

Red Action

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A.F.A. MARCH IN BETHNAL GREEN!



On the 10th November Remembrance Day, Anti-Fascist Action, abandoned the traditional confrontation with the National Front at the Cenotaph in Victoria and instead organised the biggest anti-fascist demonstration through Bethnal Green since the 1930s.

Bethnal Green, in East London has been known as the spiritual home of the far right since Moseley's blackshirts built a base there in the 30's. The area around Brick Lane in Bethnal Green was also the scene for violent confrontations between the National Front and the Anti-Nazi League in the late 70's.

Appropriately then this march started from Gardeners Corner where the anti-fascists assembled in 1936 for what was to become known as "The Battle of Cable Street" exactly fifty years ago.

Veterans of Cable Street have

also been regular supporters at AFA events in the area since AFA responded to the challenge of the neo-nazi British National Party to make Tower Hamlets "a national priority".

At a public meeting in Whitechapel in November 1990 a speaker from Red Action outlined AFA's strategy in the area for the coming year. "We must set our own agenda..... by wresting the initiative from the fascists and race attackers..... challenging them on their own doorstep and in the process cutting off their supply line of recruits at source..... confront 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..... We must attempt to polarise the whole of the working class, Asian, Black and White on the 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".

This march then was a fitting culmination to a years work in which through a variety of tactics the fascists have been forced out of various drinking haunts in Bethnal Green Road, have seen their paper sale under constant threat, were forced to witness impotently as a 10,000 strong 'Unity Carnival against racist attacks' was held in nearby Hackney, and as well as that had over 80,000 anti-fascist leaflets distributed on streets and working class estates in "their" area.

As the hugely confident, belligerent crowd wound its way down the Bethnal Green Road, occasionally chanting "Where the fucking hell are you? You're meant to be at home!" It had become apparent that if the BNP or local racists intended to counter demonstrate they would undoubtedly be dwarfed by this huge demonstration of defiance in solidarity with the many local victims of race attacks. Sections of the local population normally partisan and spontaneously vocal on such occasions remained conspicuously mute as the march passed.

Despite the BNP playing truant, the march through aggressive in tone and content, had a defensive dimension, as

an assertion of communal solidarity in response to the BNP striking a territorial claim in a working class area. An area, Tower Hamlets, that has the highest ratio of race attacks in the country and where Richard Edmonds is standing as a candidate in the general election. The BNP secured 25% of the white working class vote here in the local elections last May.

It was this defensive dimension that the speaker from Red Action emphasised when she addressed the crowd in the pre-march rally.

"Many on the left would have us believe that race attacks and the rise of fascism is not a problem. They will assure you that they are "just a bunch of isolated fanatics". Well, we say to them, tear yourselves away from the university campuses for a moment and look at reality as we see it!

We challenge them to go into the white working class estates in Tower Hamlets and secure 25% of the vote as the BNP did last May. We challenge them to go to Bermondsey and mobilise an entire estate of people as the BNP did in August. We challenge them to go to Asian families living under a curfew on estates in Stepney and convince them that race attacks are not a problem and finally we challenge them to stand 120 candidates in the next General election as the "isolated fanatics" of the BNP and NF have pledged to do in 1992.

Others will tell you that state racism is the real problem, that anti-fascism is nothing but a cowardly diversion, but we have never said it is a case of either or. They will also assure you that though fascism is a problem in France, and Germany, and Poland, and in Austria, and in Switzerland, and in Sweden, and in Yugoslavia, and in Italy, and in Spain...it will never happen here. This mark you, in a country with an estimated 70,000 race attacks a year and rising. However in a way I suppose they have a point. It is not the far right that's the problem, it's the far left that's the problem. The left has lost touch with reality and abandoned its own constituency. It is totally devoid of credibility among working class youth White, Black and Asian. The left is seen by them to lack integrity, stamina and courage with a fondness for the soft option. They have no respect for us because we have lost respect for ourselves.



BNP LEADER AMBUSHED!

Following a highly successful demonstration by AFA on the 26th October against BNP and NF paper sellers in Brick Lane, which attracted over three hundred Anti-Fascists; Richard Edmonds the defacto leader of the BNP was ambushed near Kings Cross.

Edmonds, who had apparently dropped some of his colleagues at the railway station, and may have been cruising the area on the look out for individual anti-fascists returning from the demonstration. He was returning with a companion to the van parked in York Way when he was confronted.

Recovering from his surprise, he seized the female fascist next to him, and attempted to use her as a shield screaming "Don't hit the woman!" According to an eye-witness, the attackers appeared momentarily non-plussed, until a woman stepped forward from the group and 'felled' the 'human shield' with a single blow. Almost instantly Edmonds himself collapsed under a hail of blows. (Incidentally Edmonds pulled a similar stunt outside Conway Hall in 1988, though this time BNP editor the weedy John Morse, was the sacrificial victim, in a frantic and vain

attempt by Edmonds to save his own skin.)

Though both received almost instant medical attention "from a passing doctor" according to the Jewish Chronicle, both subsequently went to hospital. When the police arrived, the other occupants of the van, eight members of the BNP, who though within sight of the incident did not manage to respond until the anti-fascists had withdrawn from the area, were then duly arrested! This was as a result of two cut-throat razors being found by police on the floor of the van.

Edmonds currently on separate charges for affray and possession of a machete (!) was released from a police station in City Road with only a caution. He was described by a passer-by as "looking as if he had been hit by a bus".

Throughout the 80s the entire area within a five mile radius of Kings Cross in particular, has developed a notorious reputation akin to "The Bermuda Triangle" among fascists. Unwary right-wingers, oblivious to the dangers have disappeared within its boundaries, and as a result of the experience forever lost to the cause of race and nation.

10,000 AT UNITY CARNIVAL

The biggest anti-fascist event for 13 years took place on a sunny Sunday in September when 10,000 people gathered on Hackney Downs for the Unity Carnival. Not since the Anti-Nazi League/Rock Against Racism Carnivals of the late '70s had this many people turned out under the banner of anti-fascism.

Successful 'chart' bands like Soho and Gary Clail's On U Sound System played alongside up and coming talent of bands like The 25th of May and Five Thirty, while reggae, latin and African sounds got the crowd dancing around the smaller stage. There was plenty for kids to do, the beer tent ran dry, the food stalls made a bomb, and 40 trade union and political groups promoted alternatives to the reactionary arguments of the fascists.

The organisers - Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and Cable Street Beat (CSB) - are well aware that organising a successful carnival will not stop racist attacks or the growth in support for the fascists. We used the carnival firstly to highlight those issues and then, having attracted an audience of 10,000, to encourage them to get involved with the more 'political' activities we had organised in the weeks following the Carnival:- a rally in the East End (with discussion workshops and speakers), a demonstration against the fascist paper sale in Brick Lane, and the National demonstration Against Race Attacks through the East End in November. These

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INSIDE:
TROTSKY THE FALSE PROPHET.
BERMONDSEY POST MORTEM.
INTERNMENT.

BROTHERS FROM ANOTHER PLANET!

BERMONDSEY--POST MORTEM

After the debacle of Thamesmead where the opposition to a provocative British National Party (BNP) march was led by the nose through the back streets of a housing estate away from the fascists, came the Brunswick Park bye-election in South London. Those responsible for the Thamesmead betrayal again became involved in a series of stunts around South London. Their ineptitude knows no bounds and their motives appear dubious to say the least.

The most recent example of this was on Saturday 24th August 1991. An anti-racist march called by National Black Caucus and supported by the Society of Black Lawyers, wandered its way from Peckham through Camberwell along the Old Kent Road and into Southwark Park, Bermondsey. The march attracted some 250 people to it. No real effort was put into building for a large, principled opposition to either the racists and/or the fascists who have been operating in South London. The largest group operating, effectively, in this field is Anti-Fascist Action, who were neither informed of the march nor invited to any planning meetings. Juxtaposed to the exclusion of AFA is the invitation to the police, an invitation accepted, to attend the steward's meeting! These decisions alone defy all logic!

Red Action is an integral part of Anti-Fascist Action and would have argued against having such an event at that time. Despite this position AFA decided that it should have a presence on the march in order to have an influence on any future activities hatched up by the incompetents of National Black Caucus. In the event the AFA contingent was the largest to attend. All the rumours of various groups being politicised and turning up en masse to support the initiative turned out to be the predictable hot air that National Black Caucus seem to specialise in. The demonstrators were the same ragbag of lefties who always seem to attend any demonstration in order to tempt some unsuspecting innocent into purchasing their propaganda, and even worse, suffer their recruitment tactics. There were very few members of local communities present. This was a direct result of the lack of planning, lack of publicity and lack of vision that had typified the (dis)organisation of this demonstration.

As the march progressed, there were constant rumours about groups of fascists and racists waiting on the Old Kent Road. They always seemed to be exaggerated, and the stewards either contributed to them or ignored them, being happy to let the march stretch over a length that far exceeded the numbers on it.

As we turned into the estates it was immediately apparent

that the rumours were not exaggerated, they were grossly inadequate in describing both the number and the quality of people opposing the march. The streets were alive with people and groups of up to 60 voicing their very militant opposition to the march. As if that were not enough, as the march reached the estates surrounding Southwark Park, it was confronted with complete estates out on their balconies and their streets, complete with Union Jack flags, shouting abuse at the invaders of their estate.

As the march started to enter the park further progress was prevented by a wave of some 300 racists storming across the park towards us. This was bad, but not as bad as a further two waves of about the same numbers storming across the park to join their compatriots. Fortunately, they did not attack the march. However, there is no doubt that the vast majority of the demonstrators were both unwilling and unable to defend themselves. As the threat became more apparent the march stewards formed up holding hands with their backs

to the racists and faced the demonstrators - see no evil and their is no evil!

The organisers then began demanding that the police arrest the racists from the park, claiming that the police had reneged on their promises to them. How can they seriously expect those that they purport to oppose to either make promises in good faith or to honour those promises once things begin to go wrong? Particularly when it is remembered that the most consistent chant on the march was, 'Who are the racists? - The police are the racists!' Yet another example that National Black Caucus exist on another planet separate from the rest of us.

