwaiti borders prior to the August invasion. The US, as we know from the war itself, have satellites that famously can count the fleas on a dog crossing a Baghdad street. Yet, the story goes, the US Intelligence establishment was 'caught by surprise' by the actual move into Kuwait. This is suspicious enough. In addition, since the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Russian political and military opposition, the US has plainly been looking to switch anti-Warsaw pact forces to a more productive theatre. There is none more productive than the Middle East by a long way, on top of oil reserves vital to the future of all the industrialised nations. The surrogate policemen employed by the US in the region, first the Shah in Iran, followed

ironically enough by Hussein himself after the Iranian revolution, has taught the US a thoroughgoing lesson. If you want something done, do it yourself. A pretext for intervention in the Middle East on a massive scale (following the humiliation of small-scale actions such as the landing of American Marines in Lebanon) was vital.

Saddam's 'surprise' invasion of Kuwait provided the perfect trigger. The US/UK establishments have offered a whole range of reasons why a war should be 'inevitable', betraying the fact that they are making them up as they go along, and that they themselves do not find any single one of the arguments they offer compelling. Nor can they explain why, when virtually every country in the world has voted to condemn Iraq, the war is a blatantly American operation.

To take these alleged arguments one by one. They have said that a war had to be fought because no aggression against a small sovereign state can be allowed to pass unpunished. That's a laugh. Overlooking US aggression against Panama, Grenada and Nicaragua in recent history, the US has consistently supported the territorial aggression of its clients and allies such as Israel in the West Bank and Golan Heights and the destruction and civilian massacres of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, South Africa's defiance of UN resolutions in Namibia over an entire decade (sanctions have been given 15 years to work in that case), and most monumentally, the 'forgotten' genocide of hundreds of thousands in East Timor committed by Indonesian troops - which persists to this day

with the active connivance and material aid of both the US and Britain. Not to forget the arming, financial and material support of the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his territorial war of aggression against Iran, which has had the unfortunate result of confronting the UK and American armies with

continued on back page...



A few days before the invasion the US ambassador Glaspie (above) assured Saddam "We have no opinion on your border dispute with Kuwait"...Incompetence or a trap?

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT



Nicola Vincenzo Crane, enforcer for the far right's music and youth scene. He has a long list of serious convictions for anti-black violence.

On Monday 18 September after a week-long trial at Wood Green Crown Court 3 members of Anti-Fascist Action were found guilty of violent disorder and Grievous Bodily Harm with intent. They were jailed for a total of 11 years. The charges arose from an incident involving one Nicholas 'Nico' Crane after the Bloody Sunday commemoration in Kilburn last year.

Crane, a 6ft heavily tattooed skinhead, was spotted in the vicinity as the march (often a target for fascists in the past) was breaking up. Suspecting some skullduggery, he was challenged by some anti-fascists leaving the area. After a brief scuffle, Crane ran off. Shortly after, he was again spotted in the back of a taxi, heading back into the area. Once again he was confronted and this time a serious fight broke out which resulted in Crane being knocked unconscious. All 3 were immediately arrested.

Crane's career as a neo-nazi organiser stretches back to 1978 when he led an attack by 200 skinheads on the Asian community around Brick Lane. In 1980 Crane was branded as 'worse than an animal' by a judge at the Old Bailey when sentencing him to 12 months for an unprovoked attack with a bottle on a black family waiting at a bus stop. During the 1980s he did another 4 1/2 years for politically motivated and violence related offences.

In between prison terms he was a member of the British Movement's Leader Guard, a National Front activist, and most recently a leading spirit and head of security for the neo-nazi music group Blood and Honour.

Nobody, least of all the prisoners, would deny that the offence was political - what is equally clear is that the verdict and particularly the sentence were political as well. Throughout history to be effective in fighting the fascists usually means breaking the law and always means rejecting the power and legitimacy of the forces of law and order. Thus the actions of the anti-fascist street fighters will always be seen to be dangerously radical in the eyes of the state, especially when it involves a form of behaviour, i.e. physical violence, which the dominant culture avoids and condemns in everyday life on the part of everyone except itself.

In her summing up the judge, who was Jewish, stated that in her opinion, the actions of the anti-fascist defendants did most damage to the rule of law and as a consequence carried the greater potential threat to the status quo. "Though we might find the political attitudes of Mr Crane repellant, nevertheless it is your actions that will cause them to win and then we have anarchy."

So in the same week as a pimp got 6 years for beating a woman with a hammer, David, a 21 year old Irish building worker with a clean record, was sent to prison for 3 years, Tony, 22, a hospital porter, and Mark, 24 and unemployed, got 4 years apiece.

There is no legal basis for appeal and because of the nature of the offence, little likelihood of parole.

The prisoners made no apology for their actions then nor do they do so now. What they do need, and we on their behalf ask, is for your support, political, moral and financial. Financial support in cases of this kind is of course mandatory and something that at the end of the day we in Anti-Fascist Action guarantee. All donations to help them or their family are gratefully received.

What is perhaps even more important in the long run, with the fascists once again limbering up across Europe, is that they receive your political support; are seen to get it, and that you or your organisation are seen to be willing to give it.

### ANTI-FASCISTS JAILED!

PLEASE GIVE YOUR SUPPORT!  
Letters if possible...but more for the long term  
Christmas & Birthday cards...

BIRTHDAY:  
TONY: 13th April  
DAVID: 28th January  
MARK: 7th December

C/O ANTI-FASCIST DEFENCE FUND

B.M. BOX 1734  
LONDON WC1N 3XX



# A STATEMENT OF INTENT

On Sunday Oct 5th a contingent from A.F.A. arrived at the corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green at 9.30. A leaflet was distributed announcing an A.F.A. public meeting in the area in response to the high profile adopted by the B.N.P. in the area. At approx 11.30 Fascists who had been dispersed by the arrival of the anti-fascists launched an attack. Four anti-fascists and three members of the B.N.P. including Richard Edmonds and Tony 'Cucumber' Lecomber were arrested and charged with affray.

At the public meeting former Dockers leader Micky Fenn pointed out that the only way to stop the B.N.P. spreading their influence "was to meet fire with fire". Labour M.P. Mildred Gordon pointed out that the 12.8% of the vote achieved by the B.N.P. in the St Peters ward was deceptive. In fact, as the composition of the area was roughly 50% white and 50% Asian the B.N.P. vote in reality represented one in four of the white working class vote.

The following statement from A.F.A. was read-out at the meeting.

**Anti-Fascist Action** was founded in 1985. The founding statement was a promise to confront the fascists 'ideologically and physically in the streets'. Despite many problems and a chequered history, we believe that AFA has made a difference and that we have remained true to our promise.

In 1988 in the small market town of Bury St. Edmunds, a National Front march was so publicly humiliated, its organisers so discredited, that it provoked a split in the National front itself. The Albert Mariner march through central London was abandoned for similar reasons in 1987. During 1988-9 the fascists had been allowed to turn Carnaby Street into a cultural centre for European fascism. Within 6 months of initiating a campaign, AFA had closed their shops and forced them to abandon their bistrotellers. The neo-Nazi music group Blood and Honour, who had confidently booked Camden town Hall to host an

international ticket only concert, selling over 1,000 in advance, were crushed in a single day on May 27 1989. Similarly, due to a variety of tactics adopted by AFA since 1985, the annual fascist parade to the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day has been reduced to a squalid 250 by 1990 - a fraction of its size in 1985.

The lesson for us at least is clear - the fascists only gain influence and support among white working class youth where there is no alternative argument being consistently and forcefully projected. While congratulations are due, we recognise that the fascist marches and rallies represent only a symptom of the problem. What is now required is that AFA address itself to the source of the problem, racism, reflected in the huge increase in race attacks and intimidation which some estimates put in the region of 20,000 in the Metropolitan area of London alone.

The Borough of Tower Hamlets has the highest concentration of race attacks in the country. Even police statistics demonstrate that the level of attacks is rising unabated year by year.

To help stem this tide is now AFA's priority. We also recognise that little progress on this issue in this area will be made by restricting our response to fascist initiatives; we accept that we must set our own agenda.

This is the first time in well over a decade that such a project - wrestling the initiative from the fascists and race-attackers, of challenging them on their own doorstep and in the process cutting off their supply line of recruits at source - has even been suggested. The purpose of AFA's strategy is to make relevant to and directly involve those sections of the community under attack. The participation and support of individuals and groups from the Asian and Black community in the Borough is vital, as they must be persuaded over a period of time to see AFA as much theirs as it is now ours. Over the last decade the issue of race attacks has effectively been ignored by both the

media and the left. As a result the situation has seriously deteriorated with many in the Asian community now living under a state of siege. They are trapped between the 'respectable' racism of the Liberal 'Focus' group, the lurking terrorism of the fascists, and the indifference or hostility of the police.

In the face of increasing aggression from the right and the corresponding apathy of the left, Asian youth have been forced back on the defensive. The only permissible tactic is to circle the wagons, while for isolated families it is a case of doing nothing and waiting for the cavalry that never comes.

To complement them AFA must be prepared to go in to encourage more of the Asian youth to come out. In a single minded fashion we must undermine the confidence of neo-nazis from within.

challenge their paper sales, put pressure on those that provide them with facilities, harass their leading activists and thoroughly erode the sense of security that allows them to act freely without sanction or restraint.

There is no doubt that Tower Hamlets is a solid working class area. In the East Council elections 12 Tory candidates amassed less than 500 votes between them. The BNP are increasingly seen as

propaganda it must be made perfectly clear that racial terrorism is no longer an acceptable part of the hidden agenda. In future there will be no appeasement of fascist gangs.

History has demonstrated that on the issue of fascism there can be no neutrality. Either you are pro-fascist or anti-fascist. There is no middle ground. And in future none will be accepted.

In the non-fascist rather than the vigorously anti-fascist corner, the problem appears to be the exact opposite - massive on the surface but like an inverted iceberg, 9/10s above the surface with nothing of substance underneath. AFA must be the catalyst for

fascist, racist and non-racist, militant and moderate, the passive and the active.

It is our intention to smash the existing status quo, so it is not to coalitions that we look but to co-insurgents. We must attempt to polarise the whole of the working class, Asian, Black and White on central issues of race, class justice and equality. To first identify and then isolate the fascists and their fellow travellers, we must divide and sub-divide again until only two visible political camps are left - one racist/fascist, and the other anti-racist and anti-fascist.

Inevitably AFA will be accused by our political opponents of provoking the fascists etc. In our experience confronting the fascists physically and politically does not provoke an escalation in violence; rather the reverse. While they are dealing with us they will not find time or enthusiasm for harassing anybody else.

In any case, we are not aware that the policy of appeasement, turning the other cheek, keeping your head down etc advocated by the police, some left-wing groups and conservative elements within the Asian community has proved such a spectacular success.

Tower Hamlets has the highest ratio of race attacks in a country where it is estimated an attack occurs every 20 minutes. It is only in this area of London that the BNP/NF are allowed to operate openly. It is not a coincidence.

It is AFA's first task to highlight this hidden epidemic and then with your help co-ordinate an effective response. While it is certainly true that the BNP/NF members do not initiate all the attacks, racial terrorism is the logical complement to a policy of forced repatriation. They encourage, justify and exploit race hatred and race violence. Their function is that of a lightning conductor. They are the channel for aggression. It should be understood that there is no time limit on this campaign so perhaps stamina will prove our greatest asset. It should be understood that there is no limit on our ambition to help deliver a lasting solution.