What was the reaction of the press to the demonstration?

Red Action has no illusions about the events of 24th August - it was a major disaster. It has set back work we have been doing with AFA in South London appreciably. We realise that to be successful, any demonstration has to involve the local community both in the event itself and in its organisational stages. This was never done, no attempt was made to contact community groups, labour movement, political

groups, workers, or residents of Bermondsey. The result was the debacle that the march turned out to be.

The BNP are not so naive as groups not actively involved in the anti-fascist struggle, like the NBC, SWP etc. would believe. The BNP produced propaganda that alerted local people and called on them to 'protect Bermondsey against invasion'. They did not, in the lead up to the day, play the race card - they had no need to. The unsuitable propaganda of the NBC already identified all white people in the area as racist and as supporters of the race attackers. The BNP had no need of adding anything more to their message until the march started. Then they held all the cards and were able to pull support to them as the controllers of the streets and the group that empowered workers enabling them to exercise influence on

immigrants), these are dangerous times. Unity Carnival played an important part in building the fightback against the growth of racism and fascism. It gained considerable publicity for AFA on TV, radio and in the papers as well as the 40,000 thousand leaflets and 6,000 posters we distributed ourselves. By appealing to sponsorship to trade unions, political groups, MPs and anti-racist bodies, we raised militant anti-fascist arguments with a large number of people. While we were very pleased on the whole with the level and range of sponsorship, it has to be noted that the two largest organisations on the 'left' (SWP, Militant) refused to back it or cover it in any way.

consistency and resolve will eventually overcome the suspicions of these groups who can then make AFA their own.

The recent gains the fascists have made internationally, especially in Germany, as well as at home, shows there is no room for complacency. In particular, the success the BNP had in mobilising nearly 1,000 people to attack an anti-racist march in Bermondsey, South London, shows the extent of their potential support. The NF have said that they will stand 60 candidates in the general election and the BNP are currently considering it. This will mean that they both get TV broadcasts. With the economy in decline and the race card already being played by the Tories (illegal

their streets. The BNP are truthfully able to say that they chivvied a ragbag march along the streets of South London, confined to a dismal corner of a park, contained until they got bored, and then pushed it out of the area.

The concept of the march would be described as correct if it were to go through working class areas and working class estates with a message to unite the class. However, as with many things, the practice needs a little more thought, a little more planning and a lot more than merely announcing a demonstration, publishing a route and strolling along on the march.

To effectively combat racism and/or fascism, a full campaign must be launched. Not isolated, possibly well intentioned events. Red Action's position in AFA has always been to argue against the publicity stunts of 'gesture' politics. A solitary march cannot be described as a campaign; if appropriate it can be the prelude to a campaign. If this was the case, no campaign was intimated

faction of political activity - untenable and indefensible.

Were the motives more sinister? Rumours abound that NBC and the Society of Black Lawyers are keen to increase their state funding. Clearly, to do this they need to be visible and to have a high profile.

Numerous activities in the public eye suit this strategy, while the more arduous planning and street level work have too low a visibility to attract funds.

Or, more likely, were the motives political naivety? Perhaps the middle class leadership of the NBC and SBL do not know how working class estates operate. Perhaps they did not know that the particular estates were predominantly white and racist with an historical connection to the far right. It is abundantly clear that these people do not recognise fascists. They still live in the late 1970s and early '80s where it was far easier to say that all fascists are skinheads and all skinheads are fascists. At that time it was far easier to take that view. Although not a totally accurate view, it was a reasonable pointer. Nowadays however, it is inaccurate and dangerous to make those assumptions. The BNP, the NF and the British Movement includes a significant number of skinheads. This was a major victory in the late '70s to rob fascist parties of the way in to working class youth by adopting skinhead clothing, hair styles etc. by anti-racist skins. The organisers and stewards were visibly shocked that the opponents were casuals and numerous when we first entered the estate, and completely non-plussed that a number of AFA supporters were skinheads.

Regardless of the motives behind the schemes of groups like the NBC, it is clear that they do not have either the political analysis, the base in the community or the willingness to develop a base through grass roots work. After August 24th, AFA representatives were invited to a number of local meetings to debate the merits of another similar march through the same area. Fortunately AFA has more credibility and more logic than the adventurers who want a repeat showing, and we were able to isolate the supporters of a follow-up march. Our view is that no more events should be attempted without first doing grass roots work on the local estates and streets, and without involving a wide section of the community in building for it. Anti-Fascist Action are active in South London and are prepared to assist with building a campaign with realistic and achievable objectives. If the lessons of Bermondsey are learned and translated into a workable strategy, then Red Action would show support and encourage people to attend.

The Carnival also gave anti-fascism a positive and popular profile (good, free entertainment with a message) and provided a 'bridge' between thousands of working class people and organised political opposition to fascism. Unfortunately, it is a fact that you would not attract 10,000 people (black and white, young and old, male and female, straight and gay) to attend a rally or meeting. By getting them to the Carnival, we had the opportunity, through our speakers, exhibitions and literature, to get our message across. That is why next year, we will be organising another Unity Carnival and will be working hard to make the necessary improvements to make it even bigger and better.



The ugly face of racism: British National Party supporters attack a passing car driven by a black man after being dispersed by police following a black-rights march in south London

to the racists and faced the demonstrators - see no evil and their is no evil!

The extra terrestrial influence was again displayed when it was announced, from the roof of a mini-bus whilst we were still under siege, that the

For the most part they found it inexplicable and chose to ignore it. Those that mentioned it, in contrast to normal practice, over estimated the number of anti-racists, and in keeping with normal practice, minimised the threat posed by the racists.

The local papers opened their letter columns to the people of Bermondsey, and most writers expressed views in support of the counter demonstration and against the antics of those who called the march.

The SWP in a paragraph hidden away in their paper offered the opinion that it was a minor defeat. How minor can we get? Anti-racists have the opportunity to work for as long as they need, because they set the timetable, to mobilise 300, and the fascists of the BNP can work for days to mobilise a whole working class estate to their side. If

quo; we are fighting for the interests of the working class.

However, AFA cannot substitute itself for a 'political party'. Being a united front means there are many different ideas and organisations involved, but we can unite in action to fight fascism both physically and ideologically. While we aim most of our propaganda at the potential recruits of fascism, in this case the white working class, not he victims who are mainly Asian. We understand the obvious suspicion the communities under attack have of predominantly white organisations - having been exploited and betrayed by so many. AFA's campaign isn't a six month recruiting job, it is here to stay, and that

10,000 AT UNITY CARNIVAL

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activities, combined with our ongoing propaganda work in the area, including mass leafletting of estates and educational work in local schools, are the sort of activities that have already challenged the fascists in East London, and can start to isolate them.

AFA argues that East London is a classic example of a run down working class area that should in theory be a stronghold of the left. In reality, it is the fascist BNP that are picking up the

disillusioned white working class vote, as shown by the 25% of the white vote they won in St Peter's ward, Bethnal Green, in August 1990. It is also no coincidence that Tower Hamlets has the highest incidence of racist attacks in the country. AFA is a united front against fascism. We see our job as contesting any working class area where the fascists have some influence, isolating them and creating the space for progressive working class organisations to operate. We are not fighting fascism just to maintain the 'status

LETTERS



BERMONDSEY NO COVER UP

Dear Red Action

Ever since the barricades of the International Brigade in thirties Spain 'They shall not pass' has been the rallying call of anti-fascists everywhere: whatever the costs fascism will not prevail. On Saturday 22nd August 1991 the tradition was reversed, a march organised by several black groups (purporting, in some cases, to represent national black opinion), was prevented from finishing, the object of the march had been to prove that there were no 'no-go' areas for black people, the consequence has been to create a no-go area where previously the opposition had only dreamt of having one. I am not exaggerating, on that afternoon, the BNP and all those families and fighters who came out to support them said 'you cannot come in here and leave safely on your own,' and they were right. It is ironic that a group of people who have spent such a time voicing criticisms of the Metropolitan Police's attitude towards black people should place the lives and safety of black people in their hands. Let there be no cover up, all who were there, both them and us, saw that without police protection we were dead meat. Not only were we heavily outnumbered, but also outnumbered (the site of the end rally was occupied by a very handy firm of racists) and outclassed. Many will disagree with this conclusion, some from an honest misunderstanding and/or ignorance of the context, others for more sinister reasons.

It does not threaten black people alone, and by accepting the fascist agenda and reducing the issue to anti-racism the mobilising potential within anti-fascism has been undermined and the issues at stake confused. Such an attitude has enabled Edmonds, Tyndall and the odious vermin that wallow in their excrement to seize the initiative. Every person I have spoken to since the day (including the organisers) were shocked by the numbers that came out in support of the BNP, more shocking is the indifference displayed by those who never came out to oppose them. Bermondsey will become a symbol for the BNP and other naz groups, it will motivate them to achieve the same in other areas with a similar reputation and social profile (the Silkwood Estate in particular and Bermondsey in general have ancient reputations as 'rough' areas). By attaching such important sounding names to the march, the image now is that black people are completely unorganised and apathetic, without 'backative' that is without the ability to back up their words when it comes to the bottom line. Politics, at the end of the day, is inherently coercive, if you don't have a coercive ability, if you cannot portray a credible ability to project force, whether you are a state or a political party, then you are weak. The consequence then of the August 22nd event was to portray a weak anti-fascist front, at a time when all over Europe the forces of fascism are gaining strength.

P. A
South London

It is acknowledged that 'race' and all issues it encompasses has become an industry, and like all industries at present the recession is having an impact. Unlike other industries the race industry is dependant wholly upon local and central government handouts, thus those who gain positions within it are answerable and responsible not to black people but to the funding body. In the GLC boom time many were able to obtain grants and consolidate their positions, voicing cliched phrases but

CRITIQUE

Dear Comrades

Thanks for the copy of "The making of Red Action!" I found it very interesting reading as did a few friends of mine. I have photocopied a few copies of it and handed them around which provoked great interest as it contradicted the image that Red Action has even amongst the sympathetic. You can also send me ten copies of each

members of the local Class War group shuddered at the thought of putting up "For the IRA against the common enemy" stickers in Plymouth. Your attitude to comrades who disagree with this policy worries me. I fall to see how disagreement or agreements is the mark which divides revolutionaries from lefties. I can see a case for that on a theoretical level; lacking in the analytical skills needed to be a revolutionary but that can't be the only measure by which we judge people.

It strikes me as rather dogmatic to quote with approval Trotsky's idea of "branded with infamy if not a bullet". A complete dismissal of alternative viewpoints on this subject is i) a trait of modern day Trotskyism and ii) not conducive to open and honest debate which you so rightly point out is essential for the revolutionary movement.

I have just read the article 'The Bolshevik Experiment' in the latest issue which was obviously relevant to the point I raised in my last letter. I thought it was well informed and interesting. I think my problem has been with the lack of a 'Revolutionary Marxist' critique of Bolshevism (as opposed to 'Marxists' like the SPGB and the Eurocommunists). I only had access to emotive Anarchist critiques which repelled me with their mixture of ignorance, hatred of personalities and moralism. Although no doubt instinctively right it seems to me that most anarchists convinced themselves that the Bolsheviks were complete bastards first and then created an analysis from there! This has, up to now kept me inside the Trotskyist movement.

Yours fraternally
J. B
Greenbank
Plymouth

BRILLIANT

Dear Red Action

First off, I'd like to say I agree with you lot about your attitude towards the Socialist "Workers" Party. The SWP was the first political organisation I ever got involved with, and frankly, I hated it. A bunch of middle class student wankers pretending to be working class for a couple of years before they are done at Uni by taking orders from a bunch of rich academics is not my idea of fun or a revolutionary organisation.

I remember being at one meeting that Duncan Hallas was speaking down to us at, telling us how we should be organising in Scotland. Anyhow, all the SWP'ers talked about him in a way that'd make you think he was the next Lenin or something. He was boring!

Anyway I left the SWP feeling very pissed off; disillusioned and even embarrassed that I'd ever believed in that crap.

However I do owe the SWP one thing. Through the force-feeding of Lenin and Trotsky I came to the conclusion that Bolshevism doesn't work.

'State and Revolution' seemed alright, but, as yourselves acknowledge, all the "Libertarian" elements were soon dropped once old Vladimir Illyich and co were in power. The pamphlet that really pissed me off was, I think, "The immediate tasks of the Soviet Govt". Lets face it, it might be a cliché, but power does corrupt - especially if its put into the hands of a few self-proclaimed "leaders". You don't have to look at the Soviet Union to see that, just look at the history of our own "vanguards" past and present (eg: WRP, SWP, Militant, RCP etc, etc, the list sadly is endless).

I'm definitely not going to

lump Red Action in with that motley crew, and I think that, from what I've read in RA what you're doing by re-examining Lenin(ism), the role of the party, vanguardism etc. is brilliant and there is no way I will say that your way is definitely wrong and the Class War Feds way is absolutely right, 'cos basically, I don't know - only time and revolution will tell.

Take Care
James
Galashiels,
Scotland

COMRADES

Dear Comrades

I am an active supporter of the Maoist Revolutionary Vanguard. However, in recent months I have become increasingly concerned by the fascist graffiti which is starting to appear in my area and on picking up your paper on a recent trip to Ireland I found some inspiration. Our movement, the RV as yet is in its formative stage and so is not yet capable of counteracting the fascist threat. So far our paper Red Rebel can only come out five times a year.

Therefore, if you send me around ten Red Actions, I should be able to sell some for you in my area. When it comes to fascist scum, I'm sure you'll agree, it is the duty of every true leftist to do what is necessary to curb their advance. When it comes to fighting fascists we are all comrades in arms. Red Action appears to be the group best qualified to do the job at the moment.

Fraternally yours
A. Robertson
New Elgin
Scotland

No-Nonsense

To: Red Action

I've been reading your paper for the past few months and I'm glad I've been able to discover an organisation that I can relate to, with a good "no nonsense" stance instead of the usual pathetic dithering from the rest of the left. Recently, here in Liverpool, there has been renewed action from BNP scum to get a group set up, and judging from the stickers and posters appearing round (with a new Liverpool address) they seem to have succeeded, and at the moment Anti-Fascist-Action are trying to get information on the fascists.

Anyway, I'd really appreciate it if you could send me some Red Action stickers etc; to help cover up some of the shit that's been appearing on local walls from the BNP, and just to stick up anywhere else to get Red Action ideas across. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Best Wishes
S.O.H.
Liverpool

INSTIGATORS

Dear Red Action

My friend and I were spurred into contacting you by a well placed sticker on a billboard outside our local shop.

We both attend a council run comprehensive school of which the teaching is of a poor quality and the pass marks of a bad standard. We are very politically aware and have gone some way into forming a small group of 'instigators' who share similar socialist views.

We also share similar views on racism having both recently partaken in an Anti-NF rally in which both of us received cautions from the police for getting 'carried away'. I am originally from Newcastle, you will be suprised to hear from the infamous Meadowell

Estate. We would be very pleased if you could send us, in a letter some information about your Red Action group.

Awaiting your reply
B. McKeown D. Webster
Darlington

ACTION

Dear Red Action

My name is Lawrence Lawrence

POLITICS NOT JUSTICE

Dear Red Action

I've been following the case of Sir Allan Green the disgraced head of the D.P.P. I look deeply into this and I see it as a set up to remove him from office, he's the man that has referred such notorious cases back to appeal as the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, Bridgewater Four, and the more recent instance with political overtones, the Winston Silcott case. Top policemen are facing criminal charges after ESDA tests were given to show that comments were added to records of interviews after the event.

Sir Allan Green had been to a dinner with legal colleagues that evening, no doubt their food was excellent. Then he moved on to a meeting with the inner temple. The highest brotherhood circle in the land. I think Sir Allan's immediate future was decided at this meeting unknown to himself.

From the inner temple meeting he made his way to back street Kings Cross. En route he stopped to buy three Kit Kats (Published Daily Express). A man that's just eaten excellent food buying three Kit Kats!?! A heroin user may tell you he bought them for his prostitute to chase heroin upon. How many prostitutes use heroin? Sir Allan was obviously a sleaze fetishist; he could have sampled the finest in the land!

When he was approached by the police woman and asked for his particulars, he was pleading not to be arrested. (What did he have on him!) Then three faceless men appear to take over the scene, taking the police woman to one side, and then taking her back to her police office for a talk. No doubt to brief her on what's she's to say. Allan Green was allowed to get away, no charge.

The next we the gullible public hear, is of Sir Allan Green's reputation being destroyed, after he was observed soliciting a woman for prostitution by police. Sir Allan Green immediately resigned. Then all of his colleagues and associates cry his attributes as a good honourable man, a sad end to a distinguished career. The doctors give him an out, suggesting the recent bereavement of his father had caused him to suffer post traumatic stress disorder with loss of concentration and pressure in work. Even when Lord Denning the Master of the Rolls said "Good enough for him, he was a rat!" the public would take that to mean Lord Denning meant in the context that he'd brought the law into disorder and let the team down! How quick they are to forget Lord Dennings comment in the press

Tamercon Rustern, I am an English Turk, I am seventeen and live in Hackney. I want to do something in the fight against fascism and the BNP. I saw a sticker of yours recently, so I'm writing to you hoping you're serious. Dear Red Action, I want some ACTION
Yours in the fight against fascism

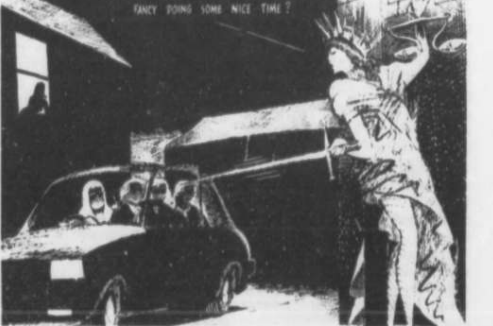
not so long ago, "What if a few innocent people remain in custody, if it saves the credibility of our good police force!" This comment is of Lord Denning's true feelings. In my view Lord Denning called him a rat, because of the cases Sir Allan Green has referred to appeal and the consequences of his doing so. Even though Sir Allan had no option due to evidence such as the ESDA results had shown. No doubt Lord Denning would have suppressed this and left the people concerned imprisoned to rot!

Sir Allan Green could have told the police woman he was seeking directions, who he was etc; and driven off. (As did Timothy Parkin when he was caught in Leeds recently, only he was charged found guilty and lost his appeal. (Wonder what he did!) However the faceless men took over, showed Sir Allan a list, containing times, dates, names and places when he'd indulged in prostitutes in the past. He had no argument, no option but to resign. He was told that he would suffer a character assassination, which would be put down as due to post traumatic stress disorder, suffered after recent family bereavement. The public would swallow that and you'll still have your pension. He duly resigned and left Britain for his villa abroad. The faceless men having done their job thoroughly and removed the non-conformist from the elite temple brethren. He will no doubt be replaced by a yes man, who will do what he's ordered by the faceless men that make their rules and play them their way, regardless of anything one can prove.

I personally believe that I'm up against the same faceless men. My solicitor sits upon an instance of irrefutable perjury while taking a back seat to a rough justice enquiry. Why? when this is clearly a legal matter. He's had over £10,000 of money donated by family and associates and given us nothing to show for it! I wonder has he been told by the faceless men that no matter what this case must be suppressed for political reasons! Am I one of the few Lord Denning refers to, and prefers to see languish in prison regardless of innocence! I am beginning to think that this is so.

Publish this letter in your magazine, lets hear it, we know what they've done to you Sir Allan! Credit where it's due, he went against a system that decides yes or no, no matter what!