Secure behind glass, an Asian boy at the window of the bus laid on to ferry children to a temporary school in London's East End without fear of racial abuse. (Spring '89). On April 5, 1970, 'The Observer' claimed that "any Asian careles enough to be walking the streets alone at night is a fool." In '91 Asian youth who walk from Whitechapel to Bow after 9 o'clock still consider it to be an act of defiance.

AFA's first job must be to lift this siege. At the moment, racist and fascist gangs can mount assaults confident in the knowledge that once the mission is completed, they need only scuttle back to base, the sanctuary of any white working class area, where they feel invulnerable from attack or retribution.

To discourage these hit and run attacks some among the Asian youth have abandoned the defensive mentality of the siege, and instead adopted an aggressive policy of 'hot pursuit'.

the only radical alternative to the Labour and Liberal parties, and in some wards are now the third party. Any advance by the right on this territory represents a dangerous retreat by the left. The working class is the natural constituency of socialism, not fascism. Racism and socialism are incompatible. One only exists at the expense of the other. The 'success' of the far right is due to the fact that the far left are not seen as a credible option. As AFA are committed to creating the space in which one can develop.

Through our actions and

real change. We must, through our activities, force people to ask which side they are on.

At the moment many areas of Tower Hamlets are divided along racial lines. To transform this situation and isolate the BNP, we must first destroy the conditions and climate in which they prosper by polarising the entire community on political lines. Therefore our first job is not to unite people but to divide them, not on racial lines between black and white or between the left and the right but between fascist and anti-

## STAB HIM, STAB HIM!

At the beginning of October, 1990, 5 members of the BNP's Glasgow branch were found guilty of GBH, assault, and Breach of the Peace. Amongst their number was BNP's Scottish organiser Eric Brand, and their Glasgow youth organiser Ian 'Crasy' MacMillan. They are still on remand awaiting reports and sentencing. At least 2 are expected to receive custodial sentences.

These charges related to an attack carried out by 15-20 fascists on an SWP public meeting in February. The Nazis who had been staking out the meeting for more than an hour, marching up and down the street outside. As the meeting of around 60 SWP members and supporters dispersed, 2 SWPs were set upon by the fascists and one of them was badly beaten up requiring stitches to head and face injuries.

Had the SWP organised themselves properly, they could have avoided any damage to themselves, and indeed, could have inflicted a bit of damage on the fascists. Instead, as is so often the case, they relied upon the state to do the work of the 'revolutionaries' for them. The end result being a 'victory' of sorts for the opposition.

The SWP had been aware of the fascist presence but elected to call the police who (surprise surprise) had not

arrived from the nearby station by the time the meeting had ended. People at the meeting were advised of what was happening outside, told to 'stick together and make for the pub'. Four of their more 'working class' element decided to head on for the pub regardless of the SWP and the BNP (one of these was an Asian comrade).

As they passed the fascists, who by now had retreated up a nearby lane, they were taunted and verbally abused with the BNP's usual mindless drivel. They replied with some mindless drivel of their own. The fascists ran at them; 2 SWPs stood their ground and were swamped by the Nazis. Eventually only one became the BNP target, after 'doing' a couple of the fascists himself.

He was thrown into the windscreen of a car, hit with bottles, bricks and sharpened oriental stars. The fascists were shouting 'stab him, stab him'. In their eagerness to stab the SWP, their own Scottish organiser Eric Brand, was stabbed twice on the legs. It all sounds quite dramatic and not very surprising! However, during all this commotion, less than 20 yards away, stood around 50 members of the SWP rooted to the spot, watching one of their own having the shit kicked out of him! It was only the screams of a couple of women

members that unnerved the Nazis who then broke away. The SWP's 'saviours', the police, then arrived and it was only the BNP's lack of knowledge of the area that led to 5 of them running straight into the arms of the plod! The SWP now talk of their 'fight with the fascists in the courts' which sums up their position, in as far as putting faith in the state and its ability to deal with the Nazis goes!

What they conveniently forget is that 2 of their own members have also been charged as a result of the fascists' counter allegations. Can they expect any different treatment to the BNP when they appear in court? SWP witnesses were phoned at home by the BNP and had death threats made against

themselves and their children. The same family had BNP 'theoretician' Harry Mullin (25 years' membership of the CPI) sitting in a car outside their home.

On this occasion the family were terrified and decided that the 'advice' of the SWP was ineffectual and called upon us (we were members of the local anti-poll tax group) for help. We explained exactly how we felt the fascists should be dealt with, and they agreed. When 2 of us arrived prepared for action, we were greeted by about 6 members of the SWP who proceeded to lecture us in the middle of the street about when violence is necessary etc. Needless to say, their presence had alerted the fascists that something was happening, so they immediately left the area

without so much as an angry word being exchanged. We felt that our Anti-Poll Tax meetings could be under threat (largely because of the presence of the SWP) from the BNP. So the next night we organised a group of about 15 people prepared to defend our public meeting.

To our astonishment, and without consulting us, the SWP had telephoned the police and asked them to provide a presence in order to 'protect the meeting'. Needless to say, the police spent more time scrutinising our comrades and friends than they did 'protecting the meeting'. A couple of weeks later, the SWP organised jointly with the Scottish Asian Action Committee (SAAC) a public meeting entitled, 'Stop Racist Attacks - Drive the Nazis off our Streets'. The discussion however, centered on racism amongst teachers in schools and avoided completely the need to confront fascism on the streets. They even tried deliberately to keep us out of the discussion, although pressure from us forced them to call me - then they boomed and hissed when I raised the question of physical confrontation. After the meeting, we were continually approached by SWP members wanting to discuss with us as a result of the obvious confusion in their ranks.

However, the local SWP leadership acted quickly, and it wasn't long before we were hearing of discussions at SWP branch meetings taking place. The line on us very quickly

changed and we were accused of 'squadism', 'terrorism' and wanting 'gang warfare' by the same people who only a few weeks earlier had been in conflict with the official party line.

It was amazing to us when several months later we read 'We Are Red Action' and discovered that the 'squadist' argument was about 10 years old!

We then proceeded, or stumbled, towards forming a genuine Anti-Nazi organisation. Together with mainly anarchist and Republican elements we established 'Glasgow Anti-Fascists' (GAF). Unfortunately, this was short-lived (although it can be revived) due largely to the 'hippy liberalian' of the anarchists. Apart from Class War we found the rest of the anarchists to be soft and lacking in any serious willingness to take on the fascists. Instead, they wanted what amounted to a slightly more left wing version of the SWP line in leaflet and poster campaigns.

For us, the whole point of GAF was to forge a real way of confronting and isolating fascism by any means necessary and going beyond the 'campaignitis' of the left. As I said, I don't think that all is lost as far as GAF is concerned because of the willingness of CWF and other individuals to collaborate with us on future projects - this is something that needs further discussion.



BNP activist on Bethnal Green demonstration declares race war on the local community.

(Glasgow R.A.).



# IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

We, as Republican Socialist P.O.W.s, would like to take this opportunity to let you, our comrades overseas, know what we have had to endure within the confines of Belfast's Crumlin Road Jail.

At present, and for the last 10 months, we, with the much appreciated help of our comrades on the outside, have launched a campaign to end the Northern Ireland Office's intransigent stance of forcing integration between ourselves and loyalist prisoners within the jail.

The embarking on a prison protest was not a decision taken lightly, but with the continual assaults, both physical and verbal from loyalists and the blatant coverups by the N.I.O., we were left with no option but to highlight the ongoing crisis within this jail.

The policy of forced integration which is backed by John Cope and his cohorts at Stormont Castle, is aimed at suppressing us as republicans by having us integrate with loyalist prisoners. The irony of this situation is that most of the loyalists are in the jail are here for divulging information on republicans to loyalist paramilitaries.

The campaign to date has resulted in the destruction of furniture and fittings by prisoners of both sides and, although we have toned down our campaign awaiting the verdict of a Judicial Review taken by 2 republicans on the policy of forced integration, we have continued in our campaign.

Tension in the jail at the moment is at an all-time high with confrontations between ourselves and loyalists taking place whenever we meet. A few weeks ago saw the latest confrontations when a republican going on a visit was severely beaten by 4 loyalists when they met on a landing. This resulted in the republican in question being taken before his visit, to the prison hospital for treatment for lacerations to his face and upper body.

The next day 7 loyalists sustained injuries in an incident with republicans. As a backlash to this incident, the loyalists damaged the dining halls on A Wing, landings 2 and 3. They also threw liquid, namely urine, out of the bottom of their cell doors for 4 continuous days. As a result of this behaviour, republicans were also denied canteen facilities, even though they took no part in these disturbances. We therefore had to eat all our meals in our cells. The meals were distributed on a trolley pushed by a screw wearing wellington boots as the floors were soaked in urine and there was also urine dripping from the landings above. The food we received was cold as these trollies have no hot plates to keep the food warm.

During these 4 or 5 days the wing was on, as the screws term it, 'controlled movement'. So not only was the food being distributed through unhygienic conditions, but our cells were also in a bad condition as we were not permitted to wash or to sleep out. We therefore had to eat our food with utensils unwashed between meals, amidst unscented urinal pots and rubbish bins. The government, when confronted, laughed at our complaints about personal hygiene, saying that under the circumstances there was nothing they could do. With this policy of forced integration, we the prisoners, have had to endure more hardship than necessary. It has resulted in us operating a form of segregation to keep us apart from loyalists. This means that we only have association every 2 days and at least 2 meals per day are eaten in our cells. We term the days we have association our jail days. These days work on the basis that we take our breakfast and lunch in the dining hall and we have one hour's exercise in the yard between these meals. We are then locked in our cells all afternoon before we take our association between 5.00 and 7.00 pm that evening.

The days between our jail days we have termed our ball days. These days we bring our breakfast and lunch back to our cells to eat and we get one hour's exercise in the yard - no association in the evening. We have to rotate days with loyalists as the screws have admitted that they couldn't cope if we tried to take meals, exercise or association with loyalists.

Due to being locked up on average 22 hours a day and to the lack of internal sanitation, prisoners are forced to urinate and defecate in their cells. They defecate on a bag which is then dropped out of the cell window. These bags often lie outside the cells for upwards of a week continually giving off a stench which comes back through the cell windows. This degrading practice is the result of cell doors being locked from 7.00 pm until 8.00 am the next morning. So, comrades, as you can see what we have to endure with this policy of forced integration, we as Republican Socialist P.O.W.s would like to call for your support and backing through our political movement, the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Go raibh maith agat.

Dedicated "To the people of Greater Ballymurphy and the oppressed everywhere", Baroid's book states clearly in the introduction,

"To describe the Irish War as a conflict between Catholics and Protestants is about as honest as portraying the Vietnam War as a conflict between Christians and Buddhists. This narrative therefore steers clear of such misleading, British inspired terminology"

And so from this standpoint, he tells the story of a community of 12,000 people living on 8 housing estates within one square mile who have been central to resisting British rule in N Ireland for the last 20 years; and tells it from both his own research and experiences of living as a community worker in the area between 1972-6 and through the eye-witness accounts of the people themselves. It is this approach that makes it a book that tells its story, for once, through the perspectives of the working class men/women involved and this made it a very forceful and inspiring read for me and would, I believe, for most readers of this paper.