Kevin Whitehead
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TROTSKY - THE

Stalinism is dead. Trotskyism has flourished for many years in the dead soil of Stalinism as its radical offspring - gaining strength in proportion as the political 'glamour' of the Soviet Union and its satellite systems faded. Yet the manner of the sudden death of the Stalinist regimes presents Trotskyism itself with a life or death crisis.

The dilemma the Trotskyite and neo-Trotskyite parties face is blindingly obvious. If the Eastern bloc regimes, really were (degenerate or deformed) workers' states as opposed to regimes controlled by a bureaucratic class dominating and exploiting the workers, then the social and political movements which have seen their overthrow during the last two years are counter-revolutionary. The analysis must hold that class-conscious workers in these countries should have taken to the barricades in defence of their state apparatus and its 'historically progressive' function. They haven't. In fact, the only disturbance in the streets has been the noise of concrete statues of Lenin crashing to the ground. Under a system where miners have to risk their livelihoods and liberty to go on strike for soap, this should not come as a great surprise. But in Trotskyite circles, the opposite is true.

It is of course, necessary to be clear what is intended by the term, "workers' state" or 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. It does not signify, as Marx himself was very clear, a socialist or communist society, i.e. one where goods are distributed according to need and the apparatus of state coercion has disappeared. On the contrary, Marx is emphatic that a state in some form will continue to exist for some considerable period after a successful workers' revolution. It is rather the case that the bourgeois state will disappear, with its legislative and executive institutions and its 'bodies of armed men' replaced by entirely new proletarian forms which Marx recognised in his lifetime in the organisation of the Paris Commune of 1871. Importantly, he recognised the Paris Commune as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' without the stultification or elimination of private property in the means of production. During the relatively short life of the Commune, the working masses did not collectivise or redistribute private property. Nor did the Bolshevik party on assuming power in 1917 immediately nationalise property though at that time it certainly fulfilled the criteria set out by Marx for a workers' state. The essential factor in compelling recognition as a workers' state was the institution of effective mechanisms of workers' control in both the political and economic spheres.

This may seem fairly elementary. It makes clear that the regime that emerged from the Russian Bolshevik revolution in 1917 was a workers' state. An article in Red Action no. 60 'The Bolshevik Experiment' explained how, by 1921, the workers' state had degenerated into a form of bureaucratic totalitarianism - still a highly unpopular view amongst the British left. Trotsky himself condemned it as 'ultra-left'. It is not suggested that the degeneration of the regime was inevitable or even pre-ordained on an ideological level. As Victor Serge observed:

"It is often said that 'the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning'. Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism contained many other germs - a mass of other germs". The specific circumstances of Russia's situation in the post-revolutionary period was to determine which of these 'germs' was to develop and which were to be stifled.

The matter is complicated first by those sections on the left that attempt to postpone the crisis of degeneration to the time of the defeat of the 'United Opposition' and Stalin's programme of agrarian collectivisation and forced industrialisation in 1928, and second, by those who follow Trotsky's analysis, developed in 1936 in 'The Revolution Betrayed' according to which, despite the horrors of Stalinism, Russia never ceased to be a ('degenerate') workers' state.

It will be argued that Trotsky's own theory and practice as developed both in his periods in power (1927-23) and in opposition within the Bolshevik party (1923-8) demonstrates his commitment to a bureaucratic, centrally directed party organisation (the Bolshevik party and within the Bolshevik party, the Politburo/Central Committee) as the instrument of socialist construction and control. In addition, it will be argued that he systematically neglected and eliminated wider mechanisms of democratic proletarian control. Trotsky's defence of the Stalinist regime as a progressive workers' state can therefore be seen not as an aberration, or purely theoretical 'mistake', but as a necessary consequence of the political theory and practice developed during his years as a Bolshevik functionary.

Throughout these years, Trotsky was in the forefront of those within the party providing theoretical support for the party's monopoly of political power. In 1923 he wrote, "We are the only party in the country, and in the period of the dictatorship it could not be otherwise." This monopoly was meant to extend for an entire historical period. In 1927, he was still proclaiming, "We will fight with all our power against the idea of two parties, because the dictatorship of the proletariat demands as its very core a single proletarian party." He was clear concerning the implications for workers' control of the 'proletarian' vanguard: "Many of the speeches [at the 12th party Congress in 1923] made in defence of workers' democracy seemed to me exaggerated, and to a considerable extent demagogic, in view of the incompatibility of a fully developed workers' democracy with the regime of a dictatorship".

It is apparent that, for the Trotsky of this period, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' somehow demanded the restriction rather than the implementation of workers' democracy. In a letter to the Central Committee, he explains his tactics of the time as requiring the stifling of debate within the closet of the topmost party leaders: "I have deliberately avoided submitting the struggle within the Central Committee to the judgment of even a very narrow circle of comrades...I think it is my duty to make the true state of affairs known to every party member whom I consider to be sufficiently

prepared, mature, self-restrained and consequently capable of helping the party find a way out of this impasse without factional upheavals." The letter was intentionally kept secret from party rank and file. In Trotsky's conception, democracy even within the party was in practice confined to its topmost ranks. Once Trotsky had lost the support of this fraction he was imprisoned by his own insistence on the banning of factions and organised opposition within the party. The antithesis to any conception of political practice based on the class could hardly be more pronounced.

Furthermore, he directly supported the dilution of the revolutionary and proletarian core of the party through the 'Lenin Levy' of 1924 in which the party structure was thrown wide open to bourgeois and technical careerists increasing membership by over 50%. In the best Stalinist fashion, he praised the Levy as a strengthening of the party's proletarian base:

"This is the best way for the fundamental revolution-ary class in our country to show its will, this vote is a reliable, sure and unerring verification". He paid tribute to the working class which, "at a certain stage of its development has shown in a particularly impressive way how it views the balance sheet of the party's work over many years".

There is really no difference between Stalinist rhetoric of this type, and the real thing as uttered by Stalin himself who claimed that the Levy was, "evidence of the party's profound democracy...it is actually the elected organ of the working class." This is identical to the tributes paid by the masses to right-wing authoritarian regimes which allow a subjected population to express its approval through carefully staged plebiscites in place of consistently democratic mechanisms. Far from being an extension of democracy, or even a recognition of the desirability of a true and consistent workers' democracy, the Lenin Levy and Trotsky's praise of its principles, represents an emasculation of the proletariat. In place of rank and file debate and control, the workers are presented with a 'balance sheet' of party achievements under the direction of an inner party Central Committee, and asked in demagogic fashion, to show 'approval'. The party apparatus then decides that the workers' approval has duly been given. In fact, the new influx decisively strengthened Stalin's hand against Trotsky himself within the party, leading Trotsky (once again) in 1936 to declare that the Lenin Levy "dealt a death blow to the party."

In the programme of the 1927 United Opposition however, he acknowledged the true condition of the 'party of the proletariat': "The number of factory workers in the leading sections of the party is next to nothing. In the regional committees it is 13%; in the county committees, from 10% to 16%". The class composition of the 'party of the proletariat' was therefore not proletarian! Naturally, this did not mean that the party could or should operate in total isolation from the social forces they claimed to represent. The bureaucracy could be divided against itself in ways that reflected wider social pressures (as in the

intra-bureaucratic purges of the Thirties and again in recent events). Trotsky described the process in 1925: "Certain mass moods which have no chance of being at all accurately represented through the mass organ-isations, trades unions or party, make their way through to upper party circles by obscure and roundabout means...the position taken by the upper circles in Leningrad [Zinoviev's power base] is a bureaucratically distorted expression felt by the most advanced section of the proletariat." This is the scope and extent of "workers' democracy" within the system that Trotsky as much as anyone, had designed and legitimated.

Trotsky's political practice in this period confirm his commitment to the direction of socialist construction through the initiatives of a narrow self-electing party directorate in opposition to competing social forces, frequently including the proletariat itself. At the 11th Party Congress in the spring of 1922, Trotsky himself acted as the counsel for the prosecution of the Worker's Opposition which, on behalf of the Central Committee he had already indicted before the party and was later to indict before the International. At the crucial 12th Party Congress of 1923 he failed to make any kind of assault against Stalin's position on a number of questions, including his role in the bureaucratisation of the party - contrary to his agreement with the dying Lenin. Against a background of profound industrial unrest and discontent with the Bolshevik regime, he declared instead, his 'unshaken' solidarity with the Politburo, and threatened, "If in the present mood the party warns you emphatically about things that seem dangerous to it, the party is right, even if it exaggerates, because what might not appear dangerous in other circumstances must appear doubly suspect at present." In plain words this meant that the Bolshevik party's control over the proletariat was threatened and that inner party debate should therefore be curtailed in favour of unity behind the Politburo. Even when he argued against the excessive bureaucratisation of the party and its repression of rank and file initiative, it is in the form of counsels against alliances with forces that attempted any action other than the reform of the bureaucracy from within itself: "The excessive central-isation of the apparatus at the expense of initiative engendered a feeling of uneasiness...which at the extremes of the party, assumed an exceedingly morbid form and...in the appearance of illegal groupings directed by elements undeniably hostile to communism."

These references to 'illegal groupings' and 'hostile elements' is uncomfortably reminiscent of the later Stalinist allegations against sundry criminal elements, saboteurs and spies that were to become such a characteristic of the totalitarian regime. Trotsky at this juncture, in 1924, also refers to the 'danger' of bureaucratic degeneration within the Bolshevik party and asks, "...is the danger of such degeneration really great? The fact that the party has understood or felt this danger and has reacted to it so energetically...bears witness to its profound vitality. There lies the principal guarantee of its preservation as a revolutionary

party."

The 'energetic reaction' of the party to which Trotsky so complacently refers was actually constituted by a meaningless resolution of the Central Committee. He later ascribes this degeneration to the "moral decay of the uncontrolled apparatus". This refuge in the subjective morality rather than the class composition of the party rank and file indicates how profound was Trotsky's attachment to a programme of intellectual and moral regeneration of the existing apparatus.