Baroid covers all the key issues of the last 20 years in a comprehensive but simple manner, explaining around each issue the role played by the British, loyalists, Dublin government, Church hierarchy and middle class Nationalists led by the SDLP in their attempts to neutralise, isolate and defeat the IRA and INLA and prevent the working class from organising themselves independently.

Another success of the book is to show the role played by the entire community in opposing British rule and therefore avoids being tagged like so many other books that concentrate on the armed struggle, as elevating or divorcing the guerrillas from the community and placing them, on purpose or otherwise, in an 'elitist' role. What the book does is show up the analysis that many left groups such as the SWP and Militant for example hold about the situation in Ireland to be disgusting or just plain laughable (depending on your temperament) and illustrates that the conflict is every bit as much of a peoples' uprising as the struggles in S Africa, Palestine or El Salvador.

But as I have said much of the book's contents comes from the memories of the people themselves, telling how one of Europe's most notorious areas where people were sent to live as a last resort was galvanised by the struggle into a staunch and proud stronghold that became feared and hated by the British forces.

Some of the parts of the book are quite brutal in portraying the suffering of the Nationalist people and leaves the reader in no doubt that the emergence of the IRA was an inevitable symptom of the troubles and not the cause of them.

"One of the most harrowing sights I remember was up in St Aidans. I went up there to find out where we could get provisions. There was an old man and an old woman in the school and they were in shock. They couldn't speak. In their lifetime it was the fifth time they had been burned out of their home by loyalists. If there had been a photographer to take a picture of you grey-haired old woman...She had been burned out as a child; she had been burned out along with her own children; she was now burned out again after her children had their children. This was her whole life." (Jimmy Burns)

"They [the army] fired rubber bullets into my husband from point blank range. He was wounded in the leg, but when he got to hospital it was the internal injuries that were the worst. They had to put him on a kidney machine, his liver and kidneys were destroyed, and there was all sorts of other injuries. The doctor told us that his leg needed amputating that night; but because of the damage from

# "BO" GIBSONS WAR

## book review

BALLYMURPHY AND THE IRISH WAR

BY CIARAN DE BAROID

the beatings, he couldn't operate. Over the next few days gangrene set in, and he died 13 days later...Our men were murdered in the streets, you know, they were shot down like dogs; and there wasn't one, not one, to get up and say." (Mary Murphy).

In 1977, the families bereaved by the 'Masse' killings had their cases heard in Crumlin Road Court in Belfast. Mrs Murphy was offered the princely sum of £250 to compensate herself and her 9 children for the loss of a husband and a father. She told them to keep it. Mrs Taggart, who was jeered outside the courtroom by the soldiers who had killed her husband, received not a penny for herself and her 10 children.

After countless attacks by Loyalists on Nationalists, burning them out of their homes, while the army stood by, 'IRA - I ran away' was daubed on some walls in Nationalist areas. On 27 June 1970 this was all to change when the IRA ruthlessly defended their people in the small Nationalist enclaves of Ardoyne and Short Strand against Loyalist pogroms, and killed 8 of them. This marked a turning point and from here onwards the IRA grew into one of the most effective guerrilla armies in the world with a close relationship with the community, illustrated in passages such as the following:

"Chris Verstoppen and Ansemieke Ryckenber, two long-standing Dutch friends of the '42' project had sent 4 postal orders for £150 each from their fund raising efforts in the Netherlands. Donal Fagan went to St James' Post Office on the Falls Road to cash them. 'I had passed the postal orders across and your man was counting the money out. Next thing, the door slammed behind us. A bloke rushed past me with a baton and sack, and another guy closed the blinds. I realised immediately what was happening so I pushed the money back. But I couldn't get my hand under the glass to grab the postal orders. We were ordered up against the wall with our hands in the air - 8 others or so and myself. One bloke covered the door and the other ran in behind the counter throwing everything he could find into the sack, stamps and all. So when he came out I waited my opportunity and sort of slowly turned around, my hands still in the air, and says, 'Do you mind if I speak to you?' And he just levelled the gun on me. My heart was bouncing. He says, 'What the fuck do you want?' I sort of knew then that it was OK. I said, 'I want those postal orders'. He says, 'Who owns them?' I said, 'They belong to a community group in Ballymurphy that runs holidays for kids.' He looks at me for a while, and then hands me the bag and says, 'Take them'. So I rummaged through the bag, lifted them out, and turned back to the wall with my hands up in the air again."

Throughout the book however, it shows that despite all that is endured by the people, and the fierce resistance, there is always time to look at the funnier side of things, such as the story of 'Bo':

"He was a pup from one of Dunne's dogs. They called him 'Bo' because one day someone gave him Strongbow to drink and he got drunk. Then I got him. He was a real loving dog. The only people he ever went for was the Brits, the 'Feelers' and my brother in law. And army dogs. He was just an old mongrel, but he hated the army dogs, no matter what size they were he'd go for them. We had him from before my Da died; and see,

when he died, Bo wouldn't leave the grave, we had to drag him away. And he was in every riot. You know the way, over here, dogs get their proper name; so he was 'Bo Gibson.' And you never seen a riot on television except Bo Gibson was in the middle of it. He used to chase stones thrown at the Brits and bring them back again. Then one day there was a riot down at Divismore Park, near Murphy's entry, and somebody chucked a nail bomb - I think maybe it was the first nailbomb ever thrown - and Bo went after it. What happened next has been described by several hundred witnesses and several thousand people who heard it second-hand. Herbo's dog caught up with the nail bomb just as it landed at the edge of the military line and turned back for the Ballymurphy ranks, tail wagging and fuse spluttering away. As it trotted towards its master with the trophy, everybody started to scatter, diving over walls and in through hedges; and Herbo took off at a gallop. The last thing that most people remember was the dog breaking into a run, and the fleeing Herbo, casting furtive glances over his shoulder,



doing the 4 minute mile up towards Glenalina Road. Lucky for Herbo, the nailbomb blew up before Bo caught up with him. That evening 'Dunne's Guerrillas' gave Bo a military funeral. The cortege was accompanied by a guard of honour in black berets and dark glasses, followed by a large crowd of youngsters. The last post was played and Bo was laid to rest in Herbo's back garden. 'You know what happened then?' Herbo says, 'The Brits came along that night and dug him up for forensic!'

Just as books have been written telling the story of struggles in Africa, central America etc, so 'Ballymurphy and the Irish War' will get to join them as an historical record of a risen people.

"The only pertinent question we believe, the existing solidarity movements need ever ask themselves, is not: Do we do enough? The question is: Do we make a difference?"

Without exception, we believe that the honest and objective answer can only be: No, we do not!"

An analysis and solution to the permanent crisis afflicting Irish solidarity work in Britain, 50p plus postage.

RM Box 37  
London WC1N 3XX

To all Anti-Imperialists and Republicans.

During a period of time in 1989, Red Action was involved in a united front organisation called Hands Off Ireland, the purpose of which was to build an anti-imperialist contingent on the Time To Go demonstration, that at a later date might provide participants in a future Irish solidarity movement.

However, when H.O.I. was finally founded on a permanent basis we decided due to a number of political factors, that it would be pointless to involve ourselves any further, and so we departed. Those left within H.O.I., principally The Leninist, continued with its activities, the bulk of which centred around mobilising for their Star march.

In the run-up to the event, comrades of the Irish Republican Socialist Party urged us to support it "in the fullest sense". In setting out the background as to the reasons we felt we could not support this initiative, we found that many of those reasons and the questions they in turn posed, can, and should be addressed to a much wider audience, hence the duplication and distribution of the following document.

In the process of explaining our reasons of non-participation in the aforementioned march a number of organisations came in for some harsh criticism. However the following document is not intended to be yet another gratuitous, sectarian chastisement of individual groups and organisations whether they be The Leninist, RCC, IFM, TOM, or any other (there is already an abundance of this). What we have intended to do is offer an honest critique that we hope will be taken in the fraternal spirit it is meant, of all the various Irish Withdrawal or Solidarity organisations.

It is an analysis of the reasons they have up to now failed, and the reasons why we feel that they will continue to fail to build anything like mass support amongst the working classes in this country. It is intended at the same time offer positive and constructive proposals that might begin to pull groups together, and out of the present day malaise strangling all Irish work in this country. Red Action welcomes any constructive criticisms, debate, responses to the ideas contained in this document and would welcome groups to submit it for review in any of their publications, either public or internal.

Yours Fraternally,  
Red Action National Council.

A preliminary meeting is to be held in London in March. For further details contact RM Box 37, London WC1N 3XX.

RED ACTION

## JOIN RED ACTION

Red Action is an organisation founded by working class people to work for the furthering of the cause of Socialism.

Membership is open to all who accept our political principles and pay a weekly subscription. Every member has an equal vote on all Red Action policy and decisions.

If you do support our aims but do not wish to become a member, you can become a supporting member. This does not entitle you to vote, but you will receive:

1. A free subscription to the newspaper.
2. A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of what is going on in the organisation.
3. Notification of any Red Action activities in your area.

The cost for this is £20 for one year.

Subscriptions to the paper are still available separately. The cost is £5 for ten issues. Please remember that producing a paper is a very uneconomic business and we are always grateful to anyone who can take extra copies to sell.

All cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'Red Action'.

**LONDON BM BOX 37 WC1N 3XX**



In comparison to the 'Crum' prisoners in Long Kesh enjoy more 'civilised' conditions, conceded by the authorities only after the '81 hunger strike.

# RESTORING THE BALANCE

It is a conspicuous fact that the left in this country has failed to establish a base of popular support - that no socialist organisation has succeeded in becoming a mass party. It would be hopeless to attempt to identify a single cause for this weakness, yet amongst the factors that have resulted in this state of affairs must be counted the question of organisation. Reflected in the inquiry into the desirable organisation of a socialist party in contemporary conditions, must be questions concerning class composition and the objectives of such a party.

The left in Britain exhibits three main forms:

- an organisation that bases itself primarily on the production of a newspaper and other propaganda, denying that it forms a 'party', such as 'Millant'
- an organisation that is composed of elements united in a 'Federation', such as Class War, where individual branches or local organisations are autonomous in the sense of forming and implementing independent policies as well as in the election of personnel
- finally, organisations that claim to be structured according to the principles of 'democratic centralism', such as the SWP.

Most socialists, certainly those supporting or sympathetic to Red Action would reject the idea that any effective party genuinely related to the working class can be satisfied with the production of propaganda without participating in effective action in other areas in the form of an independent, autonomous organisation. Ideas developed in a political vacuum, that are not generated by direct political practice, inevitably remain abstract, sterile and detached from reality. For many who style themselves socialists, this is not a disadvantage but a blessing, since it relieves them of the necessity to engage in the frequent inconclusiveness and the inevitable difficulties and 'friction' ideas encounter in the practice accompanying political commitment (which is often productive or even indispensable in converting abstract concepts into concrete proposals).

## FEDERALISM

Red Action rejects the federalist option, believing that the centralised, united exploitation of a class requires a centralised, unified response on the part of the exploited. It is not acceptable that individual branches of an organisation should be free to decide autonomously on matters of policy and activity without regard to the decisions of other branches of the organisation. While there will always be differences of consciousness and emphasis amongst sections of the working class, its interests as an exploited class are universal, and therefore the policies and activities of the organisation or party that claims to represent it, must always aim at incorporating that unity or universality both nationally and internationally.