This position was taken, it is necessary to remember, in relation to the party led by the 'Troika' of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, a party where election has been replaced by a system of bureaucratic appointment from above and where the erosion of the economic position of the working class is swiftly following upon the erosion of workers' democracy and control.

Trotsky made no attempt to mobilise rank and file workers either within or outside the party to campaign for significant concessions. In later reflections on his position during this period, he confirms that, "During the first ten years of its struggle, the Left opposition did not abandon the programme of ideological conquest of the party for that of conquest against the party. Its slogan was: reform, not revolution." His faith was in the 'goodwill' of individual bureaucrats within the party hierarchy; the "present critical period" he wrote, "will teach a good deal to the majority of the apparatus workers and will get them to abandon most of their errors."

Trotsky is suggesting that the bureaucrats will reform themselves after learning the lessons created by their own mistakes and voluntarily surrender their power to the rank and file!



"Trotskyism was displaying sympathy with that of Stalinism against which it was being ground in"

He persisted in touting this bureaucratic reformist project of "correcting the party line by strictly internal means" (a project of course broadly initiated by Lenin) up to at least 1933, when he at last wrote of the necessity of, "regenerating the regime of the dictatorship, without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform." Trotsky's strategy is therefore intolerably paradoxical: in the face of an oppressive bureaucracy antagonistic to the interests of a workers' state, he explicitly refuses to form an alliance with social forces outside the bureaucratic class, and in addition, refuses even to countenance the formation of an effective oppositional grouping based within the party bureaucracy itself. This is more than a series of 'inexplicable' tactical errors as adduced by conventional apologists for Trotsky's career. Certainly Trotsky on occasion could be extraordinarily spineless. When Lenin's famous 'Testament' attacking Stalin's personality appeared in the West, Trotsky rallied to Stalin's defence: "Comrade Lenin has not left any 'Testament'...all talk with regard to a concealed or mutilated 'Testament' is nothing but a despicable lie, directed against the real will of Comrade Lenin and against the party created by him." Trotsky of course, knew this to be totally untrue. But any analysis which rests upon the subjective character of Trotsky's temperament is quite inadequate and is obviously restricted by identification with Trotsky's own political theory and practice. It is properly explained by Trotsky's own conviction that in the specific conditions facing the Soviet state after the civil war, especially the failure of the European revolutions, that a Stalinist bureaucratic class (headed and controlled by the ideologists of the Bolshevik party) offered the only road forward to socialist

FALSE PROPHET

WRITTEN BY F. GORDON



ptoms of an outlook in harmony which it had taken its stand, and into powder." Victor Serge.

construction. He did not attempt to engineer the subordination of the bureaucracy to genuine forms of proletarian control, but its internal reform. The basis of his opposition consisted in his opposition to the specific policies of the Troika and later, the Stalin - Bukharin axis. The political form of the Stalinist dictatorship was although 'distorted', the correct one; he wished merely to fill this political form with Trotskyist programmatic content.

This position reduced him to the many zigzags and inexplicable 'failures' to oppose Stalin at specific junctures as well as accounting for the unsettling pre-echoes of the formulations associated with classic Stalinism such as the following 'confession' addressed to the Party Congress in 1924:

"Comrades, none of us wants to be or can be right against the party because the party is the sole historical instrument that the working class possesses for the solution of its fundamental tasks...I know that no one can be right against the party. It is only possible to be right with the party and through it since history has not created any other way to determine the correct position. We can say...whether it is right or wrong in any particular, specific question at any particular moment, this is my party."

The apology for the entire subsequent history of the Bolshevik party under Stalinism is effectively contained in this perspective. The fundamental political miscalculation from a Marxist viewpoint is Trotsky's unqualified substitution of party for class in the construction of a socialist society. So far from supporting the Marxist axiom that the emancipation of the working class is essentially and indispensably an act of self-emancipation by the class, Trotsky is adamant concerning the self-sufficient role of the party organisation even in

isolation from the class.

Having rejected a proletarian political base outside the party and the existence of factions within it, Trotsky effectively reduced his position to one of complete sterility: a consequence that was evidently plainer to him in 1939 than during the period of his bureaucratic reformism - though never quite conceded: "It is true that the Bolshevik party forbade factions at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921...One can argue whether or not this was correct. The subsequent course of development has in any case proved that this prohibition served as one of the starting points of the party's degeneration...Thus was formed the totalitarian regime which killed Bolshevism."

The economic and social background to the often obscure debates within the party reveals the real extent of Trotsky's theoretical and practical reinforcement of the social tendencies of the emerging Stalinist totalitarian bureaucracy. In 1922 the wages of the Russian worker were no more than half those of 1913. The Bolshevik managers of industry, implementing the principle of autocratic direction propounded by both Lenin and Trotsky himself, introduced an offensive against the level of workers' wages the following year. The cuts introduced were up to 40% of the desperately low level of 1922. The policies of the New Economic Policy (NEP) were simultaneously ensuring that the sacrifices endured by the proletariat were transferred directly to the new strata of "NEPmen" or middle men and the class of rich, labour exploiting peasants - the kulaks. Huge wage differentials between the lower and upper strata of the proletariat, and particularly between all strata of the proletariat and the bureaucracy, were enforced. In the years 1924-8, workers' output rose by some 50% while wages increased by only 15%.

In the new 'workers' state' the material as well as the political position of the workers grew steadily worse. As the United Opposition was to acknowledge in 1927, "all the data indicates that the growth of wages is lagging behind the growth of labour productivity. The intensity of labour is increasing - the bad conditions of labour remain the same."

As the level of exploitation was increased so the level of workplace democracy was eroded to extinction. In 1923 Trotsky declared that: "The present regime...is much further from any worker's democracy than was the regime of the fiercest period of war communism."

The platform of the United Opposition in 1927 declared, "The regime within the factories has deteriorated. The factory administrative bodies are striving more and more to establish their unlimited authority. The hiring and discharge of workers is actually in the hands of the administration alone. Pre-revolutionary relations between supervisors and workers are frequently found."

Moreover, it estimated that, "In the staff of the elected executive bodies of the industrial unions, the percentage of workers from the bench and non-party militant workers is extremely small, 12 - 15%."

As for "the independent initiative of the mass of workers", it, "is being replaced by agreements between the secretary of the party group, the factory director and the chairman of the factory committees..."

This precipitous attack upon living standards and workplace democracy produced a spate of industrial unrest during the winter of 1922/3, culminating in a series of massive strikes in the industrial centres of Moscow and Petrograd in the summer of 1923. Rumours of a general strike later in the year developed into the beginnings of a political movement against the direction being taken by the party regime. Menshevik agitators were denounced by the Central Committee and the GPU (forerunners of the KGB) were employed to carry out mass arrests. The validity of the workers' grievances mobilised organised groups challenging the Bolshevik leadership. The 'Workers' Truth' group was largely ineffectual, basing itself upon mostly student dissidents. Far larger was the 'Workers' Group' issuing its own manifesto attacking the "New Exploitation of the Proletariat" (a jibe at the NEP) and encouraging workers to demand democratic rights. Its leaders were three labourers who had been party members since 1905. The group was still in an emergent phase when the GPU moved in and arrested the leaders. Around 200 people (including the leaders) were arrested and expelled from the party for their sympathy with these groups.

Trotsky, though he made some protests in a letter to the Central Committee, made no protest at the arrests themselves and conspicuously failed to back the call to industrial action or for what he termed the 'extreme form' - actually very elementary forms - of democratic proletarian control that they demanded. So far from initiating an effective factional or oppositional grouping of his own, Trotsky consistently and conspicuously failed to align himself or support the efforts of others. In October 1923 a group of prominent party members formed the Party Six

group around demands for economic planning and restored inner-party democracy. Party and factory cells acclaimed spokesmen of the group and were in open revolt against the leadership. Trotsky refused to sign their joint document. He took no part in the public debate. Finally he signed a document endorsing the position of the Politbureau. In response the following year, Shliapnikov, the former leader of the Workers' Opposition group argued that Trotsky was unconcerned about "the fate of the working class" and that, "there is no reason to separate Comrade Trotsky in question of policy from other members of the Central Committee." The Central Committee, that is, headed nominally by the Troika, and in actuality, by Stalin.

After almost two years, 1925-6 in which he virtually retired from political work and effectively disbanded the Left opposition, Trotsky did eventually negotiate an alliance with the now oppositional elements, Zinoviev and Kamenev, to form the 'United Opposition', in April, 1926. The United Opposition were very soon brought to heel by the Stalinists and issued a joint statement proclaiming that,

"We categorically reject the theory and practice of 'freedom of factions and groupings' and recognise that such theory and practice are contrary to Leninism and the decisions of the party...We call for the immediate dissolution of all factional groupings which have been formed around the views of the Opposition."

The grovelling endorsement of Stalinist party organisation did not end there. For good measure the statement added, "we pledge ourselves to render every possible assistance to the party in the liquidation of factional struggle and to combat new breaches of discipline."

The distance between 'opposition' of this character and rank and file discontent with the regime has to be carefully emphasised. Serge wrote of the Stalinist bureaucrats that they were, "Outraged by the Opposition they saw it as treason against them; which in a sense it was, since the Opposition itself belonged to the ruling bureaucracy."

Later that year, Trotsky blamed the masses that he had made no virtually no attempt to organise amongst. The masses had grown "more cautious, more sceptical", and he claimed (anticipating the 'downturn' theory) that, "These moods...constitute the basic political background of party life...The attempt of the Opposition to put the new problems before the party ran up against precisely these moods."

Of course, Trotsky writing as one of the leading members of the Politburo in 1921 had written that it was the duty of the party to ignore and if necessary to override these 'moods' of the workers: "The Workers' Opposition has come out with dangerous slogans, fetishising the principles of democracy. They seem to have placed workers' voting rights above the Party, as though the Party did not have the right to defend its dictatorship even if that dictatorship were to collide...with the transitory mood of the workers' democracy."

The contradiction between an alternately depending on workers' 'moods' and overriding them as the 'mood' of the Central Committee dictates is, in the context of the Marxist objective of the

self-emancipation of the working class, too painful to need expanding.