This of course, since any organisation is historically situated and determined, will prove impossible to achieve in practice - even genuine revolutionary organisations will to some extent be limited by unconscious prejudices and distorted perspectives. The assumption of a uniquely 'correct line' or monopoly of revolutionary wisdom cannot be justified, though even the tiniest groups on the British

left frequently appear to believe that they alone carry the flame of Lenin or Trotsky or whomever.

Because no organisation or party will ever be correct in its perspectives and responses all of the time, it is vital that discussions, dissent, and even factions should be actively encouraged, not merely permitted, by the constitution of the organisation up to the point where the implementation of policy and action demands unity. National policy must therefore be decided by a majority vote of all branches voting independently, but where all branches are equally bound to carry out the policy which results from this decision-making structure.

The necessity of some form of centralism extends to the democratic implementation of the majority will in matters of policy, yet cannot be allowed to suppress the autonomy of branches to the extent of regulating the internal election of officers, delegates etc, respectively to each branch.

This element of 'federalism' is essential in limiting the power of the centre in ensuring that the majority will of the branches is genuinely expressed by the central structure. This would not be the case if the centre were able to appoint its own officers, delegates etc within each branch.

## DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Does this amount to describing Red Action as a 'democratic centralist' organisation? To answer this question, we need to look at the circumstances and disputes of the Russian Social Democratic Party in the early years of the century, where the term first evolved. In the absolutist, police-state conditions of early nineteenth century Russia, before the revolution of 1905, Lenin elaborated an ultra-centralist theory of party organisation. His reasons seem to have been the following:

a) that, as he put it, the demand that the party should be made more accessible to the masses meant in the particular circumstances that Russian Social Democracy then faced, making it more accessible to the police. The average life of party branches before the police suppressed them was at this time three months, so the point undoubtedly had some objective validity.

b) he denied that "the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate...an independent ideology for itself". Workers left to themselves would develop no more than a 'trades union' consciousness, ie fight exclusively for limited and immediate economic gains. "Class political consciousness can only be brought to the workers only from without", by a marxist party largely composed of or directed by intellectuals.

c) lacking an independent ideology, the workers would be unable to launch independent revolutionary activity except where guided by a revolutionary party apparatus.

d) he believed that it would never be possible for a revolutionary party to consist of the the entire working class since such a party would inevitably be reduced to a form of 'tailism' - being restricted by the least advanced elements of the class. From this prescription a party

would emerge that was relatively small, composed of 'professional' revolutionaries, and largely dominated by declasse intellectuals such as Lenin himself. Lenin distinguished his views from

those of Blanqui, who believed that a tiny band of dedicated revolutionaries could seize power in the name of the working class, by insisting that the party had always to work in ways that linked it to the masses. He rejected individual terror as a revolutionary method. Lenin summarised his centralism in this way:

"The organisational principle of revolutionary Social democracy...strives to proceed from the top downward, and upholds an extension of the rights and powers of the centre in relation to the parts"

Lenin always made it plain that he regarded this form of organisation as specific to conditions prevailing at the time he wrote. Nonetheless, certain objective trends were evident to contemporary critics, including Trotsky, who wrote in 1904:

"Lenin's methods lead to this: the party organisation at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole, then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organisation; and finally a single 'dictator' substitutes himself for the Central Committee."

Rosa Luxemburg, while recognising the unfavourable conditions of political absolutism and economic backwardness under which Russian Social Democracy had to work, wrote an article for 'Iskra' criticising Lenin's conception of the party entitled "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy". She isolated two principles of Leninist centralism:

i) "the sharp accentuation of the distinction of the organised troops of explicit and active revolutionaries from the unorganised, though revolutionary, milieu which surrounds them"

ii) "the strict discipline and the direct, decisive and determining intervention of the central committee in all activities of the local organisations of the party" including the power to "determine the composition of the personnel of each local organisation".

She concedes that there is "a strong tendency to centralism inherent in Marxism", and that a Marxist party represents "the totality of the interests of the proletariat as a class, as opposed to all partial and group interests". For the same reason, she opposes federalism. Yet Lenin's conception is fundamentally flawed because it substitutes a mechanical and external relationship between the party and the working class, and a mechanical model of the evolution of working class consciousness, for the more complex reality:

"[The class struggle] moves in the dialectical contradiction that here the proletarian army is first recruited in the struggle itself, and too, only in the struggle does it become aware of the objectives of the struggle."

It follows that, just as importantly,

"apart from the general principle of struggle, there is no ready-made, pre-established, detailed set of

tactics which a central committee can teach its social democratic membership as if they were army recruits."

It is only during its participation within the struggle as it develops that even the goals and aims of the working class can be meaningfully defined. This is the opposite of 'utopianism' which is a charge every socialist will have met. The socialist organisation cannot therefore, in any circumstances, take the form of the direction of the masses by a group of professionalised militants, who themselves are obliged to obey the directions of a centralised power. Rosa Luxemburg summarised her own conception of socialist organisation in this way:

"a 'self-centralism' of the leading stratum of the proletariat; it is the rule of the majority within its own party organisation."

She also objects to Lenin's simplistic conception of party (and working class) 'discipline'. It is true that Lenin at all points in his career seemed to regard the discipline of the factory or even of the barracks as the model of socialist discipline, whereas anyone who has actually worked in a factory knows that the routine slavery endured on the production line or under a foreman is the product of domination by an exploiting class and has virtually nothing in common with the values of a socialist society. Moreover, in Luxemburg's view, it is always the logic of objective events and the spontaneous reaction of the working class to them which leads, and the subjective logic of theory and the 'party line' which follows; hence any party organisation is inherently conservative in relation to mass action.

## CLASS COMPOSITION

It is notable that Lenin's own conception of the party and its organisation was 'revolutionised' by the events of 1905. He acknowledged that the composition of the party had to change to incorporate worker elements in place of intellectuals and that the entire base of party membership had to be broadened to the extent that existing party structures were shattered. By 1906 he described the Russian Social Democrats as a "mass party" with a more "loose" and "free" organisation. He further had to acknowledge that, in 1905, "the proletariat sensed sooner than its leaders the change in the objective conditions of the struggle" - that the working class was after all capable of spontaneous revolutionary action. The authority of the Central Committee was weakened. At the Bolshevik Congress of 1905 Lenin declared that:

"the whole party organisation is now built on a democratic basis. This means that all the party members take part in the election of officials etc, that all party members discuss and decide questions concerning the political campaigns of the proletariat, and that all the party members determine the line of tactics of the party organisations."

At the Congress of the RSDLP in 1906 he put down a resolution stating that "the principle of democratic centralism in the Party is now universally recognised", and that this "implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action".

# PARTY

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He called upon the party members to work to "make the local organisations the principal organisational units of the Party in fact and not merely in name". The right of factions to exist was not merely recognised but fought for; at the 1905 Bolshevik Congress it was resolved that: "the Minority now has the unconditional right, guaranteed by Party rules, to advocate views and to carry on an ideological struggle, so long as the disputes and differences do not lead to disorganisation".

It can be seen that the doctrine of "democratic centralism" evolved from a revolutionary response to revolutionary circumstances. Still, doubts about Lenin's own commitment to democratic rather than centralist procedures remain. As Luxemburg argues,

"It is a mistake to believe that it is possible to substitute 'provisionally' the 'transferred absolute power' of the central committee of the party for the yet unrealisable majority rule of the enlightened working class with its own organisation; and it is a mistake to believe that the lack of open control by the working masses over the action and conduct of the party organs could be replaced by the opposite: control by the central committee over the activity of the revolutionary working class."

There is overwhelming evidence in the period following the 1917 revolution that Lenin did believe both these propositions and that in those specific conditions, did his utmost to put them into practice, with disastrous consequences for the Marxist tradition. It is important to be clear that he only did so when the possibility of mass working class power within a workers' state had faded. There is no evidence that he desired the substitution of the party for the class; only that he tragically believed that the party could substitute itself for the class in conditions where the exercise of power

by a genuine workers' state was not feasible.

The lessons remain for socialist organisations today. Both tactics and objectives are defined only through the class struggle in action; there can be no abstract party perspectives and party lines laid down in advance. Participation in existing mass campaigns within the class is the only way to develop political awareness and perspectives. The organisation must relate to the working class as a whole and not solely to some notional 'advanced section' or 'vanguard'. Power must flow democratically and accountably from below. No 'central committee' or 'control commission' can have the right to vet and direct members and their local organisations. There should be no 'closed' meetings or tribunals. It is an illusion to suppose that omniscient committees or cadres can maintain the 'purity' of revolutionary doctrine by substituting themselves for mass consciousness and objective conditions. As Luxemburg remarks: "errors made by a truly revolutionary labour movement are historically infinitely more fruitful and more valuable than the infallibility of the best of all possible 'central committees'".

The utmost effort must be made to break down the barrier between the militant and active party cadre and the non-party sympathiser: there should for example, be categories of party membership available open to those who are not able to become full members. The publications of a revolutionary organisation must be careful not to address issues in a manner comprehensible only to its own members or other committed activists. Integration within general working class culture is essential if the organisation is not to become detached from the class it represents. Finally, socialists should beware of making a fetish of constitutions and structural mechanisms or believing that a rigorously-worded constitution



# ACTION

# CLASS

# BREAKING THE MOULD

## THEORY AND PRACTICE

"The Central Committee had the power to organise all partial committees of the party. It can also determine the composition of each individual local organisation from Geneva and Liege to Tomsk and Irkutsk; it can give them its ready made rules of local organisation; it can dissolve and reconstitute these local groups by decree and finally, in this way, it can indirectly influence the composition of the highest party authority - that of the party Congress. Thus the central committee appears as the only active element of the party, and all other organisations simply as the tools which implement its decisions." (Rosa Luxemburg)

The tacit assumptions underlying the continued support for the Leninist theory of the party is this: that the socialist transformation of society is something for which a ready made formula or blueprint lies ready made in the pocket of the leadership and which for first the revolution and then socialism to materialise needs only to be implemented energetically in practice.

But in reality there can be no blueprint for the revolution before the revolution. The blueprint can only be drawn up by the participants after the revolution, but as things constantly change the actual revolution itself having changed reality, then of course the formula is already out of date. Its real value is in demonstrating the truth or otherwise of the basis on which it was made. Theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice. The value of any theory is only determined by objective impartial results in social practice, and only actual practice can be the criterion for truth.

Looking at the revolutionary left in Britain on that basis, not only can it be said that they failed over the last 70 years but they have failed miserably.

So if the leadership, academic or otherwise, of a revolutionary group is no longer to be regarded as omnipotent or infallible, if it is accepted that the real agents of change are not the pens of theoreticians but the actions of workers themselves conscious of their own self-interest, then with equal logic the revolutionary organisation cannot be built with any confidence by decree from the top down but by election from the bottom up. If the real initiative for change resides not at the top but at the base, then that is ultimately where its companions, power and responsibility, must also reside. The primary task therefore is to create a structure that maintains the smallest possible distance between the rank and file membership and the functioning leadership and between party and class. The serving leadership is then seen only as the 'filter' for the ideas of the membership. (From the class, through the membership, to the leadership, from the leadership through the membership, to the class). While the entire membership decide on strategy and policy in the interests of flexibility it must be left to the elected leadership to decide within these parameters day to day tactics.

## CADRE

A revolutionary socialist party must be composed of working class members - anything else is a sham or a sect. It must be working class in instinct, character, composition and appeal. The structure of any group like the structure of any society, is responsible for and defines the status, rights and responsibilities of the individual within its confines.

For that very reason the attitude of a revolutionary organisation to its membership must be different in this respect to all previous or existing political institutions.

For instance the division of mental and manual labour inherent in class society must not be carried over into the socialist movement and sanctified in the revolutionary party. Neither can it be accepted that the bureaucratic type discipline and authority imposed on the workers by the capitalist system be simply transferred from the boss class to some new ruling elite within the party.

While it is obviously in the interests of any group to train its members to efficiency as agitators, organisers or general propagandists etc it must now be regarded as both a 'pressing necessity' and a primary duty to facilitate the development of the working class membership intellectually as well. It is in this way that the mass of the class will come to know what we are fighting for, in addition to understanding what we are currently fighting against. Not only is internal democracy greatly enhanced with a membership capable of making educated and independent decisions with distinct virtues other than a passive obedience to duty, but as a direct result it will forge an entirely new strata of organic intellectuals (Gramsci) who can articulate and rationalise the potential for dominance of the working class from which they have emerged but in which they also remain. The production of its own leadership by a class is at once evidence and the vital contribution to a further raising of its self-esteem. This development itself being a necessary precondition and an indication that the replacement of the rule by the minority is not only inevitable but perhaps even imminent. Praising an economic study by a working class tailor Marx made the point that:

"Before the proletariat wins its victory it announces the coming of its rule by a series of intellectual victories". In the meantime they serve the movement as the ideological counterparts to the organic intellectuals among the top civil servants, economists, barristers, architects who function as the spinal column for the existing order. This then is the core or cadre, "the whalebone in the corset", the living embodiment of the ultimate aim and a revolutionary role model for working class youth. Only by a conscious preparation of the ground in advance can we the working class render ourselves fit for political dominion.

## VANGUARD

For some utopian elements on the left the entire question of leadership is unpalatable, but there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led. Within this society the origins lie in class division, but it also operates within classes and organisations. At a time like this when the level of struggle is low and few workers believe in the possibility of reform, not to talk of revolution, a revolutionary group like RA will be small and must be content to be so. To dilute political principles simply to recruit is pointless. Obviously

there are different levels of awareness within the working class, so it is self-evident that a revolutionary workers group will only attract the most advanced elements, and so will be by definition a minority. But it is the minorities who have made history as in the past; it is the few who will have the courage to take their places at the front, the most conscious, purposeful part of the class who form the political wedge and through whose example the entire broad mass of the working class is pointed "towards its historical tasks at every step" (Rosa Luxemburg), who will shape history in the future. The very reason for the movement's existence is to provide both a focus and a coherent platform for our aspirations and the necessary cutting edge to advance the interests of the class as a whole. Yes, a genuine revolutionary class would be part of the revolutionary vanguard within the class when the class as a whole is advancing, but it also recognises that it has the responsibility to form or take part in a revolutionary rearguard to prevent headlong flight when the class is in retreat rather than just produce abstract propaganda. It must also understand that no revolutionary party can expect to constitute the entire vanguard when the class is on the advance due to the sheer volume of recruits, neither in retreat due to mandatory fragmentation, confusion and despair. Therefore to advance the interests of the entire class, sectarianism and its sterile 'one party only' advocates should be outlawed but in any case will become redundant.

No political collective can ever expect completely by its own efforts to command a monopoly on the truth. As a revolutionary minority it is Red Action's duty to first set an example and by so doing advocate a harder road for the majority. A democratic structure where power flows from the periphery to the centre, ensures that when the situation arises, we fulfil a complementary duty to copy and support a more effective strategy set by others than ourselves. From this follows the acceptance by us that the vanguard of the class will at all times be made up and fed by many different tributaries and currents. That political pluralism will exist within any subsequent proletarian dictatorship. This is the only guarantee that truth will never again bend the knee to power.

Intellectuals

## INTELLECTUALS

The Marxist concept of socialism cannot be fixed in rigid formulas in any area including that of the questions of organisation. The revolutionary party must be designed specific to the situation or period in which it seeks to develop. Class composition must in all cases be accepted as the primary ingredient in the development of a genuine revolutionary party and to advance we must learn to appeal to and exploit all the skills technical and otherwise that exist in the class. A revolutionary organisation needs organisers, theoreticians, journalists, propagandists, artists, poets etc to promote and project its political message. Communism is about the collective emancipation of the entire working class thereby releasing for full development the potential of the individual members within the class. Few would deny that Britain in 1991 for the left to be held in low esteem by the working class would be a tremendous advance. Since the student explosions in 1968 which inflated many tiny groups such as the SWP into viable national organisations,

sometimes increasing membership tenfold, the student and ex-student strata have consciously and unconsciously created an entire political sub-culture in their own image and likeness.

In a country like Britain where even in 1991 80% of the population still leave school at 16, the dominant culture of the 'revolutionary' left is predominantly middle class reflecting the dominant culture and values of the very society it is meant to subvert. As a consequence its initiatives tend to be short term, short-sighted and shallow with a marked absence of stamina alien to and inadvertently inhospitable to the working class and its culture and values.

To first re-build and then retain the working class character of the revolutionary socialist movement, there can be no room for the phoney, the careerists, the self-server or the self-promoters.

Because we are dealing in a rational manner with a specific institution this must be given institutional form. Therefore special provisions of scrutiny are necessary to regulate the influx of elements of other class origin. For that reason, the National Council would preclude from recognising entitlement to delegate representation on the council of a branch exclusively composed of students. For the same reason, no branch would be accepted of which two-thirds at least did not consist of wage-labourers, clerical or manual.

This is not to exclude educated and progressive elements of other classes (who have broken with their own class) from the socialist movement, but in recognition that it is the very power of a class moving under its own steam that attracts them, not the other way around. When the level of struggle is low like now the drift by intellectuals towards the working class dries up, an alignment at any time by them with us only serves as a measure of our own independence, self-esteem and ambition.

## WORKING CLASS

So why the working class? The answer has nothing to do with idealising the workers as such, it does not depend on regarding workers as more clever, courageous or humanitarian than other people, nor is it relevant that workers often follow reactionary movements or leaders and do not show any instinctive empathy with progressive causes. They are at least as capable of being misled and deceived as any other section of society (including intellectuals). They are filled with selfish, short-sighted aspirations like everyone else.

Militancy collective not personal, is in principle an index to the alienation characteristic of a social group, corresponding to its objective relationship in real life to the productive forces and the resulting social hierarchy. For instance, it is perfectly possible that individual bank clerks or librarians may be more advanced politically and more militant than say other individuals who happen to be miners or building labourers. But collectively the latter are far more likely during an industrial dispute to find themselves engaged as a matter of course in hand to hand combat with the forces of the state. In the same way that manual workers see themselves as working for the boss, many clerical workers with superior income and income often see themselves

can defeat objective, historical factors. As Luxemburg puts it: "It is not the text of a statute but the sense and spirit which are bought into that text by the active fighters which decide the value of an organisational form." So when all constitutional and organisational questions have been settled, the crucial element within a socialist party remains its class composition. Policy and action must be determined throughout the organisation not by intellectuals or other kinds of 'specialist,' but by conscious and active members of the working class.

The conclusion must be that, despite having been discredited by the working practices of contemporary left groups, the 'democratic centralist' model, of the three described above, approximates most closely to

the needs of a contemporary working class socialist organisation. It is not the phrase itself that is significant (indeed it may be profitable in present circumstances to discard it); it is the putting of the principles which it contains into practice that is the key. Certain groups, the SWP among them, claim to be operate a 'democratic centralist' structure, yet certainly do not manifest this in practice. It is no secret that a number of the founding members of Red Action left the SWP precisely in protest against that organisation's actual bias in favour of centralism above democracy. Red Action can claim to be the result of correcting that imbalance. It is only on this basis that the historical inability of the left to relate to the mass of the working class can eventually be overcome.

F. Gordon

## FACTIONS

In a headlong and instinctive flight from centralism, some hoped to find theoretical if not actual sanctuary in its polar opposite, federalism, discarding similarly discredited concepts like cadre and vanguard party en route. Federalism has often been defined simply as free association, whereas federalism has always meant the right to 'secede' as well. In the mid-1980s Red Action was involved with other autonomous groups in the setting up of the Socialist Federation. Whilst a lowest common denominator on a range of issues was possible in theory, it rarely materialised in practice. Within any independent group federal rights acknowledge the right within certain broad parameters, to autonomy of thought and action for branches or regions. Within a group like Red Action that can only mean the right to ignore majority decisions while still retaining membership. A political organisation is a voluntary organisation and as such individuals who are reluctant to implement

majority decisions can leave. If the majority decides and the minority submits, how then can that minority be heard and inner democracy protected? The dissenting minority can continue to propagate its case as a faction with access to an internal journal or newsletter, thereby presenting the opportunity for the minority to become the majority. In the interim they are bound by the requirements of tactical unity to carry out majority decisions. Political parties are created in order to prepare for crisis situations - it is not their function to debate endlessly. The party is not a debating society; it discusses in order to reach a decision and then carries out that decision in a united fashion. That is the central reason for its existence. However, "unless both tactical unity and the right to dissent are guaranteed within a political organisation then there is the inevitable tendency to collapse into chaos on the one hand or authoritarianism on the other." Socialism from Below - Anarchist Workers' Group)

# PARTY AND CLASS

(CONTINUED)

as working with the boss. Generally they are more attuned to the norms of respectability, less alienated from the ruling class and the ruling ideas of society, and so for them the lines of class demarcation are always far less clearly defined.

By the same token, the working class is the very class at the levers of economic power, not by conscious decision, but by its objective conditions of existence. Seen in that light it is not a question of how the working class can be deceived, betrayed, seduced, bought off or manipulated by the ruling powers of society like every other class and strata. The fundamental point is that it is the working class that they must deceive and so it is the working class as a result that is the principal target of all ruling class propaganda. Devoid of any other credible alternative, a revolutionary organisation for and by the class is the only adequate antidote.

The basic function of class organisation is struggle, present or potential, reality or threat. Class organisations bring class characteristics to the fore and as a function of organisation class characteristics increasingly take precedence over merely individual reactions the greater the scale of class involvement. Then in a feedback effect class reactions can also re-shape and re-educate individual opinion. Thus class consciousness develops. In the struggle to change conditions we change ourselves.

## CLASS AND PARTY

People, regardless of class, do not fight for abstract concepts, say socialism or fascism, they only fight for or against its coming if it carries with it some tangible benefit or threat. Self-interest, immediate and short-term, is the practical basis and the real foundation for any political party or movement. And so it is with the revolutionary movement and the working class. It must be the role of a revolutionary party to reflect and respond to in a practical manner the actual problems of

workers and by so doing weld the revolutionary to the class and the class to the revolutionary. First of all must come an acceptance or recognition that for much of the time the revolutionary and the broad base of the class do not share identical interests. So what then, is the actual relationship? For instance, is it our primary duty as revolutionaries to help win the dispute or campaign or is the real objective to 'build the party'?