In fact, there is significant evidence that the Opposition at this time enjoyed a considerable amount of potential support both within and outside the party. According to both Serge and Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher, it appears that the possibility of organising a democratic opposition amongst the Soviet working people (and even elements of the army) was a substantial one. The demoralisation of these forces by the inadequacy of its own 'leadership' was soon completed and the effective bankruptcy of the Trotskyite opposition revealed. Speaking before the Central Commission in 1927, he argued that,

"It is necessary to secure for the party the possibility of ideological self-criticism...if this is done I am certain that, in a year or two, the course of the party will be rectified." This is surely the most supine form of political opposition to a totalitarian bureaucracy imaginable - an appeal, not for direct workers' action, or for rank and file opposition within the party to the dictatorship of the leadership, but to the leadership to 'criticise' itself in the words of Victor Serge, this "petitioning" amounted to no more than "mere child's play". The final capitulation came at the 15th Party Congress. The Opposition statement revealingly declared that,

"There are no programmatic differences between us and the party."

It denied that "our state has ever ceased to be a workers' state" and asserted,

"We still maintain...that our party has been and is the embodiment of the proletarian vanguard, and that the Soviet state is the embodiment of the proletarian dictatorship."

Even after Trotsky's exile to Alma Ata at the beginning of 1928 this almost systematic demoralisation of opposition forces persisted. As Serge wrote:

"From the depths of his exile in Alma Ata Trotsky affirmed that this system was still ours, still proletarian, still socialist, even though sick; the party that was excommunicating, imprisoning, and beginning to murder us, remained our party, and we still owed everything to it: we must live only for it, since only through it could we serve the Revolution. We were defeated by party patriotism..."

It is impossible to escape the conviction that, given both the consistency of his statements and the general pattern of Trotsky's tactics during this period, he genuinely believed, at least in the specific circumstances of a backward Russian economic and social formation, that the Stalinist leadership was a revolutionary embodiment of the workers' interests and that reform from within the party, 'self-criticism', was the appropriate instrument of ideological and social correction. Serge tells us that,

"At the end of 1928, Trotsky wrote to us...to the effect that, since the Right represented the danger of a slide towards capitalism, we had to support the 'Centre' - Stalin - against it."

If this is so, then his later position, developed on the eve of the show trials, that Stalinism represented a mere degeneration of what remained in essence a workers' state, is entirely consistent with his political theory and practice both as a leader of the Bolshevik party and the leading oppositionist within it. More than this, any other position,

any criticism of the Stalinist regime as counter-revolutionary, would have meant confessing that his political career since at least 1921, was fundamentally flawed as itself being implicated in the counter-revolution. As Serge writes of his disagreements with Trotsky as late as 1938:

"I was also in disagreement with him on certain important issues in the history of the Revolution: he refused to admit that in the terrible Kronstadt episode of 1921 the responsibilities of the Bolshevik Central Committee had been simply enormous; that the subsequent repression had been needlessly barbarous; and that the establishment of the Cheka with its techniques of secret inquisition had been a grievous error on the part of the revolutionary leadership, and one incompatible with any socialist philosophy." Serge's conclusion is surely the right one:

"Trotskyism was displaying symptoms of an outlook in harmony with that of Stalinism against which it had taken its stand, and by which it was being ground into powder..."

The verdict is inevitable: while it is true that on a subjective and idealistic level the Trotskyite programme of the opposition years represented a genuine programmatic alternative to Stalinism, at the level of political practice and his overall theoretical/practical conception of socialist construction the essentially advanced Left Opposition reformist was no radical alternative to the Stalinist dictatorship and the social forces it represented.

Trotsky's opposition was not conceived in terms of class or even of political organisation outside the leading ranks of the Bolshevik party itself; and finally, conceded the 'criminality' of mere factional groupings within the party. In a wider perspective therefore, it is both possible and necessary to ask whether a victory of the Left opposition over the Stalinist clique would have constituted a Marxist, i.e. class alternative to the continuing evolution of the totalitarian bureaucratic apparatus.

Conventional eulogies/apologies for Trotsky are built upon the premise that while he lacked the subjective qualities to implement a socialist alternative and that the necessary social forces to oppose the bureaucracy may not have existed, he fought the regime on Marxist principles. In the light of the arguments developed above, it can be seen that the conventional wisdom of both orthodox and 'unorthodox' Trotskyists, is profoundly mistaken. It is a mistake that flows, not from some purely intellectual misapprehension, but fundamentally, from their continuing identification with the underlying content of Trotsky's political theory and practice in the construction of a socialist society. It is this underlying identification with the Bolshevik party in its bureaucratic phase that leads them to deny the primacy of workers' democracy within a workers' state, the principle of socialist pluralism, and the overriding importance of the class composition of the revolutionary party.

RED ACTION ARTICLES

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

After the riots on Meadow Lane estate, Neil Kinnock called on the police to pursue the "ring leaders" clearly desperate to put sufficient distance between himself and some of those traditionally perceived to be Labour's constituency. Just as eager to prove that there is no social basis for such outrageous behaviour the right wing press were scouring the area for any evidence of "outside agitators". None were found but the London Evening Standard floated the idea anyway: "Anarchists behind riots" they claimed hopefully. Ever ready to oblige the gentlemen of the press Class War, promised to produce the balachava wearing 'ring leaders' from Meadow Lane at their conference. Eventually the media decided that the theory 'didn't have legs' and in mass opted for a less satisfactory but still palatable theory, that it was not a "political conspiracy" like the riot in Trafalgar Square, against the state then it must have been a "criminal conspiracy" against the police.

In an article called "Tapping into the anger", Socialist Worker claimed that the riots "were proof of the anger that exists in British society.... It is vital that socialists seek to direct this anger against the Tories and the ruling class". However not even the Sunday Sport who periodically proclaim that Elvis is alive was brazen enough to suggest that the SWP might possibly have been behind the riots. Be that as it may "Tapping into the anger" is a most appropriate caption to best illustrate their basic approach. Of course to 'tap into' can mean to direct; it also means 'to exploit', 'make use of', 'siphon off' etc, as well as being a tacit admission that the organisation is separate and distinct from the events themselves, the area geographically and the culture and instincts of the people who live in it.

As a response to any inner city disturbance the people of the area are subject to a two tier invasion. Immediately the dust settles and the paramilitary police withdraw comes the second wave; Sun journalists, social analysts, plainclothes detectives, photographers, community policemen, and members of the Socialist Workers Party all have different motives but in a way are after the same thing.

The police are there to find out who was involved, the analysts to discover why they were, the media to interview them and the SWP like latter-day missionaries to rescue, remodel and recruit them. It is a genuine cultural invasion as the intentions of all on the crusade is first to dominate, to pacify, then colonise 'the natives'. While some of the invaders may be overtly hostile, others camouflage their intentions by appearing to understand and be sympathetic though the political analysts, the social workers and the activists may appear to listen, the real point is to understand the perception of reality that caused the 'inarticulate explosion', the better to dominate them more effectively, channel the anger more productively. For the left to channel the anger 'against the Tories' is both necessary and positive; and an effective counter to the politics behind the propaganda churned out by the media is it not. Only superficially because all the invaders, including them approach the subject from the stand point of cultural and personal superiority devoid of real empathy. Therefore there is no dialogue as any genuine dialogue can only be had between equals. There is no communication if only one side listens to be educated by his betters, while the other side is attentive only to those things than allow them to better manipulate their prey. Because of this approach the plans of the SWP for 'the proletariat' of North Shields will always

fail (despite them selling 17 papers door to door getting an excellent reception!) because the authors design their strategies according to their own personal views of reality never taking into account (except when assessing a potential recruit) the active aspirations of the resident rioters themselves towards whom their programme is ostensibly directed.

They don't feel the need to listen because they have convinced themselves they know all the answers. Like the average politician the methods and objectives are the same 'to win over the people'. So it is considered sufficient that in the slogans of the revolutionary vanguard are

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counter posed to the slogans of the ruling elite. This type of revolutionary activist projects himself to the working class as their necessary opposite by politely demonstrating that their ignorance is absolute, they seek to justify their own existence. As a result of this process the subject is either repelled, and on the rebound from the far left finds succour in the far right or indeed becomes so convinced of his or her intrinsic inferiority forfeits his independence and culture and begins to mimic the values of the invader. Eventually he wants to walk like them, dress like them, live like them, talk like them, totally alienated from his class, his instincts, his culture and himself. As a result of the cultural castration a working class recruit becomes a stranger in his own community as much an alien as those from outside who 'educated' him.

Nonetheless like the supporters of a group called "The

workers go on strike for? probably more pay, shorter hours, better conditions, the right to elect their own representatives etc However once the strike is declared, the strike committee is dismissed the workers find the strike being run entirely by anonymous union bureaucrats. The men in grey suits demand that in return for a meagre food parcel, individuals must work twelve hour shifts on picket duty. All monies and donations are controlled by the union. Well justified rumours of corruption abound. Some workers claiming that the conduct of the strike is contrary to the aims of the strike, call for a ballot and reinstatement of the strike committees, are branded as stooges and fifth columnists, and cudgelled by swaggering well fed flunkeys. Thereafter their families no longer receive food parcels. In all respects conditions outside the gates are worse than the conditions that originally provoked the strike inside.

because for them it doesn't matter how the revolutionary vanguard comes to power, or indeed what bureaucratic authoritarian methods are employed by them to stay in power. While The Leninist as avowed Marxist Leninists, and the neo-Trotskyists of the SWP may have surface differences they are united by an underlying ideology demonstrated by Tony Cliff's defence of the autocratic legacy of the Bolsheviks "There was a dictatorship of the proletariat even though the proletariat had disintegrated. Of course to the vulgar materialist it sounds impossible to have a dictatorship of the proletariat without the proletariat like the smile of a Cheshire cat without the cat itself..." however, "Ideas have their own momentum" (Red Action 80).