The vast majority, if not all groups on the left would not hesitate, claiming that as the revolutionary transformation is indeed in the long-term interests of all workers, and a revolutionary party is a vital component in that struggle, and of course they to the exclusion of all others are the party. The party must be built, so collecting money for striking workers and skimming a percentage off the top for propaganda purposes is permitted, indeed any unprincipled opportunism or dishonesty is defended pragmatically as a means to this end.

Absolute garbage - and equally obvious, totally counter-productive as the impression left on the workers with whom they come into contact is indelible and disastrous. Once bitten twice shy. Their 'business is business' approach to every campaign, which demands an instant return on any investment by recruiting arithmetically and their fly by night methods, has more in common with the ethics of the Trotters and Arthur Daley than it has with the principles espoused by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. And just as surely it is an indication of their class instincts and origins.

Red Action as a group must be seen to be an instrument to strengthen the class rather than the class struggle being used to 'strengthen' the party. The growth of the relevant organisations will then serve as a genuine reflection of the recovery of ambition and confidence and resolve of the class. Though good will desperately needs to be restored this is not simple altruism, but more a long term than a short term investment if you like.

It is this form of 'propaganda by deed' that will most quickly heal the fracture and help restore the empathy that must exist between any revolutionary minority and the

broad base of the class. As well as that though, always keeping an unblinking eye on the ultimate goal, we must fight for all reforms on the basis that 5 lashes a day are better than 10 lashes. To simply insist that 'worse is better', that it is 10 lashes or nothing would find few takers among the recipients, who would also be the best judge as to whether the reform was worthwhile. You take everything you can as a class regardless of capitalist considerations and when

## MAGIC FORMULA

The structure being advocated of recallable delegates from branches making up regional bodies and delegates from those sections making up a National Council is clearly no magic formula. What it does is to provide direct representation and control by the working class members over its own organisation. Starting with the Stalin led counter revolution in Russia, the rise of fascism in

Revolutionary organisations have only one purpose-to give a structure and leadership to the working class in a time of crisis. During the 1920s and 30s, first in Germany then in Spain, the Communist Party and later the Trotskyists and Anarchists were the overseers to devastating disasters for the working class movement internationally

The victory of fascism was in no way inevitable; it

itself. A little later in Spain the contradictory but equally disastrous Popular Front coalition with the bourgeoisie endorsed by all revolutionary parties from the Stalinists to the anarchists from 1935 onwards led to Franco's victory in Spain.

Forty years later, when disaster beckoned in Chile, Allende responded in a similar manner to his predecessors. He promptly dispensed with his one and only reliable guide, the Chilean working class, and then playing the role of the Judas goat with some distinction (ably supported by the CP), Allende heroically speedwalked the entire expedition over the nearest cliff.

Before and since practically everywhere else the disciples of Lenin and Trotsky have managed only to advertise a vision of a socialist alternative that copperfastens the very system it is meant to replace. The principle lesson that has been learnt has been learnt only by the working class and it is maybe not entirely negative. It is this. The 'old' left is not to be trusted. Clearly we must start afresh.

The dominant theories of that era always had the tail wagging the dog, while the aforementioned proposals simply re-establish that the dog is back in control. This development should not be regarded as an end in itself but as a means to an end. Direct democratic control by workers over their own revolutionary organisation is the very necessary practice and pre-condition for the direct democratic control by workers over their own countries.

G. O'Halloran.



The barrier between the militant, the active party cadre and the non-party sympathiser must be broken down. The empathy between the revolutionary minority and the broad base of the class must be restored.

A group of militant anti-fascists (not known to us) proudly pose for the camera beneath their own Red Action graffiti. (Paris 1989)

through crisis an opportunity presents itself, push the consequences to the extreme and then take everything. Not to understand this is not to understand the only basis for real social change.

Does that mean that like Militant for example we prioritise all issues of short term economic interest to the working class and either ignore or allow the lowest common denominator to dictate our policy on others? Exactly the opposite. By providing practical and principled help in honestly fighting for short term goals do we demonstrate and improve the currency of our stand on long term ideological ones (i.e. our support for the IRA against the common enemy, our own ruling class), currently perceived as being alien to or against their interests. The lack of relevance of the left, is principally due to its lack of relevance to the class. Without our involvement in the former, there will be little interest by them in the latter. In this way, the advanced minority can bend the majority to their will instead of retreating into an exclusive sect or them bending us to theirs.

Germany, the Spanish Civil War, Hungary, Chile etc, the last 70 years have been an era of unprecedented setbacks, defeats and disasters. Within a decade, the Stalinists had strangled every initiative, blunted any instinct and finally left the completely demoralised working class entangled and paralysed on the barbed wire of the bureaucracy. Having demolished the revolutionary alternative, they then imposed a sham communism in the East and left us with the sham of parliamentary democracy in the West. Despite a variety of circumstances, some favourable, the Bolshevik type party and their Trotskyite adherents failed everywhere, and like a fish in the first stages of decomposition, the rot started at the head and worked its way down. Lenin's hierarchical party was designed to be "a powerful dam" (Lenin) against opportunism, but instead, like the Maginot line, it facilitated that it was designed to prevent.

Opportunism knows no principle and the real threat eventually came not from the front and outside but from the rear and inside.

happened not because the people failed to respond at some precise time to instructions from the revolutionary vanguard, rather the reverse. The revolutionary elites chose to ignore over an extended period contrary directions from the class. This fatal flaw had existed in their relations outside was only a reflection of their structure inside.

Without the reciprocal relationship, at critical junctures, when the road forked right and left, the party already isolated from their own immediate periphery were also totally divorced from the surrounding but still revolutionary milieu. The head had been severed from the body-by the head. The leadership existed in a void.

Given these conditions, the only possible outcome was sectarianism, skullduggery and schizophrenia. Faced with the rise of Hitler, the theory of 'social fascism' was introduced which made the left-wing social democrats the mortal enemy of all communists and successfully divided the German working class against

## RED ACTION ARTICLES

All signed articles are that persons own view, and may not necessarily reflect Red Action decided policy.

those who have withheld payment. On the contrary, a few early successes by the Anti-Poll Tax movement will encourage the waverers and instill confidence in all those determined to hold out.

The key to the defeat of the Poll Tax is therefore a gloves-off bailiff-busting campaign. Anti-Poll Tax Unions should ensure that every household in their area is aware of their rights against bailiffs. The registration numbers of vehicles used by the bailiffs should be circulated - their home addresses published. A system of telephone contacts should be set up to react to any news of bailiffs in the area and anti-bailiff activists put in contact with each other. All bailiffs are total scumbags - they must be treated as such. Let 1991 be the year in which this medieval garbage is cleared off the streets!

## BAILIFF BUSTERS

Even after a period of heavy defeats and demoralisation, working class people know that the Poll Tax is the Tories' Bridge too Far.

It represents a transparent assault by one class upon another even more blatant than the income tax cuts for the rich or the anti-union laws. This is the reason it has evoked a far more unified response from all sections of the working class than previous attacks such as that during the miners' strike, when relatively isolated sections were carefully selected for the Tories' attention. Despite the reformist blandishments and promises of sections of the Tory party to 'amend or abolish' the Poll Tax by the time of the next election, or perhaps sometime after that, it remains clear that the Tories will fight tooth and nail to retain as much of the principle of the Poll Tax as they can.

Only the fighting response of large sections of ordinary people in joining the campaign of mass non-payment has forced the Tories onto the ropes; the knockout blow to the Poll Tax can only be delivered by continuing the fight - which means continued obstruction and refusal to pay. If the campaign were to relax, the Tories will attempt to

hang on to the Poll Tax to the bitter end. We must continue to fight at every step.

Court proceedings are still an enormous impediment to councils attempting to coerce those in arrears. The High Court, in its infinite wisdom, has recently ruled that Mackenzie Friends, the system of lay advocates for de'endants which has proved of great value in defending those appearing for non-payment, is no longer to be regarded as the 'right' of every defendant, although it has been acknowledged as a 'right' since the publication of a Law Report on the matter 20 years ago. The High Court concluded that the authors of the report had used 'unwarranted language', though no-one had noticed during the intervening decades! Nonetheless, the majority of courts will probably continue to permit Mackenzie Friends and given the huge backlog of work facing local authorities in bringing non-payers to justice, every possible delay and impediment that can be put in their way in the courts is worthwhile.

Whereas the councils won an important decision in the case of Mackenzie Friends, they, in the person of Wandsworth council, have lost a potentially more far-reaching decision



regarding the powers of the bailiff firms that councils rely upon to extort the tax from those in arrears. Early in the New Year it was ruled that bailiffs do not have the power to take the property of one person in a household in payment of another's Poll Tax, even if they are related and are both in debt. Bailiffs have never taken any notice of this restriction before, and this ruling should considerably amend their practice. They will now have to ensure that any items they take are the actual property of the person owing the debt - difficult in a house containing more than one adult. The importance of this ruling

lies in the fact that not even in the courts are the bailiffs going to have entirely their own way - and it is the issue of the bailiffs that is going to decide the fate of the Poll Tax. Other mechanisms, such as attachment of earnings or benefit, are longwinded, administratively difficult and relatively unprofitable for the council. In the case of the low paid and those on Income Support it actually costs more to collect Poll Tax arrears than the amount collected is worth! Moreover, people are frightened and intimidated by the bailiffs, especially when they do not know their rights, in a way that they are not intimidated by the other

options. Most non-payers when told by the council that they face attachment of earnings etc will tell them to go ahead; but the threat of bailiffs understandably makes even determined people nervous. The prospect of a gang of licensed thieves and muggers dragging out into the street the few hard-earned possessions of ordinary people, who can barely survive with what they have, is a relic from the middle ages and must be resisted in the most determined manner possible. If the bailiffs gain even a few early successes in an area, the news will spread anxiety and panic amongst the rest of

### The following is a summary of bailiff powers:

- \* Bailiffs must inform you by letter that the debt has been put in their hands - but they won't tell you when they are coming.
- \* Bailiffs cannot force entry no matter how many times they may call.
- \* If you answer the door to bailiffs they cannot force their way past you.
- \* Bailiffs can enter through an open door or window - keep them locked!
- \* Bailiffs can return a number of times - be on your guard!
- \* Bailiffs cannot take anything that does not belong to you
- \* Bailiffs must carry written authorisation from the local authority and give you a copy of Regulation 39 and Schedule 5 of the Enforcement Regulations 1985.
- \* Bailiffs cannot take certain items such as tools, clothes, beds etc.
- \* The police are not involved in bailiff actions.

BE SAFE - DON'T LET THEM IN DON'T TALK TO THEM



# WILD AT HEART

In the history of capitalist ideology, two names are constantly referred to - Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus. Smith was the great advocate of free-trade and the market and was considered by Marx himself to have been a 'scientific' economist and can be considered as the rational face of capitalist theory, while the Reverend Malthus has always appealed to the seamier prejudices and bigotry of the bourgeoisie. Malthus claimed that the poor, i.e. the working class, lacked "restraint" which led them to breed at a rate which had a permanent tendency to run ahead of the rate of the production of resources, principally food, needed to sustain them. The validity of this idea as a scientific theory has long since been abundantly disproved by the enormous increases in productivity in agriculture as elsewhere in the generations since Malthus wrote. At the bottom of Malthus' complaint, for that was really all it was, is the contradictory relationship of the bourgeoisie to the working class. Workers are essential in production and the making of profits on the one hand, but on the other are the object of the bourgeoisie' fear and loathing as the type of people who are liable to form mobs and swamp civilisation as it exists in middle-class suburbs. Workers as a class not only make the privileged and leisured existence of the bourgeoisie as a class a possibility, they also threaten through riots and revolution, to remove those privileges. As Marx puts it, the bourgeoisie "creates its own gravediggers". Recognising that it cannot abolish the proletariat (Marx's term for the working class) without abolishing itself, the most manic members of the bourgeoisie have always resorted to the theory that there are simply too many of them - the problem of the 'surplus population'. It is this instinctual fear and loathing of ordinary working class people that inspires the unity and class consciousness of the Tories. This hatred of the working class takes many interesting social and psychological forms. The pathological hatred of the working class football supporter is an significant example. And who can forget Sir Keith Joseph (the one who looks like the Mekon) and his magnificent political suicide in 1974 when he declared that the poor, being a 'lesser breed' should be

It is this instinctive fear and loathing of ordinary working class people that inspires the unity and class consciousness of the Tories.



Derby Day at Epsom... hard times ahead for us all!

compulsorily sterilised? Bearing in mind that you cannot do away with the working class entirely, most of the flak is directed at certain groups within the proletariat. The most obvious tactic is the criminalising of extreme poverty. For many years Marx has been derided by sociologists etc for his prediction that the gap between rich and poor would expand under capitalism. Recently released figures, which the government has typically tried to suppress, show that while the real incomes of the top 1% have risen by 80% from 1987 to 1989, the real incomes of the bottom 10% have fallen by 8%! Put another way, the real incomes of the top 10% in the period from 1979 to 1990

increased by 48%; those of the bottom 10% by 2%. The number of children living in poverty, is around the supplementary benefit level, has doubled. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, the number of people living on below average incomes doubled to 10.5 million between 1979 and 1987. Moreover, the gap between the richest and poorest groups in society has actually widened considerably since 1886, the first year in which records were kept. This is precisely the state of affairs that Marx predicted that generations of bourgeois apologists have denied! The government's objective is to turn the people who are now 'surplus' to the requirements of contemporary capitalism into a politically and socially

deprived 'underclass' - the sociologists' term for those they want to convince us are 'socially inadequate' so as to legitimise their poverty. The term "underclass" in America has already become the bureaucratic code for "black". The same racial overtones are already present in the use Tory newspapers make of the word. A racial element is being added to the association of poverty and criminality. A new dimension has been added to the assault on working class living standards by the Poll Tax. The Poll Tax alone will make millions of people in this country who cannot afford to pay into criminals. The renewed use of the Vagrancy Acts serves a similar purpose - 3,000 people were convicted as criminals, or in the terms of the Act, "rogues and vagabonds", last year for not having anywhere to live. That'll teach them to laze around outside day and night in freezing temperatures without eating anything.

New theories are being advanced to explain the coincidence of criminality with poverty and social deprivation (except crimes that consist in mass fraud of the Edward Saunders type which are simply a case of a chap being a bit of a bounder). Kenneth Baker and Keith Joseph recently attended a conference organised by American criminologists and right-wing British 'think tanks' attempting to peddle their ideas over here. The theory is that criminality is inherited. So if you're young, poor and especially if you're black, you are more liable to be a criminal because you have more criminal genes. If you are working class, its because you have working class genes and not middle class genes - let alone toff's genes. The message of American criminology therefore is: cut welfare and educational programmes because crime is genetically determined. Instead, put the money into prisons and lock up the born criminals for longer. America incidentally, has 5 times the amount of violent crime compared to Britain, so on the face of it, that's the last place you would go for scientific advice.

Of course 'science' has nothing to do with all this. It is simply the warped manifestation of class hatred and contempt for working people who simultaneously create and threaten the wealth of the privileged.

Despite all the talk of interest rates, credit controls, export performance etc, the Tories have only one weapon with which to defend company profits - higher unemployment.

"City Cheered by Rising Unemployment" read a recent headline in the 'Independent'. The month of November saw the biggest monthly rise in unemployment since the depths of 1981. The following month saw inflation fall by a full 1%. It is no coincidence. The Tory "miracle" has dissolved into this: a short party period of unrestrained greed and affluence for the yuppies paid for a couple of years later by the poverty and mass unemployment amongst the working class.

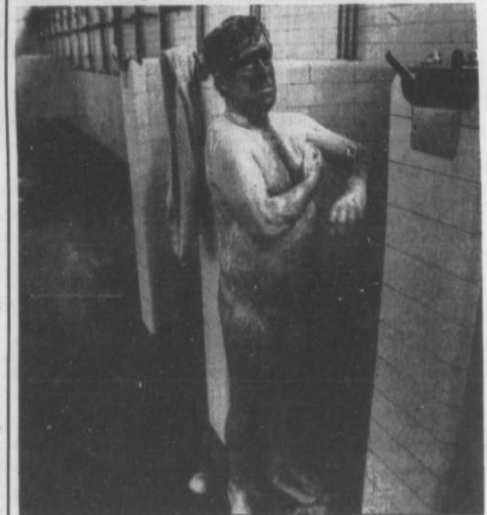
The Tories tell us that people price themselves out of jobs. But while shareholders and managers award themselves rises averaging 30%, and profits rise by 20% a year, workers are told they are to blame for wanting rises of up to 9%! Tories say that workers pay should reflect productivity - so when average profits have been going up at 20% why are they not given 20% wage rises? But only managements are permitted to make this sort of claim; the directors of Bechams received increases of 151% last year taking home £3.25 million (though profits went up by only 3%). The directors of Lloyds gave 8% to their employees and 70% to themselves, although the bank lost £715 million last year. Its terrifying to think how much they would pay

degenerate. The 'Financia Times' recently contained an article on labour relations which provides a rare uncensored glimpse into the real assumptions of those involved in running the economy (ordinary people are of course assumed not to read such publications):

"The British working class is like a stubborn ox. Coax it along, and it will be as strong as any beast. Pull its nose ring too fast, and it will dig its hooves deeply into the ground. The American workforce is by contrast a racehorse...although the owner has the advantage of being able to switch horses by uprooting factories without causing an outcry. The German worker is like a carthorse...there is no reason why all three animals should not make similar speed with good management."

All this incredibly condescending garbage is in the middle of a 'scientific' article. The views that regard the working class as being genetically distinct from the civilised elements of the population who own the wealth, as inheriting criminal tendencies requiring long terms of imprisonment and in the workplace as "beasts" and "animals" who labour contentedly under the discipline of good managers, are all essential and related components of ruling class ideology. This is clearly a reflection of the contradiction that exists in reality between the interests of those who own and control capital and the means of production, and those who own nothing are forced to work for them. It attempts to legitimise this contradiction

"The British working class is like a stubborn ox. Coax it along, and it will be as strong as any beast. Pull its nose ring too fast, and it will dig its hooves deeply into the ground".



Scrubbed out... a miner washes away the dust after his shift at the Mardy pit in the Rhondda, South Wales.

themselves if they made a profit! "Sir" Ralph Halpel was given a payoff of £4 million plus a pension worth £9 million in the week he was sacked from his Chairmanship of the Burton group for presiding over a drop in profits of £100 million. He's not alone - George Davies of the Next store group was also paid £4 million to leave.

Many Tories don't regard this as hypocrisy for the reason that they genuinely believe, in the true Malthus tradition, that bosses and workers are different species, that workers can be considered as so much raw material. This is the industrial counterpart of the sociology that sees people without money as criminal types genetically

and unstable situation by insisting that there are various species of people: some of whom are fittid by nature ("genetically") to own and to rule (bosses), some who are fittid only to work for and be ruled by others (the working class), and a "sub-species" of criminal inadequates not fit for anything (the "surplus population"). It is this ideology which in reality underpins the economics of capitalism, not the rhetoric of 'freedom and opportunity' offered by right wing propaganda for popular consumption. Socialists should always remember that the terms 'class struggle' and 'class war' have a real basis to them not only in the hatred we have towards the ruling elites, but also in their contempt and fear of us.



If you are working class its because you have working class genes and not middle class genes - let alone toff's genes.

It is Marx who provided a genuinely scientific explanation of the phenomenon of 'surplus population' in capitalism. He showed how, as capitalism advanced, firms are constantly obliged to increase productivity through the use of machinery so growing larger and fewer and so reducing their need for labour. Thus comes into being what he termed the "industrial reserve army" - all those who are unemployed or who work only part time or in casual jobs. This, he pointed out, is an essential element within advanced economies both to provide instant sources of extra labour at the beginning of a boom without raising the level of wages generally and to enforce discipline amongst the workforce at other times. In recent bourgeois economics it is called, literally, the "natural rate of unemployment" i.e. the rate at which inflation is held steady!

Others may regard that as highly unnatural. The Eighties in Britain saw ample evidence of the working of this mechanism. We are about to see it again in the nineties.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THOUSANDS OF KURDS BY CHEMICAL BOMBING WAS REGARDED WITH BLAND INDIFFERENCE BY THE U.N.



armaments supplied to Iraq forces by their own governments.

What of the argument that the Middle East cannot be allowed to become a region in which the conflicting regional powers possess nuclear weapons? That therefore, Iraq must be invaded to destroy a potential nuclear capability? Discounting the fact that it was the West (in the shape of France) who supplied Iraq with weapons-grade plutonium in the first place (in 1980), the amount in Saddam Hussein's possession is enough to manufacture a single bomb slightly smaller than the one used by the US on Hiroshima. The plutonium, which would take months to convert into a bomb, is subject to regular inspections by an International Commission and was still there in November. So Iraq does not have the bomb; but Israel, America's client state in the region, possesses an arsenal of around 200 nuclear weapons. Yet there has been nothing about sanctions or war against Israel - although of all countries liable to use nuclear weapons, Israel would be near or at the top of anyone's list. Moreover Saddam has, since well before the invasion of Kuwait, stated his readiness to destroy all non-conventional weapons provided that other powers in the region (i.e. Israel) do so as well. We shall never know whether the offer was genuine, since the US has never made any response.

Alternatively, are we to agree that the purpose of the war is to displace Saddam's ruthless dictatorship with a democratic regime, as has been alleged by some apologists for the US/UK action? That at least, might be worth the sickening rhetoric about a 'just war' (in John Major's words) from the politicians responsible for having engineered the situation in which Saddam sat in command of one of the most formidable collections of military hardware in the world. Are the allies in the Gulf in defence therefore, of freedom and democracy, as Bush has maintained? Hardly. In fighting in defence of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the allies have shown themselves willing to risk thousands of lives in defence of regimes so repressive, dictatorial and intolerant, that the troops ready to die for them are forbidden to celebrate Christmas! These sacrifices are supposedly being made so that 7% of the Kuwaiti population can continue to vote in meaningless elections to keep a family of obscenely wealthy bandits in power. They are being made so that the Saudi Royal family can continue to lop off the hands and heads of dissidents. These Arab ruling elites are not a pretty sight. One high Gulf official told the Wall Street Journal "with a chuckle" that his son would not have to die for Kuwait since, "We have our white slaves from America to do that".