In 1874 Engels started writing a series of articles one of which was the 'Program of the Blanquist Refugees of the Commune,' a review of the Blanquists pamphlet "Aux Communes". This article is one of the most important presentations of political views of Marx and Engels particularly if you are like Red Action "vulgar materialists". Auguste Blanqui was a revolutionary who represented a particular Socialist Communist current and enjoyed mass support in France pre-1848. He was known to Marx, indeed some (including the SWP) mistakenly give him credit for coining Marx's

of the Proletariat", as a class dictatorship and the traditional understanding: The Dictatorship of the party as the pre-amble to popular democratic government, as a result excluding the latter at first thus entailing the Dictatorship of the party over the proletariat. The ramification is this. A cross index of the theoretical expressions of ALL contemporary groups from Stalinist recidivists like Partisan "The revolutionary class exercises its dictatorship through the conscious element" to the orthodox Trots, Workers Power who proclaim that "the workers dictatorship will have to be highly authoritarian and centralised..." etc without apology and without exception (Anarchists apart) readily identify-through word and deed implicitly and explicitly on this vital question not with the political philosophy of Marx but remain wistful towards the philosophy of Auguste Blanqui which it replaced. (However though attracted by the dictatorial aspect they are repelled by the violence and self sacrifice needed to make themselves a tendency credible and the option of insurrection viable. As a consequence, the mongrel tendency they represent is typified in the main by hot air and worthless impotence). To be consistent with this theory it follows, that if the revolutionary elite deign to play midwife and deliver popular democracy, conditions and the weather permitting they are entitled indeed obliged to reverse the process should this, correspond with the 'Revolutionary interest'. Naturally it is only the party with the 'Revolutionary Birthright' that would be allowed to determine exactly what manoeuvres served the interests of the revolution. A revolution for the people but without the people, is another way of being against the people for then the role allotted to them is peripheral rather than fundamental, and the process and methods of manipulation and regimentation employed by the new ruling elite are only those copied by them from their predecessors. Dialogue between the revolutionary minority and the mass of the class, a communication between equals is the lifeblood of every authentic revolution. This is

what makes it a revolution as distinguished from a coup. "Denial of communion in the revolutionary process, avoidance of dialogue with the people under the pretext of organising them, of strengthening revolutionary power, or of ensuring a united front is really a fear of freedom. It is a fear or lack of faith in the people. But if the people cannot be trusted there is no reason for liberation, in this case the revolution is not even carried out for the people but 'by' the people for the leaders, a complete self negation"(1)

from above, particularly the intellectual leadership look at the anarchy of Capitalism, its contradictions and inconsistencies and genuinely believe that on an intellectual level a Socialist Society is preferable to indeed vastly superior to what currently exists. They are also happy to acknowledge that the working class is the sole vehicle for revolutionary change. However they are not, as they are quick to remind you simply sentimental utopians, blind to the harsh realities of Capitalism or indeed to the subsequent failings, imperfections, bigotries and shortcomings of the only revolutionary class, as a result of its alienation under the system. What they rarely acknowledge even to themselves, is that they too are products of the system and so without a conscious effort and understanding, that their own characteristic way of living and behaving is even more distorted than that of

"The left are the loyal disciples to the lost cause of party dictatorship, Socialists of the previous generation"

Leninist" the SWP are for the working class. Indeed as the former explained in issue 108 of their paper "the long term interests of the working class are the beginning and end of our politics". Indeed such is their concern for the long term interests of the working class in the USSR; the Leninist does not hesitate to say that the real interests of the workers would be better served by being represented by people other than the workers. They have reached this conclusion because it is patently obvious that the workers can't distinguish between revolution that is good for them, and counter revolution that is bad for them. "Revolution is progressive, it is the new overthrowing the old. A counter revolution is a reversal of a previous revolution and its results are a turning back to the past, back to private property, back to Capitalist social relations... So what was ours is now theirs, there is nothing left to defend. Prior to August 22nd, though the Soviet State might have been authoritarian and ablit bureaucratic it was the duty of all Revolutionary Communists to defend it".

To fully clarify their position they drew up an extraordinary analogy (quoted in full) "What would we do if in the midst of a long drawn out strike the bureaucrats began using authoritarian measures to maintain the strike, continued to live a privileged lifestyle and some of them began taking bribes from the bosses? Would we abandon the strike? No! We would defend the strike against the bosses and against its leaders. What would we do if under these conditions, a steady trickle of workers began returning to work complaining of hunger and bureaucratic methods we would still defend the strike wouldn't we? Well we would! and if at a critical moment the strike collapsed because of betrayal from the top and a mass return from below, would we join the bosses in welcoming the end of the strike? No we wouldn't, not even if it made us unpopular among workers and bureaucrats alike... in the USSR the strike has been broken".

Totally demoralised, some workers who drift back to work are denounced as scabs; by the bureaucrats. But their co-workers, the original militant strikers remain silent. Inevitably the strike collapses, with the union itself now utterly discredited. Certainly Judases abound, but who betrayed who? Did the workers betray the bureaucrats? or was it the other way round? Did the end justify the means? Not in this case for the means determined what the end would be, the exact opposite to what (the workers in any case) intended; and where would the Leninist stand? Quite absurdly they choose to stand along side the bureaucrats and defend their authoritarianism, bemoaning the fact that they weren't sufficiently authoritarian! In the same way they expressed their contempt for the tactical blundering ineptness of the state emergency committee who led the coup on August 19th. In condemning the opportunism of the SWP for lauding Yeltsins "courageous strike call," (who admittedly does betray the ambition of a youthful Benito Mussolini) they then declare "Frankly we prefer bureaucratic authoritarianism over a deformed proletarian state to a capitalist bourgeois democracy". So there it is in a nutshell... "We prefer"... despite the fact that during the crisis they made their position perfectly clear, those feckless bastards, working twelve hour shifts down mines in the Ukraine, went and fucking let them down!!!


To resolve the conflict between the aspirations of the workers and the ambitions of the revolutionaries is a dilemma faced by many others before them, before Marx and after Marx. Historically the preferred solution has been something like this. If we the revolutionary elite, cannot persuade the masses to follow us and make revolution, why we still have the revolution for the workers, but without the workers, if necessary even despite the workers. This is why groups like The Leninist cannot distinguish between an authentic revolution and a coup (witness their support for the regime in Afghanistan),

phrase the "Dictatorship of the proletariat". In any case he represented a definitive tendency with his own views on the value of dictatorship. "It is unquestionable that after a revolution accomplished in behalf of our ideas, there will be created a dictatorial power whose mission it will be to direct the revolutionary movement. The dictatorial power will of necessity base itself on the assent of the armed population which acting in the general interest, will evidently represent the enlightened will of the great majority of the nation".

This view of Socialism from above, of benign dictatorship had popular currency among all the Jacobin/Communist secret societies that blossomed pre The Paris Commune and the writing of the Communist Manifesto in 1848. In 1874 Engels wrote of Blanqui himself "Blanqui is essentially a political revolutionary, a Socialist only by sentiment, sympathising with the sufferings of the people but he has neither a Socialist theory nor definite practical proposals for social remedies. In his political activity he was essentially the "man of action" believing that small, well organised minorities attempting a revolutionary 'coup de main' at the right moment, can carry the mass of the people with them by a couple of initial successes and thus make a victorious revolution." In this article as well Engels pinpoints the meaning of Marx's term the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" as against the Blanquist dictatorship. "From the fact that Blanqui conceives of every revolution as the coup de main of a small revolutionary minority, what follows of itself is the necessity of dictatorship after its success- The Dictatorship, please note not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, but of the small number of those who made the coup de main and who themselves are organised beforehand under the dictatorship of one person or a few. One can see that Blanqui is a revolutionary of the previous generation".

There could be no clearer distinction between Marx's concept of the Dictatorship

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the oppressed, for while they may genuinely transfer their political allegiance and break with their own class, they still carry over within them the snobbery, manners and prejudices of the oppressor. These 'converts' may truly desire to transform the unjust order, but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation they talk about the people but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable pre-condition for revolutionary change...The convert who approaches the people but feels alarm at each step they take, each doubt they express, and each suggestion they offer and attempts to impose his status remains nostalgic towards his origins"(2)

After the decline of the 1848 revolutions, the Communist League of which Marx and Engels were members split, with them, once again in conflict with the crude 'communism' of putchism which thought to substitute determined bands of revolutionaries for the real mass movement of the enlightened working class. Marx told them "The minority make mere will the motive force of the revolution, instead of actual relations. Where as we say to the workers you will have to go through fifteen or twenty or so years of civil wars and international wars not only to change extant conditions but also in order to change yourselves and render yourselves fit for political dominion." The principal characteristics of the proponents of 'Socialism from above': the prevailing current on the left: is the belief the will of the radical elite can transcend actual conditions, and the conceit in the primacy, and momentum of ideas over material interests. Marx maintained that the class whose struggle even under Socialist leadership and on a relatively low level shakes the foundations of capitalist society. "Every step of a real movement is more important than a dozen programmes". Before Marx and Engels joined the group, which became the Communist League they insisted that everything conclusive to superstitious authoritarianism be struck out of the rules". A journal issued by the league in 1847 a few months before the publication of the Communist Manifesto declared: "We are not among those Communists who are out to destroy personal liberty who wish to turn the world into one huge barracks or into a gigantic workhouse. There are certainly those communists who with an easy conscience refuse to countenance personal liberty and would like to shuffle it out of the world because they consider it a hindrance to complete harmony. But we have no desire to exchange freedom for equality."

For the last seventy years the advocates of Socialism from above, Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyist alike, would have the world believe that they were in a linear descent from Marx and Engels. Now with the collapse of Totalitarian Dictatorships in the East, the apologists for authoritarianism in the West will have to work harder to conceal the fact, that apart from Marx's uncompromising spirit of revolutionary opposition to the Capitalist status quo, Marx cut his eye teeth making war on their type.