Finally, there is the argument directed at Sadaam Hussein personally, that he is such an unprecedentedly nasty piece of work that it is the moral duty of all nations to bomb Iraq until he is destroyed. No-one would contest the truth of this characterisation of Saddam in

the face of the poison-gas attack upon Kurdish villages and other horrors committed by the Iraqi regime. But is this the reason for the aggressive response of the allies? While the facts of the attempted genocide have been well known for a couple of years, both the US and UK governments continued to supply all forms of material aid to Iraq, and to stress the importance of good relations, right up until the invasion of Kuwait. If the high moral ground is now being claimed, it is rather undermined by the fact that the British used terror bombing against Iraqi villages when they ran the country as a colony in the twenties and thirties, and in the course of which authorised, in the words and according to the strong recommendation of Tory icon

Winston Churchill, "the use of poison gas against uncivilised tribes". I.e. precisely those people attacked in the same way by Saddam!

So much for the pretexes being offered for war by the US/UK axis; none of them account for either the massive mobilisation or the unprecedented 5 month period of procrastination and delay. If a war had been justified or necessitated by any of the ideals outlined above, it would have been launched by a genuinely international force, not just the forces of the



ISRAEL BOMBED BAGHDAD IN 1981 AND INVADDED LEBANON IN 1982, KILLING 17,000 LEBANESE AND SYRIANS IN THE FIRST SEVEN WEEKS OF THE INVASION. IT CONTINUES TO OCCUPY ARAB TERRITORIES IN DEFIANCE OF UN RESOLUTIONS.

US/UK axis. In fact, none of the other UN powers offered any justification for a war and insisted that sanctions were perfectly sufficient to do the job - if the objective really was to merely bring Saddam to the conference table. We

need to look elsewhere, to the objective forces behind the unsteady rhetoric, to account for this contradiction between the massive mobilisation of military resources and the inadequacy of the public rationalisations.

First of all, in economic terms, the US has achieved its principal 'war aim' simply by occupying Saudi Arabia. The West's supply of oil is now guaranteed to be under direct US military control in whatever quantities and at whatever prices it dictates. The Saudis produce a large percentage of the world's oil, and sit on a far larger proportion of all proven reserves. The military occupation has placed a crucial economic lever in the hands of the US in relation to its real rivals in the world - the industrial powers of Europe and Japan. This fundamental issue was settled in the first few weeks of the deployment (not an 'invasion' of course) of US troops in the Gulf. The further issue, of waging war against Saddam Hussein, was always secondary. It is perfectly possible that rather than securing the economic gains made, war could upset them. It was therefore desirable that the US marines and USAF should establish an unchallengeable military



Palestinian slingshot versus Israeli gun.

presence in the region under the ideological cover provided by the demonisation of the Iraqis. If this presence alone could extort concessions from Saddam, well and good; equally acceptable would be a war of strictly limited dimensions (i.e. the fewest possible American casualties). With Saddam intransigent however, the ideological cover took on a warlike momentum of its own. There could be no liberation of Kuwait without massive use of force, and this involved two distinct gambles.

Would American casualties be kept to acceptable levels, and could US and world opinion be made to swallow the propaganda? Hence the extended fumbling of the issue by Bush and his associates over the past months. For, in military terms, Iraq was no Grenada or even Panama. Even with the Soviet threat now out of the picture and the consequent American near monopoly of military force, a quick, surgical strike against Iraqi forces and the consequent collapse of the Saddamist regime could not be guaranteed in advance. America in its cold war military and strategic relations hitherto has operated on the principle of overwhelmingly superior forces being deployed

either against negligible opposition (Vietnam proved a mistake and the Grenadas of this world were substituted) or to the brink of war but not beyond - the archetype being the Cuban missile crisis of 1963. The success of this strategy always depended upon the relative rationality of Russian generals and politicians in deciding that the gamble wasn't worth it. Having virtually no informed public opinion to answer to, they could afford the loss of face involved. Unfortunately Saddam refused to play the game.

Mobilisation, deployment and threats did not deter him; and unlike the Russians, he cannot afford to be seen to back down within Iraq and the Arab world generally. The January 15 ultimatum proved a clumsy device undertaken by an Administration that simply didn't know what else to do, ensuring that the position of the US/UK would become virtually impossible to maintain militarily for long without a direct move to war.

Politically too, the government was subject to contradictory pressures. A neat, sharp demonstration of force in a strategically sensitive area is a wonderful prospect for the enhancement of US global strategy; in effect the threat or use of military force could then be substituted for the economic decline that the US has suffered over the last decade in comparison with the likes of Germany and Japan (no German or Japanese forces went to the Gulf!). The US would then be in a position to 'sell' strategic power in exchange for economic concessions and control - as the rest of the industrial world would soon find out. The pathetic, self-deluding attempts of the Tories to mimic this strategy was seen in the Falklands and again today. Yet the 'neatness' of this outcome could be threatened by several factors. A protracted war, or a war that spread beyond a certain narrow confine, would create a political situation far more 'unstable' (the code word for out of US/UK control) even than that existing now. The political gains of even a 'successful' war are uncertain. What for example would be done with a defeated Iraq itself? Would the domestic populations of the feudal Arab states remain docile in the face of blatant US control of the region? Which way will Israel jump? There is no circumscribed political target for American military action to aim at once the incalculable effects of war have worked themselves out. The declared aim (fudged and mumbled though it is) of merely removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait would leave an insoluble legacy for the future. The restoration of blatant, old-style colonialism sheltering behind a generally detested Kuwaiti 'Royal Family' would be a constant focus of friction. Even a 'successful' war that was perceived as a necessary imperialist adventure could result in reinforcing the so-called 'Vietnam syndrome' in US internal politics, inhibiting rather than strengthening the freedom of action of the political and military hawks. Moreover, domestic opinion within the US has proved stubbornly hard to manage, despite months of 'Saddam - Hitler' indoctrination. The impression summed up in the remark by a Defence Department official that "If Kuwait grew carrots we wouldn't give a damn" has been impossible to erase. The hesitant and conditional Senate vote giving Bush the go-ahead to declare war by a near even vote of 52 to 47 reflects the radical split between the American ruling classes as well as the population as a whole - the product of the contradictory factors outlined above. One experienced US Republican Senator (one of only 2 to vote against the 1984 Gulf of Tonkin resolution) said:

"If we are divided now, think how divided we will be when the shooting starts and our young people start coming home in those human remains pouches. The action does not want this war. We have the fire-power, but we do not have the will."

The Bush administration has been hamstrung by the knowledge that each body-bag will lose thousands of votes - a unlucky turn in military fortunes and the Republicans could kiss goodbye to a further term of office. That has been the fundamental concern of Bush and his cohorts as it was Nixon's during the Vietnam war.

Demonstrations against the war in the US are widespread - as they are amongst the populations of the 'allies'. In London, 50,000 marched against the war while the absurd 'Free Kuwait!' campaign could attract only 2,000 (despite national advertising); 250,000 marched in Germany, 200,000 in France and 100,000 in Spain. In Germany, opinion polls show 70% against the war;

in France, 75%. European governments themselves have clearly been uneasy at the prospect of the Middle East being turned into a zone of US military occupation. It is encouraging to note that US/UK propaganda, extended as it has been to unparalleled lengths over an unprecedented period of time, has had so little effect in convincing their respective populations of the need for the war. Cynicism about the real war aims of the 'allies' is already widespread. It need not be supposed that the US/UK ruling elites have been following a precise plan coherent in all its details - Bush's rendition over the past few months of a man without any grasp of what to do next or even what had been done already has been too convincing to have been just an act. But the fundamental objective logic behind the fatal progression of events has been clear. It is now widely appreciated that the two leading protagonists of the aggression, America and Britain, have historically been those countries most to benefit from the supply of oil and the flow of capital investment from their client oil kingdoms, and that this is why they are willing to do the fighting. It is too obvious that the war represents a desperate attempt by sheer brute force to restore and maintain the situation of the past 50 years or more whereby the wealth and resources of the Middle East have been siphoned into Western pockets via repulsive and corrupt local elites. The relocation of American

# A LAUGHING STOCK

Many people will have read of the call made by Vanessa Redgrave in Barcelona, in front of a crowd of 20,000 people, to 'support' the war effort of Saddam Hussein. This has been echoed by slogans calling for 'Victory to Iraq' issued by almost all orthodox Trotskyite groups. The British left in general is considered by much of the working class to be hopelessly out of touch, and you can see why. Anyone reading the current or previous articles in Red Action on the Gulf situation will quite confidently conclude that while unreservedly opposing the waste of life involved in military action by the US/UK axis, and condemning the cynicism and the mercenary motives behind it, we are equally strong in our condemnation of the Saddamist regime as a singularly barbaric form of totalitarianism. It should be unthinkable for any group who regard themselves as revolutionary socialists to even contemplate offering 'support' to such a repressive and reactionary monstrosity. Saddam's espousal of the Palestinian cause should be regarded in the same way as American concern for the citizens of Kuwait. The Vietnam war, by contrast, saw a reactionary power, the US, in conflict with a progressive resistance, the NLF. Drawing attention to the fact, and to the advantages for the international working class of an NLF victory is of course, a perfectly legitimate function. Ideological conflicts are one terrain of revolutionary activity. The fact remains that any 'support' offered in such circumstances is likely to remain insubstantial - a blank

cheque written on a non-existent bank account. The distinction should be kept clearly in mind as a precaution against lefty megalomania. But, as is the case in the present situation, a war between two totally reactionary forces will not offer any progressive solution: the only possible attitude must be one of opposition to the war itself and not support for one side or the other. Neither has anything to offer the international working class.

But since the W.R.P. and the like are offering their support to Iraq and are apparently serious in regarding themselves as revolutionaries, what kind of 'support' can Iraq expect from this dedicated band? What do such groups seriously propose to do? Dig up the arms cache and attack the Kuwaiti Embassy? Storm the American base at Midehall? Will Vanessa Redgrave tear up her Equity card? No, I don't think so either. When for example, Red Action attacks the propaganda of the fascists and puts forward ideas concerning the best way to combat them, this is accompanied by a presence on the streets putting the theory into practice. And putting the theory into practice naturally modifies and refines the theory. This is the way progress is made. But when 'revolutionaries' announce world-historical objectives, make 'proclamations to the working class' (The Leninist) or sloganise their 'support' for a war halfway round the world, without even pausing to consider how their words might be turned into action, both they and the politics they allegedly stand for are made a laughing stock.



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might from the barren plains of Northern Germany to the rich oilfields of Saudi Arabia is painfully explicit in its significance. When Britain last attempted military intervention in the Middle East, during the Suez crisis of the fifties, the enterprise was shrouded in the tatters of imperialist ideology. For all the jingoistic 'buttkicking' rhetoric which has now taken on a life of its own and may yet engulf the politicians who propagated it, the latest expedition in the Middle East is already seen by the majority of the home populations as naked mercenary aggression. The war which was launched on this basis may prove catastrophic not only for Saddam Hussein, but also for politicians of the US/UK axis who planned it. The 'Vietnam syndrome', the unwillingness of the American people to become involved in extended and potentially catastrophic, foreign military adventures, held back the US hawks for months while Bush served himself to push the button. The Gulf War is crucial in determining the extent to which the post-Cold War world is to be under the global military and economic control of the American ruling elites. The outcome of the war itself will be significant, but not decisive - the political fallout will be the final determining factor and far more difficult for the Pentagon to control. In the long term, the imperialist will of the US instead of being strengthened, could be finally shattered.