The collapse of 'Communism' signalled the end of an era. The 'old left' remains ensnared in a time warp, sentimentally cherishing the discredited methods and ideologies, obsessions, intrigues and petty rivalries of that bygone age. They are the loyal disciples to the lost cause of party dictatorship, socialists of the previous generation.

By: J Reilly



"WE ARE NOT REPUBLICANS!"

The Glasgow Hunger Strike Committee recently organised a series of events in the West of Scotland. In the end however, the two most important events of the weekend (a rally on the Friday evening and a march through the city centre on the Saturday) were scuppered by a combination of threats from Loyalists, police intimidation and ineptitude on the part of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) who were involved in booking and organising both events. The rally/social and the march represented an excellent opportunity for Republicans and socialists in Glasgow to launch a genuine broad based and non-sectarian Irish Solidarity Campaign. Instead, we have been involved in launching a committee which is complacent in terms of what it actually represents, liberal in its soft political orientation, and completely lacking in strategy, tactics and direction.

The LCI, despite their lack of forces on the ground, politically dominate the committee, and despite the presence of some very experienced Republicans, they have successfully steered the committee towards a position similar to that of campaigns like that of 'Time to Go' as opposed to a more militant pro-Republican approach. Indeed, on at least two occasions their representatives have emphasised their liberalism with the statement, "we are not Republicans". We would pose the question to all of the supporters of the committee as to how a state of affairs has been allowed to arise whereby such people are leading a committee to commemorate the Republican Hunger Strike of 1981.

It is the opinion of Glasgow members of Red Action that the committee's problems are compounded by the fact that non-Republicans are leading what should be an obviously pro-Republican campaign. If not, then what was the hunger strike about if it wasn't about the rights of Irish Republican prisoners of war? It would seem that the committee's activities are being guided by the idea that attaching the name of Labour to an application for a march or a meeting will bring it 'respectability' (the word, 'respectability' crops up at every meeting!) 'Respectability' can be measured in terms of success. By that measure, the usefulness of attaching a Labour party tag to a Hunger Strike Commemoration is non-existent. The right to march was refused by a 'respectable' Labour council after the Chief Constable stated that he was not confident that he could adequately police the march due to information received from his 'intelligence sources' regarding the possibility of a Loyalist counter demonstration. The meeting was also cancelled after a sensationalist article in the Sun claimed it was an 'IRA BASH'! So much for the non-Republican slant of the committee. Despite the intervention of some very 'respectable' members of the Labour Party, including MPs and Councillors, both the meeting and the march remained banned. On the Friday night, the rally had to be switched to a public park where just over 100 people listened to speeches from Ken Livingstone, father Des Wilson, Noel Ellis, a relative of hunger

striker Mickey Devine, and a Republican ex-prisoner. The Committee and the LCI in particular, would do well to remember the words of Ken Livingstone when he said at the rally, "if they try to ban our meetings, we go ahead and have them...and if they try to ban our marches, we march anyway!" What was obvious from these events was that, as a committee, we had no strategy to challenge the obstacles that the state and their loyalist allies placed before us and despite all of the rhetoric to the contrary, we gave in and were defeated. To state anything other would be dishonest. The truth is that we have allowed elements with their own hidden agenda to dominate an event that should have been an outstanding success and a fitting tribute to the ten hunger strikers. In the end, it was neither. There are lessons to be learned as regards the future of the committee and the commitment but it would seem that the LCI and others will be the last to learn them. Already, there is talk of another march in January, booked in the name of the LCI, "as a matter of principle"! Proposals by Red Action that a series of 'Beat the Ban' meetings should be organised in the run up to it in order to build the march, have already been dismissed. At the last meeting it was suggested that over attention to security matters was 'impractical' and it was even implied that RA weren't really serious about the march. The LCI has a short memory when it comes to assessing how 'serious' people take Irish Republican marches through the centre of Glasgow. There is definitely an air of defeatism which permeates through the committee and a feeling that there is a need to keep events within a scale that the committee can cope with, and in order that we don't 'provoke the Loyalists'. Red Action believes that the very existence of the committee and the commemoration is enough to provoke opposition from loyalists and fascists. The hatching of cunning plans and semi-secret marches and meetings won't beat the opposition. It will only serve to increase their confidence. Instead of driving ourselves further into the ghetto of Irish politics, we should be formulating a strategy which can break the deadlock and make the question of Ireland an issue that can activate and politicise working class areas of Glasgow. With a principled pro-Republican stance, allied to a strategy which goes beyond involving ourselves in a competition for the smallest march on Ireland, we can begin to challenge effectively the British presence in Ireland. As has been stated elsewhere by Red Action in relation to Irish Solidarity work, "The only pertinent question, we believe, that existing solidarity movements need 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."

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Dispatches from a warzone



This past few weeks has seen repeated calls from Unionist politicians for the re-introduction of internment only this time they want it to be 'selective'. Does this mean that those interned in 1971 were picked at random? Out of a hat maybe? They have also said they know who the 'top terrorists' are. Hugh Annesley, Chief Constable of the RUC, has said his intelligence indicates that if they arrested five hundred individuals the IRA would be smashed. Sound familiar? Of course he also states he would have to arrest seventy loyalist terrorists. This is his solution to ending the recent escalation of random sectarian murders carried out by UFF/UVF killers.

Messrs Paisley and Maginnis are vehement in their calls for the re-introduction of internment though both go about it in different ways. In the case of Paisley it is in his renowned fire and brimstone method. He tries to coerce the British government with threats of the 'protestant backlash', a threat that many of his critics, in fact even many of his colleagues and followers, believe is a dead horse well and truly flogged. His latest piece of information that the IRA intends to wipe out an entire Fermanagh family and in his table thumping manner warns that "the loyalist people will no longer stand for this", is yet again a veiled threat of "Ulster streets running red with blood".

Mister Maginnis on the other hand goes about it in a cool, calm, dignified manner befitting an ex-officer of the UDR. While calling for its reintroduction he also takes the opportunity to lambast the Anglo-Irish agreement by informing us that violence has increased by thirty four per cent per annum since the signing of the agreement. His figure may well be true but what he neglects to mention when using this as an excuse to intern Nationalists is that this figure comes about due to the increase in murders carried out by loyalist gunmen. So far the pleas, threats and logistics of Unionists have failed to impress their Brit masters who have turned a blind eye and deaf ear to their rantings.

There have been a myriad of reasons as to why internment should not be reintroduced by establishment figures. General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, who was commander of Land Forces in the six counties during internment has said "in answer to all the calls for selective internmentit's another of those rushes of blood to the head which

some people in Ulster are prone". He says that the arrest and internment of leading Republicans would be 'advantageous' but there would have to be an upsurge in violence far greater than anything yet seen. Of course, he deemed that 1971 had been a disaster, but since he was one of those who forced Faulkners hand he would do.

To Unionist calls that selective internment be introduced in the twenty six counties and simultaneously with the six counties Dermot Ahearne of Fianna Fail has said that any attempt to do so would, "be used as a recruitment drive by the provos in the South." What he really means is any government which attempted to intern Republicans would be committing political suicide. Although the Offences Against the State Act is becoming more and more draconian in nature, Ahearne himself is trying to do away with a suspects right to silence and right to bail, the recent extradition of Dubliner Deslie Ellis, which has backfired on them caused so much controversy that perhaps they are realising that they can only push the Irish people so far.

Even the British government are not telling the real reason why they won't consider internment. Spokespersons will tell us that it is because they want to get it right, they want it to be a "humane and secure containment of the main perpetrators of violence". This was said by Sam Beattie, chairman of the Police Federation. In order to get the main perpetrators of violence he will have to intern quite a few of his own officers. Sir Oliver Wright, the former Ambassador and the Government's special Representative to the Northern Ireland Administration in 1969, has said that the reintroduction of internment, no matter how selective, would be detrimental to Britain's standing. He goes a long way to point out that there are 16 million Irish Americans in the USA who would not take kindly to internment and might be drawn to NORAID. Since when did Britain care what the international community thought of them? Making sure they get the right people, they worry about international reaction or the time not being right to implement it? None of these lame excuses will wash with those who understand how devious the British establishment can be. This then begs the question, why they won't appease the Unionists in this case? In the mid-seventies the Brits initiated the twin policies of Ulsterisation and Criminal-

isation. The first policy, that of Ulsterisation was designed so that the RUC, who had taken a back seat to the British army up until then, would take primacy in the war against the Republican movement, thus giving the impression to outside observers that what was happening in Ireland was a civil dispute between two communities of different religions, a domestic, sectarian squabble rather than what it truly is, a war of liberation waged by Irishmen and women to divest themselves of a foreign oppressive regime. The second policy was to criminalise the struggle. In order to do this they built a new complex beside the compounds at Long Kesh. These new structures were made to house volunteers arrested after a designated date on which political status was abolished. The new complex was the infamous H-Blocks. Since then the Brits have emptied the compounds of Long Kesh of men sentenced in the early 70s and therefore having political status. These people were an acute embarrassment to a government working flat out to criminalise political activities. Such was the embarrassment that men sentenced to life imprisonment in the compounds of Long Kesh were told that if they moved to the H-Blocks and let the last bastion of political status be demolished they wouldn't have too long to do before they received a release date. To introduce any form of internment at this time, or any other time, would be cataclysmic to the Brits. In order to do so they would have to treat the internees as political prisoners. How could they manage to control the jailed Republicans in Crumlin Road, Long Kesh, or Maghaberry, and how would the government in the 26 counties control Republican prisoners in their jails if a foreign government were to give status to people engaged in the same struggle as those they now have incarcerated. The Brits cannot tell the Unionists that if they do reintroduce internment they will wreck their criminalisation policy, which in turn brings down the Ulsterisation policy due to the fact that a political prisoner constitutes a political struggle and not a religious war. It would seem then that in criminalising the armed struggle here, they have have unwittingly robbed themselves of a weapon which they would dearly love to be able to use. Perhaps it is still on the statute books in the hope that they can change enough laws and legislation to be able to use it, but I think it will be a long time before we see internment again in Ireland. M.COLLINS, BELFAST.



